

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, February 3, 1993**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 93/02/03

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I've given prior notice to you that I would be raising this particular motion under the provisions of Standing Order 30. The motion is as follows:

That the ordinary business of the House be adjourned today to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, that being the release of confidential client information by the Minister of Family and Social Services in the Assembly yesterday and the loss of public trust in the government occasioned by this breach of confidentiality.

I have copies for all hon. members.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I propose to move under Standing Order 40 the following motion:

That the members of this Assembly congratulate the debaters, coaches, judges, organizers, and hosts from around the world who are now participating in the 1993 World Schools Debating Championships under way in Medicine Hat and extend best wishes for success to all of these outstanding young citizens of the world in the competitions and their future endeavours.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

### Bill 280

#### Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 280, the Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act.

This Bill, if passed, would respect the democratic right of farmers to make decisions about whether or not commissions collecting refundable levies would be established in the future.

[Leave granted; Bill 280 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Assembly today copies of the report of activities and the Auditor General's report regarding the government land purchase fund for the year ended March 31, 1992, as well as a response in answer to Motion for a Return 204.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Assembly the annual report of the Alberta Advanced Education department for the year 1990-91, also the annual report of Medicine Hat College for the year 1990-91, and the annual report of the University of Lethbridge for the year 1991-92.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, there are two groups of people involved in English as a Second Language programs in Edmonton-

Centre. The first is 34 adults from the Grandin school ESL program. They're here with their group leaders Barbara Hoepfer and Jo-Anne Eggen. As well, there are four English language professionals who are with us: Siew Tang, Cha Loeup Chow, Lily Tan, and Yen Thi Tran. I'd ask that all the visitors here today please rise and be welcomed by the members.

Thank you.

head: **Oral Question Period**

### Mortgage Properties Inc.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, waste and mismanagement by this government has cost taxpayers in Alberta unparalleled amounts. I can't imagine anywhere else in the history of this country where we have lost such amounts of taxpayers' money through waste and mismanagement. It goes on and on and on. On Friday we learned that Alberta Mortgage and Housing will lose millions of dollars more, and one has to ask: is it any wonder that we continue to have a deficit that keeps growing? I want to look specifically at one of the big losers, Mortgage Properties Incorporated. Heck, they just made a small arithmetic error: they predicted \$1.2 million lost, and it turned out to be \$57.6 million. Just a minor, little arithmetic mistake. My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs is simply this: will the minister come clean and tell Albertans how much we're going to lose on this white elephant?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, for clarification, Mortgage Properties Inc. is an arm's-length corporation that is the real estate company of Alberta Mortgage and Housing. It was set up by the hon. Ray Speaker in 1990 in order to discharge some \$800 million worth of properties that had accumulated over the years from the late '70s in CHIP and MAP housing programs. Those are subsidized apartment and housing incentive programs.

Will I come clean? Absolutely. I did during the estimates, and anybody can pick up *Hansard* and read that we absolutely, definitively stated how much money was written off: \$882 million on those projects that were built in the late '70s. They were written off between the years 1982 and 1986, and the MPI organization has been charged with the disposition of those. To date they have delivered over the years some \$500 million worth of write-downs that have been charged back against the general revenue fund and delivered back to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Left out of those are some \$300 million-plus, and I haven't got the defined numbers. To come clean, I'm stating here today that there are still some \$300 million-plus that were written down in the early '80s that have to be worked on by Mortgage Properties Inc. or any other real estate delivery mechanism we use as we sell off those properties that are surplus from those days.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of what's happened in the past; we've lost millions and millions and millions of dollars.

I want to come back to what the minister said, that AMHC still has an accumulated deficit of \$387 million. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is simply this: isn't it true that basically all of that \$387 million is gone and we'll have to pay for that in the future?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, let me clarify it one more time. You ask: is it true that we are going to incur these losses? The answer is yes, but these losses were incurred during a time when this province was at the peak of its economic growth. I have never seen a boom like the one that hit this province in 1979. The members opposite in the opposition, many of them – and if I went

back, I could probably find their statements – were demanding that this government do something about the shortfall in housing accommodation for the masses of people that had come to this province looking for work as well as working in the new things such as were going on at Fort McMurray, such as the growth in the industries that were developing here. They were asking that the government get involved and help the private sector in bringing up to date rental accommodations and housing accommodations for people that were coming here. Therefore, to stand here now in this Assembly and point fingers when indeed many of them themselves asked for this is irresponsible. The people of Alberta along with this government will share in the responsibility in taking the licks for the losses incurred from those boom times.

2:40

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, isn't it typical of this government? They lose all the money, billions of dollars, and it's everybody else's fault. I wonder who's been in power all these years.

I want to come back to this minister. He didn't answer the specific question, because we know what's happened in the past with their waste and mismanagement. I want to repeat the question to him, Mr. Speaker. Isn't it true that we'll probably have to write off another \$387 million? I would point out to the minister that that's a lot of hospital beds that we're cutting. That's the honesty I want from him.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I have explained, and I answered his question to the best of my ability.

Let's put it in another perspective. This province to date has borrowed approximately \$5.1 billion from the heritage savings trust fund for social housing and other programs in this province. Of this amount, approximately \$3.42 billion has been repaid to the heritage savings trust fund. In addition, approximately \$4.6 billion in interest repayments has been made. The total repayments, including interest and principal, are slightly over \$8 billion that have been paid back to the heritage savings trust fund over the years.

Certainly there is a high price for social housing for those less fortunate than others, that can't afford to pay their way at the present time. There is a high price, and it's been part of the policy of the federal government over the years, of this provincial government, and other provinces in this country. So, yes, there is going to be a price to be paid for social housing, for helping those less fortunate than others, but if you can look at the track record, many of the projects have paid on time and have paid back a tremendous amount of interest to the heritage savings trust fund.

### Health Care System

MR. MARTIN: Let's look at what's happened because of the mismanagement: MPI, Softco, Principal, NovAtel, Myrias, GSR. We could go on all day, but let's look at what the reality of that is. As a result of this government's bungling and mismanagement, it's becoming apparent who's going to pay the price: yesterday the provincial employees, today in announcements we see health care workers being held at risk, 101 people being laid off just in the Edmonton area. I expect that's the tip of the iceberg when we look at the rest of the province. The previous minister promised a 2.5 percent increase; now they're reneging on that and forcing local hospital boards to make, if I may use the term, brutal cuts. My question to the Minister of Health is simply this: what does this minister, who is part of a government who has lost, say, for example, over half a billion dollars on NovAtel, have to say to those nurses and other health care workers today who will be losing their jobs? What does she say to them in a personal way?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say to the House and to the people of Alberta that this government in 1992-93 committed \$4.3 billion to health care in this province. Of that, \$2.1 billion goes to acute care funding for institutions. I think what we should be talking about here are the real components in what has occurred in hospitals, and we should look at it from the positive side, at the reorganization of how we treat patients in this province. I do not agree that institutionalization, longer hospital stays are in the best interests of patients. What we are doing in this province is moving to less institutional care, shorter hospital stays, and inpatient and outpatient changes. This hospital group is reorganizing with that in mind. I think we need to look at the quality of care, certainly, and the quality of life of the patients. I think this hospital group is doing that. The hospital group is very much keeping that in their thoughts in this reorganization.

MR. MARTIN: I don't blame the minister for not wanting to answer the question, because she's going to have to talk to those health care workers about NovAtel and MPI and all the other mismanagement things of this government, Mr. Speaker.

She talks about patient care, Mr. Speaker. Yes, let's take a look at it. If you look at the announcement yesterday, what is really happening in this case is that higher skilled workers will be replaced by lower skilled workers. For example, you're going to reduce the number of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses while increasing the numbers of nurses' aides. That's in the announcement. I think this is a very dangerous direction for patient health care and our health care system. My question to the minister is: how can the minister justify policies from this government which force higher skilled workers out of their jobs so that lower paid workers can take their places?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the choice of support staff in the institutions is certainly within the purview of the administration. I expect that each of their decisions has been made on the type of care and the type of procedures that they are handling in today's new world.

I have said and I will repeat that this province, this government has committed \$4.3 billion to health care in this province. I think that that is adequate. I think it's how we spend our dollars. We are reviewing our system to look at how we deliver health in this province. To look at reviewing how we deliver health requires some change. Now, if the hon. member is contending that the best way to deliver health care is through institutions, then we have a discussion on that issue. The people who are delivering health care contend that we can deliver health services to our constituents through more community-based. We have increased home care funding significantly to assist people to have treatment so that they are not institutionalized for a long length of time.

MR. MARTIN: Absolute and total nonsense, Mr. Speaker. There is no plan to go into community care, something we've been advocating. All this is is hack, hack, hack. Slash and burn, with no options. We can prove that. Don't hand us that.

I want to say this to this minister, because there is not a plan. I want her to answer this question. [interjections] Oh, they're getting a little excited, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister is simply this: because of what's happening in our health care system, can this minister absolutely stand in her place in the Assembly and assure people in Alberta that patient care is not at risk by these massive layoffs that are occurring in the health care system?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I can stand in this Assembly and say that I have every confidence in the Caritas group to provide exemplary patient care, care that is in the best interests of their patients, and decisions that are made in their organization.

Mr. Speaker, to say that there is no plan for this group is wrong. The group has a plan, which I should say I have their permission to comment on, and I would be happy to table a copy of that with the House. They very clearly outline their plan for health care for the people in their area of responsibility. That is what I support as Minister of Health in this province: that these decisions are made in the local communities for the best health care delivery to their constituents. I think they are the people to do it, and we are here to support them.

#### Advanced Education Access

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, under the Social Credit and the Lougheed regimes the government's support towards education in Alberta was second to none. We now find ourselves in sixth position when we're compared to other provinces in Canada. Thousands upon thousands of students cannot get access to postsecondary institutions. That's bad enough. Now it appears that mathematics 30 is being used as a course to screen out even more students. My first question is to the Minister of Education. The minister has had lots of time to look into this issue now. I'd like the minister to stand and explain to Albertans why this extra screening is taking place to screen out even more and more Albertans from the many thousands that can't get into postsecondary institutions.

2:50

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would first of all like to indicate that this is the second time I have heard this question. It was previously posed by the Member for Calgary-McKnight. I'd like to give the same answer, and that is that there is no intention or plan by Alberta Education to use mathematics 30 as any type of screening device.

I'd like to further comment that following the question being posed by the Member for Calgary-McKnight, I have checked into the piloting of the questions for this test, and the normal amount of piloting and time was paid to providing the preparation of the test. Secondly, the normal amount of time if not more time was spent through the department in the preparation and design of the test. So those procedures are in order with previous years' procedures.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, administrators have informed our offices that 60 percent of the students who we're told and who in fact take mathematics 30 don't need mathematics 30 for postsecondary institutional programs. I'd like to ask the minister, then, what action he is taking to better co-ordinate what's being taught and what's needed at these postsecondary institutions.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is confusing facts in terms of who's responsible for setting university entrance requirements. Mathematics 30 is very commonly part of entrance to various faculties of the universities of this province. Therefore, there is certainly a very good reason for many students to register in mathematics 30.

In terms of working to co-ordinate with the universities, officials of the department have met with university people to talk about co-ordinating science programs and, I think, very recently have been talking about mathematics programs and the possibility of more recognition for mathematics 33. That is something that

may be a possibility, although there's certainly no definite progress to report at this particular time.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that answer.

My last question is to the minister of advanced education. Thousands upon thousands of students can't get access to postsecondary institutions, yet we know that this government since 1989 has provided some 39 corporations with tax dollars. Those corporations have blown a billion dollars of tax moneys. Priorities are hopelessly skewed in the wrong way. I'd like the minister to stand and tell Alberta students who can't get into postsecondary institutions what advice he's giving them in not being able to get into the institutions in our own province.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the question has to do with the same type of question that's been coming to this minister for the past week, and it has to do with funding for postsecondary education and access. Let me say very quickly that if we have any students who cannot access our postsecondary institutions, that's a concern, whether it's one or a thousand or 5,000. We all have a concern with that. We're all endeavouring to address the very difficult fiscal circumstances we have in our province. We have spoken to the institutions. They're doing all that they can within their power. Certainly we intend to do all that we can within the fiscal realities of this province to deal with the very serious problem of access based on the fact that we have students who are not able to access our postsecondary institutions. We intend to continue to work in that direction. Hopefully we'll be able to come up with some innovative and effective means of addressing that problem.

#### Workers' Compensation

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. One of the advantages that an employer has had through the years is that by having workers' compensation on his employees, he can't be sued, then, by an injured worker. It has been recently brought to my attention by some of my constituents that there's an interpretation of the Workers' Compensation Act that in a limited company, if the directors do not personally have workers' compensation, although they are not employees of the limited company, then they can be sued by an injured worker. Now, this is news to me, and I'm just wondering if there's been some change in the Act to allow this.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I don't pretend to be a legal expert on the Act itself, but I believe that section 10 refers to directors. My understanding is that a director himself or herself does not have to carry that coverage for themselves, yet if an employee is injured or wants to pursue something, if there is one or more directors who do not have the coverage, my understanding is that they are liable to court action by that particular employee.

MR. MUSGROVE: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's also my understanding that in a partnership this is not the case. Now, why would there be this discrepancy in the Workers' Compensation Act?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, as far as the partnership, again it would refer to directorship. In terms of a specific incident like this, if the member would like to get the details to me, I'd be happy to follow it up. I would not want to give advice which might be interpreted as legal and then possibly cause a problem. If one of those partners is in fact registered as a director, I understand that there is some liability for an injured worker.

### Health Care System

(continued)

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago the Health minister talked about shifts in the health field, implying that shifting towards home care is what's happening, as a justification for underfunding our health system. I can tell you that those shifts are happening about as fast as the retreat of the Columbia Icefield. She said that patients are enjoying shorter hospital stays. A case in point: I have a 75-year-old constituent sitting in the Royal Alexandra hospital right now who would love to go home. Guess what? Home care in Edmonton says: no money for home care for you. I ask the minister: why won't she funnel some money into home care, which is dreadfully needed, instead of the corporate bailouts that these guys collectively agree to on a daily basis?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, home care is a very, very important part of community-based health care, and it has been increased significantly. In fact in the 1992-93 budget we increased it again by 9.4 percent to \$70.3 million. The health units are assisting us greatly in delivering this very important service, and I think home care is working extremely well. Unfortunately, the member is probably correct that there are cases where we could use more, but I do believe that our health units and the people that are helping us manage the system are working within the resources. It does take some time to shift and reallocate resources. I'm very encouraged that the member opposite agrees with the shift and the direction that we are going in, because I think it is important. Remember that the other move that we made that was very important was moving home care to those under the seniors' age who required it, and I think that that was a great step forward. It does take some time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Please.

Supplementary.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a supplementary estimates book. It asks us to approve \$185 million to cover up the NovAtel fiasco and not a nickel, not a penny for home care or anything else in the Health department.

Mr. Speaker, I've got a number of constituents who really need home care. Here's another example. A 77-year-old woman phones me last week. She's on crutches. You know what? She got cut off home care. She was getting two hours every two weeks. A 77-year-old woman getting none now. Tell me, Mr. Speaker, what does it take to get the government to change its priorities, to get these people the home care they need and keep them out of the institutions that they don't want?

3:00

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I did say very clearly that priorities are changing and shifts are occurring. We had an almost 10 percent increase in the home care budget this year. I repeat again that there were \$4.3 billion committed to Health in this province in 1992-93; \$70.3 million of those are to home care. Certainly it takes some time for the shift to community-based to occur. I think we are achieving that in the most orderly fashion that we can with the help of the people who are delivering these services in our communities. I applaud their efforts. We will continue to work with them.

Certainly if the member wants to bring any specific problems to my office, I would be only too happy to sit down with her and try and deal with it.

### Trucking Regulations

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I have sent over to the Minister of Justice a copy of a memo from the director of transport field operations. In this memo the director of field operations instructed his department's officials to ignore all safety violations unless the violation is visibly life threatening. My question: was the Minister of Justice aware of this memo that calls upon law enforcement officials to neglect their duty?

MR. FOWLER: I thank the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, for sending the document that he has indicated he sent. What I have received here is a document that is obviously a photocopy of something without letterhead, without signature, without a date, or anything. I guess that over the past couple of months I have come to wonder about some of these documents which circulate.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is not made up.

MR. FOWLER: I don't know, hon. member, whether it's made up or not. I'm merely saying that I have a document that doesn't have any indication of officialdom on it.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware, however, of what the hon. Member for Three Hills is referring to because I, too, have read it in the *Journal* and have raised it with the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, whose responsibility highway regulations and control are to the extent that they are not covered in the Criminal Code. The hon. minister has advised me in no uncertain terms that the last instruction he issued to his people was that if truckers break the law, they shall be attended to properly.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, but will the Minister of Justice now take responsibility for motor transport field operations to ensure that safety regulations and legislation will be consistently enforced?

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would take an order in council and the willingness of all cabinet to transfer some responsibilities from one minister to another. I don't know if I'm going to even make such a recommendation, because there is no indication that it is necessary.

What I will undertake to the hon. member to do, Mr. Speaker, because the enforcement of the law and regulations in the province is a concern of the Minister of Justice, is to speak further with the Minister of Transportation and Utilities on this matter.

### Speaker's Ruling Tabling a Cited Document

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the Member for Three Hills would be kind enough to supply copies for the Table so it can be on the record so all members of the House might know what this purported document is supposed to be.

Fort McMurray, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

### Agricultural Development Corporation

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. As a member representing a nonagricultural constituency I often heard the minister expound accolades to the Agricultural Development Corporation and was most impressed by how they apparently had assisted new ventures. Well, would the minister advise the Assembly on what basis the ADC rejected the only agricultural application for a tree nursery that was recently proposed by an

enterprising constituent of mine who has already put up the greenhouse and only now finds his application rejected?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I've had some discussions with the individual the hon. member refers to. I haven't had a chance to review the entire file. It's my understanding from the applicant that one of the problems is the type of tenure he has on the land, which he feels he's got a way of getting around. The applicant is appearing before an appeal committee on Friday of this week. I've told him that if things don't work out in the normal, efficient way that ADC does things to give me another call.

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks by the hon. minister. When he refers to a question with regards to tenure, it's a lease prepared by the improvement districts that is standard throughout the province of Alberta, so I'd suggest that the problem lies within the minister's department and not with the individual himself.

I'd request then: would the minister agree to instruct his department officials to review this application posthaste, prior even to the appeal process? Because of the time frame, this individual will be financially broke unless something happens immediately.

MR. ISLEY: I will do what I can to expedite the review of the file.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

### Pay Equity

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the minister responsible for women's issues. This minister justifies failure to bring in pay equity legislation on the basis that businesses might flee Alberta if pay equity legislation were brought in. She said that businesses are leaving Ontario because of its pay equity legislation and ignores the reality that businesses are leaving Ontario due to the free trade deal rather than to the fair treatment of women. Given that all but two provinces have pay equity provisions, is this minister saying that lower pay for women is a way of attracting business to Alberta?

MRS. MIROSH: Absolutely not. Mr. Speaker, this government does not support pay equity legislation, but it indeed supports equal pay for equal work. It's very important that pay equity is done on a volunteer basis. I'd like to point out to the House that when our Premier was mayor of Calgary, he initiated such a program, and that program is now being implemented and is working on a voluntary basis.

MS M. LAING: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the information of the minister, equal pay for equal work was legislated in 1951, and our advisory council says that as part of employment equity for women pay equity legislation is necessary.

I have a further question. Mr. Speaker, 60 percent of families headed by women and nearly 50 percent of unattached women over the age of 65 live in poverty. Is this minister now saying that she will accept the social costs and tragedy of this poverty so that businesses may flourish?

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Speaker, poverty occurs in all provinces, even those with pay equity legislation, and nobody endorses poverty. It is very important that women do have jobs and equal pay for equal work. There are programs that are being initiated by this government. We have training opportunities and

education programs and child care programs that are addressing these very problems that this member opposite is relating to.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-North West.

### Machinery and Equipment Tax

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the leadership campaign the Premier clearly stated in writing that the machinery and equipment tax should be phased out and that municipalities would have to adjust by reducing expenditures or developing other revenue sources. The Premier is clear that M and E must go, but what he has neglected to mention is that the education of our young people will suffer. In 1991 an estimated \$100 million of M and E taxes went directly to pay for education, \$31 million for the school foundation program, and \$67 million for local supplementary requisition. Local residential tax payers cannot afford any additional increases. To the Treasurer: what alternate source of revenue is the Treasurer going to provide to municipalities if this government goes ahead and phases out the M and E tax, as the Premier advocates?

3:10

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I believe that is an hypothetical question. [interjections] He said "if."

Mr. Speaker, clearly the machinery and equipment tax generates a large amount of money for municipalities and for schools and school boards across this province. There can be no question that it could be eliminated and the revenue would not be found somewhere else.

One thing that does concern me about the machinery and equipment tax is that it is a major obstacle to the likes of the petrochemical industry expanding and taking advantage of some tremendous opportunities that exist in this province and the growth of the petrochemical industry over the next 10 years. We're told by advisers across the globe that those kinds of major investment decisions are on the verge of being made, and we have some opportunities to attract that industry and expand the industry here in this province.

It's a debate that's been going on at the Local Government Financing Review Committee. It's a concern to municipal councillors and school trustees and to the provincial government. We don't want to see that obstacle there, but we also recognize that there must be adequate funding for education in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that's hypothetical in this House is the Treasurer.

It's obvious that the Treasurer is quite prepared to further strangle education by reducing taxes to the corporate sector. To the Minister of Education then: when is the Minister of Education going to act responsibly and implement on an interim basis at least either the Alberta School Boards Association's proposal, option 1, or some form of the ETEC proposals in order to address equity immediately?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in other venues, it's my intention to put forward a proposal with respect to improving equity funding in education in the near future, I hope as part of the overall budget process. Something that the hon. member has to be reminded of is that the proposal that might come forward has to have the support and acceptance of many parties.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

**Versa Services Ltd.**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Versa food services workers at Alberta Hospital are all going to lose their jobs when the service is taken over by another corporation. Now, this problem is created because section 44 of the Labour Relations Code, dealing with successor rights, denies workers the help of their unions and does nothing to protect their jobs. My question is to the Minister of Labour today. What does the minister propose to do to correct this inequity?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in the particular incident being referred to by the member, Versa Services had a contract for some 25 years, that contract was put out to tender recently, and another company was awarded the contract. In the process, there is a possibility that some of the employees from Versa may not be transferred over to Marriott. The particular section being referred to, section 44, does not restrict anything. In fact, it gives the opportunity for a worker or for a representative of the union in a situation like this to go to the Labour Relations Board and ask for an appeal to see if any unfair practice has taken place. That's basically what has happened in this instance.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, while it doesn't restrict anything, it doesn't protect anyone either, and that's the problem with this. So my question to the minister to follow up is: since many of these workers stand to lose their jobs, are you going to be able to provide any in-service training so that these people will get retrained and find new careers when they lose this one?

MR. DAY: Even though that's a different issue, I'm prepared to address it, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to say that I've discussed this matter with the particular union representative and also with senior people at the hospital and at Marriott. I have an assurance from the individuals at Marriott and at the hospital that every opportunity is going to be given to the employees from Versa to be accommodated in the new operation at Marriott. It's not a hundred percent guarantee, but I have consulted with them. I have received the indication from them that they will give opportunity and effort to see that those employees transfer over. And, yes, there are many education upgrading programs, job re-entry programs that are available through different departments in the government.

**Fujitsu Supercomputer**

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, my question this afternoon is to the minister of economic development and trade and has to do with the government's proposed \$5 million grant to HPC Technologies Inc. to help bring a Fujitsu supercomputer to Calgary. Although this project is vigorously supported by the Calgary Economic Development Authority and the Alberta Research Council and also Mayor Duerr, I'm concerned that HPC could end up in direct competition with the private-sector seismic data processing firms in Calgary. I'm wondering: can the minister indicate to the Assembly what steps he's prepared to take to avoid the market distortion that could result from this large government grant?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad this has been brought to my attention. I will be meeting with a group of seismic companies in Calgary tomorrow to address and discuss this issue with them. I've been assured by the president of HPC that they will have this operating at arm's length and that any Alberta

company will be able to access the computer on an equal and comparable basis. I think the concern has come forward because a previous proposal on where this computer would be located was on the premises of one of the seismic firms. I've been assured that there definitely will be free access.

I'd like to point out that this is not a grant or giveaway. This is an investment over the next four years. The Alberta government committed last fall to work with the federal government and the private sector to form this joint venture, a nonprofit company to provide Canada's first high-performance computer. I think there's an exciting era ahead of us. I would like to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Cyber 205 at the University of Calgary, which we put in several years ago, is about 95 percent efficient right now. Over 300 students in Calgary have been trained on that. There are three other supercomputers in Calgary because of that last investment this government made. I hope that this will perpetuate the high technology and the high . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.  
Supplementary, Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, to restate the concern, these seismic data processors in Calgary are concerned that there won't be enough nonseismic work to keep that Fujitsu supercomputer fully occupied and, to enhance its investment and to maximize its potential for computer processing work, that they will not be able to resist the temptation to move into the processing of seismic data at subsidized rates, those subsidies originating from this place. Can the minister reassure the Assembly that that kind of market distortion will not proceed and that perhaps some kind of caveat can be put on this \$5 million grant to avoid such direct competition with the private sector? Can we have that assurance?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I have been given the assurance that there would be a free and open marketplace by the president. Yes, we will make sure in the future that the doors are open for every company or university in this province to enter the computer.

As far as the use of it, this high-performance computing will be very critical for scientific advancement and industrial competitiveness in the future with all kinds of other users: environmental modeling, medical diagnostics, automotive design. Seismic processing is just one use. I've thoroughly reviewed this issue over the last several weeks and have been assured that the commitment by the Canadian government, ourselves, the University of Calgary, and all of the private sector is a good investment into the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

**Pensions**

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year this government reached broad agreement with employer groups over pension reforms. The government got what it wanted on key issues like reducing its unfunded liabilities, and the employees also thought they got what they wanted: a greater say in the management and control of their own pension plans. However, on that issue the government's been dragging its feet. For example, the independent board of trustees that was supposed to be in place by January 1 has not even been set up yet. Can the Provincial Treasurer point to any evidence that would convince Albertans that he will shortly finalize agreements with employee groups and honour commitments made by his government last year?

3:20

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting with the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees in mid-January, and we came to such a conclusion.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government introduced legislation last year that did not meet the spirit and the intent of the pension agreements on some pretty fundamental points; for example, the composition of the trustee board and its investment powers, the terms under which the government would surrender control by 1995, and the distribution of so-called surplus assets. Talk and negotiations were supposed to have been finished last year, not dragged on into this year. Can the Provincial Treasurer assure us that government games and flip-flops are over, that proper legislation to enact the agreements will be passed into law by this Legislature before the upcoming provincial election is called?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to point out to all Albertans that this Legislature and in fact this government made some tremendous progress in the past year in solving what was a major financial overhang, and that is the unfunded liability of the government-guaranteed pension plans. Not only did it provide for security and assurance of future security for those participating in the pension plans, but it provided some security and assurance to taxpayers. I can assure the hon. member that following a session with the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees as well as the vice-chairman and members of the local authorities pension board, we are well on track to coming to an agreement about how the pension funds will be managed, how the plans will be overseen by an independent board of trustees. I expect to be able to introduce legislation in the spring session of this Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: Question period has expired. However, the Minister of Justice wishes to supplement an answer.

### **Trucking Regulations** (continued)

MR. FOWLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to make it abundantly clear that in the response to the question from the hon. Member for Three Hills, there was no intent to cast any aspersions on the document that I received. It was just that, as explained, it is not signed, has no officialdom to it at all, but I want it abundantly understood that I have not questioned or doubted the integrity of the Member for Three Hills.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.  
Standing Order 30 request, Leader of the Opposition.

### head: **Request for Emergency Debate** **Social Services Client Confidentiality**

MR. MARTIN: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've read the motion, so I won't bother rereading it. I want to say, though, to the Assembly that I consider this an extremely serious breach of ethics by a minister of this government. If we want to talk about big government, as the government talks about from time to time, I think this is the worst example of big government that we can have. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the urgency is simply this: the credibility of not only the government but the Legislature and how we do government business is at risk.

If you look on page 2034 – I won't reread what the minister said yesterday, but it's very clear that he went into a specific case, laid it out, and said the name of the individual. Now, the issue here is not whether the individual deserves more support or less support. It's not the individual; it is the fact that a minister would stand up here in the Legislature, quote a name, and then go into a very specific case, Mr. Speaker. I suggest to you that that is extremely serious, because one of the things that Albertans and all of us should value is privacy and confidentiality. This is a very important trust that we have in terms of dealing with the public.

Now, the minister may have even breached the Social Development Act in a legal sense, because certainly it says there, "any file, document or paper kept by any person in any place, that has come into existence." It goes all through it under 5(1), disclosure of information, that this information should be documented, Now, it does say in there:

Except on the written consent of the Minister or an authorized official responsible for the administration of this Act or the Child Welfare Act.

But it's not a legal issue. I mean, one could argue that he certainly didn't have written consent. This is greater than a legal issue, although I think that could be questioned, Mr. Speaker. Clearly this minister stood up in the Legislature to discredit somebody by releasing their file. I would say to you that it's premeditated. This person was in the news, and obviously the minister was expecting the question, took one of the 88,000 files and looked into it and then raised it in the Legislature. So it can't be a slip of the tongue.

Now, there are others; I won't bore you. Even in supports for independence, in the minister's own department, it says that we respect people's autonomy, dignity, and personal choice. We talk about privacy all the way through his department, and here it is the minister, if I may say so, that breached this particular Act. As I said, Mr. Speaker, it's much greater, if I could put it this way, than a legal imperative. I think this is a moral imperative.

I would remind people that recently a new minister in the Ontario government did something similar, Mr. Speaker, and felt the moral imperative, after recognizing what they had done, and that minister resigned. I think, if I may so, that this minister should do the proper thing and resign, at least for the time being, because this is a serious breach. Certainly if the minister's not doing it, the Premier should demand the minister's resignation.

Now, I want to just talk about the fact that some members may say that this is not an urgent debate. I think it is, Mr. Speaker. Some people might say that we'll be debating social services estimates later on today. That's not the point. We're not talking about money to the department here. We're talking about an issue of ethics, the minister's ethics. I say that it's a totally different issue.

I want to say again that I believe the minister's response was premeditated and orchestrated, Mr. Speaker. How else would he come with all this information about one file if he wasn't expecting it to be raised in the Legislature?

The point that I make is that maybe the government, maybe the minister doesn't think this is an important breach. I think Albertans do. Think of what happens any time anybody criticizes the government or raises concerns about the government. Are they then at risk of some other minister standing up and relating their files either here in the Assembly or outside? I think that's a fundamental issue. If this government doesn't see that as important, surely we here in the Legislature should send a message to Albertans that we understand that this is a serious breach. We can't force the Premier to demand a resignation. We can't force the minister to resign, as they have in other jurisdictions. Surely

we can at least send out a message in this Legislature that we think this is urgent and very important and should be debated today as an emergency debate.

Thank you.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I will support this motion under Standing Order 30. I believe there has been a flagrant breach of confidentiality and of the Social Development Act. The Leader of the Official Opposition has read from that Act the requirements of the minister which he must maintain. I'm assuming, and I think correctly, that he did not secure in advance the consent of this individual to mention him by name in the House. He not only mentioned him by name, Mr. Speaker, he revealed details regarding his social allowance, regarding his housing circumstances, regarding counseling circumstances, and the sort of advice that was available and had been provided to him on employment. This man and his family are clients of this department and this minister, and they deserve protection from the minister, not this kind of breach.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that in Ontario a minister in the same circumstances in fact resigned her position. I would hope that the Justice minister would want to look at these circumstances in Alberta to determine whether or not the breach has the legal implications that I believe it does.

I would remind the minister that people on social assistance have rights, as do all of us. They are not simply ciphers on a computer screen whose records can be drawn up and commented on here or anyplace else. These are real people with families who are struggling to manage on a tiny wage, dependent often on food banks, on their family, if they have any family left in the area. Mr. Speaker, the man is plainly aggrieved.

I would also comment, Mr. Speaker, that just one question prior to this one being asked yesterday of the minister – and it's a curious juxtaposition – the minister of economic development was asked a question. His answer was:

Mr. Speaker . . . if the member puts . . . the motion for a return, in the spirit of openness and frankness we definitely will provide any information that's available and that doesn't have confidentiality problems with the other two partners that own the plant.

So here's the evidence of the double standard, right back-to-back in question period yesterday. It appears that we are prepared to protect the confidentiality of certain individuals while others, it's open season.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a legal issue as well as a moral issue. This man is desperate. He deserves our consideration; he deserves our concern. He does not deserve the kind of lack of protection that this minister has afforded him. I think it's a flagrant breach, and I hope that the House will agree.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, under a Standing Order 30 motion the question is one of urgent public importance to the House. In addition to that, arguments were made with respect to privacy and confidentiality with respect to this matter, and in terms of the comments that were raised by both the Leader of the Opposition and the House leader for the third party, the Liberal Party, there was also some imputing of motives with respect to the minister in question.

Let's deal with them in a sequential order. First of all, in terms of the urgency, which is the most important question with respect to a Standing Order 30. Mr. Speaker, this matter was not raised in question period today; it could have been raised in question period today. The Leader of the Opposition clearly has the first

two questions that are afforded. The leader of the third party clearly has the third question afforded. That question could have been raised of the Government House Leader and the Deputy Premier in this regard. It was not.

Secondly, on the consistency with the urgency respect. It's been known for at least two days now, I'm sure, that the estimates in fact that are scheduled to be called this afternoon will have the minister in question appearing before the Legislature. That matter has been scheduled and clearly known without any hesitation whatsoever with respect to this. More importantly the substance of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is based on privacy and confidentiality. Now, a question was raised by a member of the House of the Minister of Family and Social Services yesterday, and *Hansard* will show that when the question was raised, it was raised by Mr. Main.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my questions are for the Minister of Family and Social Services. On the front page of the paper today and in recent television newscasts and on radio talk shows we have seen and heard of an individual who lives in Edmonton using his two children to reinforce his appeal for funds by begging on street corners.

Part of the argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is that there's been a violation of privacy and confidentiality. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that the individual in question has had publicity in a major news venue in the province of Alberta. Yesterday on the front page of the *Edmonton Journal* it was identification of a whole story. This same individual appeared on CFRN TV on December 19, 1992, in the *Edmonton Sun* on December 21, 1992, and on CJCA's *Ron Collister Show* on December 21, 1992. Now, I raise that on the basis of the privacy and the confidentiality that's been imputed. It's been suggested that the Minister of Family and Social Services has in fact violated something. That's been the basic argument of this. I'd be very, very pleased to file for the Legislative Assembly today a copy of the newspaper article that was featured in the *Edmonton Journal* on February 2, 1993, the front page. Now, I can take this article and go through it paragraph by paragraph to point out that everything that was discussed in this Assembly yesterday was featured in the *Edmonton Journal* yesterday.

Now, any member of Executive Council, if he or she is astute, would anticipate very, very significantly what type of question might come to him or her in this particular Assembly on any given day. Mr. Speaker, I raised this matter after it was brought to my attention late in the afternoon yesterday. I sat in this Assembly. I listened to the question. I listened to the answer, and nothing that I could hear in either the question or the answer imputed anything of the types of things being raised by the Leader of the Opposition. Last evening I did some research with respect to this matter, as I did this morning. I've interviewed the Minister of Family and Social Services, and I asked him a question. I asked him if he had any information that was in front of him when he was in the Legislative Assembly yesterday that he was reading from, surveying, using that would be construed by anybody as confidential. His response to me was that he had before himself in question period a blank sheet of paper, which is his style.

Now, it is extremely important that the truth of the matter be brought to this Assembly, because under Standing Order 23(1) it's clearly pointed out that no statement may be made by any member of this House which "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." Quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, the arguments put forward today by those two individuals who have spoken so far with respect to the importance of this Standing Order 30 have in fact imputed a motive of the Minister of Family and Social



Services and suggested that this was premeditated and there was a setup of sorts.

I want to point out again that this is not the first time that the individual in question has been referred to in the media. Yesterday was a major story, the fourth time in recent weeks.

In addition to the citation that I've asked you to consider under Standing Order 23(1), I would also like to refer you, sir, to the Social Development Act, which is an Act of the Legislature of the parliament of the province of Alberta. I refer you to section 5(1), which clearly points out that the release of personal information, if there was a release of personal information – and I made the arguments thus far that there was no release of personal information – is clearly within the jurisdiction of the minister to do so. The point that I want to make is that there was no release of personal information, but if there had been, it's clearly under section 5(1) of the Social Development Act that that would be within the purview of the minister. As well, I would ask you to refer to section 13(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act. I would ask you to refer as well to *Beauchesne* 493(4) in terms of naming of individuals should that occur.

The Minister of Family and Social Services responded to a question in the Legislature yesterday. No information of any privacy was conveyed. What the minister did indicate was that he had some knowledge of the individual who was cited on the front page of the *Edmonton Journal* yesterday. The minister in question also went so far as to point out and say that he's prepared to do everything that he can to help this individual seek and gain meaningful employment, that he was prepared to respond enthusiastically and affirmatively with respect to help for a person in need. Mr. Speaker, that is pretty significant and that is considered.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, on the question of urgency I repeat again that we've had opportunities to discuss this. If a thing that has been before the public for the last six or seven weeks is urgent, that would be for you to determine. My argument basically is that there has not been a release of confidential client information. If there had been, that still rests with the purview of the minister in question. It was not raised in question period today by way of urgent business, and secondly, we already have the minister scheduled to appear before this Legislature by way of a committee minutes from now. So, sir, I would ask that you rule this Standing Order 30 motion out of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair is willing to listen to one more speaker from each caucus before deciding.

Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rebut the arguments made by the Government House Leader. First of all, he says that this was an issue that was on the front page of the *Journal*. That most certainly is true. Whether or not the other references to public knowledge of this particular individual that he made are true or not, I can't comment. However, I can say this. The minister came into this Assembly supplied with private client information that had not been in the *Edmonton Journal*: references to the nature of his social assistance, the level of it, where he dwells, so on and so forth. A kindergarten student would not be fooled by the statement: he just happened to know this. He knew it. He intended to be ready to deliver these comments and this information to the Assembly.

I'd also point out to the Government House Leader that while it is . . . [interjections]

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, Minister of Municipal Affairs. That's the second time; it's the last time.

MR. DOYLE: Throw him out.

MR. SPEAKER: You be quiet, please. I don't need your advice. Thank you.

Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, I agree with Jerry.

### Debate Continued

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. The Government House Leader said that we're going to have this minister in front of the Assembly this afternoon in any event. That's quite right, but to deal with an \$85 million budget for which we will only have a few hours to discuss and debate, not to deal with the loss of integrity of a minister in the Assembly.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader said that we could have brought this up in question period. That is absolutely true, but the Official Opposition thought the much more serious way to deal with this was by prior notice to you, more than two hours' notice to you, that we intended to move the adjournment of the ordinary business of the Assembly and get a full debate on this.

Mr. Speaker, the question is not necessarily what the minister is entitled to by one provision of an Act versus another, because they are in conflict with each other. The issue is: what information do we divulge in this Assembly about clients of the government in any department without their prior written consent? That's the urgent matter; that's what should be debated.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands was at least honest enough to admit that she wasn't sure of what was referred on the front page and that there was some . . .

MS BARRETT: No, no, not the *Journal*. I said . . .

MR. DAY: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. I believe I have the floor. I believe I was patient and listened to every painful word uttered by the member opposite, and now I expect the same amount of respect.

I will go on to say that the information that has been tabled in the House was not just casual references to an individual in the streets. In fact, not that I would ever use the *Journal* as a source of research – but since the members opposite do, it is clearly stated here and I quote: the family gets “\$1,401 in social assistance every month.” That's right here in your source of research, which you didn't read. It goes on to say in another indication that the family was able to get subsidized housing. Mr. Speaker, very, very clear and specific references, hardly casual references, and references that anybody with even a superficial ability to read could derive from this particular article.

I reiterate what has been said by the Government House Leader: indeed there is no sense of urgency as these items are coming up anyway, and there is no violation of confidentiality. Apparently thousands of people read this particular newspaper. I would question whether these items are at any time confidential.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak on the matter of urgency, and the matter of urgency relates to credibility. First of all, we should separate very, very carefully the circumstances of the one individual that were raised and put that aside and look at the broader picture. The broader picture is that question of credibility, of release of information that should be by rights kept in personal files. There is absolutely no reason, absolutely no excuse to divulge information, to try and make excuses because it was in the paper. The Minister of Family and Social Services can verify that he has people who are going around interviewing recipients of social services on the AISH program, and these people are expected to provide information to those workers. Now, can they provide information in confidence, in trust knowing that their circumstances could come out in this House? How often do we sit here, Mr. Speaker, and hear: we can't release a Gainers document. We can't release that. It's confidential; it's confidential. Yet we're talking about an individual's personal information, and suddenly that is no longer confidential. We're not talking about this one individual; we're talking about the danger that is involved in this type of carelessness.

The minister must do the honourable thing: the minister must stand up and admit he made a mistake, apologize for it, and make a statement that he will try his best to never do it again. He is a new minister. I would give him the benefit of the doubt and not ask for his resignation, but he owes the people of Alberta an apology and his assurance that he will make every attempt to never do it again.

MR. SPEAKER: First, the Chair would like to point out that when we come to matters of privilege or other very sensitive issues before the House, such as this one is, the Chair is greatly appreciative of the bulk of members who indeed listen attentively. It's very disconcerting to be here attempting to listen with a lot of flak going on in between. Government members, two in particular over here, are aware of the fact that there were discussions going on with members of the Official Opposition. I trust that will not continue. I apologize to the minister for calling him to order over here, but again distractions were coming from this side of the House as well.

The issue, as I have mentioned, is very sensitive, and it's one which arises from time to time in a slightly different context. It arises most frequently in question period, although from time to time it also occurs in debate at all hours in this Assembly.

Again, quoting from Beauchesne 493(4), where we're talking about protected persons – I know hon. members realize that references to judges and courts and so forth are part of what we're supposed to stay away from as members of this House. Subsection (4) specifically reads:

The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply.

Certain members of the general public have had their names bandied about in this Assembly from time to time, and that's an ongoing concern for the Chair, and it's an ongoing concern for all members. So to some degree, of course, that relates to the matter before us on this day.

The Chair is not prepared to make comment with respect to the quote from the Leader of the Opposition, "premeditated and orchestrated," because the Chair is not in a position to know what the inner workings of caucus were yesterday, whether or not there was a programmed question. The Chair is also not privy to any information as to whether or not the minister had either a blank piece of paper in front of him or had some reference documents at all. The Chair prefers to set aside that comment at this time

knowing full well that in the heat of standing up to make arguments sometimes we tend to overstate what we're really intending to say.

3:50

Having said all that, though, there are the concerns there that the information about this individual does seem to have had fair public comment before raised in question period yesterday. Of course, what happens outside of the House is outside of this House. So that brings us back to what indeed did occur in this House in question period yesterday.

It seems obvious to the Chair that the comments in *Hansard* – the reply to the Member for Edmonton-Parkallen, the specific wording that is there as uttered by the minister – one could take that as being in large measure sufficiently generic to deal with a number of cases that are there within his department. Had the minister left it at that, that would have been one thing. Certain bits of information were added which appear not to have been covered in any of the newspaper coverage that the Chair's been able to scan.

The real difficulty occurred when the minister mentioned the individual's name. It's at that time that we have a breach of convention of the House. By and large, in the last seven years that I've been privileged to be Speaker, this has been honoured in this House by the government benches. They have not named specific individuals unless prior consent had been given, as pointed out by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. This is certainly what we attempt to do, and it's one of the concerns of the Table and the Chair when we have documents, as today, being passed around the House with or without a person's approval. We understand it's there for effect, but nevertheless, we do not know whether many of the documents tabled here are indeed valid. So when sometimes you see scanning being done by the Chair and the Table officers, it is to try to ascertain the validity of documents to protect all members of the House. Now, I say a breach of convention of the House did occur by the minister referring to an individual's name.

The Chair would also like to point out, however, that certain other things came into play yesterday, not the least of which was the fact that the Chair failed in its duty to intervene. At the time that I heard the answer to the supplementary, as I said to my staff, I blinked because I thought I heard a name, and in actual fact I should have stopped the House right then and cautioned the minister. So the Chair is partially at fault in what has transpired.

The other thing that occurred was that because it was of that nature, perhaps another member of the House would have been kind enough to help the House by then rising on a point of order, either immediately at the time that it occurred or at the end of question period. So in that sense we all shared in not bringing it to the immediate attention of the House.

The Chair in research with respect to this matter – and the Chair again appreciates the Leader of the Opposition having given due notice of raising this matter – then had to go back to research other documents and was brought back to the Legislative Assembly Act. Again, quoting from division 2 of that Act, which is entitled Assembly's Privileges, Immunities and Powers, in 13(1) I read specifically this:

A Member is not liable to any civil action or prosecution, arrest, imprisonment or damages by reason of any matter or thing brought by him before the Assembly or any committee of the Assembly by petition, bill, resolution, motion or otherwise or by reason of anything said by him in the Assembly or any committee of the Assembly.

Now, this is one of the protective rights and privileges of Parliament which was recently confirmed again by a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Also, reading from *Erskine May*, Freedom of Speech in Debate, page 84:

Subject to the rules of order in debate, a Member may state whatever he thinks fit in debate, however offensive it may be to the feelings, or injurious to the character, of individuals; and he is protected by his privilege from any action for libel, as well as from any other question or molestation.

Thankfully, while that is there, again the convention of the Houses has been that hon. members refrain from giving details and naming individuals.

One other point the Chair would like to make is that at least two members in giving their advice to the House, which the Chair appreciated, mentioned the situation of the resignation of a minister in Ontario. While there are some echoes of the situation there, from the Chair and Table study of that situation it is not an exact parallel.

Once again, the Chair apologizes to the House for not having acted of its own volition yesterday. The Chair is of the assumption that all ministers have taken due note of what has transpired here. Given the fact that no points of order were raised yesterday but again that a breach of the convention of the House has occurred and having made these comments to the House, the Chair feels that the matter of urgency has failed. However, the Chair now will proceed to offer an opportunity to the minister perhaps to make a brief statement to the House.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister you know how sincere I am in making it better for the needy people of Alberta and how I've been very sincere and work hard. If I did do some wrong to anyone, I fully take the responsibility and apologize to the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister, I wonder if you might be gracious enough to rise and extend your apology formally to the individual who was named.

MR. CARDINAL: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to extend my apology also to the family that I mentioned in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you, all members.

The Member for Medicine Hat, Standing Order 40 request.

#### head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 40 to make the case for urgent and pressing necessity for passing the motion, which I will not read. I would point out that the 1993 World Schools Debating Championships are now under way in Medicine Hat. The semifinals will commence within a day or so and will be concluded on Saturday of this week. While the semifinals are just about to commence, it is therefore important that the House deal with the motion in a timely way so that this message of congratulations can be forwarded to the participants. On the case of urgency I would ask that the hon. members accept that explanation.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: There's a request under Standing Order 40. [interjection] No. I'm sorry; just the one member can speak on the request for urgency.

All those in favour for the matter to proceed, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously. The Member for Medicine Hat, followed by the Minister of Education.

#### **World Schools Debating Championships**

Moved by Mr. Horsman:

Be it resolved that the members of this Assembly congratulate the debaters, coaches, judges, organizers, and hosts from around the world who are now participating in the 1993 World Schools Debating Championships under way in Medicine Hat and extend best wishes for success to all of these outstanding young citizens of the world in the competitions and their future endeavours.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, a motion is before the Assembly. I thought it important just to advise the Assembly of the fact that we are very fortunate in Alberta to have had the encouragement for a number of years now of school debating. School debaters have taken part on behalf of Alberta and Canada, and I just want to let members know that I'm very proud indeed that in Medicine Hat we have been leading the charge for a number of years insofar as Alberta and Canada are concerned.

**4:00**

In 1988 two of our debaters from Medicine Hat won the World Schools Debating Championships at this age level. They won those in Australia. In 1992 one of our speakers was a top finisher in the World Speech Championships in England. As a result of such excellence, in Medicine Hat we have hosted two provincial speech championships, one provincial debate championship, and in 1990 the National Debate Championship was held in Medicine Hat. On the basis of that experience it was felt by the organizers and in particular the chief organizer, John Baty, that we should apply for and obtain the 1993 World Schools Debating Championships.

Mr. Speaker, by way of information I should point out that 14 countries from around the world are participating. These are young people between 17 and 19 years of age. They come from as wide a variety of backgrounds as Israel, Pakistan, England, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Peru. I had the opportunity on Sunday evening of participating in the opening ceremonies and meeting each of the individual young people from around the world who are here in our province. I'm extremely proud of the fact that the city of Medicine Hat, its organizing committee, the host families, and many service organizations and community-minded individuals and businesses have contributed to the success of this very interesting and challenging opportunity to bring to Alberta, to Canada these outstanding young people.

The topic on which they are debating is: is there the development of a new world order? That is something that when those young people come into Legislatures such as ours around the world, perhaps we will have a new world order in which peace and harmony will be the order of the day rather than conflict, as we find it in so many places in the world.

I'm delighted that the hon. Minister of Education will be able to participate in the closing ceremonies on Saturday this week in Medicine Hat. I'm hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that the message of congratulations when passed by this Assembly will be put into his hands to deliver at the final dinner, which will take place in Medicine Hat, so that the recognition of this Assembly can be properly extended to those outstanding citizens of Alberta who

have put this on and welcomed the world to Alberta, to Medicine Hat, to Canada.

I must conclude with one point: to say that I'm extremely proud that one of the members of the Canadian team, Miss Liisa Gue, is a member of that debating team from Medicine Hat. I'm very pleased indeed that that's the case.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the hon. members to pass this motion of congratulatory words to these people who are visiting us and of course to those who continue and will continue to live with us in Alberta and in Canada.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this occasion to offer a few remarks in support of this Standing Order 40 motion. The province of Alberta has long had a fine tradition in terms of speech and debating among its high school and for that matter junior high school students. The number of community volunteers and teachers that take part in supporting this activity is great in number, and the expertise that they lend to providing success in debating is something that needs to be recognized and appreciated. The city of Medicine Hat is certainly well known in debating circles for the many achievements of its teams and individual debaters over the years, and it's most appropriate that that vibrant city is now host to this important international event.

I'd just like to reflect that in the process of this international debating final occurring I think first of all there is a degree of international understanding that will be improved and extended by virtue of these many young people gathering together and discussing various issues both formally and informally. Many of them I'm sure will be future leaders in their respective countries.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to remember that underlying and ensuring success in these debating contests is skill in organizing one's thoughts and presenting them to others, something which is important all over the world in Assemblies such as this and in many other venues. So this is a very important activity.

I emphasize my congratulations. I look forward to being there on Saturday afternoon.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you. Just briefly, Mr. Speaker, I want to add my support to this motion. I have for a long time supported this activity in Alberta and have watched and admired and given every assistance that I can to John Baty's leadership and commitment. I think he has extended himself beyond the efforts of most volunteers in making sure that young people in our schools in Alberta have an opportunity to participate. This is a wonderful experience for Alberta students. It's an international event. The exchange, the opportunities for new friendships certainly will benefit not only our students from Alberta but those who are here from other parts of the world. I want to congratulate all the organizers and the competitors and wish them well.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: A call for the question. The matter before the House is the motion under Standing Order 40 as moved by the Member for Medicine Hat. Those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries, let the record show unanimously.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 1992-93**

**Family and Social Services**

MR. CHAIRMAN: When the committee rose last, the Minister of Family and Social Services was in the process of making his remarks, and he still has 16 minutes left according to the records. The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. I'd just like to thank my staff, who are sitting in the gallery there joining me this afternoon, who will assist us through the process.

I'm again happy to continue my discussions on the supplementary estimates for Alberta Family and Social Services for \$85 million. The supplementary estimate is a result of many factors, some of which are beyond our control. In fact, in 1992, for example, full-time employment in Alberta shrunk by 19,900 positions while part-time went up by 14,200 positions. In short, some 40,000 Albertans found themselves unemployed last year. These are people like you and me, people who have families and friends, people with goals and plans for the future, but people who have come into hard times and need our assistance.

As the government we need to work together amongst departments, with other levels of government to find solutions, because only by working together and co-ordinating our efforts will we make a positive and meaningful change again, I say. The business community must commit to getting involved, commit to making an investment in people so they can get off welfare, commit to giving someone a chance, Mr. Chairman. It is this commitment by individuals, businesses, communities, and governments that will help to turn things around for individuals and families on welfare. That is why we must always keep our perspective when discussing welfare issues. We must always keep our balance. We must always be true to the principle of both caring and responsibility.

**4:10**

Why? When we talk about supports for independence, we have a tendency to use the language of statisticians and economists. We toss out words like "caseloads," "projections," and sometimes I fear we forget that we are speaking about parents who have lost their jobs, the children who depend on us. We're talking about families who need their income supplemented or a single person who is able to work but can't find a job. We are talking about single parents, usually women, who make up one-third of our clients. We are talking about people who for the most part need a little help for a short time to get back on their feet. That is why I believe some bold new steps must be taken, Mr. Chairman, steps that may not be popular in all quarters, but steps that are necessary if we want to start to make real and substantial progress against poverty in Alberta. To that end it is my intention to move quickly in bringing those new reforms to this Assembly for discussion and to all Albertans for debate in the near future.

This world is changing. Everywhere we look there are global shifts that sweep out old ways of thinking and new ways in. The world economy is no longer laced with geographical or turf boundaries, and there is no longer any room for isolationists. Alberta's future is going to be much different than what we have

seen before. The rules of the game have changed, and like the rest of Alberta's industries we must learn to do more with less.

As government departments working to achieve the same goal, to put taxpayers' dollars to the best possible use, we need to work together to meet the needs of Albertans. Part of this is ensuring that the program is efficient and that the limited amount of money we have is directed to those who truly need it. My department does this with ongoing fraud investigations and new initiatives aimed to ensure that clients are receiving the best benefit they are entitled to. In doing this, we need to co-ordinate our efforts, especially within government: Advanced Education and Career Development and Community Development. We need to co-ordinate efforts and resources of the federal and provincial and municipal governments, Canada Employment and Immigration, communities, and our clients in the focus on developing a continuum of services all aimed at independence and self-sufficiency. We need a new partnership with the private sector, a partnership that will provide opportunities for people on supports for independence, and we need partnership with all Albertans to give this government and the people we are supporting on their way to independence time to work things out in these tough economic times.

That is my goal, Mr. Chairman: working together with all the players as full and equal partners in building solutions for Albertans. I request your support on the supplementary estimates. Thank you.

If the hon. members have any questions, I would be pleased to respond, Mr. Chairman, or provide them in written form at a later date.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to begin today by congratulating the minister. I think this is an appropriate time to do so. I know he's got a difficult position in being the minister of this particular department. I know that in the last few weeks we've raised some very serious issues with this minister. I'm not saying that I'm totally satisfied with what has transpired, but I know that the minister is trying very hard, and I look forward to working with him in the future.

Mr. Chairman, it's interesting today that we're being asked to endorse \$85,000 in this particular budget. I don't think anyone in this Assembly would stand and say that this money is not needed, but I think we need to ask ourselves why this money is being asked for in the first place. Why do we need this additional money? The minister in his opening remarks – and I refer to *Hansard* because I know he gave some of those remarks last Monday afternoon – talks about a number of things in terms of why this money is needed. He said again today that a lot of the reasons are beyond his control or the government's control. He talks about “global pressures of international trade and economic competitiveness.” I'd like to say to this minister, to this government that as far as I'm concerned, the reason why we've got increasing numbers of people on social assistance and in need and that we're here today being asked to endorse this amount of money is because this government has failed in their economic strategies.

If we take a look at the unemployment figures in this province, they are at an unacceptable rate. I would suspect that nowhere else in the world governments speak out in pride of an unemployment rate of 9.4 percent or 10 percent or whatever around the province. The figures are very high. The minister keeps referring to 40,000 people unemployed last year, but I would like to submit to him that those figures are low. I'm not sure where he's getting

his figures from, because our information shows very clearly that those figures are more like 140,000 people. [interjection] Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. It's recorded in *Hansard* as 40,000, Mr. Chairman.

I know that earlier on in the minister's appointment as Minister of Family and Social Services he left the perception with the public – and I know that he may not have meant to – that the reason why we had such high numbers of people on social assistance was because we had all of these hundreds of thousands of people migrating into Alberta because life on welfare in Alberta is so wonderful. Now, I realize that that's not particularly the perception he wanted to leave, but that was what many of the public felt he had said. Mr. Chairman, I want to take a minute to tell this Assembly that in fact more people migrated out of Alberta than migrated in. So let the record show that the figures that the minister's officials were using were not accurate.

I know the minister in his remarks talks about the federal government's responsibility in terms of adding to the social assistance caseloads in Alberta. I'm pleased that he referred to the federal government, because they certainly do play a role. I would submit, though, Mr. Chairman, that it's a Conservative government federally, and I look forward to this minister going to Ottawa and raising these issues with his counterparts: the fact that there is a ceiling on Alberta with regards to the Canada assistance plan and we're losing \$75 million because of this ceiling. That's a significant amount of money. Then there have been changes to the unemployment insurance plan as well that also affect us here at the provincial level.

One last comment on the minister's opening remarks. Mr. Chairman, he talks about the successful economic diversification plan in Alberta. Well, I would hate to think what kinds of figures we'd be looking at if it was an unsuccessful diversification plan. As far as I'm concerned, you cannot have a 10 percent unemployment rate and have a successful economic strategy in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned earlier, the changes to the UIC have affected Alberta significantly, and again I would look forward to the minister's outcry at the changes to that particular program. We have a seriously high unemployment figure in Alberta. We have 88,000 caseloads on social assistance per month. Again I use the minister's figures. I think we have to take every opportunity we can to look at the implications of those high numbers. To many of the MLAs in this Assembly these are simply numbers. But to many of us who work with these people they're not just numbers; they're real human beings. I know that the minister alluded to this.

4:20

We know from our positions as MLAs working with a lot of people who are on social assistance that there's a wide diversity of people who find themselves in a situation where they have to turn to this particular program for assistance. Mr. Chairman, it could be a woman leaving an abusive relationship; it could be a young person with very little education who has left home for whatever reason; it could be an older person who has worked hard all their life and suddenly finds himself without a job, being laid off; it could be someone who's very ill and unable to work. The reason I go through these scenarios is because I believe that there's a perception with some of the public, and it's a perception that I think is endorsed and is encouraged by this particular government, that people who are on social assistance for some reason don't want to work. I would say when you look at the scenarios I've just outlined that many of these people are not in that position. I think the minister has to keep that in mind when he talks about reforms.

Mr. Chairman, one thing is for sure: when you are on social assistance, you are very, very poor. That we do know. The situations vary, but we do know that you are very poor when you are on social assistance. The majority of the families living in poverty are single-parent families headed by women; we know that. The risk of being poor for single mothers and their children is incredibly high. The effects of poverty can be devastating, especially on children. I think when we're asked to endorse this amount of money because we've got increasing numbers of families and children on social assistance, we have to look at the effects of poverty. It's part of this whole debate. The longer this government is content to see the numbers of children increase, the more we will pay as a society in the long run. It's as simple as that.

I know that this issue has been brought up previously in the Legislature, but we can't forget, Mr. Chairman, that many children pay the price of poverty even before they are born. They are born underweight or they are born premature. They miss school more often due to illnesses, and therefore they drop out of school. They don't succeed in school. They experience hearing impairments, speech impediments. Nutrition is a critical factor when we're talking about poverty because an undernourished diet causes serious health deterioration in children; a child displays a decrease in performance in all activities. A child who lives in poverty is more likely to come to school underfed and even hungry, and we know that a hungry child cannot learn. It's as simple as that.

I would like to know specifically what this minister and his department and this government are doing to address the cycle of poverty. We've all heard about that, Mr. Chairman. The antipoverty organization report released approximately a week ago once again reminded us of the negative effects that poverty has on children. It's too easy, I believe, for us to just desensitize ourselves to this whole issue. These figures do become numbers; they lose their human aspect. I think we need to keep reminding ourselves that these are real people with real problems. I know that the eradication of poverty must be long term and calls for many solutions, but I believe that the first solution is a strong commitment to at least begin dealing with this serious issue.

I know that the minister has all the best intentions, but we've seen ministers come and we've seen ministers go. Since I was elected, Mr. Chairman, we've seen three ministers in this particular portfolio, and all, with all due respect, have said the same thing. Now we hear this particular minister saying that he's coming up with some new reforms. We had new reforms three years ago. We know those reforms have not been successful in many respects, in many aspects. It's true. We've had reports telling us what kinds of problems are out there in this particular program. We've had constituents phone us and tell us that the evidence is quite clear. When the minister talks about coming up with new reforms, I wonder who he is consulting with before he comes up with these new reforms. That was a serious problem with the supports for independence program: there wasn't enough input into that program. It was almost doomed before it even began because the input wasn't there. So I'd like to ask the minister: who is he consulting with before he comes out with new reforms?

We do know, Mr. Chairman, that there are many obstacles that are present in the system as it currently is operating. Clients are unable to talk to their social workers. They do not have access to their social workers, and the system is set up to minimize that contact. We know that initially when a person goes into a social services office, they see a financial benefit worker who is not a trained social worker. That is where I believe we can identify and we can counsel and we can assess that person coming into that office, but that's not being done.

Now, I refer the minister to the women's advisory council report that talks about some of these issues: the supports for independence program. I would refer him to this particular report, and I'll just quickly point out that one of the problems identified here, Mr. Chairman, is that intake workers are expected to keep seven appointments a day. Of these, it is expected that four will be accepted into the income security program and three will be turned away. That is predetermined. As the social workers and the intake workers describe, this is ridiculous. So I think the minister has to address some of these issues. The caseloads are too high. That is outlined again in this particular report.

Also, one of the problems that I find with this system – and this is from personal experience as an MLA – is that there's no flexibility within the system, and I think that's really crucial. I had an example this fall of two teenagers, 17 and 18 years old, wanting to go back to school. They had registered in a local high school, yet they were told that if they have registered in school, they cannot receive social assistance. They must first apply for social assistance, then once they're on social assistance, they would go see a counsellor. If at that time the recommendation was given for them to go back to school, then that would be acceptable. That could take six months. They had already been registered. They wanted to go back to school, they needed to go back to school, yet the system was saying that that just wasn't the way it was going to be. So I really think the system has to be more flexible to respond to individual's needs.

Mr. Chairman, I could go on and on about some of the obstacles that people on social assistance face. I look forward to the minister addressing a lot of these issues. I'll just mention transitional benefits. Again, the minister has talked about moving people off of social assistance into the work force. It worries me when he talks about “employables,” “trainables” – he uses those words – when we've got such a high unemployment rate. I hope the minister will take that into account and recognize that not everyone just because they're labeled “employable” is able to find a job, and I would hope that this department doesn't simply cut them off. In terms of transitional benefits, again if he wants people to be able to move into the work force, he has to recognize that people cannot afford to give up their benefits. We need a transitional benefit program in place in order for people to actually obtain employment.

I'm going to hurry my remarks, Mr. Chairman; I know others want to get in. I would just like to say that there are solutions, and I'd like to see the government moving with some of these. We know that pay equity, for example, has been an issue. We know that's part of the solution, yet the government refuses to endorse that. We know that good quality child care is also a very important issue when it comes to people accessing the work force. The minister is in charge of that particular area, so hopefully we'll see some movement there. If he wants some more ideas in that area, I would be happy to meet with him.

Mr. Chairman, with that I'll conclude my remarks so that others can get in. Thank you.

4:30

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of questions for the Minister of Family and Social Services. I, too, would like to add my congratulations to the minister for taking on this most onerous and demanding portfolio and look forward to working with him on it.

The infusion of \$85 million into this budget is no surprise. The state of the economy and unemployment at 10 percent is obviously

driving this increase in caseloads. This is, of course, the largest increase in the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Chairman, poverty is becoming very visible in our communities. We not only are faced with 10 percent unemployment; a great many Albertans continue to be in part-time employment which yields them insufficient without advances in social assistance. They are underemployed, so that we are not utilizing the skills of our citizens.

Mr. Chairman, currently caseloads have increased to 89,000, and according to the budget document none of this increase will be covered by federal cost sharing. This is entirely a responsibility of the province, as I understand it. I'd like to ask the minister: is the \$85 million destined to go to social allowance recipients? I wonder if the minister would tell us what if anything he's doing to ease the caseload of his workers. We all deplored the strike a number of years ago, and we had many conversations then about the need to lessen the caseload to allow workers to provide more backup and counseling to applicants for assistance. I think that's as necessary or more necessary now, and with this addition perhaps the minister will comment on that. Of the 89,000 increase it's my understanding that more than 29,000 are single parents, at least 12,600 are couples with children, and over 4,000 are estimated to be single people that could be considered capable of work.

My questions to the minister, first of all, Mr. Chairman, relate to what, if anything, the minister is doing to change the federal government's position and decisions that Alberta is a have-province. I think that clearly no longer can be maintained. I think we need to mount a demand to Ottawa that the imposed ceiling on social assistance payments on this basis is no longer applicable. Perhaps the minister could tell us if he's consulted with his counterparts in British Columbia and Ontario to form a joint lobby to Ottawa to lift the ceiling or have a discussion with his friends, his kissing cousins the local members of the federal House.

Mr. Chairman, I note in the ministers's initial comments on Monday that he tells us, and I'm reading from *Hansard*:

As a result of these trends and the recent unilateral and, I believe, reckless change to the federal Unemployment Insurance Act, our caseload has increased to 88,000 cases . . . higher than our estimates at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we know that the latest round of unemployment insurance changes is proposed to take effect on April 1. This is undoubtedly going to impact directly on caseloads. Perhaps the minister will tell us how he plans to handle this infusion that I think will inevitably happen and the kind of pressure that will descend upon his department. Has the minister talked with his federal counterparts regarding these changes and the impact it will have on Alberta and other provinces?

I'd like to ask the minister if the department in its consideration of reforms is going to restrict the number of weeks a single person can stay on assistance. We've heard the department is floating the idea of restricting assistance for single Albertans to a number of weeks, perhaps two, and I think people need to know. Many Albertans have been disturbed by the minister's comments about the influx of people from other provinces coming to Alberta to find jobs and that he's going to stop that somehow. I suspect that perhaps there would be a Charter challenge in that regard. I hope he's reconsidered some of that, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that that is not a well-founded reform. I don't have any difficulty in letting people know that there are no jobs in Alberta, but it seems to me that we can't somehow close our borders. This, in my view, flies in the face of the recent referendum discussions where we were talking about a far more open nation. I would remind the minister of a few years back when we were begging people to

come to this province. Hopefully and with luck, Mr. Minister, that will be the case again when the economy in Alberta picks up.

Mr. Chairman, before Christmas we were aware that the career development and employment minister promised the House that he would develop an emergency winter works program. I wonder if the minister would comment on what has happened to that plan. Perhaps he would also comment on his musings about a work-for-welfare program. Is this part of the same thing? We haven't heard anything in the last few weeks about the minister's comments. I felt at the time that I wanted to plead with the minister to look very carefully at what he was proposing in that regard. People on welfare want real jobs, and I'm sure the minister understands that.

What is going to happen to the current job training programs and job clubs? We have asked a number of questions in the House about the validity of these commercial enterprises that seem to command a high wage, and as yet I've had nothing that really satisfies me that they have in fact been achieving a success rate. I wonder if the minister can tell us if now he has been able to track sufficiently to determine whether or not real jobs – that is, lasting full-time jobs – have been secured by the people that have gone through and how they have succeeded compared to the cost of this service per person. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, when we set these kinds of programs in place, which I gather the minister is considering, that we really have to have some means of constant analysis as to whether or not they're working.

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like the minister to tell us how he's assessing the programs in income support and how he's going to determine what is or isn't working. I have from time to time pleaded with former ministers to do just this.

Mr. Chairman, will the minister reveal what his reform program is? He refers to it daily in the House. We have had some grave concerns about the entire supports for independence program and have failed totally in being able to find out whether an analysis has been done . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please. The background conversation noise is interfering with the Chair's ability to hear the hon. member.

4:40

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

. . . on the success or failure of the supports for independence program. Do we understand that he intends to trash it and substitute something else for it, or are parts of it going to be kept? Will we get some evidence that certain parts have worked and other parts are going to be disregarded or something put in their place?

Mr. Chairman, the minister talks to us about the thousands of jobs created by forestry projects. I wonder if he could help the House by telling us how many of these jobs are filled by persons who were on social assistance. I think this would be a very comforting piece of information, if we were to understand that people who formerly have been on welfare have been able to find jobs in the forestry industry. While I appreciate that he's proud of the thousands of jobs created, I wonder if he could reveal to us how many have gone to people on assistance and how many of them – just rough figures, Mr. Minister – have become permanent, long-range jobs.

Mr. Minister, another thing. I get the feeling that there are cuts coming in the department, and perhaps you would tell us what are the determinants that you use: the indicators, the requirement for outcomes that you would use to decide which programs you're going to keep and which you will not maintain. Will the minister

be implementing a tracking system on people who get off social assistance so that we can know what clients obtain permanent employment and what the contributing factors have been to that?

A couple of other questions, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Edmonton-Calder asked this. Because I don't have any indication that the minister has been consulting with client groups, I'd like to know who the people are, apart from the department staff, that he is using to help with the design of changes and the reforms that he consistently refers to.

Just one final question. What is happening with the minister's threat to disallow social assistance people moving into the province? Have there been any further moves, Mr. Chairman, or can we assume that that is now a thing of the past and that we don't need to concern ourselves further with it?

Mr. Chairman, I'd appreciate answers to some of those questions. I hope they will come. I think the House is confronted with accepting this motion of an additional \$85 million into this program to deal with people who are in very straitened circumstances in our province. I think we all agree that the way to deal with it best is to get real jobs for people who are hurting out there. I would hope that the minister in his answers to my questions about the reforms will be able to deal with some of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you. I would like to congratulate the minister. I read his comments from I think it was Monday afternoon, and I'd like to commend him on some of the language he used: that he recognizes that people that are on social assistance or unemployment insurance want to work and want to take care of themselves. I think that for too long we've heard much rhetoric about people on social assistance or unemployed not wanting to work, not wanting to be responsible, not wanting to take care of themselves and their families. I think that's just patently false. At a time of really high unemployment - 10 or 12 percent recorded unemployment, possibly as high as 15 to 20 percent when we take the hidden unemployment into account - for many people the search for a job is a frustrating and humiliating experience. One can only be turned down a couple of hundred times before one's self-esteem is destroyed, and sometimes it only takes 10 or 20 times. When you hear of one or two jobs, not particularly glamorous jobs, and 400 or 500 applicants, I think we know something of the desperation that people feel.

A group of people that I have very strong concerns about are what I consider the lost generation, particularly young men in their late teens and middle to late 20s, men who have yet to have entered into a career path or a job with any kind of permanence. Men and women who have worked part-time, have worked at low-paying jobs do not have a sense of future, and I think that in some measure contributes to the suicide rate. They have no real hope of taking control and charge of their lives. So I think the minister has some sensitivity to this, and I hope that in his work in his caucus and his cabinet he can broaden that sensitivity, increase the consciousness, so to speak.

Another problem that I think contributes to this is low wages. I note from his remarks that 14 percent of the cases that he's dealing with are working but do not earn enough to support themselves and their families. Again I think this speaks to the need for pay equity, a higher minimum wage, and the issue of how much contracting out and privatization is going into the private for-profit sector that goes to part-time workers who are paid much less than if they were able to obtain the job directly because the contractor takes a bit off the top. Not such a small bit either;

sometimes 20, 30, 40 percent of what would have been paid in wages.

Another issue is child care costs, again a great barrier for women to participate in the labour force. I think that in Alberta, although we have no lack of child care spaces, we have a lack of quality child care. You cannot be a working parent and be able to devote your energy and time to your work while you're in the workplace if you're worrying about the care your child is receiving. So I would urge the minister to ensure that we have standards of care, of education in our child care centres so that children in their most vulnerable time receive the start to their life that will allow them to participate. Dr. Freud a hundred years ago said that the first five years of life are the most important years for a child. "The child is father of the man" or, I guess, mother of the woman, bringing it up to date. Those are crucial years, and at our own peril we neglect the needs of children in that age range.

[Mr. Main in the Chair]

I've heard it said that the new child care subsidy arrangements have legislated women back into the home. I think we have to recognize at this time the importance of children, as I have said. We have to recognize that the social service policy holds that mothers who have children of whom the youngest is two years of age are considered employable. I think that's quite a wrong policy. It fails to address the needs of children. It fails to address the fact that caring for children can be a full-time job and more, that you can't just care for children when you come home after eight hours of work in the workplace. Caring for children is not something you do in your spare time. It takes energy, it takes emotional commitment, and it takes presence. It needs the presence of a person. So I think that mothers have to have choices when it comes to caring for their children, that mothers in their hearts know what their children need and how best they can mother. That we require them to be in the work force when their youngest child is two is wrong. I think it's just simply wrong. It denies the importance of children and the importance of parenting. So I would hope that we see a new attitude towards mothers and mothering and children and choices for mothers and their children.

I would like to make a couple of comments about employable people. I think we need to recognize that although some people are designated as employable from the outside, they may in fact have problems of self-esteem that may make it very difficult for them to succeed, to even try. Issues of depression and anxiety need to be addressed. In my other life as a psychologist I worked with young people who hadn't been able to get jobs and how they wanted basically to hide out at home. How do we bring them out of that in a humane and sensitive way, and how do we support them in their faltering steps into the workplace? I would like to see the minister tracking people who have been through training programs, through some of these programs that are getting people back into the labour force, because we hear anecdotally that many of them do not remain employed for a long period of time. We have to understand why that is. Did the job end, or was it somehow that the kind of support they needed to succeed was not there?

Supports for independence has been evaluated by the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and it has been found to be quite inadequate to meet the needs of women in this province. Rather than going through and articulating all those needs, I would just recommend that report to the minister.

4:50

There are just a couple of other things I would raise. One of the degrading rules that we have in the social assistance area is the



spouse-in-the-house rule: the fact that if a man stays in the same house as a woman, he is expected to support her. Women told the advisory council that that made them feel like prostitutes. I would suggest that if we expect a man to support a woman and her children simply because he stays with her, that is prostitution.

The other issue I would raise is young people between the ages of 15 and 18, the emancipated minors. Again we see that children turn to the streets because they have no alternatives. If we're going to look at the issue of prostitution and violence and criminal behaviour of young people in that age group, I think we have to look and say: how did they get there? What are the supports that we could put in place in the first place to keep them from getting there and, in the second place, to get them off the streets or out of those kinds of behaviour patterns? Again my work with young survivors of sexual and physical and emotional violence in the home: they saw the streets as safer than their homes. That's a sad indictment of their homes, but it's a sad indictment of our society that we do not provide a better alternative than the streets.

So with those comments I would again wish the minister well in addressing the many problems that face us in this province.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the indulgence of members of the Assembly I'm going to try and say something to the minister that I've not had a lot of practice with. It goes something like this. [remarks in Cree] That's my attempt at congratulating the minister in Cree, and that's said from the heart.

The concern that I want to address today, Mr. Chairman, is one that I've had the opportunity to speak about on occasion but never directly to the minister. I was hoping that the minister would be able to provide me with some of the statistical information that led him to comment on the number 2,000 that he used when he said that 2,000 people were coming to Alberta to join the ranks of welfare recipients and that they were coming from all parts of Canada to our province. As I checked out figures from Statistics Canada, what I saw was a real decline in employment opportunities for Albertans and what they were doing as their unemployment insurance was exhausted. They were finding that because they had no further savings in their accounts, no more income from the unemployment insurance program, they were leaving the job search market to enter, unfortunately, the ranks of welfare recipients. So they were not in fact coming in droves to Alberta – at least certainly not in the numbers that the minister indicated – to take advantage of our welfare system. If anything, I've heard members of the new administration stand up and admit that we have lost jobs in the Alberta market, and that's a real concern.

Now, I know that the minister has spoken on a number of occasions about trying to get people back to work by providing job training and retraining programs. I endorse that; my caucus endorses that position. But I would like some clarification on that number of 2,000, because I don't believe that that number is at all accurate. If the minister is still of the opinion that 2,000 people a month are coming to Alberta to take advantage of our welfare system, I'd like him to back those figures up.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, just want to take a few moments to address the estimates of social assistance, but I first of all also want to extend my congratulations to

the minister on his appointment. I'm pleased with the kind of comments I've heard from him recently here in the House and outside the House. I suspect that the philosophy he seems to have adopted is going to go a long way in dealing with the very many difficult issues that he's going to face as the minister in this very demanding portfolio.

I wanted to just make a few points, Mr. Chairman. As a member from a constituency that does have a relatively large number of individuals who are social assistance recipients, I thought it would be important that I in fact make some comments. Particularly, I wanted to advise or enlighten the minister of some of the concerns that have come to my attention that I think might be of value when he talks about reforming the process. Indeed, he may consider some of the suggestions that have come to me that I want to relay to the minister. First of all, I want to say that the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly is made up of many single parents. Certainly there is our fair share of children. We have many working poor, who of course receive a social service subsidy, and we have our share of young offenders. It's from that kind of background that I want to make the suggestions that I'm going to make this afternoon.

Probably the area that receives the most criticism is the shelter allowance. I believe it may have been sufficient a few years ago when the vacancy rates were high and there was enough shelter to provide, but it seems that as the vacancy rate has dropped, it's becoming more and more difficult for individuals on social assistance to get adequate, proper housing. The shelter allowance simply does not provide sufficient funding for individuals to be able to live in a home that is adequate and proper. They are having to resort more and more to the slum landlord types and to housing that is not appropriate.

The other difficulty – and the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore raised it – is the so-called employables and particularly the young employables. Many of these people are young men and women who have been in the work force for quite some time who, through circumstances not of their own but because of the economy in this country and in this province, find themselves having exhausted their UIC benefits and unfortunately at the mercy of social assistance. They're not comfortable being there; nevertheless, they have no other choice. It is in this area, where they are considered to be employable, that they are given actually minimum assistance for a three-month period, and then they're expected to go through a variety of training programs. Fair enough; I think we accept that. Some people need the knowledge to write résumés and so on. The difficulty that we find with those programs – we'll go to one program. I really question the kind of résumés these people are asked to write. They're inaccurate; they're not true in many cases; they're a figment of somebody's imagination. Somehow these people are supposed to take this to a prospective employer and get work. That doesn't happen. After a period of time if they still don't get a job, they're then asked to go to another agency who provides training, and so basically it's a cycle of different people doing the same kind of work. It's frustrating, and it's not fair to these people. I think we are imposing hardship on these individuals unnecessarily and unfairly.

5:00

I would think that spending money on these organizations, these companies that have sprung up as if somehow they're going to find work for these individuals, is unfair. They can't find work for them; we know that. The garbage that they provide these people to write their résumés and the stuff they put out is garbage. I simply say that rather than spending money paying for – and I

get the feeling sometimes that they're friends of this government who have set up companies to make money at the expense of the social services department and the recipients of social assistance. Get rid of those companies and in fact make an honest effort at some retraining programs to accommodate the people that may require some additional skills and so on rather than sending them to some classrooms and doing the kind of job searches and so on that these people have to contend with.

So, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to make those comments to the minister. These are the kinds of frustrations that come to my office that we have to deal with daily. It's a daily process because there are that many people in Edmonton-Beverly that require services from my office relative to the social services department.

I couldn't sit down without first saying that I think the people at the Fort Road office with which I deal are doing great work. Certainly from time to time we disagree and we have problems, but I want the minister to know and I want to pass on to his staff that by and large I think they do a tremendous job over there in spite of the difficulty, the big caseloads that they handle. There are problems sometimes, but by and large we're very pleased at the co-operation and the kind of dedication that they have to the recipients of social services in that area.

Those are primarily my comments, Mr. Chairman, and I want to again urge the minister, when he's talking about reform, that consideration be given that you indeed talk to recipients of social services, talk to individuals who have had the experience, because that's really where you're going to learn what is required. I know his background and his experience; that's what he will do and will be able to figure out the wheat from the chaff when it comes to what the real information is.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Minister, closing remarks? Are we ready for the vote? The minister of social services.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd just like to thank the hon. members that made presentations, and I appreciate the comments and the recommendations they made. I always like recommendations from all people whenever possible, and we'll sure take this into serious consideration when we do develop a number of our reforms and look at a review of our programs.

I'd just like to indicate that I will, because there are so many questions asked, answer just briefly some of the questions, and I'll advise my staff who are present to do the rest in writing.

First of all, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder indicated the request for the \$85 million: why do we need this additional money? I guess as a minister and a person that's reasonably knowledgeable of people on social assistance and how people don't want to be on social assistance, I too would hope that we didn't have to have over 88,000 people on social assistance. I, too, would like to see that we don't come for additional moneys, Mr. Chairman, but I believe the problem we have with requiring additional dollars and additional caseloads is not only in Alberta, and that definitely has impact on this province. In Alberta for every thousand people we have 29 on assistance. When you go to British Columbia, for every thousand people they have 40 people on assistance. When we go to Ontario, 50 per thousand, and Quebec is at 55 per thousand. So I think most jurisdictions across Canada are experiencing similar problems because of the economic downturn. As a minister, of course, I would prefer that everyone that's employable and wants to get back to the work force would, number one, have that opportunity to do so, and I will continue working hard to make sure that happens.

The member also indicated that the failure of the economic strategy in Alberta is why we may have such a high unemployment rate. But it seems, Mr. Chairman, that when you talk to people from other jurisdictions, even though there are over 140,000 people looking for work in Alberta and they are Albertans, they feel that Alberta is still the brighter spot of all places in Canada. Just one quick indication of that is a project like the Alberta-Pacific project in my constituency, presently employing over 3,000 people on site. A high percentage of those, of course, are from Edmonton and the surrounding area.

The other question the member mentioned is that the federal government should play a role in issues such as the Canada assistance plan. Mr. Chairman, I am in the process of talking to the federal government, in fact, on reviewing the three sections of the Canada assistance plan. One is the existing cost-sharing agreement, where we do have a 5 percent cap, and a percentage of our dollars is not cost shared under that program. That's one issue I have commenced discussions on. The second issue is the cost-sharing agreement we have with federal Indian affairs. It's another one that I'm looking at, and a third one is in relation to utilizing dollars for employment and training purposes under that program. So under that particular jurisdiction we are definitely working on that. The other items you mentioned, which I will address later in writing, are the questions on unemployment insurance and the changes.

The other concern that was mentioned was the caseload that we do have, over 88,000 cases. I do have a concern on that too, Mr. Chairman, and hopefully some of the reforms I am proposing will assist a lot more people, especially the single employables and the couples without children who do sincerely want to get back into the work force. Hopefully, the reforms we are proposing will deal with some of those issues.

I am again advising my staff, in the areas where they feel we should provide additional answers to the members, to make sure to record that and do it.

The other questions. Item 7, on social assistance and effects on poverty. I too, Mr. Chairman, understand that. I live in an area of the province that has in the past 40 years faced a high rate of poverty. Hopefully, again that's another issue we will be addressing in writing.

The other item that was mentioned by that member is breaking the cycle of poverty: what are we doing? I guess there are a number of ways our province always tries to deal with the breaking of the cycle of poverty. One, of course, that is a major area and I think the number one priority of all Albertans and all Canadians and no doubt a lot of people that are on assistance is to have a job, and also to have a good economic diversification plan in our province and to have a good educational program for those people that want further education and training so they can become part of the mainstream of society in a productive work force.

#### 5:10

The other area, of course, that should deal with that, Mr. Chairman, is our proposal to review our existing programs. The proposed reforms I'm talking about are specifically directed at changing how we deliver the welfare system for people that are employable and that are trainable, the young and the single people or childless couples that want to get back to the work force, to make sure we provide whatever possible assistance there can be provided under our financial resources and our system presently to make sure we do allow them to get back into the work force.

The member asked, I guess in relation to my reforms, as to who participates in looking at how we may reform the welfare system. Basically, I'd like to advise the member that in the past

I guess close to 10 years now I've had experience in working on a number of programs in northern Alberta that dealt with models that we ran on reforms. The member can be assured that the people that are involved in the process include my executive staff in government, along with the community, the frontline social workers, the clients, and the native leaders, because we do have a lot of our native people, unfortunately, on social assistance.

The other point the member mentioned is the need for us to provide more of a one-stop type of service, career and employment related, in our offices. I just want to advise the member that we do have two pilot projects running now in my constituency, which I hope are very, very successful. Hopefully, we can expand some of that, possibly as part of our reforms. These projects are situated in Athabasca and also one in Lac La Biche, and it's specifically the issues the member mentioned. When you walk in the office, you have the opportunity to be provided with career counseling, career assessment, a training plan, and possibly placement into a training institution or direct placement to a job with the necessary financial support till you have an opportunity to get back on your feet.

Those are some of the issues addressed on that particular point. Of course, there are about another five or six issues that were mentioned by the hon. member, and I will address those in writing.

I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for her presentation, although she had to leave earlier due to other commitments. I want to advise her that I will make sure that I do answer some of the questions in writing to her as soon as possible.

The one important area she mentioned, where of course I have a concern and we as a government have a concern, again is our caseload, which is running over 88,000 cases, and the cost sharing in relation to the federal government. I think *Hansard* will show that I've addressed that particular issue.

The other one she mentioned was the request for the estimate of \$85 million. Where is it going? That again I will have to advise her on. It is under the supports for independence, and it's very much needed.

Mr. Chairman, I don't have any more comments. Due to the time, I'd like to move that the vote be reported.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you for that, minister. We haven't taken a vote yet.

#### Vote on Supplementary Estimates

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We're operating now under the constraints of Government Motion 35 that was passed by the Assembly on Wednesday, January 27. So I will, with the permission of the committee, place the entire question, which is: those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the supplementary estimates of the general revenue fund 1992-93, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move that the votes be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Deputy Government House Leader has something to say.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move we now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Deputy Chairman of Committees.

MR. MAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports approval of the following supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund for the year '92-93:

Agriculture and Rural Development: \$400,000 for Departmental Support Services, \$1.8 million for Field Services, and \$5.857 million for Farm Income Support.

Economic Development and Tourism: \$187 million for Financing of Technology and Research Projects.

Environmental Protection: \$26 million for Forest Resources Management, \$1.8 million for Public Lands Management and Land Information Services.

Executive Council: \$1,907,669 for Disaster Services and Dangerous Goods Control, \$175,000 for Personnel Administration.

Family and Social Services: \$85 million for Income Support to Individuals and Families.

Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs: \$500,000 for Intergovernmental Co-ordination and Research.

Justice: \$6.3 million for Support for Legal Aid.

Legislative Assembly: \$118,990 for Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$90,037 for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Treasury: \$350,000 for Departmental Support Services, \$3 million for Revenue Collection and Rebates.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file a list of these resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.  
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I request leave that we revert to Introduction of Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously.

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

#### Bill 56 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1993

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 56, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1993. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 56 read a first time]

[At 5:20 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

