

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Monday, May 17, 1993  
**Date:** 93/05/17

**2:30 p.m.**

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Let us pray.

The prayer is that used at the Mother of Parliaments since the year 1659.

We, Thine unworthy servants here gathered together in Thy name, do humbly beseech Thee to send down Thy heavenly wisdom from above to direct and guide us in all our considerations.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury.

**MR. BRASSARD:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to present to this Assembly a petition signed by 84 of my constituents that

the government of the Province of Alberta will maintain the existing senior citizen rental grants and senior home-owner tax grants as they are currently in effect

in that they may remain in their own homes as independently as possible.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**MR. HAWKESWORTH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to have the petition I presented last week read at this time.

**CLERK:**

The petition of the undersigned members of the Royal Canadian Legion humbly herewith . . . pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of the Province of Alberta will maintain the existing senior citizen rental grants and senior home-owner tax grants as they are currently in effect.

head: **Notices of Motions**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Calgary-Bow.

**MRS. B. LAING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chairman of the Private Bills Committee I give oral notice of the introduction of four private Bills: Bill Pr. 16, the Adrienne Heather Cupido Adoption Act; Bill Pr. 24, the King's College Amendment Act, 1993; Bill Pr. 28, First Canadian Casualty Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, 1993; and Bill Pr. 30, Youth Emergency Services Foundation Amendment Act, 1993.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for West Yellowhead.

**MR. DOYLE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 40 I would like to propose the following motion to be addressed immediately after question period:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the organizers of Vista '93, the first international symposium on sport for athletes with disabilities, which is being held in Jasper. Organizers, including Dr. Robert Steadward and Dr. Garry Wheeler, both of the Rick Hansen Centre at the University of Alberta, and Mr. Gary

McPherson, chairperson of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, attracted professionals from 27 countries around the world.

**MR. SPEAKER:** On a procedural basis the Chair trusts that there are enough copies for all members. In the ordinary course of events the Chair usually gets notice before the House begins.

Thank you.

**CLERK:** Introduction of Bills.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Is this a Bill?

**MRS. HEWES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a Bill being Bill Pr. 24, the King's College Amendment Act, 1993.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, hon. member. I believe we have to delay on that one at least for another day.

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister of Energy.

**MRS. BLACK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the annual report for the year ended March 31, 1992, for the Alberta Oil Sands Equity.

**MR. SPARROW:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file with the Assembly today the tourism component of the Alberta tourism, parks and recreation annual report 1991-92.

**MRS. McCLELLAN:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the audited financial statements of the Charles Camsell provincial general hospital for the nine months ended December 31, 1992.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister of Family and Social Services, followed by his colleague immediately adjacent.

**MR. CARDINAL:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table a response to Motion for a Return 318.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

**MR. ADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table with the Assembly four copies of the report of the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Labour Market Development and Training. This committee was established under cabinet direction to recommend to government how to increase labour market development and training partnerships in Alberta. The committee included representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups, including industry, labour, training organizations, and equity groups including women, visible minorities, Indian, Metis, and the disabled.

I'd also like to table four copies of the 1991-92 annual report of Alberta advanced education and four copies of the 1991-92 annual report for Alberta career development and employment.

**MR. SPARROW:** I'd like to file with the Assembly six copies of the answers to written questions 291, 384, and 270.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce if I could today to you and to the members of the Assembly six of our staff from the Alberta Tourism Education Council who are touring the Assembly today. They are Shirley Lichuk, Ursula Ford, Jackie Moffitt, Carol Chovanec, Lillian Kostyniuk, and Steve Rowan. I'd like to ask them to stand and be acknowledged by the Assembly.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of members of ASWAC, the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, that I believe are sitting in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: I think we have one more introduction. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, please. I know you're responding to an immediate problem.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I regret that I don't have the names of our guests, but I've been advised that we have in the Assembly today a school group from AVC in Calgary. I believe they're seated in the members' gallery, and on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Millican I'd like to introduce that group to your good self and to the members of the Assembly. I wonder if they might rise and receive the recognition of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**  
**Provincial Budget**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the budget estimates that were tabled on Friday show that as usual the government says one thing publicly then does another. When the Premier cut the size of the provincial cabinet, he made a big deal about the fact that he had taken action to save Alberta taxpayers money. Well, we find out again that it's smoke and mirrors. We find out that with four Conservative caucus committees government spending on Conservative cabinet ministers and backbenchers actually has gone up 10.7 percent instead of being cut. My question to the Deputy Premier in charge of reorganization: how can the government claim it is cutting at the top when it's actually spending more on Conservative MLAs?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party and I had a debate on this issue a few days ago within this Legislative Assembly as to reductions that we are facing in this budget, that has been introduced by the Provincial Treasurer. It's interesting to note within the media – and I'm sure it was instigated by members opposite – as to the spending in the Premier's office, whereby they suggested that there was an increase in the spending of the Premier's office. In reality we have seen a 7 percent decrease, a saving of some \$254,971, within the Premier's office itself. Contrary to what the hon. member suggests, we are saving taxpayer dollars by the reduction of cabinet from some 26 to 17 members.

We do recognize and we do respect the questions that the hon. member has raised as it relates to those members who are chairmen of standing policy committees. We do recognize that there are some additional dollars being spent there, but we believe that they are well spent, because we want to have an opportunity for broader public input into the decision-making process of this government.

**2:40**

MR. MARTIN: Well spent? Well spent on Conservative MLAs. That's the only people that are demanding it, Mr. Speaker. The

reality is that when you put in all the money for Conservative MLAs and backbenchers, the increase is 10.7 percent.

I want to ask the Deputy Premier simply this: at the same time we're hacking away \$144 million in spending on health care, how can he begin to justify a 10.7 percent increase for themselves, Mr. Speaker?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, firstly dealing with the health care reductions, we indicated when the budget was introduced that we are going to go out to the individual stakeholders so that we can receive their input. The Provincial Treasurer and the Minister of Health have indicated that, and there has been publicity related to those stakeholder groups, whereby they have concurred with the decisions that we have made as long as they have meaningful input into those reductions, and that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to consult in a broad and public way under the leadership of the Minister of Health.

As it relates to the hon. member's suggestion earlier, I've dealt with that consistently within this Legislative Assembly. If the hon. leader would like me to repeat my answer, I'm more than happy to do so.

MR. MARTIN: Well, maybe we should have consultation about whether they want to give Conservative ministers and MLAs more money. I'm sure you'd get something about that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the Deputy Premier simply this: what kind of message are you sending out to Albertans? No money for health care, no money for the poor, no money for this, that, and everything else but at the same time a 10.7 percent increase for your own caucus. That's really what it's coming to. How can you justify that?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let's deal with the facts. Contrary to what the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party is suggesting, there have been serious and substantial reductions. We recognize that it's not easy. We wish we could take the alternative route that the leader of the New Democratic Party suggests, whereby he says: we're going to tax the Alberta population to a much greater degree. If we had the taxation levels that are in B.C. or Ontario, we wouldn't have a budgetary deficit today. Under a New Democratic government if people wish to pay additional taxes, that's their choice, and we will respect that choice. I repeat: if we raised our taxation level within this province to the levels in those provinces that have New Democratic Party governments, B.C. and Ontario, we wouldn't have a deficit whatsoever. But we believe that the route to take is the reduction of some services because we believe that we can inject greater efficiencies. One of those efficiencies we injected was a 5 percent reduction for ministerial salaries.

MR. MARTIN: Isn't it interesting that the credit rating is better in B.C. than here. I wonder why.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**MLA Pensions**

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, for years taxpayers in this province have been on the hook for the fact that this government continues to set MLA pension plan rules behind closed doors. The pension legislation in the MLA pension plan pamphlet talks about years of

pensionable service but is silent about exactly what constitutes a year's pensionable service. A regulation was enacted by cabinet in 1985 which defines a year of pensionable service as a year or any fraction of a year. This means that if the anniversary date is exceeded by only a day, it counts as a full year of pensionable service. To the Deputy Premier: will the Deputy Premier acknowledge that this definition will increase the pensions of outgoing MLAs by up to 14 percent in the cases of members elected in 1986?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the regulation the hon. member is talking about is one that I do not have in front of me, but the application of such a regulation is based on a 365-day year.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, many Albertans have been wondering why the government has been delaying the calling of the provincial election. Perhaps it's just an interesting coincidence that the delay operates to the benefit of certain MLAs. In particular, members elected on May 8, 1986, have had their pensions jump by 14 percent by just having had the election delayed past their anniversary date. Indeed each of the retiring MLAs has gained a year's pension. To the Deputy Premier: will the Deputy Premier admit that one of the reasons the election has not been called is because the government has been waiting for the clock to tick past the anniversary date?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, these are very, very odd questions. In the first question the gentleman suggested that if you serve for one day as an MLA, you would gain benefit for one year's service as an MLA. That is just absolutely and totally absurd. You have to serve for 365 days to earn one year's service.

Secondly, under British parliamentary tradition elections have to be held within five years, and it's only the Premier who'll determine when an election is. It may very well be, Mr. Speaker, that the anticipation the hon. member has is that perhaps in two weeks from now or three weeks from now an election might be called, but if you follow through with the logic of his question, then surely the Premier won't call this election till the 18th day of March, 1994.

MR. CHIVERS: The Deputy Premier misunderstands the regulation.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, it's not too late to abolish the bonus that departing members get as a result of the one-year rule. Will the Deputy Speaker undertake to have cabinet immediately pass an amendment to this regulation to define a year's pensionable service as one full year of actual service?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the question was addressed to the Deputy Speaker rather than myself, but I'll assume that the intent was to this particular individual.

Let me make it very, very clear again. In order to earn one year of service, Mr. Speaker, one year equates to 365 days; it is the calendar year. Anything else is rather mischievous today, and it's totally - well, it may not be unlike some of the other questions the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has raised in this Assembly on various occasions. I sincerely hope that tonight before he goes to bed and he looks at himself in the mirror, he doesn't have winks coming out of both of his eyes thinking that he pulled a fast one here today, because he most certainly did not. I sincerely hope that it will be with some degree of integrity that he'll want to start tomorrow's day.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, may I just supplement the hon. member?

MR. SPEAKER: Very briefly.

MR. DINNING: By my calculation, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the hon. member who was elected in 1986 for pension purposes has served for 7.0267 years, no more and no less.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish that the Treasurer was more precise in answering other questions, as he was today.

### Gainers Inc.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the latest Auditor General's report identifies the fact that some \$80 million-plus has gone into the Pocklington/Gainers/government enterprise. We also know that some \$67 million in loans and loan guarantees are offered up for this special enterprise. Finally, we know that by disclosure of the government Gainers has lost some \$3.7 million in 1993 - their fiscal year starts in September - in a short period of time, I think, for the first three months. I'd like the minister of agriculture to tell Albertans - it's now eight months into 1993 - exactly what the loss in the Gainers operation is to date.

**2:50**

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should well know, probably about five weeks ago we injected \$9.27 million into Gainers: \$3.8 million of that \$9.27 million covered the actual operating cash losses from October 6, 1989, until that point in time when that injection was made, \$3 million covered restructuring costs that took place after government took it over in October of 1989, and the balance was interest on income tax that went back into the mid-80s. As I pointed out at that time, since takeover Gainers has injected almost a billion dollars into the pockets of producers in acquiring beef and pork, paid over \$110 million in wages to employees in the city and in excess of \$12 million in utilities and taxes to the city of Edmonton. I also suggested that the workers would have paid back to this government more in income tax than that cash injection. I can't believe this member over here advocating that we shut down Gainers.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the question again because it's clear that the minister didn't hear the question. The fiscal year is from September to September. We know that \$3.7 million was allocated for losses. It's now my information, Mr. Minister, that the losses for this fiscal year up to this point exceed \$7 million dollars. Yes or no?

MR. ISLEY: To the best of my knowledge no, but he may wish to submit it as a motion for a return.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the ministerial task force that was set up by the minister of agriculture, which he refuses to make public, recommends that there should be a merger of Fletcher's and Gainers, that jobs can be saved, that probably consolidation can take place with the operations in Vancouver or wherever, and that, I repeat, jobs can be saved. [interjections] Why is the minister delaying the merger of Fletcher's and Gainers? Why continue to lose money for Albertans?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the minister is not delaying anything. As I've indicated before, negotiations are under way. I haven't

indicated publicly who we're negotiating with. It's fully our intent to get Gainers back into the private sector. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore. [interjections] Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: God, Mr. Speaker, it sounds like froggies in a pond. They make a hell of a lot of noise, but you can't make out what they're saying.

### Social Policy

MS CALAHASEN: My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. The welfare reforms proposed by the minister are supported by native groups throughout Alberta because we as Indian people want an end to welfare and poverty and need a chance to start over again. Even with these positive steps, Mr. Speaker, there's much criticism from the opposition, because no matter how good the projects are, they put a negative spin to anything. They want to shut down Al-Pac. They want to shut down Gainers. Will the minister advise this Assembly how projects like Gainers and Al-Pac will assist in the proposed reforms?

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, as I've always indicated – and I'll talk to you in a minute – the ideal way to end poverty and be successful with the welfare reform package that I've proposed is to have jobs in private industry. In addition to that, we do have projects operating already in northern communities like Calling Lake, Wabasca, Sandy Lake, and other areas where they are co-ordinating services at the community level and ready to access jobs at projects like Alberta-Pacific. Of course, in addition to that, we do have other projects like the Athabasca regional employment centre, which is a model that's going to be used across the province and which will again co-ordinate local community employment services to local people that want to access jobs in private industry, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake mentioned that there is opposition. Of course there is opposition. The main opposition is from the Liberals, Mr. Speaker. I have an article here that says that the Liberal leader would cancel a project like Alberta-Pacific, in fact also cancel a project like Gainers. Those are thousands of jobs that they are not interested in.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you.

Supplementary, Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Northern Alberta communities are willing and ready to start with the reforms in areas which I think will make a great difference. My question is: will the Minister of Family and Social Services outline what specific impacts his reforms will have on communities like Peerless Lake, Trout Lake, and Faust, Alberta?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the reforms I am proposing are fully supported. The Metis Nation, of course, put out a press release that they support the project fully, because they want to see an end to welfare also. All the communities across the north, not only across the north but municipalities also, are participating in the process, and you can see why the caseloads have dropped by 3,000 already.

The only opposition we have right now in the project is again from the Liberals, and I can see why. These welfare reforms will

address the issue of poverty in the long run. I have an article here that says: Decore concedes he probably slighted native people. It's an author's quote of the former mayor in a book. It says in there, "Why do you want to write a book about Indians?" The rest I won't read because it's not parliamentary. That's how they feel about native people. That's why they will not get support. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order. If you're challenging the Chair, Edmonton-Whitemud, you're a little bit late in doing it. I don't know if you were here the other night about 12. [interjection] Thank you, hon. member.

Edmonton-Avonmore.

### Advisory Council on Women's Issues

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the minister responsible for women's issues. On Friday the minister appointed a new chair to the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, Catherine Arthur, who said that her major concern was violence against women and children. Yet in 1980 when details of abuse of children in a group home came to light, including forcing a child to eat dog food with Tabasco sauce on it and forcing a child to stand with his hands in water for 12 to 16 hours without drink, food, or rest, Miss Arthur commented that these were common behavioral management techniques, a conclusion contrary to the views expressed by the professionals who investigated. My question to the minister: how does this minister justify appointing a person who condoned the abuse and torture of children as head of the advisory council?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite really had to dig into the gutter to find that kind of information. This woman comes highly recommended by the top lady in this province, the Hon. Helen Hunley, and she comes with recommendations – appointed by the Alberta Women's Bureau in 1973 – and great qualifications that are extremely superior. Again, I would like to emphasize that the recommendation came from the Hon. Helen Hunley, who has a great deal of respect for women's issues.

MS M. LAING: So what? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. I know Edmonton-Avonmore will take due care for Beauchesne 409(7).

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I didn't have to dig. I lived in this province in 1980. I remember what Miss Arthur said, and I remember the scandal that that treatment of those children caused across Canada.

Miss Arthur was also intricately involved with a move to force single mothers with babies on social assistance into the work force under the threat of losing benefits. Can this minister explain how this mentality fits into an advisory council whose mandate is to advocate on behalf of women and children?

**3:00**

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the member opposite takes time to meet with Miss Arthur. She's an excellent person, is committed to women's advisory issues . . .

MS M. LAING: I've already met her.

MRS. MIROSH: And particularly violence against women.

MS M. LAING: On more than one occasion.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MRS. MIROSH: The member opposite is becoming quite violent herself.

It's quite sad that the day has come when a person has to bring another person's . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I would encourage women in Alberta to meet with Miss Arthur – and we'll make that available to any woman in Alberta – so that they can judge for themselves.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjections] Order, hon. members. [interjections] Order.

Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### **Child Welfare**

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the beginning of Child Poverty Awareness Week. Given this government's record on children and poverty, it's obvious that they're the ones that need the education on this issue. The statistics are disgraceful. More than 120,000 children in our province live in poverty: 40,000 in Edmonton, another 30,000 in Calgary, the rest from areas outside those two urban centres, especially in the north. Even more disgraceful is the government's failure to develop a plan to deal with this tragic situation. Last week we revealed how the province has not accessed \$17 million in federal money targeted for children of Alberta under the Brighter Futures program, all because some departments can't get their act together. My first question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. What is the minister doing, or has he already acquired the \$17 million set aside for Alberta children by Ottawa? This would feed a lot of children.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, by reading this article earlier, I didn't realize these people cared for children in northern Alberta.

I'd just like to indicate to the hon. member that we do have a large budget. We have \$155 million in child welfare. We have \$67 million in day care, \$17 million in handicapped children's services, and I can go on. We do provide a high quality of service for Albertans that are needy, Mr. Speaker, and our welfare payments are as high as any in Canada in support of the family.

On that particular question, I do have a plan for the \$17.4 million. It's a four-year plan, and if the hon. member wants to know what we are accessing each year, Mr. Speaker, I can provide her with the information. It's here in front of me. As far as the federal government is concerned, under Brighter Futures we are ahead of any province in Canada as far as planning and initiation of those programs.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, we haven't got the money yet. The departments are still squabbling.

Mr. Speaker, how does this minister expect us to believe that he's committed to helping to end the cycle of poverty when he has just recently slashed needed supplemental benefits for clients, including single parents and single moms with children who have special needs?

MR. CARDINAL: Talking about special needs, the budget has increased by \$12 million for the people in the most needy areas, Mr. Speaker. The areas where we've redirected the dollars are under supports for independence, and those are for the 60,000 or so cases that are employable, single, young couples without

children that want to get back into the work force. It's not me; it's the clients out there that want to get back into the work force. The process I've put forward, a three-year plan, will provide an opportunity for over 10,000 individuals under that program so that they can get back to the work force, because that's where they want to be.

MR. SPEAKER: Fort McMurray, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

### **Edmonton Oilers**

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week when I asked the Premier if he would assist in resolving a then outstanding issue as it related to the Edmonton Oilers and the various parties, the Premier tabled a letter of support to the governor of the NHL and subsequently met with Mr. Glen Sather, the general manager of the Oilers. Now that the deal has been finalized and as the Deputy Premier is the minister responsible for lotteries, would the minister advise the Assembly if there was any commitment made by the province to provide lottery fund dollars for renovations to the Edmonton coliseum?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, this matter was dealt with at the end of last week. The answer remains the same today. The answer is emphatically no.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, while the answer may be emphatically no, my question might be a little bit hypothetical. If there were to be any grant funding advanced, would the minister, then, confirm that no funds would go directly to Peter Pocklington?

MR. KOWALSKI: Absolutely. The question is based on hypothesis. We indicated the other day that there are no dollars going to the Edmonton Oilers, Mr. Speaker, period, period, period, period. No, nyet, over, finished, tout fini, nothing, period, zero.

MR. SPEAKER: It sounds like a popular western song that's out: *What Part of No Don't You Understand?*

Edmonton-Calder.

### **Child Welfare** *(continued)*

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Child Poverty Action Group of Edmonton has designated this week Child Poverty Awareness Week, as was mentioned earlier. In 1992 literally thousands and thousands of children relied on Edmonton's Food Bank, and the numbers for 1993 show a continual increase. It is estimated by school personnel that 50 percent of elementary school children come to school hungry. One solution is to implement school lunch programs, which have been supported by many agencies and organizations but not by this government or the Minister of Family and Social Services. My questions are to the minister. Given that this minister has responded to a school lunch program by saying that, and I quote, this government does not have funds available for such a program, will the minister now recognize that lunch programs have a positive benefit in a child's ability to learn and to stay in school and work with the Minister of Education to implement school lunch programs in elementary schools, where there is a high need for such a thing?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I do agree that there is a need out there to provide better services, and no doubt there will always be.

I'd just like to advise this hon. member that through my department at least we do have a high expenditure: child welfare, \$155 million. I can go on as to what we provide. Day care, for example: we spend \$67 million. We have 32,000 day care spaces, one of the highest number of spaces, available in Alberta, and the lowest day care rates. I did a couple of weeks ago in fact visit six different day care centres. Five of those are for profit and one nonprofit. They all operate very well. Some of these facilities do provide an after school program and a lunch program also.

In addition to that, just introduced in this budget, Mr. Speaker, 28 new communities can join the FCSS program, which provides that specific program in a lot of areas.

**MS MJOLSNESS:** Mr. Speaker, if the minister knew anything about poor children, he'd realize that more poor children end up under child welfare, and that's probably why his budget is so high in child welfare.

My supplementary to the minister. It's well documented that children of poor families have a greater chance of dropping out of school, getting in trouble with the law, being unemployed, moving onto social assistance. I'd like to ask the minister: will the minister commit to supporting the efforts of the School Food Action Committee to implement a pilot project in two elementary schools in Edmonton to give these kids a future?

**MR. CARDINAL:** Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to indicate to the hon. member that we are taking some initiatives to work in this direction.

I don't think that hon. member can give me some education on what poverty is like. I do know. I went through it all my life. The reason we have poverty is people like the ND opposition, Mr. Speaker, who want more welfare but want no jobs. Your leader, hon. member, said the other day: massive clear-cutting of forestry projects, cut them out. The other member said . . .

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, hon. minister.

West Yellowhead, followed by Calgary-North West.

### **3:10                  Disabled Persons Programs**

**MR. DOYLE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government attacks society's most vulnerable: the poor, the sick, the elderly, children, and the disabled. The GRIT program, which serves the needs of the most severely handicapped, medically fragile children aged 2 to 5, is receiving an 8 percent reduction in its program budget through cuts to the program unit grant and a 10 percent cut in its transportation grant. Many parents are concerned that they will be unable to cope with cuts to this early intervention program and fear the institutionalization of their children. Can the Minister of Education justify these cruel and disproportionately large cuts to these most vulnerable children?

**MR. JONSON:** Mr. Speaker, this government has put a high priority on providing funding to students with special needs. If you look over the expenditures that are projected for the coming year and are occurring this year, we have been planning and will be committing well over \$120 million to special services and education for these young people. I think that is a very significant amount of money and one that compares well with other provinces in this country.

**MR. DOYLE:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's council has done excellent work advocating on behalf of the disabled, yet its budget

is cut by 9 percent, or \$71,000. Can the minister responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities justify this large cut when it appears by the actions of this government that the advocacy work of the Premier's council will need money more than ever?

**MRS. MIROSH:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's council for the disabled has had a large variety of consultation programs ongoing, and this is one that we will continue. The Premier's council for the disabled has done a magnificent job in working with the disabled community and will continue to work with the interdepartmental committees to help the disabled community.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Calgary-North West.

### **Loan Guarantees**

**MR. BRUSEKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government talks about being realistic in its budget estimates, yet the budget document shows a little bit of creative writing once again. Last year's budget showed a \$6 million allocation for losses under loan guarantees, which bloomed into a \$144 million loss, a \$138 million difference. This year's budget contains an allocation of \$10 million for the same losses under loan guarantees. My question to the Treasurer is: given that the interest losses on MagCan alone are going to amount to \$12 million this fiscal year, how does the Treasurer justify a fictitious figure of \$10 million under losses for loan guarantees?

**MR. DINNING:** Mr. Speaker, we took the advice of the Financial Review Commission to ensure that we valued and placed a conservative valuation on those future losses. The member will see that for the 1992-93 fiscal year there was an abundance of conservative caution in the large number that was allocated for that amount last year. We believe that that plus this year's amount reflects the problems and the deficiencies that we'll have to cover.

**MR. BRUSEKER:** Well, I guess the Treasurer doesn't know the answer to that question, so I'll ask him this one instead. Mr. Treasurer, can you give us a clear outline of what businesses you expect to lose only \$10 million on this year?

**MR. DINNING:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member is asking for that kind of detailed commercial information, but I know also from the Liberal Party's documentation that they said that when a government is trying to deal with these difficult financial issues, it's best that the maximum return for the taxpayers' dollars be received through the best kind of negotiations. Once those negotiations are completed or once the final valuations or write-downs occur, I will provide the hon. member with the full information, but not in a way that will jeopardize or compromise or reduce or discount the value of the return that we will get and that we must get on the taxpayers' dollar.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Olds-Didsbury, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

### **Education Funding**

**MR. BRASSARD:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. In reviewing this year's budget, I recognized that the Department of Education at \$1.9 billion was one of the few areas of the budget to actually receive an increase. In spite of that increase, however, at least one of the school boards that I represent is very concerned with what the future may hold. Things are already extremely tight. To the

minister: could you share with this Assembly how you see future budgets impacting on your department?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, certainly the hon. member is correct in that Alberta Education along with Advanced Education and Career Development are two of the departments that have received an increase in this year's budget, a very significant one given the fiscal realities of the times we are in. The addition of \$35 million, or 2.4 percent, to school boards and to the classrooms of the province is a very significant increase. We have the additional money that's available for our fiscal equity, and that will help a number of the school boards that are facing difficult budgeting challenges at the current time. Certainly this is a time when school boards are going to have to plan carefully and deal with the restraint that is upon them, but clearly the government is putting a high priority on education.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, given the stated goal of delivering "the best possible education" for students "at a reasonable cost," could he tell us just exactly how he intends to accomplish this goal?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives that have been proposed by myself and others in terms of the directions that we have to look at for the future. Certainly the sharing of services among school jurisdictions in this province and the amalgamation of school boards in terms of more efficient operations is something that has to be actively pursued. Also, we have to look at the place that technology may have in our future plans as far as education is concerned in the province. I think that most important in this process of dealing with the future financial situation as far as education is concerned is consulting and working with the school boards and other stakeholders of this province to set priorities and to develop those plans. It is certainly my view that overall I'm confident that education will remain a high priority with this government because it is so important for the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by Westlock-Sturgeon.

### Air Quality

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. At a public meeting last Thursday in Edmonton Inland Cement admitted to 49 occasions on which they had exceeded their allowances in the air pollution permit. Two days later the Edmonton board of health announced that it is investigating air emissions from Inland, including the permit which was issued, also last Thursday, by the Minister of Environmental Protection to burn tires. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if she's taking steps to involve the public health system in these important decisions before the minister of the environment runs off and issues a permit to pollute.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the public health sector and certainly Edmonton public health has that mandate in this province, and I am quite sure that they are monitoring that and will bring any concerns to this minister.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, the board of health is one of many agencies that were shafted by the government when it issued the permit without doing an environmental impact assessment. In view of the fact that environmental health is an initiative of the

minister's department, I wonder if she could advise whether she as a minister is prepared to stand up to the Minister of Environmental Protection and insist that he consider these health implications before he issues permits instead of forcing the board of health to investigate after the fact as they are now doing?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the board of health very clearly has the mandate to attend to this issue. I would also inform the hon. member that the Minister of Health and the minister of the environment have agreed to work together and indeed have a committee under my department that is looking at these issues where we can be more proactive in working together rather than having the cost of the investigative work being done carried fully by public health after. So, yes, we are addressing that.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

**3:20**

### Crow Benefit

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day in response to the Member for Wainwright inquiring about the Crow benefit and how it would be paid out if indeed the federal government put it through, the minister of agriculture stated that it would be on the basis of acreage and productivity. Because a considerable amount of the past production has been used domestically, this means that the money, the Crow benefit, would be split amongst exporters and nonexporters of grain. In other words, then, the present \$20 a tonne that now goes only to exporting companies would be diluted, if you want to call it that. My calculations say that it would be \$6 a tonne. Is that the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The question is?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This is fairly complicated, and I thought you'd listen.

### Speaker's Ruling Brevity

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. It's fairly complicated to take up a whole minute, so could we have the question, please? Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Are you speaking on my time or your time? I'm sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: It's your time.

### Crow Benefit (continued)

MR. TAYLOR: Okay. To the minister then: would he agree that the dilution would be about \$14 to \$16 a tonne?

MR. ISLEY: No, Mr. Speaker, I would not agree to that. I don't think the hon. member quite got my answer as of last week clear in his mind. I suggested that the Alberta government was taking the position that the farmer entitlement should be based upon arable acres adjusted for productivity and adjusted for distance from port. I would agree with him that the payment would be to all producers whether they were processing their product on the prairies or taking it into the export marketplace, and the very reason why we've been trying to get the change is to remove the distortion that the existing system causes when it only tracks export grain.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, then, in view of the fact that the grain exporting sector, which is probably in the most trouble in farming, could suffer a loss of up to \$14 a tonne and in view of the complexity of the situation, would he at least agree that before any move is made to pay the producers, he would hold a plebiscite of all producers?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member should probably be in Saskatchewan instead of Alberta. Then he could support a grain transportation policy that may as well attach a caboose to the end of the train of grain cars and ship the young people out along with the grain, because you're not creating the jobs back home. This issue has been debated long and strong. We went through the transportation discussions. If an agreement is reached, I don't hold out any hope of a plebiscite.

### **Chelation Therapy**

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, it's evident from the Provincial Treasurer's recently tabled budget that the government is committed to reducing government spending. Assuming this commitment is shared by the Minister of Health, I wonder if the minister can report on the progress of her review of EDTA chelation therapy as an inexpensive alternative to high-cost coronary artery bypass surgery and balloon angioplasty?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the hon. member and all hon. members that first of all the drug EDTA must be licensed through Health and Welfare Canada. The Minister of Health in Alberta does not license the drug that would be used in chelation therapy. Also, it is indeed the College of Physicians and Surgeons in the province of Alberta who recommend medically accepted practices in this province.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have looked at this therapy very closely. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley, the chair of the Health Planning Secretariat, has met with the chelation association of Alberta, and the provincial medical consultant has also attended and heard a presentation from that group. So we are most interested in chelation therapy.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I don't question the minister's interest. I'm slightly uneasy about the three different directions in which her finger pointed.

I'm sure she is aware that chelation therapy as a valid treatment for coronary artery disease is permitted now in a number of states in the United States and nations in Europe. Would she be prepared to urge the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who admittedly have a vested interest in high-cost surgical solutions to cardiac problems, to expedite their review and approval of the chelation association of Alberta's application for a scientific study to be conducted here in Alberta? It could save us millions of dollars.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, first of all, I also neglected to mention to the hon. member - and I know he and all other members would be interested to know - that the chelation association are making a presentation to the standing policy committee on community services, I believe, this evening. I would invite the hon. member to come. We're very fortunate in this Legislature, under the leadership of our Premier, to have a process where all may come before the members and have their procedures heard. Recommendations indeed fall from that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS CALAHASEN: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order will be taken after question period.

The Minister of Health has information from a previous question period to questions raised by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands dealing with the Provincial Lab.

The Minister of Health.

### **Provincial Laboratory of Health**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to a question from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands taken on notice by the Provincial Treasurer regarding the Provincial Lab. I want to assure the member that our government is committed to managing the growth of private labs, and I have reporting to me a diagnostic advisory committee which makes expert recommendations on how to contain costs in the diagnostic services sector. Private labs is one of those areas. This committee also does review all applications for new facilities, and the final approval is made by the minister.

In essence what I'm telling you is that prior approval must be granted before a new lab can be opened. This does allow us to manage the number of labs and hopefully will contain it in that area. I would . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.

Maybe we can have a supplementary back and forth. Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister to make a four-year commitment. The reason I asked the question in the first place was because of what the Provincial Treasurer's budget had said. They wanted a four-year plan. Well, I want a four-year plan, and Albertans want a four-year plan to make sure that the growth of the very cost-efficient public lab continues and we see a decrease of the much more expensive private labs, which Alberta taxpayers can't afford anymore. A four-year commitment: is this minister willing to give it?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, I would agree with the hon. member on the importance of the Provincial Lab and the good work that they do. I would not agree necessarily that private labs are more expensive to the public sector, because indeed we do not fund the building of a private lab.

I want to assure the hon. member, though, that the mandate of the Provincial Lab has not in any way been diminished. It has not changed, and in fact we're looking at opportunities to enhance the use of the Provincial Lab in this province. I think the commitment is more than a four-year commitment. The provincial labs in this province have operated for a number of years, and we expect them to continue to. We will continue to work with them to make sure that they are effective, efficient, that we avoid duplication, and we'll do that through better planning and collaboration. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are working to manage the private labs in this province, and we do fully support the mandate of the Provincial Lab.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Point of order, Lesser Slave Lake.

### **Point of Order**

### **Parliamentary Language**

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier on before my question I didn't actually mean to say what I said. In terms of using unparliamentary language, however, there was an awful

racket coming from the other side. I apologize for using unparliamentary language.

**head: Motions under Standing Order 40**

**3:30**

MR. SPEAKER: We have a request under Standing Order 40. Speaking to the matter of urgency, not to the matter of the motion, please.

**Vista '93**

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would speak to Standing Order 40 on urgency with regard to the notice I sent before the House earlier. I thank you for accepting my apologies for not advising you in advance.

Mr. Speaker, the urgency is because this conference going on in Jasper for the handicapped in sports recreation is the very first of its kind in the world. The president of that organization, Dr. Robert Steadward, is from the Rick Hansen Centre at the University of Alberta. Mr. Steadward gathered delegates expecting 100, and it ended up that there were 163 delegates, mostly doctors and scientific people from around the world concerned about the handicapped in sports recreation. There were 27 countries involved, like Israel, Lithuania, Australia, Japan, China: far too many to name.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to thank the minister of lotteries for providing tote bags for all the delegates at that convention and funds to make sure that the convention was a success. It began on Saturday and will end on Wednesday morning.

MR. SPEAKER: On the matter of urgency under Standing Order 40, those members willing to allow the matter to proceed, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried unanimously.

Moved by Mr. Doyle:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the organizers of Vista '93, the first international symposium on sport for athletes with disabilities, which is being held in Jasper. Organizers, including Dr. Robert Steadward and Dr. Garry Wheeler, both of the Rick Hansen Centre at the University of Alberta, and Mr. Gary McPherson, chairperson of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, attracted professionals from 27 countries around the world.

MR. SPEAKER: Any additional comments, West Yellowhead?

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the people involved with such an important function, I would like to thank the government for their support.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated by the voice vote, we're very supportive of this motion. I would like to indicate that I had the opportunity to attend the opening ceremonies of it last Friday evening on behalf of the Premier. I should indicate that when meeting with Dr. Steadward and a number of the individuals that are so involved with Vista '93, they were very complimentary towards the Deputy Premier and minister of public works and minister responsible for lotteries not only for his support for Vista '93 but, just as importantly, for his support for the Rick Hansen Centre. We're delighted that we can play a role

in helping these individuals play an important part in the mainstream of our Alberta way of life, and we take this opportunity to pay tribute to them for the outstanding courage they exhibit on an ongoing basis.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our caucus I want to indicate our support for the motion and commend the member for bringing it forward.

Wheelchair sports have come a long, long way. I shouldn't use the term "wheelchair" sports because it involves now persons with varying degrees of disabilities. I myself can recall Canada having its first national games in 1967. On a very, very limited budget we traveled to Montreal where we had a competition. It was the first ever competition for wheelchair sports. At that time in Canada it was called "wheelchair" sports. Since that time we've seen the Rick Hansens and a number of others that have gone on to wheel around a track for one mile faster than most people can run it. It has come a long, long way. People like Robert Steadward and Gary McPherson have contributed a great, great deal towards that whole process.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter before the House is the motion as proposed by the Member for West Yellowhead. All those members in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries, let the record show unanimously. The appropriate certificates will be sent immediately.

Thank you.

**head: Orders of the Day**

**head: Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please. Today the Committee of Supply is meeting for the first time this year, for the second time this session.

**head: Capital Fund Estimates 1993-94**

**Advanced Education and Career Development  
1 – Construction of Postsecondary Education Facilities**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would invite the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development to generally describe the nature of these estimates as they relate to his department. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As minister responsible I'm pleased to present the capital estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development. Effectively, these are the capital estimates for the postsecondary system in Alberta, including universities, colleges, and technical institutes, and in this year's budget total some \$67,860,970. I had considered giving an overview of how the capital system works, but in view of the fact that all members have been in the Assembly at least four years,

I'll dispense with that and move to a description of the projects that actually fall within the budget this year.

I'd like to begin with the project at the University of Alberta known as the utilities upgrading project, for some \$2,171,000. This project was originally approved in 1988-89, and it's intended to provide more reliable utilities services, such as power, heating, and cooling, to the south university campus. The funds were provided to the University of Alberta, but the beneficiaries of the project include the Walter Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, the Red Cross blood donor clinic, the Jubilee Auditorium, the W.W. Cross Cancer hospital, and Corbett Hall. The original approval was for \$19.2 million, but because of favourable bids and other priorities the university was permitted to reallocate some of the project funds to the animal facilities on campus. The university had planned to complete the project in the 1992-93 fiscal year, but because of delays in decisions by the city of Edmonton respecting the alignment of the LRT on campus, it has been unable to complete the work. Therefore, the university did not spend all of its funds intended for the project, and the full amount of the remaining project funds carried on to the 1993-94 fiscal year.

The animal facilities project, for some \$2,689,000, that I spoke of earlier was originally approved in the 1990-91 year in response to the need for renovation of animal facilities at the university's Faculty of Medicine and the heritage research centre. The total project is budgeted for some \$8.5 million and will be completed in 1993-94. The facilities after renovation will be state of the art. These facilities will not only attract researchers to the university but also will attract research grants from provincial and federal granting bodies.

**3:40**

I'd like to move on now to projects at the University of Calgary, the first being the business program expansion covering building and equipment. In response to a growing demand for more business graduates the University of Calgary was provided with almost \$10 million to expand its business faculty in 1989-90. Of that total, \$7.9 million was for the expansion of the business building known as Scurfield Hall, and almost \$2 million was for equipment related to the project. The expenditures in this area in this fiscal year are the final payments to fulfill those original obligations.

The next, being the Professional Faculties Building, is budgeted for \$16,486,000. The University of Calgary has accommodated growing numbers of students over the last decade and accomplished this through squeezing and timetable changes. In 1989-90 approval was given to begin planning for the Professional Faculties Building. This building of 29,300 square metres, at a total cost of \$52,900,000, will house the faculties of Environmental Design, Law, Nursing, Social Work and general classroom and ancillary space. The project, constructed by PCL Maxam, is on schedule, on budget, and will be ready for occupancy in September 1993. Some site work costs will be carried over into the next fiscal year.

I'd like to move on now to the college component, the Grant MacEwan Community College, city centre campus, with a budget of \$46,040,000. The city centre campus, located along 104th Avenue between 105th Street and 111 Street, will consolidate all of the programs being offered at the Cromdale campus and the Seventh Street Plaza campus. It consists of four buildings to accommodate business, general studies, university transfer, and recreation programs. It will accommodate 4,500 students in a new facility that includes the new physical education centre, available to students at all the college campuses, and a learning resource centre able to accommodate a 6,500 student campus. Initial approval for planning for the \$110 million facility was given in

1989-90 and includes room for future expansion. The 72,300 square metre project is ahead of schedule and under its original budget. It is being constructed by Raywalt Construction, PCL Maxam, and Stuart Olson.

The Alberta Vocational College at Lesser Slave Lake has a budget of \$252,130. These funds are for equipment and furnishings for various construction projects essential to the operation of the college in northern Alberta. These projects, which are part of the Public Works, Supply and Services budget, include the new campus at Slave Lake, \$15,400,000; the Wabasca-Desmarais facility built by Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services, \$4,500,000; and the Moostoos Building at High Prairie, which is leased.

Mr. Chairman, that covers the components of the budget in the capital projects for this department and hopefully gives the members something of an overview. I would be pleased to entertain questions that they might have pertaining to those projects.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

**MR. PASHAK:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the past practice when tabling the capital fund estimates was for the government to also bring forward supplementary information with respect to the element details. I have with me the statement of government estimates and capital fund estimates for 1992-93. In the back under Advanced Education there's quite a complete breakdown of expenditure by institution. We have a little statement, admittedly, on page 8 of the capital fund estimates that have been presented earlier, but it might have been more helpful if that had been elaborated and set out in a way to show just where all of those expenditures were targeted in terms of being able to respond more directly to the minister. I must say, though, through the Chair to the hon. minister, that I do appreciate the fact that he did in his remarks provide some supplementary information with respect to these issues, but my first question to him is really: why this change in terms of the way in which this important budgetary information is presented to the members of the Assembly?

My second question has to do with the whole business having to do with proper maintenance and upkeep. Now, I recognize that in the general revenue fund there's some small sum of money – I think it's in the neighbourhood of \$40 million – that's provided for upkeep, but during the estimates debate one year ago the minister that preceded the current minister of advanced education said in effect that we need \$600 million just to provide some reasonable maintenance of our existing postsecondary plants in the province of Alberta. I know that a few years ago, in conjunction with members from all parties of the House, the faculty association at the University of Calgary organized a tour of the facilities there. At the time that we were taken around the University of Calgary campus, even though that's a relatively new university they were in desperate need of at least \$30 million just to bring their plant up to reasonable operating speed. Now, this was about four or five years ago, I think, when we went on that tour. I know that since that period of time there's been continual deterioration of the equipment and the facilities. The problem is, of course, that if we don't address this running down, if we don't do proper maintenance now, a lot of these facilities are in danger of becoming totally unusable. They'd have to be replaced at a much greater expense. It'd be sort of really penny-wise to make necessary and needed repairs right now before they get out of hand. The moneys that are provided in the general revenue fund, Mr. Chairman, simply aren't sufficient to address that issue. There has to be a larger

cash transfusion here. I'd like the minister to make it really clear to the members of the Assembly just what his priorities are. I think my priorities would be to make sure that we got existing physical plants in order before we embarked on new capital expenditures.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that the minister is under a lot of pressure from a number of community colleges in the province to change their mandate from that of offering one or two years of postsecondary education, in some cases a third year, to becoming full-fledged degree-granting institutions. If they move in that direction, they're going to need additional physical plant; they're going to need more classrooms and that sort of thing. So I wonder what the minister's priority is here. Is it to provide additional new facilities, or is it to address this urgent and pressing need to bring our existing plant up to a reasonable operating level?

Earlier this session, just by way of an example, my colleague for Edmonton-Strathcona asked questions of the minister with respect to Michener Park, which is a student residence at the University of Alberta that needs some immediate upgrading. It needs upgrading to the point that the university is looking at privatizing Michener centre. So, Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, I'd like to ask what his intention is with respect to that. Is he prepared to take any action to ensure that the roof repairs at the Michener centre are done? I think that would take pressure off the possibility of the university privatizing this institution. By the way, the minister said that he would be prepared to deal with this question when the capital budgets have been announced. I assume that they've been announced now so that he'd be prepared to look at that issue.

Finally, I'd like the hon. minister to comment on how he sees the role of advanced technology with respect to the question of providing additional facilities and this sort of thing. I look at what's possible through telecommunications and what's available through personal computers: the kind of programming that's going on right now, the opportunities for video teleconferencing that are there right now. The costs of doing this are declining rather rapidly. Do we even have to think in the future about providing brick and mortar - buildings, that is - in order to ensure that students in this province, wherever they are, have access to postsecondary education? I guess my question, Mr. Chairman, to the minister is really: what initiatives is his department taking with respect to looking at how technology could begin to be used to resolve what admittedly is a very serious accessibility problem that our students face at the postsecondary level in Alberta at this point in time?

With those few comments, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to hear from the minister.

**3:50**

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight.

**MRS. GAGNON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, want to make some comment about the lack of specificity in the estimates. Grant MacEwan city centre campus at \$46 million is mentioned, the U of C Professional Faculties Building at \$16.5 million, the U of A animal care facility at \$2.7 million, the U of A utilities upgrading project at \$2.2 million. This does leave about \$400,000 unaccounted for: \$169,000 at universities and \$252,000 at provincially administered institutions. I would gather by the minister's comments that these moneys are for the business faculty expansion at the U of C, the AVC at Lesser Slave Lake, the projects at Wabasca and High Prairie. If there is more than that, I would hope the minister would reveal this when he responds to our comments. It is quite unusual that the amount of \$400,000

was not accounted for in the estimates but only later during the minister's comments.

I also want to talk about the problem of deferred maintenance, as mentioned by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn. During last year's capital estimates the minister of advanced education spoke of \$600,000 needed in this area, and the amount is growing all the time. This is the same kind of problem as one would have if one owned a home and never repaired the leaks in the roof, ignored the leaks in the basement to the point where such neglect would end up costing much, much more as the buildings would become totally unusable. Many facilities in the province at the moment do not meet current Building Code standards for fire and safety. This is not a sudden situation. It's not as if they only suddenly needed repair. This has been going on for years, and the government has failed to keep up the repairs on these buildings. They have not listened to the institutions who've said: we really need to begin a program of renovation and repair because deterioration is taking place.

This year there is a 17 percent cut in the capital renewal grants, something which I think is shameful. It is not at all cost-effective to not maintain the capital assets that you have. This also causes situations such as the one that's ongoing with Michener Park and the threat of privatization. It seems to me that we're leaving our institutions in a hopeless situation. Either the residences in this case fall apart or have to be sold. Given the opinion of the former minister that such facilities should be sold, is it the position of the government at this time that institutions should privatize these public capital investments to make up for government cuts? That is a question that I hope the minister would answer.

Mr. Chairman, the government has a formula for capital funding which it consistently ignores. Not only must institutions neglect their needs for maintenance and renovations, but the technology becomes more and more outdated, and needed equipment cannot be replaced, and thus the education of students is neglected. The Premier's economic development speech is not at all reflected in this capital fund estimates budget. The strategy enunciated in that speech was this:

Research and development facilities, communication networks, and related infrastructure will be targeted as a priority to build our knowledge-based economy.

The words sound wonderful. These facilities already exist. They are colleges, universities, and technical institutions, but all are suffering under the neglect of this government. The Communications Network, or the electronic highway as mentioned in the Premier's speech, is absolutely essential to our postsecondary institutions and to our public and private research facilities to ensure the competitiveness that we need in the area of high technology, so I would like the minister to also answer the following question: is the government committed to the Communications Network?

These, Mr. Chairman, are my comments. Again, I'm very pleased to see the funding which is ongoing for those major estimates which were given us in the booklet. I am extremely concerned about deferred maintenance, as are many, many administrators at our institutions, and I would like to know how the minister intends to fulfill the mandate given in the Premier's economic development speech.

Thank you.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The hon. minister would like to reply.

**MR. ADY:** It seems that both of the members who spoke have an interest in the capital renewal component of the budget, although it's not part of the capital projects. It comes out of general

revenue. Maybe I could spend just a few minutes giving them something of an overview of the priority and the interest that the government has in this particular issue.

There really are no simple answers to the question of how to keep our physical facilities in good operating condition. The solutions will be various and will have to involve action both on the part of the government and on the part of the institutions. Finding solutions for the renewal of buildings and equipment has been and will continue to be a very high priority for this minister. Within the limits of the province's financial situation I'm developing a strategy which I expect will enable institutions to respond to the challenge of capital renewal over time. First, as I have said, we have developed and provided to the postsecondary system one of the most extensive and complete physical plants in the country. The most recent additions to that plant are now being completed in Calgary and Edmonton. Part of our response has been a focus on increasingly efficient use of those buildings by extended use on a daily basis and on weekends and into the summer. That should enable us to limit the construction of new buildings in the future. Undoubtedly we will still have to recognize emerging needs by building some new buildings, but the justification will have to be very compelling.

Furthermore, I expect to see institutions support their request for high-priority new facilities by fund-raising campaigns which will help limit the impact on the public purse. Limiting construction of new facilities should enable us to refocus capital fund expenditures in the future on major renovation and renewal projects for those buildings in the system which are nearing the end of their useful life and require major overhaul.

As I've already pointed out, capital renewal grants to institutions are not part of these estimates, but clearly they are relevant to the issue. Although these funds have been constrained in recent years and have undergone a further reduction in 1993-94, we have endeavoured to protect those funds as much as possible under the circumstances. It is worth noting that there are a few jurisdictions in this country which provide segregated funding for capital renewal. Clearly the level of direct capital renewal funding is inadequate to the task of maintaining all buildings and equipment in the system. Part of the answer is to work with institutions to develop productivity savings that will help support the annual needs for maintenance. In support of this element of this strategy I've given postsecondary institutions permission to allocate up to 2 percent of their operating grants toward capital renewal purposes.

I had hoped that the overview that I gave would give the members the additional detail that they might expect. I recognize that on page 8 of the capital fund estimates there is an outline of the projects that fall under this budget under the heading of Program Delivery Mechanism, and I would refer them to that for the amount of money allocated to each project.

**4:00**

I should also emphasize that there are no new capital projects in this year's budget but, rather, funding in place to complete projects that were announced sometime ago and have been ongoing. Several of those will be completed in this budget year, as a matter of fact the majority of them.

The members both mentioned Michener Park. It's recognized that Michener Park does require upgrading and that it's a facility that is utilized by the students for their housing, but we need to remember that it's part of the complex of the university and it belongs to the university. Consequently, it falls within the mandate of the board of governors and the administration of the university to allocate funding for upgrading. Michener Park falls

within that. The University of Alberta will receive over \$8 million in upgrading funding this year, which, granted, is not sufficient to meet their needs as they have reported them. I know that the University of Alberta is looking at options on how to deal with the circumstance that exists at Michener Park. If I recall correctly, one of the members put the question to me about the privatization of Michener Park. I can only respond that I've not received any request from the board of governors to sell off Michener Park. Before they could do that, they would have to receive permission from the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn also raised the question of our priority, whether it was being directed to new technology or whether we would continue along the path of new bricks and mortar. Let me assure him that this government is not anxious to initiate new capital projects in the system but rather to bring about efficiencies, whether it be through efficiencies of programming or utilizing the new technology that's becoming available almost on a daily basis. In fact during recent weeks when I've been visiting the institutions, I find that they are using new technology on an increasing basis. I spoke to them about several applications that they are looking at to utilize new technology, and I'm optimistic that that will be a major component in solving some of the difficulties that we have with access for students and an opportunity to preclude building new buildings.

The Member for Calgary-McKnight, as I mentioned, also talked about capital renewal. I hope that my remarks have given the member an overview of the priority that we have on it; we know that it's a necessity that it be addressed in some manner. I hope that she can realize the difficulty that we have in finding funding to do it immediately. As I mentioned in my remarks, I do have a proposal that I hope to receive approval for that will allow us to work with the institutions and government to address this circumstance.

I believe that addresses the main questions. I haven't had an opportunity to address the first question that the Member for Calgary-McKnight put to me, having to do with the numbers not balancing. I believe they balance on the overview that I gave, but for some reason - I'll have to look and see what the discrepancy is in the numbers, and I can perhaps respond to the member in writing later on that. I'm sure there's a logical answer, but I can't answer her because I don't have the information right at my fingertips.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn, followed by Edmonton-Kingsway.

**MR. PASHAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like, first of all, to thank the minister for providing answers to the questions that I put to him earlier. He did introduce some new information in his remarks that I'd like to follow up briefly with him. He indicated that in the new budget process our postsecondary institutions would have the option of taking up to 2 percent out of their operating budgets and putting that into the capital side of their budgets. I can't help but feel a little worried about this. At least, the alarm bells are going off. We all know that these institutions are under a lot of pressure, not just pressures to upgrade their physical plant and upgrade their equipment and that sort of thing. We know that increasingly institutions are meeting the accessibility problem, the crunch of students that are showing up, by asking faculty to teach larger numbers of students, to increase their workloads. One instructor I know at the University of Alberta just recently told me that he had over 300 students in a fourth-year sociology class, and I just wonder what kind of individual attention a student can get in these circumstances and how the learning

process is facilitated with these kinds of numbers. I know what happens from my own personal experience: instructors begin to move away from giving essay-type exams and give more multiple-choice exams. So a component that everyone is concerned about, the development of writing skills, increasingly is lost even at the postsecondary level.

I can just see situations in which certain administrators who maybe are enamoured of the notion of increasing – well, I'm not sure whether this 2 percent is available for new construction or just for maintenance. [interjection] Oh, it's just for maintenance.

In any event, I think it's a dangerous precedent, and I would hope that the minister would have found another way of solving this. Perhaps the minister might want to comment on my concern.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway

**MR. McEACHERN:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening to the conversations and looking at the various books associated with these capital fund expenditures. I do have to comment that I don't find the little paragraph on page 8 of the new book an adequate replacement for the kind of element details we used to get in the old element detail book.

I look back at last year. There were five points in the advanced education capital works program – 1.1, 1.2, up to 1.5 – five different items listed, money under some of them and blanks, zeros, under others. When you look at the element detail book, those five points were split into 17 points. So there were considerably more details in the backup information to the capital fund expenditures outlined last year compared to this year.

I thought this was a government that was going to be more open and give more information and give more detail and tell everybody what they were doing. It seems to me that what they have done is reorganized the books all right but used the opportunity to in fact give us less information.

**4:10**

Now, some capital expenditures for education also come under the education budget in the general budget as well, so I had to look over there to see what's going on and see what the breakdown is that way around. There's rather a strange anomaly, and I don't know if the minister wants to answer at this time or wait for education estimates another time. According to last year's book, the capital fund expenditures in the general education budget – you know, the operating budget – there was some \$50.6 million estimated for the 1992-93 fiscal year. This year's book quotes it as only \$26.2 million and then says that in fact the forecast bears that out at \$36.5 million and the new ones for the coming year at \$28.5 million approximately. So in terms of capital expenditures – and you said there are no new projects going ahead – you can add to this \$67.8 million, I guess, another \$28.5 million for this year.

My concern is that in looking at the operating budget figures, I also looked to see how well they were broken down compared to last year, and while the layout and format are the same in the operating budget book for last year and this year, again this year now we will have no element details to add more information or break down that information into greater detail for us, as we had last year. So not only have we been shortchanged on information on the capital side but also on the operating side and on the capital expenditures under the general budget.

Mr. Chairman, that is a serious lack, and I think the Treasurer really has to be taken to task for doing that. I think that the minister who has to stand here and defend his estimates and we in the House who are supposed to debate these issues should have the

detailed kind of information, at least as much as we had before. In fact I thought it was inadequate. I thought that it needed more detail in many cases than we got. Now we have even less information, and I think it's inexcusable. I think it's just going in the opposite direction to what this government has claimed it's going: to provide us with more information.

Now, Mr. Chairman, this \$67.8 million, almost \$67.9 million, of capital expenditures is part of an overall capital expenditure of, I believe, \$311 million. Each year the Treasurer indicates how much of the principal of our capital borrowing is going to be paid and how much will be for interest payments. Now, we had that for last year. I've been unable to find it in this year's books yet. Perhaps the breakdown on those two figures is somewhere in that budget document, Budget '93. I looked up last year's figures and found that the principal payment was \$83 million and the debt servicing cost was \$159 million on the capital side. Now, that was on borrowings of \$1.44 billion in the capital fund. That's not all the borrowings of the province of course; the province, at that stage, in the general revenue fund had borrowed \$10.67 billion.

Now, I did look in the new books and tried to find the new totals and was able to find those two figures; that was for March '92. For March 31, '93, the general revenue total capital fund borrowings have gone up to \$4.1 billion; from the capital fund side, \$1.66 billion, up from, as I mentioned, the \$1.44 last year. But I've not been able to find in the books a breakdown on the \$311 million needed for the capital fund to show which is interest payment and which is principal payment. I think that's something that the government needs to build into these books so that we know what's going on there. So, Mr. Chairman, I just really want it on the record for this minister, because he is the first one before the Assembly, and to the Treasurer that the information they're providing is not really adequate.

Just before I leave that topic – I will get back to very specific education questions; I have two or three – I wanted to say that that \$14.1 billion in borrowing from the general revenue fund plus the \$1.66 billion puts us at just under \$16 billion in borrowing. Now, the Treasurer a while ago brought in Bill 63, I believe it was, which was to amend the Financial Administration Act. Yes, it was Bill 63, Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1993. I was struck that he didn't bother, in bringing in that Act, like he does in most years when he brings it in, to ask to increase the borrowing power. Now, I remember distinctly that last year the government raised its borrowing power from \$13.5 billion to \$17.5 billion, and I couldn't help thinking that with the way things have gone over this last year and the amount of money expended, the government would be pushing against that limit of \$17.5 billion. I was concerned that it may be some time yet if we have an election and don't pass these budgets and don't have a Bill increasing the borrowing power, that the government may exceed its legal borrowing limits. I guess a question really to the Treasurer probably is: has he borrowed enough of that money from the heritage trust fund that he doesn't have to borrow externally, and is that a problem or not? Is borrowing from the heritage trust fund, which is really our own fund, not counted in totaling the borrowing for this province? Is that maybe why he's been borrowing so much more from the heritage trust fund in recent times: so that he wouldn't be pushing on that upper limit? It certainly came as a bit of a surprise to me when the independent audit committee that the government hired recently to look at their books said that the heritage trust fund was only worth \$7.6 billion because the general revenue fund had borrowed so much money from it.

So, Mr. Chairman, those are some important questions that should be answered by the minister and by the Treasurer: the

minister in terms of the details in education; the Treasurer in terms of the whole style of all of the ministries. If that's the way they're going to treat them, that means that for all the ministries that we're going to debate we're not going to have the kind of detailed information that we got in previous years. Here I thought that this Treasurer was going to do a better job than the previous Treasurer. He's obviously not. This minister should be pushing the Treasurer to provide that kind of information, or maybe the minister should have produced some supplementary information of his own and passed it out at the start of his estimates. Certainly I hope he will do so for the operating budget, if we get a chance to debate that before an election call. So I'm rather distressed at the way that the books are being handled by this new government, and I'm sorry that the minister's got caught being the first one to have to defend what can only be considered a more secretive approach to asking the House to approve expenditures of taxpayers' dollars in this province.

Now, specifically on some of the comments and questions raised on education that are not related exactly to dollar figures, or at least that's not the main point of some of my inquiries. There is some money, some \$2.7 million, being put toward an animal care facility at the University of Alberta. I want to ask the minister: is this a result of some of the rather unfavourable publicity received in recent years by the University of Alberta for the way it has handled animal experimentation and the way some of those animals have been housed? Will these new facilities go a long way to not only housing the animals in of course proper and excellent facilities – at least, I would hope they would be – but also has the university used this opportunity to take a look at its procedures and how it treats those animals and how it uses them in experimentation and how much of it is necessary, how much of it is ethical? All those questions need to be asked. We do share this Earth with our brother and sister animals, and it does seem to me that we need to have some care and consideration for how we treat them and not be too gross in deciding that their lives are of no consequence and that therefore it's no problem to sacrifice them or cause them incredible pain as long as we're bettering our own human conditions. I think that we tread on dangerous territory if we get as callous in that area as we have been in past years. If the minister hasn't had a chance to look into that or doesn't know a lot about it because he is new in his job, I would hope that he would take a good look at that area and have some comments for this House.

**4:20**

There is another area of education. Of course, I was a teacher for some 25 years before I got elected in 1986, so I'm concerned about students leaving high school and going into universities and entrance requirements and all those things. What kind of education are we offering those people? What directions will education take in the near future? There are multitudes of questions I could ask. I'm concerned about the entrance requirements and some of the recent changes that have been made in that area. How many people are we barring from further education, perhaps unnecessarily, with artificially high entrance requirements, the main purpose of which is to sort of set quotas and limit the number of people that get into our educational institutions because we don't seem to have enough money to keep them up?

My colleague from Calgary-Forest Lawn suggested that some of the new technologies could help to alleviate some of the costs, and the minister replied that maybe we don't need to build more bricks and mortar. That's possible, but I do think that we have to look very carefully at how and when and why we expand that area. Of course he would be aware that Athabasca University has led the

way in experimenting with what they call long-distance learning or distance learning. They certainly would have some instructive ideas, I think, on how to do it, what to do, what not to do. A concern I would raise in that regard is that if we decide to go more and more to that sort of computer connection learning, we have to watch out, I think, that we don't lose the socialization that goes with an education. Certainly we have schools where we gather students together, and they learn to socialize. We start of course with day cares and kindergartens or even just on an informal basis, families getting together. So the socialization process is as much of the learning process and growing process as is more formal information learning, as we tend to think of education, or training for jobs. That carries on not just through high school.

[Mr. Main in the Chair]

In fact, one of the things that concerns me in that regard is the number of people that are opting out, because we seem to be eroding the viability of the public system. At least there's a lot of talk about that. I don't totally buy that. I know that certainly a lot of teachers work very hard trying to keep the education system in this country and in this province viable, but they do it with great difficulty and under great stress because they keep being loaded with more and more responsibilities. The number of people that are opting out of the education system and deciding to educate their children at home is, I think, starting to become a concern, at least to me, because you do not get the same kind of socialization processes taking place. While it's all very well for students to learn about their Charter of Rights and their rights in our society, they also need to learn about social responsibility, and that is an area that is not well taught in small settings or with few people. So I have concerns at the postsecondary level, as well, about students going more and more to a distance learning sort of approach. Certainly to some extent it is required, and with the technologies available I'm sure the person who lives in some remote northern community can get the kind of education and the kind of things they need from a computer contact with a professor, say, at the University of Alberta or Athabasca University. I applaud that, and I'm certainly not saying that we shouldn't do that. Certainly if the person's an adult and in the work force and trying to change their vocation or upgrade their skills or take something for interest, then that's not a problem.

One of the things that would concern me is if we started trying to educate en masse the large, large numbers of students coming out of our high schools in some kind of computer setting where they did not have contact with other students and other people in a social setting. Contact through the computer can be very interesting and very entertaining, I gather, by those who are computer junkies. But I think you would find some of the same difficulties that California ran into years ago when they decided to bring program learning into the schools on a large scale. In this case it was with younger students in elementary and even primary school. They found that the students achieved very well at first, when the program machine was sort of new and novel, but pretty soon they lost a lot of interest because they didn't have the approval of the teacher and their classmates for success in moving along with the program, at least not on a regular enough basis and in a personal enough way. So I don't think that we should move in that direction without some very careful thought as to the consequences. In other words, the technologies are available, and we should thoughtfully decide how to use them, not necessarily just grab onto the nearest and newest technology and follow it

wherever it takes us without thought to the consequences in terms of a real education for our students.

Mr. Chairman, those are some of my interests and concerns, and I would appreciate any comments the minister might have.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

**MR. ADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to deal with one of the points that was made by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn. He expressed a concern over the 2 percent that could be allocated to capital renewal from within the operating budget of the institutions. Let me be clear that there was a caveat put on that: that could only be used for that purpose as long as it did not affect access negatively. It was done in an effort to give the institution more flexibility. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, there are very few jurisdictions left in the country who set out a special fund. Most of them have now moved to a total block funding for postsecondary education, and the institutions are left free to choose how best to use it.

To move on to Edmonton-Kingsway, the best that I can tell him on his concern about the element details is that for this particular budget that we're talking about today pertaining to my department, the projects are very straightforward, and there's just really not a lot of intricate detail that could be supplied for them. It's X number of dollars to complete Grant MacEwan College. If we were to go further, I suppose you could break down how much for the recreation side of it, how much for the learning side of it, and the like. I don't think that that's what the member was really looking for in particular but rather making comments in a general nature, feeling that there were not enough details in the overall budget elements that he's been given. The best that I can tell him is that I'll take note of his dissatisfaction about the details that he feels should be there and will pass it on to the Treasurer.

**4:30**

He also talks about the principal repayment, and I wasn't clear if the hon. member did find the principal repayment in the budget. For his interest, the principal repayment for this component of the budget is \$17,845,251. The interest is paid by Treasury, and I don't have that number as part of my department estimates. If they were to come forward, they would come forward under the Treasury Department when that department does its full estimates in the House, because it's that department that picks up the interest payments against the capital fund. Each department is just responsible for its principal repayment over a 35-year period on capital projects and 10 years on equipment.

He also raised a question about the animal care facility. This project has been ongoing for two or three years. It was brought about because the facilities that were there were seen to be inadequate and the institution was not able to care for and handle the animals properly. I have received assurance that the new facility that's being put in place will put the University of Alberta right on the leading edge of the type of facilities that should be put in place to handle animals for experimental purposes properly. Hopefully, that will answer his concerns about that.

Also, the member had some concern about the social aspect of students who might be put into a circumstance where they have to use distance learning in order to get access. I guess the best I can answer that is that there is high-tech equipment coming on the scene on a daily basis that enhances the opportunity to give students an education without being in a classroom. I should also go on to say that it opens up the opportunity for students in a community to be assembled and to be taught by distance learning,

and thereby they could take advantage of the social aspect of learning because they would be able to interact with one another and to discuss what they're endeavouring to learn. It would be similar in many respects to having a professor there except that you would have a mechanical professor as opposed to a human one.

Again, in visiting with some of the institutions, it would appear to me that that opportunity really does exist. Specifically when I visited with the Athabasca University, that was one of the things they could see a potential for. I also received a call just two days ago about some, again, very new technology that gives the student and the professor even more access to each other on an ongoing interplay basis through the computer system. Although I didn't have time to go and look at it, I did want to and hopefully will be able to in the not too distant future so that we can evaluate the potential for that for distance learning for students and also to help address the access problems that we have which were outlined by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

I don't know if there were too many more specific questions that the member asked that pertain to this department. There were some observations made that I believe more properly reflect to Treasury, and hopefully he can deal with those when Treasury comes before the Assembly with their estimates.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Is everybody ready for the votes? Not quite.

Edmonton-Kingsway.

**MR. McEACHERN:** Yes. Just a couple of minor points. I thank the minister for answering my questions, although one or two of them leave me just a little bit uncertain yet.

Perhaps the minister doesn't know the answer to this question, but I think it should still be asked. The Treasurer and every minister that comes before the Assembly need to know the answer to it, I think, so it's worth asking. Will we be given element details in the future? The Treasurer did bring in the various books. He brought in the budget one night, and then he brought in the capital fund estimates another day, the heritage fund estimates another day, the Leg. Assembly estimates another day, and then half of the general revenue estimates another day. Then he brought in a bigger book that superseded that. By the way, that first half-book was a total waste of taxpayers' dollars. I don't know why he bothered. He brought that in one day and said, "Here are eight departments." Then the next day he brought in all 17. Well, I'm not quite sure why. I mean, I just threw mine away the next day when I got the big book. Every page that was in the half-book was also in the big book. So since he's been bringing the things forward one day at a time or every two or three days bringing something new, then I have a question. Does the Treasurer intend to bring us the element details like we would normally get in other years? If not, why not? We certainly do need them. That's a question really for the Treasurer, as the minister said, but each minister that comes before the Assembly needs to know the answer to it just as much as we need to know the answer to it.

Now, I did not quite understand the share of principal payments part, the \$17 million. I'm not sure that the minister has a full answer for me on that. From what he said, at first I was about to subtract the \$17 million from the \$67.8 million and say, well, then the rest of it must be being paid by interest payments. But I don't think that necessarily makes sense, although it could be the education part of the \$311 million total, and it could be broken down that way. Is that what you're implying? I'm not quite sure.

You mentioned Grant MacEwan. I don't know if you'd call it an observation or a question on Grant MacEwan. It is an odd thing that consolidating so much of Grant MacEwan downtown does sort of take away to some extent the degree to which it is Grant MacEwan Community College. The idea was that the community college would be in your neighbourhood. That used to be the case. We used to have Grant MacEwan campuses sort of all over the city. Now some of them are being shut down to be consolidated in the centre of the city, so the words "community college" won't have quite the same meaning at the end of it, I need to observe. Also, the original intention, I understood, was to build quite a considerable amount of housing with Grant MacEwan Community College so that people would come to live downtown. The housing component has been cut back considerably. I wonder if the minister has had any talks with municipal officials and where that stands. Are there any new developments in that area? I've forgotten the figures; of course, we talked about them in previous years. Has there been any suggestion of changing or adding to the amount of apartments connected with Grant MacEwan downtown so that people come and live downtown and sort of help revitalize the downtown core of Edmonton?

I appreciate your comments on the animal care side. On that particular point, the minister dealt with the facility side of it, but I would also like him to keep his ear tuned to what they are doing in the field of experimentation with animals and how they're treating them and how much it is fair to, like I said, hurt or in some cases kill animals for the sake of advancement in human medicine. I think that's an important question that the minister should be very sensitive to. So it's not just the facility side but the moral side of how far we take that.

**4:40**

On the social aspects of long-distance learning or new computer learning: an interesting area. I would just say that the minister didn't comment on the need to consider the large bulk of students coming out of high school and moving into a university level to also have a socialization process take place. It helps them in their becoming adults and independent and individual people that go in different directions on their own, yet with some kind of social setting that may not be able to be duplicated totally by the new technologies and doing it at a distance.

The point I was trying to make – and again the minister should be aware, I think, as he watches the evolution and plays a part in the evolution of our new ways of educating ourselves. The fundamental question is: are we going to let the technologies drive us, or are we going to decide what we want to do and use the technologies that help us do what we want to do? If we haven't got the technologies to do that, then maybe invent them, put some money into developing those technologies. But try to remember that we should be in control of the technologies, not just willy-nilly following the technologies and finding out that we're missing some very important aspects of human relationships just by accident later. I would make an analogy: I think a lot of people have been raised in the last 20 years or so watching the boob tube, the idiot box, whatever you want to call the television set. The amount of violence and strange kind of programming we get in this country has not been a great help, exactly, in trying to build a more kindly, more gentle society. I think we have to stop and think about what it is we're doing with our technology and what the effect of it is. Certainly that's as true in postsecondary educational institutions as it is in how parents raise their kids at home and how much and what kind of television they get to watch.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Is the committee ready for the vote?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**MR. DOYLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Briefly, on page 9, *Provincially Administered Institutions*: I was wondering if the minister would confirm if that was for educational consortiums, or is that for some other facilities for education within the province? In my riding the Yellowhead educational consortium is a very important institution for people who want to upgrade their education, go into new fields. With the downturn in the economy it's been very important and helps people gain better education and find better jobs. So I was wondering if the minister would mention something about these educational consortiums and whether any of this money out of the capital fund goes towards them. It mentions furnishings for postsecondary education: is that one part of this budget?

**MR. ADY:** I'll just respond briefly to the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway one more time. He seems to have a sincere concern with the loss, with high tech, of the classroom atmosphere for students. I think we need to look at that a little more positively. Certainly the ultimate would be a classroom with 10 students in it and a professor. But we can't do that, so we extend beyond and now we have classrooms that have 100 and 300 students in them. Now maybe we need to look at the high-tech system to see if perhaps the student wouldn't get more interaction and response with the technology coming back and forth to him than he would get from a professor with a class of 300. So there's a reasoned breakout there that we have to consider. Of course, the student has to be the prime concern, and certainly we have to keep that in mind.

The Member for West Yellowhead asked if the publicly administered institutions had to do with the education consortiums. No. That's not part of this budget submission. They fall under the general revenue, and they'll come forward when this department's full estimates come before the Assembly.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Is the committee ready for the vote?

Agreed to:

Total Vote 1 – Construction of Postsecondary Education Facilities	\$67,860,970
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#### **Municipal Affairs**

##### **1 – Construction of Social Housing**

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** We now move to page 15 in the 1993-1994 capital fund estimates. There's no subprogram. Program 1 is Construction of Social Housing, \$20,818,000. We would call on the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, if he has any comments.

**DR. WEST:** Yes, thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee, Mr. Chairman. I've been having some interesting discussions with some of its members, not that they were enlightening.

Municipal Affairs capital fund estimates today are asking for some \$20,818,000. The majority of these funds are in senior lodge programs. There are 76 lodges in the province that have been built before 1970 that need a tremendous amount of upgrading. We have been on a program of rehabilitation and reconstruction of some of these lodges, but no doubt we have seen that we haven't been able to keep up with the demand. There are some 8,000 seniors that use the lodges in the province of Alberta.

In my travels recently they're telling me that they don't need Taj Mahals, but they do need the facilities upgraded for the essential priorities of life. I was in a lodge not long ago that had three washrooms and tubs for 46 units, if you can believe it. In this day and age that's not acceptable. Some of these moneys that are being asked for here today will be prorated out across those 76 lodges, and we're going to do as many as we can over the next year and look at the standards that we've demanded so that the dollars will go further. We're also going to empower lodge foundations to become their own contractors, if you like, and to do their own consulting and actual direct-line contracts with the construction industry to make the dollars go further.

One of the other problems we have is our standards that we put into government-owned foundations. I think there's an opportunity in the future to allow an ownership change which makes the foundations then owners of these lodges. Therefore, they can access the same standards that any commercial building code would use. I think it would cut the costs 20 to 30 percent on a lot of these foundations.

One of the other things that we have to address in this province is that the lodges program came in in 1959 and was set up for upwardly mobile seniors of about the age of 65 who were going to use these accommodations almost as a suitcase drop-off. They were small rooms, so a lot of them didn't even have their own washrooms. The senior of those days was healthy and, as I said, upwardly mobile. Today the average age in a lot of our lodges is 85, and their needs vary from various levels of home care right through to assistance getting into the washrooms and into the tubs for their baths. I believe that many of these lodges that were built in the 1959-62 era have to have some major renovations in them to accommodate this age of senior.

**4:50**

The 1993-94 estimates here represent the total cash flow requirements for projects started in previous years as well as the new projects approved for the commencement of construction this year. There's a good \$9 million of this that's flowing through from projects that weren't finished last year that will be moving into this year, and therefore it's not all new construction or new renovations. The actual 1992-93 expenditures were less than budgeted because of late construction starts last year. We had a budget last year of \$18,750,000, and we actually spent last year \$9,900,000. The total 1993-94 cash flow resulting from previous years' commitments – that's ones that we've already made – is \$16 million. New rehabilitation projects, then, if you look at that \$16 million, will only total \$4,818,000. So we're going to have to make these dollars go further, and we're going to look at innovative ways of giving dollars to lodges that will update them and renovate them and yet make them last a longer time.

I think I'll stop there and see if there are any questions. Again, the majority of these dollars are going to seniors' projects, some to self-contained units and, as I said, much to lodges. As I say, I look forward to the approval of these because, as I pointed out, with the fiscal times that we're in, we're going to need these dollars to renovate these projects to make them last longer and accommodate the 8,000 seniors that are using them at the present time.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Vegreville. You're in touch with *News and Talk 930 CJCA*.

**MR. FOX:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the minister can be assured that the proposed \$20,818,000 expenditure for this capital fund estimate will be passed, will be supported by members in the

Assembly. It's difficult to imagine a particular item of government expenditure that has more obvious and redeeming value than money that's put into social housing, seniors' housing projects: lodges and self-contained units. Anyone who travels the province realizes the very important accommodation opportunities that these provide for seniors and pioneers.

I would just like to observe that the mandate of the lodge program has changed significantly since its inception. When it was first conceived, a lodge was a place that a senior would go after they either weren't able to look after the day-to-day responsibilities of maintaining a home or needed some company if they were lonely, and the people that were going into lodges were relatively young. People soon after they reached the age of 65 would end up in lodges. In the Homestead lodge in Vegreville now we might have an average age that would be in excess of 85, and the day-to-day care needs of these people have increased substantially and are very different than they were when the program was established.

As a result, the facilities, especially those built in the early years, tend to be somewhat lacking in terms of what they're able to provide for the people. I know the Homestead lodge in Vegreville has been very diligently maintained by staff administration and the board and they've done their best over the years, but the fact is that this facility was built probably 29 years ago. I don't recall the exact date of construction, but I do know the hon. minister and I were both guests at the 25th anniversary of that lodge shortly after we were elected, probably in 1987. So that lodge could be in excess of 30 years old now, one of the first built in the province, not unlike the Vialta Lodge in the town of Viking built very early on in the lodge program. They were certainly state of the art back in those days, but there are some obvious problems with those facilities now that need to be corrected.

The minister alluded to projects that are ongoing and projects that will be initiated this year in terms of lodge renovation and replacement. I'd like to ask him specifically what plans the department has for the Homestead lodge in Vegreville this year, whether we can expect some additional dollars to add on to that lodge to ensure that the lodge spaces which are provided for the people who built our community out there have adequate rest room facilities. For example, the minister alluded to how sometimes there aren't very many bathtubs per number of residents in these places, and the Homestead lodge is certainly in that category. I'd like to know specifically what the department's plans are for that lodge this year.

As well, there was a project – I'm not sure if it would be fair to call it a pilot project – in the village of Andrew that I think was a very progressive kind of project initiated by the minister's department, where they had a lodge, part of which was unoccupied, and at the request of local authorities the department agreed to convert a wing of the lodge to self-contained units. So part of it is a lodge and part of it is seniors' apartments, and it makes very good use of the facility. I know that I've written letters to the former minister responsible for seniors' housing, the former Member for Little Bow, about a similar kind of project in the town of Mundare. I'd like to get the minister's response to whether or not that kind of project was deemed successful from the department's point of view and if they have any plans to carry forward with that in cases where some lodges may not be fully occupied on an ongoing basis. If there's a request from the community for conversion to self-contained units for a portion of the lodge beds, is that something that's being considered?

Speaking briefly about self-contained units, I would just like to add as well that we had some very good success with the department in terms of lobbying for some additional self-contained units

for the village of Ryley. The minister was very responsive and accommodating, and we ended up with some additional units in Ryley. They've been very well received and are full on almost a constant basis in Ryley. They have certainly not only provided opportunity for the seniors there to retire in their community but have helped the community, because there's just that many more people that are able to stay and be a part of community life in Ryley. So it was very good.

One concern was expressed to me by people in the Lions Club, who run the self-contained units in Ryley. Often local volunteer groups take responsibility for these projects and work very hard to try and make sure that they work. There was some frustration expressed by members there that the guidelines established by the department and sometimes the lines of communication aren't as clear as they'd like them to be, and confusing messages are sent to the people responsible for the operation of lodges and/or self-contained units. They're not sure what the department wants of them. When they try and access information from the department, sometimes it's not forthcoming. You end up in situations where the residents of the facilities become very frustrated. They express that frustration directly at the volunteers who are running the facilities to the best of their ability, and it ends up being a difficult process. I wonder if the minister would comment on whether or not he's made sure that the guidelines now are very clear with respect to lodge and self-contained unit management, that there are good clear and open lines of communication between the hardworking volunteer groups that run these facilities and his department. I think that's very important, and I know the minister would agree with me. There are some cases where volunteer groups have had to give up the role that they played in the community because it was causing so many problems, so many hassles for them.

We talked about possible renovation and addition to the Homestead lodge in Vegreville. I would just like to point out that in my constituency we have the highest percentage of seniors in the whole province, and that requires us, I think, to come up with a comprehensive strategy to provide for the care needs of seniors in our area. There are so many of them, and that means that we have to have adequate lodge space for seniors who are able to be maintained in lodges. It means we have to have adequate space in the long-term care centres, which I would submit is perhaps the greatest single unaddressed need in our constituency. The Vegreville long-term care centre has had plans on the books for several years now for a 40-bed addition. I've stood in my place as MLA for Vegreville time and time again trying to convince government that we need money to build that addition to the long-term care centre, that for the estimated \$7 million it would have cost to build a 40-bed addition, maybe we only needed to raise the water level in Buffalo Lake half as high, because it cost \$14 million to raise the water level. Seven million dollars would have . . .

**5:00**

**MR. ZARUSKY:** The Conservatives will do it.

**MR. FOX:** The Member for Redwater-Andrew says that the Conservative candidate will do it. That highlights a real problem in this government's agenda and people's perception that somehow these things are done on the basis of who you know or favour. Curry favour with the government and you'll be well treated. I know that that kind of process is offensive to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, and I hope that he'll straighten out the Member for Redwater-Andrew, because I think it's offensive in the extreme to suggest that taxpayers would be bought

with their own money or that the legitimate and very pressing needs of seniors would be parlayed against the political needs of a particular party in government. I'm sure the minister responsible for these estimates will take the Member for Redwater-Andrew to task too, because what we want are clear, objective, reasonable, sensitive criteria established so that we know projects will be built when they need to be built and that the priorities of the citizens, the people of the province of Alberta, will be first and foremost on any government's agenda. I want to make sure that I advocate for that.

The point I'm trying to make is that if we had that pressing need in Vegreville addressed, a 40-bed addition built, the waiting list would shrink to almost zero in that facility. For that facility it would mean much less pressure on the long-term care facilities in Two Hills, Mundare, Lamont, Tofield, and Viking, all in that same general area. I know that since I asked questions in the Legislature about how the stringent rules with respect to single point of entry have caused all kinds of problems for seniors, they've made some modifications to those rules. So there are changes that can occur through issues raised and decisions made in this Alberta Legislature.

I just want to remind the minister that we need a comprehensive strategy that includes lodges, self-contained units, long-term care, and a very thoughtful and extensive program for home care for seniors that makes sure that we're looking after the needs of people in the most responsible, thoughtful, compassionate, and cost-effective way. Having, for example, 18 seniors on a regular basis occupying beds in the acute-care hospital in Vegreville at a cost of, on average, about \$400 to \$500 a day is not a very efficient use of the taxpayers' resource. I know that's a concern and a priority for this minister, and we need to find the best way possible to make use of our dollars and care for people.

I want to leave those representations with the minister and await some response to the questions I asked with respect to the Homestead lodge in Vegreville and the issues with regards to possible conversion of vacant lodge facilities to self-contained units.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**DR. WEST:** Yes. I'll take the questions. I'll be very quick, and then you can make your comments.

You're right; the mandate has changed. I addressed that in my opening remarks, about how seniors have changed tremendously in their life expectancy and some of their needs and how the lodges have become outdated.

You talked about the mutants, where you could have a lodge and self-contained units, like in Andrew. I think of Thorhild because we're doing one there with the Department of Health, where we're using a mutant also, between a lodge and a bit of a nursing home. I agree with you. That's the sort of flexibility we have to move to in the future in certain areas of the province where the lodges are half full or half empty, whichever you want to say, and need some flexibility in what they do.

We are working in the department to ensure that the guidelines are clear and that we co-operate in the best way with our volunteer groups. We have 400 housing authorities in the province of Alberta. I might add that in the future that needs to be looked at. I think we have too many housing authorities. I think there's an opportunity to amalgamate some of the various groups and more efficiently run them. I think of the area where I saw three operations run a foundation and individual self-contained units plus a nursing home, and they all had new John Deere lawnmowers cutting pieces of lawn around them that weren't bigger than this

area here. I'm sure that if they had got together, they could have bought one and cut the whole area in half the time. At any rate, that just sums up one of the things. We need to have good guidelines and perhaps work with the volunteer groups to help them find efficient ways to use the dollars.

You're right about the nursing homes and long-term care beds, that that co-ordination with some of our other seniors programs and housing programs has to be addressed, because once you back up one, you back them into either a higher expense type room or one that wasn't meant to accommodate them. As I say, we're starting to see some of our lodges take on the image of more of a nursing home or an auxiliary home than what they should appear as, because we don't have accommodations for them down the road in various areas.

Flexibility is what you're asking for, and I'll certainly take those recommendations. Common sense is what we're after, and you can't legislate it, so we're going to have to allow it. We're going to have to look at our legislation or our regulations to enable some of the flexibility that you're asking for.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**MRS. HEWES:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A few questions. I have supported this program in the past. I understand from the minister it's the one that was begun by the former Minister of Municipal Affairs to rehabilitate lodges, essentially. However, the objective of the program also includes social housing projects, and the minister did not mention any. I'd like to ask at the outset: are there some other inner-city housing projects, either new construction or rehabilitation of inner-city housing, that are included or any social housing other than the lodge rehabilitation program? He didn't mention that.

Mr. Chairman, I think it would be helpful to members if we had a breakdown of the program: the lodges that have been worked on where completion has been achieved and the ones that are still to go. As I understood from Mr. Speaker, the former minister, it was very clearly defined which ones were going to be attempted in what year and so on. I think that would be helpful to members if we had that. I know the lodges in my own constituency have been rehabilitated, and the comfort level has soared. They are far more practical both to work in and to live in, and I'm very grateful for that.

Mr. Chairman, I would gather that the upgrading extends not only to increasing the size of the rooms but also to adding things like ramps and other spaces that make them accessible for people with walkers and wheelchairs, which we now allow, and oxygen tanks and so on. So I would assume, although the minister didn't mention it, that that is there as well.

Mr. Chairman, would the minister tell us if the number of spaces overall, as we turn three bedrooms into two or whatever, has had to be reduced? If so, how are we going to work on achieving more? I think so far we've really talked mainly about rehabilitation but not of new construction, and perhaps he would indicate to us if there are additional spaces to be produced through his program.

I was also a little uneasy – and perhaps he'd clarify his comments – about the reductions of standards through privatizing the foundations in some way.

No question, Mr. Chairman, that the level of need has increased as the age has increased in our lodges, but I do congratulate and commend the minister. We've become far more flexible. There's no question of that, not just in the physical plant but also in the

programs that are available and our capacity to have residents in our lodges with different levels of need.

**5:10**

I'd like to ask the minister if his plan includes anything in the sense of construction for support programs to allow for home care, for practical assistance. That is, is it planned to have offices for those services as well? I'm pleased that we now have medication helping to be dispensed by active pharmacy co-operation with the lodges.

Mr. Chairman, has the minister any proposals before him for seniors' co-operatives or condos with shared interests? I'd be interested to hear if any of those are in the discussion stage or even further than that.

Finally, other than giving us the details, the numbers and a time schedule, which I would appreciate having, I would like to know, Mr. Chairman, if the minister or his department has discussed with the consumers some of these renovations and rehabilitations as well as new ideas for seniors' housing or social housing. Our seniors' organizations have become truly invigorated in the province. They have great ideas about the kind of housing that they like, the kind of housing that they're prepared to spend their own money on. I would like to know if in fact he is using as consultants in this whole process the seniors' organizations that are available to us, because I think they would be willing partners in this whole procedure and perhaps could give us some very clear and creative ideas about how we can develop an overall cafeteria of housing services that would be efficient and would make the very best use of taxpayers' money.

**DR. WEST:** A few comments. You had alluded: is there social housing in this budget? There is some. Because of the way the numbers flow through and the projects started and that sort of thing, I've concentrated the majority of the new money, the \$4 million, on reconstruction, on seniors' lodges. There is in the rest of the dollars money that will become available and is available at the present time, some of it cost-shared with the federal government 70-30, for fourplexes and what have you for the disabled, for the mentally handicapped, and other types of housing that we are undergoing. At the present time I can't give you the exact numbers of those, but there are some in Edmonton here that are going under construction this year. I think we could provide that.

Yes, there is money available in a major way. That's where we're going to look at some of the lodges to get the numbers of rehabilitations up – carpets and roofs and windows and ventilation and some of the structural problems they had – without doing a complete structural devastation of a lodge and rebuilding it. Some of the reconstructions were \$3 million and \$4 million. I think we can do a lot for some of these lodges with a lot less money and yet have them last for a few more years without doing the major one. So, yes, there are other things to do.

The spaces: that's one of the problems, and it's a good point you bring up. Reconstruction and rehabilitation didn't necessarily create more spaces. I think it's a question that you've asked that bears merit. We have about 8,000, as I said. We haven't moved up a great deal from the 7,200 or 7,400 we had a few years ago. I think we're going to have to look to the private sector to address some of the construction as the population of seniors doubles by the year 2016 or so. Straight government-subsidized housing – and that's what the lodge program is – cannot keep up with the demand. That's where your last statement came in: can other forms of co-operatives or the private sector be utilized to provide this housing? The answer is absolutely yes. We've had some tremendous projects brought forward to us. All we've got to do

is get flexibility in the way we do business with some of the properties we have and some of the innovative ways we have of funding, to kick-start the private sector in providing what the seniors want.

The other thing that came in: do we ever consult with seniors for what they want? I've had a lot of seniors in my office telling us that they've seen floor plans and things brought forth by the private sector and couldn't you help these people get going, because that's what we want. They're going to put a pharmacy in the bottom of this huge complex, and recreational areas. They're even going to provide for travel and entertainment. They will look at Victorian nurses coming in and out, and they will even provide contracts with some of the hotels to provide Meals on Wheels, hot meals to the seniors, if they're willing to pay. They'll even look at selling their own home and transferring the moneys into this development and at the end guaranteeing the sale of their condominium in the development so their family doesn't lose their equity. There are so many innovative ways that we can do it. Government, if it's needed, then can follow the client with rent subsidy if there are seniors out there that are less fortunate than others and can't afford it.

So rather than getting into the construction business, the government can facilitate the private sector or nonprofit organizations in kicking off these projects, allow the seniors that can look after their self-initiative and own resolve to make direct dealings with these for their own accommodation – even what they want, the type of accommodation – as well as accommodate those other seniors that need help. There is a tremendous avenue in the future to look after this, and we'll be working with some of the private sector to ask them what they need to make affordable housing available in some of the higher cost real estate areas such as Calgary and Edmonton. I think we've got ample time.

The standards: we're keeping the quality, but you don't tell me that you need to buy solid sterling silver for all the place settings for a lodge or put the type of architectural designs and the type of dimensions that we put into some of the recently built lodges in this province. I'm not ashamed of those lodges, but I have to stand back and ask the architects, the engineers, and the foundations: can we really afford that type of individual lodge to be built by government? If you want to build that sort of thing in the private sector or contract it with a hundred seniors and put silver on the platters, go ahead, but I don't think we can do that on an average for some half million seniors in this province by the year 2016. So we're not cutting down quality, but some of those standards could be cut back so that we could produce more affordable housing for more people, and that goes right into social housing too. We don't need four-bedroom apartment condominiums for families in social housing when the private sector can't even do that for themselves, yet we need affordable housing for those families.

Consultation does go on through the seniors secretariat, the seniors council, and the chairman's here. I'll stop there.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Edmonton-Belmont

**MR. SIGURDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the minister, I've got just a quick question. Last year when the Member for St. Albert was responsible for the Department of Municipal Affairs, he went to the Emmanuel nursing home, which is located in northeast Edmonton, and there was some kind of a commitment, at least from the Member for St. Albert, that he would try and make that project a priority. Given that we haven't a list of those

facilities that will have new starts in this fiscal year, I'm just wondering if the Emmanuel nursing home group is on line for some kind of funding to get them under way so that they can provide the services that their clients most certainly want.

**5:20**

**DR. WEST:** I'll just quickly comment. The Emmanuel Home group has been to see me. I think I visited with them on two occasions already and spoke to one of the proponents. They were there just last week with the group. They have very good living accommodations already, and they have a desire to expand that to a project they've been working on for a couple of years now. I've said to them that our new construction dollars and what we have are not as flexible as they were, because not only did the federal government cut back some dollars, we did also, but I would be willing to work with them to find some innovative, creative ways to kick-start that project if so be it. So they've gone back to the drawing board. The simplest way, of course, is that we just authorize it with the federal government. They wanted to get in on an interest shielding program, and the window for opportunity for that, because of what the federal government is doing, is closed. The federal government is now going to withdraw from their 35-year debentures. That came out in the last budget. They're going to look at a different way of funding these 70-30 splits. They want to go to more loan guarantees; you know, guaranteeing the borrowings. You'll find that they're ending these programs on January 1, 1994.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Edmonton-Belmont.

**MR. SIGURDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe there's provision in the Unemployment Insurance Act that will allow for unemployed, skilled journeypeople to provide their expertise and their labour in exchange for unemployment insurance and some kind of provincial supplement. Now, I believe that measure was employed at St. Michael's nursing home going back to the middle 1980s. If that were to be developed or if that were to be looked at, would the minister consider trying to provide some supplementary funding in order for this group to kick-start that program? Certainly with the number of people that we have unemployed in our province who are currently on unemployment insurance, it might be an ideal time to try and access that labour, which is a considerable cost for the project, while we can without having to pay full rate.

**MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The Member for West Yellowhead.

**MR. DOYLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister mentioned something about loan guarantees. I didn't quite pick up his point.

I had some representation from members of town council in Edson in regards to a housing development for seniors there. The town has guaranteed the land, and the people have guaranteed that some would buy. Some would like to purchase to own, and some simply can't afford to get into it unless there was some type of guarantee. Representation from at least one of the chairmen, Chris Breault,\* who is on council – his wish is that the government might provide a loan guarantee through a Treasury Branch or through some other financial institution and the town would hold the property.

Parkland Lodge in Edson of course has had renovations recently and is a very modern facility. I must agree with the minister that

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

it is one of the best in the province and we perhaps don't have to go quite that far in the future.

I just wonder if the minister would respond to that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

DR. WEST: Yeah. Just to correct. You took off on an assumption that I had said that we were looking at some type of loan structure through the banks as a guarantee. That was federal government. I want to reassure you that that was not a provincial initiative. The federal government, I said, is going to be backing out of their traditional way of funding these projects and wants to look at something more innovative, such as guaranteeing the mortgage so that people can kick-start them. So federal government. You mentioned the Treasury Branches. I know, West Yellowhead, how you sometimes get moving off in these creative mindscapes. Please, it's federal government I was talking about.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. Just a couple of comments and questions, Mr. Chairman. I was looking at last year's budget and the element details, and the element details didn't have any more details than the budget. Nonetheless, I can't help asking this minister to also be aware that we have not had the element details for these expenditures, and there are some capital expenditures under the general revenue budget as well, a couple of million dollars. It would seem to me that this minister, like the previous one, should get on the Treasurer's case and see to it that we get element details for all of the capital expenditures and operating expenditures of the various departments that we'll be dealing with if we're going to start to handle budgets.

Also, a question I want to ask the minister is: can the minister move unexpended moneys from one vote to another vote in his department? That was allowed in the Spending Control Act last year, which the government brought in and then turned around and scrapped, but the new Bill sets out some targets for limiting expenditures, and it's not clear in the reorganization of the books and the way the numbers are put together whether that idea has been grandfathered over into the new procedures or not. Perhaps the minister would have an answer for me on that point.

Mr. Chairman, it does seem to me that if we've got 8,000 seniors that are dependent on some of these upgradings and capital

expenditures, we could have had a bit of a breakdown on which ones and where are getting the moneys. I don't understand why we just get a global figure and let it go at that. It is, after all, being done by Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which has been the greatest and biggest boondoggle that this government ever perpetuated, including NovAtel, Myrias, GSR, Principal, and North West Trust. While it's all very well to talk about the nice things we're doing for seniors, let's not forget it's being done under the auspices of a department that's carrying a lot of baggage with it.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, given the hour, I know that the minister would like to respond directly in writing. I would move the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Alberta capital fund and reports as follows.

Resolved there be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1994, a sum from the Alberta capital fund not exceeding the following for the departments and purposes indicated.

For the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development: \$67,860,970 for capital investment.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the committee has had under consideration certain other resolutions of the Alberta capital fund, and we report progress thereon and beg leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'd give notice that at 8 o'clock tomorrow evening it is our intention to consider the estimates of the capital fund.

[At 5:29 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]

