

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, September 23, 1993**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 93/09/23

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our divine Father, as we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our thanks and ask that we may continue our work under Your guidance.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 282 Albertans who are urging the government

to reinstate the cuts made to social assistance and in the future to consult . . . with clients, labour and professionals to determine where savings can be made that will not harm . . . families.

This brings the total of this petition now to 1,188 signatures.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully request that the petition regarding the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre be now read and received.

CLERK:

We pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide ongoing support for the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre's cost-effective, therapeutically-effective drug/alcohol treatment programs.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of motion that following question period today I will rise under Standing Order 40 to seek unanimous consent of the House on the following proposed motion:

That the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate Professor David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology, University of Alberta, on receiving a Manning award in recognition of his contribution to the fight against water pollution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today the annual report of the Wild Rose Foundation for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1993.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today the 1992-93 annual report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table with the Assembly for the information of all members copies of an Alberta Education

publication: Education in Alberta 1993-94, an overview of challenges in the '90s.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly three very special guests. Hiroshi Onozaka, the dean of law at Niigata University in Japan, is in the province of Alberta on a courtesy visit to the University of Alberta and has delivered lectures on the subject of criminal punishment in Japan. Professor Ken Kuwahara is also from Niigata University and is in Alberta this year to teach Pacific Rim law, which runs from September through December, also at the University of Alberta. For the last two summers 20 students from Niigata University have attended the University of Alberta to study language and legal culture in this province. Their host today is the University of Alberta's dean of law, Tim Christian, who I'm pleased to announce was my professor at the University of Alberta, where I obtained my bachelor of laws. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister of advanced education.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am privileged today to introduce to you and to the Assembly Dr. Paul Davenport, president of the University of Alberta, who is seated in the members' gallery. Dr. Davenport has contributed in a significant way to the University of Alberta during the last four years. I would like him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today for the very proud occasion of introducing to you and through you to the members of the Legislature a group of 31 students from Alberta Vocational College in a special program called English as a Second Language, which we know is well supported by this government and governments before them. With them today we have their teachers Margaret Hodgson and Maureen Day, and we have Ashley Carrier, who is a volunteer English teacher in their college. There are 31 students coming from 10 different countries around the world, sir, new Canadians all. I ask you and others to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure this afternoon, the first time this session, to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly seven members of the Loon River Cree band. These members come from Loon Lake, Alberta, approximately 500 kilometres north of Edmonton. They've been here negotiating their land claims, which I would like to say my hon. colleague the minister responsible for native affairs has certainly been looking forward to resolving. They're seated in the members' gallery. Their names are Chief Paddy Noskey; councillors Jerry Noskey, Eva Whitehead, Felix Noskey, Arthur Noskey; and elders Frank Noskey and Paul Letendre. I would ask that they receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly teacher Mrs. Kathryn Gillespie, parents Mrs. Karen Nichols and Mrs. Colleen Sommer, and 26 grade 6 scholars from Millwoods Christian school. They are seated in the public gallery, and with your permission I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

#### Loan Guarantees

MR. DECORE: Thank you, sir. Albertans have learned from some statements that the Premier has made that there are some six or seven companies that are being considered for or have already received the government's permission for more loan guarantees. We have a Premier who says that he is open and accountable but insists on keeping secret the details of these agreements and the names of the companies that are going to get these loan guarantees. Mr. Premier, the Alberta government, the Conservative government, has now lost \$2.1 billion in providing loan guarantees. How much more do you need to lose, Mr. Premier, before you and the members of that front bench appreciate the fact that you're not business tycoons?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't profess to be business tycoons. As a matter of fact, we have stated quite clearly that we want to get out of the business of being in business. The hon. leader knows very well that there were some commitments made in the past. As a matter of fact, he acknowledged in a very positive way one of those commitments. I would refer him to a statement he made to the *Medicine Hat News* whilst in Redcliff:

A Decore Liberal government will honor a \$15 million provincial loan guarantee to Consumers Paper, he said during a stop in Redcliff Tuesday.

So basically what we're trying to do is to sort out on legal grounds and moral grounds those commitments, to review them completely, and to find out what our legal position is relative to honouring those commitments that were made by a previous administration. We would look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's input into this process, especially as it relates to his statements relative to Consumers Paper in Redcliff.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, for the record, this leader and this party would not have agreed to a loan or a loan guarantee. What I said, Mr. Premier, was that a contract had been signed, and a contract is a contract, and you need to live up to a contract.

Mr. Premier, let me ask you the second question. You're an advocate, sir, of freedom of information. What's so difficult about telling Albertans the names of these six or seven companies and giving us the details of what it is and what they're about? Why is it so difficult to say no to these companies?

1:40

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, all we ask for is the courtesy of some time, not a long period of time, to do a thorough review of our commitment relative to those projects that were given either approval in principle or approval in writing by a previous administration. Once that review is complete, all that information will be tabled in this Legislature.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier didn't hear the question. I want to make it as simple as I can. Albertans, sir,

are entitled to know where their moneys are going; \$2.1 billion has been lost by your previous government monkeying around in the marketplace. Who are these people that you're considering? Who are they?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we know of one for sure, because the hon. leader of the Liberal Party supports that particular project. So there's one down. There are some others out there that we would like to review in a reasonable manner. Once that review has taken place by government, the government that was elected to properly adjudicate these matters, then we will report that information to the Legislature and to the public of this province.

#### Freedom of Information Legislation

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier recently created an all-party panel to consult with Albertans to craft the best possible freedom of information Bill that Albertans could possibly have. The panel has met and unanimously decided that they would distribute not only the government freedom of information Bill but the Liberal Bill and that they would advertise both Bills being available so that the public could review those Bills. I note with considerable interest that the Premier himself in the *Calgary Herald* is reported as saying that the Bill his government has introduced is full of terrible deficiencies.

MR. KLEIN: No, I never said terrible deficiencies.

MR. DECORE: Great deficiencies, Mr. Premier? Little deficiencies? Some deficiencies?

MR. SPEAKER: Question. The question please.

MR. DECORE: Okay. Deficiencies.

Mr. Speaker, the sad part is that after a unanimous agreement the government has directed this all-party panel, has directed them, that they now cannot give out the Liberal Bill and that they cannot advertise the availability of that Liberal Bill. My question to the Premier is this: why did the Premier, why did the government countermand the unanimous decision of the all-party panel?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of that particular decision, but perhaps I'll have the chairman of the all-party committee respond.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not accurate to say that the panel unanimously agreed to distribute Bill 201. One of the members of the panel came forward and asked me as chair if I had a problem with distributing Bill 201 along with the other information. I suggested that I didn't see that there was a problem but that I would check.

MR. DECORE: Well, that's a pretty different story, Mr. Speaker.

Well, let's just put it to the Premier. We can correct this glitch, Mr. Premier. Will you agree that to make for the best possible freedom of information Bill, your Bill, which has some deficiencies, and our Bill should be given out to the public so that we can get this best possible Bill. Will you agree to that, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will agree that our Bill, with some deficiencies, and their Bill, with some deficiencies as well, will go out to the public.

MR. DECORE: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Municipal Grants

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Municipal Affairs made a devastating announcement this morning in terms of municipal grants. My question is to the Premier. We constantly hear about the plan, the plan, his plan. Mr. Premier, show me in your plan where it calls for a 20 percent reduction to municipal grants.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I think the introduction to that question included me, so I'll answer that. I didn't make an announcement this morning. I met with the AUMA executive committee the other night and indicated to them a plan and direction because they had wanted to know what the future held as far as the MAG grants and some of the grants that were related to this department. Tonight I meet with the municipal districts and counties executive committee.

I had indicated to them, consistent with the direction the government had announced several months ago, that there would be a 20 percent target on major grants that would be sought in the next coming years or next year. I said that this communication would be brought to them at the earliest at their conventions, that I would stand up at that time in my address to each convention and spell out exactly a plan that would indicate to them the direction they had to go in their budgeting. When Edmonton came to me and said, "We had planned on a 10 percent cut," I said: you better plan on a direction closer to a 20 percent cut.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. The Premier has talked about a good working partnership or relationship with the municipalities. Why, Mr. Premier, have you walked away from the municipalities?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, nobody is walking away from the municipalities, least of all the minister. I understand that this information came out as a result of a meeting involving the minister and representatives of various municipalities. To me that's consultation.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, let me try the Treasurer. To the Treasurer: does your concept of fiscal responsibility include passing the buck down to the next level of government?

1:50

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member just allowed me in for a minute on that. A cut of 20 percent: I want to put it in the magnitude of what's going on. We have to address a balanced budget in '96-97. All areas of this province are going to contribute in a meaningful way to that balanced budget. Here's what that means for the MAG grants, the municipal assistance grants, to two of the major components. The city of Edmonton in '93 has a budget of \$696,500,000. The city of Calgary has \$837,000,000 budget. They get MAG grants from this province in the order of \$19 million, both of them about the same because there's an equity formula in place. A cut of 20 percent to each one of those grants to these cities in the '94-95 budget means .66 percent change to Edmonton and .4 percent change to Calgary. Let me repeat: that 20 percent reduction in the MAG grants only means a .66 percent change in Edmonton's budget and a .4 percent change in Calgary's. I see in the news today somebody said that

they would have to look at massive cuts or increased taxes. If you can't adjust in this fiscal plan to a .66 percent change or a .4 percent change, then I don't know; you better get better managers in your cities.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod.

### Agricultural Assistance

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Grain farmers in my constituency, in particular the towns of Granum and Pincher Creek and their neighbouring areas, have experienced extremely wet weather conditions for most, if not all, of this year's growing season. Can the minister of agriculture outline what programs are in place to help farmers affected by these conditions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I share the concerns of the hon. member regarding the agricultural community in that particular area. We had the opportunity of traveling through the area last Tuesday and indeed were able to share some of the difficulties that the farmers are experiencing, very stressful times: the season is late, the crops are green, and the crops are wet. So we fully understand and appreciate the difficult moments that they are having.

To indeed deal with this, the government has put together three programs that are designed to assist in cases such as this. First, we have the crop insurance program, we have the GRIP program, and we also have a NISA program. Just to quote some figures, in the year 1992 \$504 million was paid out to farmers through the GRIP program alone in Alberta. The crop insurance program from 1988 to 1992 has delivered over a half a billion dollars to the agricultural community. The NISA program in 1993-94 is estimated to deliver approximately \$18 million to the agricultural community.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplemental to the minister: are there any provisions in place to help farmers that were not able to seed in the spring due to these wet conditions?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: There is a provision, Mr. Speaker, that has been put in place for instances such as this, where indeed the spring was wet and the farmers weren't allowed to plant their crops. Through the crop insurance program there is up to a \$30 maximum per acre payout. What this deals with are expenses that farmers may have put into the process of trying to grow a crop in that coming year.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final supplemental: will the minister, then, consider providing any compensation to those farmers who were not injured or have not participated in any of these safety net programs?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, there is no formal program in place at this time to deal with those instances. We are monitoring the process and will continue to monitor the process, but I should share that there is no additional formal process, because we now have the crop insurance opportunity, the GRIP opportunity, as well

as the NISA opportunity for the farmers to become involved in, and this is part of their management decision.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

### Road Construction

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that the Progressive Conservative government has created a serious financial crisis in Alberta and in light of the fact that the minister of transportation froze \$30 million worth of paving contracts this August as one small step to attempt to correct this financial mess, my question is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Has the minister authorized the paving of Highway 22, including the main street of Mayerthorpe?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the member uses the media for his questions, because in using the two articles - they're not factual.

Let me outline the situation. Highway 22 is a highway that runs through my community of Mayerthorpe. The overlay that's to be tendered out shortly is something that we don't have jurisdiction over. It comes as a result of protecting the infrastructure. Overlay throughout the province of Alberta is done on the basis of need, not on the basis of a minister or an MLA. Again, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would take his questions directly from myself or somebody else instead of the paper, he'd know what was going on.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the freeze on highway construction and paving was announced in August, can the minister tell us when the decision for another paving project in his constituency was made?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, there was never a freeze put on highway construction. There was never a freeze. [interjections] There was a hold put on by myself for about . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. If the hon. members want answers, they have to give the opportunity to the person giving the answer.

The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, there has been no freeze put on highway construction in the province of Alberta.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Just suspended.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Redwater, order.

Hon. minister? There's no freeze. Okay.

Final supplemental.

MR. KIRKLAND: Was the minister not concerned that his wife, son, and daughter own a business on the Mayerthorpe main street portion of this paving project?

### Speaker's Ruling Unrelated Supplementary

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. That question was out of order.

MR. DECORE: Answer the question. Answer the question. Why is that out of order?

MR. SPEAKER: That is not relevant to the main question.

MR. DECORE: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can I have the citation on which the Speaker makes that ruling?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The point of order will be recognized in due course.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

### Home Schooling

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Education. Home schooling is a growing phenomenon in Alberta as many families avail themselves of this opportunity of engaging their children in their education. My question to the minister is: what standardized tests are home-schooled students required to take in the province of Alberta?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think two factors have to be kept in mind. First of all, Alberta Education and the government of Alberta have a great interest in being able to monitor and improve the overall quality of education in this province no matter what part of the system it is dealing with. Secondly, we also have to keep in mind that some years ago in a Supreme Court decision home schooling was dealt with as an alternative program of education in the province, and the compelling interest of the provincial government in that program was also affirmed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in terms of standardized testing our provincial achievement tests are not currently being administered to and written by home-schooling students, and that is certainly something that I as minister am proposing as part of our review of home-schooling guidelines. It is my understanding that certain standardized tests from commercial sources are administered to some home-schooled students.

MR. TANNAS: To the Minister of Education again, Mr. Speaker. If I understand what you're saying, then, home-schooling students do not have to write the grade 3 test, the grade 6 test, the grade 9 test, or the grade 12 test, which are mandatory for all public-schooled students in the province?

2:00

MR. JONSON: That is almost entirely correct, Mr. Speaker. The one exception would be that the writing of diploma examinations is mandatory for all students who wish to get an Alberta high school diploma. It is not mandatory at the present time for the others listed by the hon. member. That, I would like to emphasize, is one of the reasons I am conducting a review of home-schooling regulations and policies at this current time. One of the proposals there, as I have said, is that these achievement tests that we have in the province to monitor the achievement of students in all parts of the system be taken by home-schooling students.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Pension Fund Transfer

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General and the Financial Review Commission demanded that this government be more consistent and more open in its financial disclosure and its budgeting. It said: no more creative accounting, no more

bending the rules. This Treasurer has said that he will be consistent in reporting and that there will be full disclosure. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Can he tell me how the \$2.3 million in surplus in the provincial judges and masters in chambers pension plan was generated and how it ended up being siphoned into the general revenue fund by order in council yesterday?

MR. DINNING: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can. As of March 31, 1992, the provincial judges and masters in chambers pension plan had a surplus of \$375,000. In other words, it had assets to pay off its liabilities greater than those liabilities of some \$375,000. There was a plan by the government in effect to pay off the unfunded liability of this plan over a number of years. There had been a transfer of some \$2.3 million into that fund to ensure its soundness. In April of 1993, when an independent evaluation of the plan was done, it was found that the fund was overfunded to the tune of \$2.3 million. As a result, as is provided for under the law, that excess, that surplus was then transferred back to the general revenues of the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. PERCY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there is a supplemental. It's interesting, Mr. Treasurer, that when we look at the unfunded pension liability, the actuarial estimates there were too sensitive to allow the interest on that unfunded liability to be included in the Deficit Elimination Act. So my question to you, Mr. Treasurer, is: how come when it's in your favour, you'll count it and you'll transfer it into the general revenue, not against the debt, mind you, into the general revenue?

MR. DINNING: Well, the hon. member can't have it both ways. Mr. Speaker, I would put it to him that he was and is supportive of the government's decision to acknowledge that there are two plans. There is a four-year plan to balance the budget, to balance the consolidated bottom-line budget, and there is a longer term plan, in some cases as long as a 70-year plan, to balance and bring into balance the pension plans of this province so they no longer remain unfunded. They are two separate plans. The hon. member stood in his place – if I'm not mistaken, it was a week ago today – and acknowledged that that was the right kind of accounting for this government to do, and I welcome the hon. member's support for this government's plan.

DR. PERCY: You will get support when you are consistent.

The bottom line, Mr. Treasurer, is that that surplus should have been applied against the debt. That windfall ought to go against the debt. Why is it not going to the debt? Why have you put it against the deficit in the general revenue fund?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the original surplus was created by virtue of a payment from the general revenue fund, so it seemed only appropriate and proper that the general revenue fund would be reimbursed for having made an attempt to make that fund whole. Later finding out that the fund was whole, the general revenue fund was reimbursed for its original payment.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Road Construction

(continued)

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the hon. minister of transportation. I have a number of communities such as Irvine in my riding that could use some overlay

paving as well, as I'm sure does the hon. Member for Bow Valley, who sits next to me. Could you please inform this House, Mr. Minister, how it is that these roads in your community get the overlay so that I can get the same results in my communities? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Time is flying, hon. members.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, let me outline the procedure of a road paving project. There are five steps in regards to road construction. There's the grading, where we require input from the local governments and MLAs based on need and volume of traffic. The next step is base course. On base course we also require input from local governments and MLAs and a local traffic count. The next step is paving. When we do the paving on a base course job, there's no input required because we do the paving based on saving the infrastructure. The next step after the paving is overlay. Overlay is done on highways throughout the province, and I might add it's done on Highway 3, that runs through that member's community of Bow Island. Overlay is done on the basis of 15 to 20 years, when the highway has deteriorated to the base and it needs relaying of overlay, of hot mix. The next step is chip, seal, and coat. So those five steps give you the final, finished highway project. When it comes to overlay – and that's what's being done on Highway 22. Overlay runs right through the town of Mayerthorpe, not down main street, without any involvement of the MLA or the minister in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you inform me: are any of these projects in ridings other than Conservative-held ridings?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. There have been some 37 projects released since we took off the hold, and a number are in the opposition ridings. I want to just refer to Redwater-Andrew, 651, \$2.2 million; 656, \$1.1 million; Lac La Biche, 652, \$3.1 million; Bonnyville, 897, \$1.8 million. The list goes on and on.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Red Meat Stabilization Program

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday the minister of agriculture announced the termination of Alberta's participation in the national tripartite stabilization program for beef. Since its inception in 1986 this program has accumulated a surplus of about \$30.6 million, moneys that have been contributed by the producers, by the federal government, and by the provincial government. My question to the minister of agriculture: now that the program is ending on December 31, how will these surplus moneys be distributed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very valid question. We have a lot of cattle producers out there that no doubt will be interested in knowing just how that will be distributed because they have been active participants in the program. The withdrawal will be scheduled for September 30. It will take

a quarter to wind down, so the final program will be December 31 of 1993.

The cow/calf area is the one that is really in the greatest surplus. There are three areas that participate in tripartite in the beef industry: the cow/calf, the slaughter, and the feeder. The cow/calf is the one that's in the greatest surplus at the present time, and that will be distributed back to those who have contributed to the program, as will the slaughter, as will the feeder. Now, the slaughter at the present time is in a very slight deficiency. It is anticipated that by the time the process is wound down, the overall will probably be at about zero in the slaughter area.

**2:10**

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister of agriculture: will the payment to the farmers include the considerable accumulation of interest that would come on these surpluses in the separate accounts?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The final process, of course, will be designed by the industry in conjunction with the levels of government. Now, there is no formal final decision on just how that money will be redistributed. It may be that the industry may wish that the money be moved into another program. So at this time I wouldn't want to prejudge just what the process will be. It's a bit premature to indicate, and the decision will be made in total consultation with the industry.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister of agriculture. Now that the tripartite stabilization program has been ended, what steps is the minister making to work with the beef producers to have livestock included in the net income stabilization program that's being set up?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The commitment basically that was made when we agreed with the industry that it would be a suitable time to withdraw from the tripartite was that there would be again consultation with the industry to develop a new program. The program that by and large the beef industry would like to see developed is an all-encompassing program called VAISA.

At this stage we have commitments with the grain industry that are two years from now, which is GRIP. The tripartite in the beef industry is withdrawing December 31. The pork industry and the lamb industry have not decided what they want to do with their tripartite program. So we have a group that have not made their final decision. What we have to do in consultation with all the groups, with all the safety net programs that are in place is develop an overall farm program. That may take a little while. So it may be that we may have to go through a transition period and put a transition program in place that will allow for continuing participation of the beef industry.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Day Care

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been inundated by calls from my constituency regarding a possible day care closure in High Prairie, which of course will severely impact people in the area who rely upon this service. It appears that day cares have been put in a terrible financial position for a number

of reasons. First among these, of course, is government regulations which require day cares to hire qualified staff. Second, social services has cut allowances made for day cares, which results in fee increases so parents can't afford to have their kids in day cares. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Is it possible that in places where these and other regulations will create a problem, exemptions can be provided for training staff over a much longer period of time so that day cares can solve their financial situation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said before, we are a caring government when it comes to children. I'd just like to advise this Assembly and the hon. member that the day care budget in '93-94 is over \$70 million. Thirty-five million dollars of that is in direct subsidies to parents, and \$35 million is a subsidy to operating allowances. We have 32,000 spaces in Alberta with 28 percent of them nonprofit.

The new day care policy manual came into effect January 1 of this year. The manual ensures that day care centres provide a safe, secure place for children. The manual was approved by users of services, which are the parents. Day care training is being phased in over a period of years, Mr. Speaker, and there is a provision to exempt some staff training, which includes the director.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to know that these exemptions can occur.

However, I think the issue is rather the fund-raising issue. I would like to give my supplementary to the Minister of Justice. Regular nonprofit day cares are not allowed to fund-raise using bingos or casinos. What mechanism would be appropriate to allow day cares to fund-raise via bingos and casinos?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, actually the hon. member is correct, and that's because the Gaming Commission gets its authority to give licences under the Criminal Code to charitable or religious organizations. Through public hearings there have been day care organizations come forward. It's been the finding of the commission that they are in fact, although they may be not for profit, not of a charitable or religious designation. I would suggest that any day care that is interested apply for a licence, find out whether in their context they are charitable, and, if they are found not to be, to appeal to the commission, make their representations, and perhaps the regulations can be changed.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

MS CALAHASEN: No. That's fine, thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper.

### Agricultural Development Corporation

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rationalizing his government's decision to authorize a million dollar Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation loan guarantee to Beatrice, the Premier indicated that AADC has a hundred percent record of no failures. My question is to the Premier: can he explain why the company has taken over \$197 million in write-downs on loans,

loan guarantees, guarantee implementations, and property for sale in the past five years?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think I was the one that made the comment, and what I was referring to was that there were no failures under the new CAPA program. I didn't indicate that ADC had not had any failures. What you're referring to are the foreclosures on land that may develop along the way. So I think we're talking about two different items here.

MR. KLEIN: I'm sorry. Just to supplement that. If I left the impression that it was ADC generally and through the life of that corporation, I apologize. It was indeed CAPA that I was referring to.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. CHADI: Okay. You know, maybe the Premier should examine the reports of the company before he starts to muse out loud.

Given the record of the AADC, Mr. Speaker, would the Premier give his assurance that he would undertake to have a complete review of the operations of AADC and fire those responsible for creating these horrific losses? [interjections] A hundred and ninety-seven million dollars in five years.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, ADC has something well in excess of 11,000 active loans, 11,000. ADC is a lender of last resort. If you've been turned down by all the banks, by all the institutions, you can therefore go to ADC and they will allow you consideration as to whether they will lend you money or not. The agricultural community, with all the hardships, with all the difficulties, with the return that they receive as far as prices are concerned, are not at the higher level of risk. Therefore, our government, in order to work with agriculture – and that's an ongoing commitment that's been made for many years: to work with agriculture in allowing agriculture to continue to grow. The risk that's being taken now, the default, is at 2.5 percent. That's an all-time low. We've moved down from 4 percent two years ago. We're now down to 2.5 percent. If we are considering 2.5 percent from a lender of last resort as being outlandish, I think perhaps you should consider some other lending institutions.

MR. CHADI: With all due respect, I can give the hon. minister plenty of examples as to where he is wrong.

Nonetheless, my next question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Given this record of write-downs, \$197 million in the last five years, and the fact that AADC incurred a deficit of \$30 million on operations in 1992-93, can the Treasurer tell Albertans why the May 6 budget predicted a \$7 million turnaround in the net operating position of AADC between March 31, '92 and March 31, 1994? Is this just another instance of creative accounting, Mr. Treasurer?

2:20

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. minister of agriculture has informed the Assembly this afternoon is that here you have a lending institution, a lender of last resort with a 2.5 percent loan loss provision. That is remarkable in this day and age, in this province, in this country, really on this globe when one considers the situation of agriculture in this province, in this country today. Clearly, I regret that any member opposite, whatever party, would want to stand here and say, "Let's cut the pins out from under Alberta farmers," and be that unsupportive of Alberta's agriculture

industry. It's a vital part of this economy. We believe in it. We will support it because we believe in it, but we will do it in the interests of good conservative principles as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

### Community Development Bonds

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Community life has always been important to Albertans. The small towns and communities of rural Alberta supported the early growth and development of this province. Over the past decade many of these small communities have experienced economic decline. As a vehicle for communities to get directly involved in creating economic growth in their local areas, the government of Alberta announced the Alberta local diversification bond pilot project. Three pilot projects were to be launched in '93. I understand that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has been working on this project. My question to the hon. minister: what is the status of this initiative?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The task force that traveled throughout Alberta some two years ago had made some very strong recommendations. One of the recommendations that was made was that the local community can best achieve by investing within its local community, and if you're looking for investors, rather than draw investors from abroad or from other places, the local community can service its own needs the best.

With that in mind, one of the recommendations that came forward was that a community bond principle should be explored, and indeed this government has chosen to take that route. They're doing just that. They have formulated a process where there will be three pilot projects that will be instituted in the province of Alberta up to a million dollars per project. The community can be involved anywhere from 25 to 35 percent with their own equity, and that will be the process that would allow the project to start.

We are now in the process of accepting requests from the various rural communities. As they come forward, they're going to be analyzed and will be dealt with.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many communities and individuals within my constituency welcome this initiative. Would the minister please indicate for me when he anticipates the implementation of these pilot projects?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: As I'd mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, the assessment is now being done of at least two projects that fit the category. Once the assessment is completed, I would anticipate that the process will be brought forward.

MRS. GORDON: What criteria will be used, Mr. Minister, to evaluate these pilot projects?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: As I mentioned, part of the process was to see that there is strong community commitment and strong local involvement. The need, of course, the need of the project, the overall business plan, local participation will certainly be very major processes that will be considered. The most important element of all of course will be a suitable and a successful business plan.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Municipal Taxation

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Klein government talks about establishing a partnership with municipalities. All we've seen from this government are unilateral decisions: a 42 percent cut in the municipal debenture interest shielding program, changes to the distribution of AMFC surplus, and a 20 percent reduction in municipal grants. It is simply the same old policy of off-loading and passing the buck. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why does the minister continue to shift the blame onto municipalities for recent tax increases as a result of general reassessment when his department has the legislative authority for assessment under the Municipal Taxation Act?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago in this House I explained taxation and its various components. Assessment is one of those components, and we are hopefully working in this province to go to a time when assessments are current and not in some cases seven, 10 years behind.

Assessment is one part of taxation. Mill rate is the next. The municipalities, of course, have expenditures in every area, whether it be in roads or looking after the town halls or city halls, and it goes on and on and on, and they set a budget. They sit down, and they break it out, and they say: this year I need — well, if it were the city of Edmonton, they need \$694 million. When they do that, then they look at the assessment, and hopefully it's current. If it's not, they're in a lot of trouble, because when they change it, they're going to shock some people. They look at all of their assessment base, and they set a mill rate.

Then they multiply that assessment by the mill rate, and they come up with revenue. If they are short, they can't go back and change the assessment. I mean, the assessments are fixed on a modifier across the province. So what do they have to do? If they're short, they look after their budget and go inside and say: well, we don't need so many bicycle paths, or we don't need so much repair here, or we don't need that. Or they jack the mill rate, and when they jack the mill rate, the taxes go up.

Now, if they're in an existing budget and they're balanced and during that year they go in and do a reassessment and the assessment in certain areas of the city goes up and they don't change the mill rate, then their revenues go up above what they're spending. Now, they have the opportunity to phase-in that change in assessment or not do it at all, but we're not going to allow them to do that.

To ask a question like that begs the question of whether anybody over there knows anything about taxation at all.

MR. BRACKO: Probably 10 percent right, 90 percent wrong in your answer, Mr. Minister.

Is the minister prepared to retract the comments he made in the House on September 16 in which he put the total blame for the tax increases on the municipalities?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I didn't blame anyone in this Assembly. I said that if they are having problems communicating with the taxpayer, go back and explain the taxation system to them. If they're going to do an assessment, they have ample time ahead to start sending out notice that they're going to do it and explain what's going to happen if they're seven years behind.

We are doing what we can in Municipal Affairs to indicate to the municipalities: bring your assessments up to date. Then we will put in automation and index against new sales or new developments, and we will bring the assessment into a one-

two-year relevancy. That way we won't get the shock system going to the taxpayer.

I didn't ever make an innuendo in here that was just said by the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister stop shifting blame and work with the municipalities to ensure property taxes are assessed in a fair and equitable manner?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we are working with the municipalities, and I've had good response from many of them. I'll be meeting tonight with the municipal districts and counties, and I met this week with the urban municipalities' executive. We will be communicating on how we can look at the tax structure and assessment. I've told them that we were going to bring the assessment up to date by '96-97. We've also got a task force in place through the hon. Treasurer that will be looking at total taxation in the province of Alberta: everything from fiscal equity in the school system, the machinery and equipment taxes as well as corporate taxes, land taxes, and anything else that might be affecting ratepayers and how business works in this province.

head:

### Members' Statements

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

2:30

### Medicine Hat College

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring to the attention of all members of this Assembly a matter that is of great concern to me and to members of my constituency. Medicine Hat College was constructed in 1971 and was designed to accommodate 800 students. I'm proud to say that I attended the institution shortly after it opened in 1972, when I was enrolled in a university transfer program. I might add that the member opposite from Calgary-West was a classmate of mine at that time. I can attest to the fact that even with the enrollments in the 800-student range there was not an overabundance of space in the facility.

In the 20 years since I and the member opposite attended that school, Medicine Hat College has taken an outdoor courtyard and roofed it over to create more classroom space, office areas have been added, the garage has been converted into a classroom as has the original shipping and receiving area, a hallway has been converted into study areas due to a lack of space in the library, and washrooms and storage facilities have been converted into faculty offices.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for all this is quite simple. The original 800 students have increased to the point where this year it's expected that about 2,300 full-time students will register at the college. In addition, they will register 600 students in the conservatory of music and dance program and about 4,000 registrants in the noncredit community education programs.

Mr. Speaker, this House has already heard from the Provincial Treasurer how it would be ill-advised to make massive cuts to capital spending in an attempt to reduce the deficit. Medicine Hat College is currently proposing a five-year program of expansion to accommodate its needs. Conceptual architectural work has been done; however, an additional \$3 million is required to have detailed design work done over the next two years.

I would like to ask for the support of this Assembly in my call to make this support to Medicine Hat College a priority in the



'94-95 capital spending budget. Medicine Hat College needs and deserves their support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### **Michener Park Residence**

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's ironic that the president of the University of Alberta, Mr. Davenport, was here – I can't see from this angle if he's still up there – because the matter that I want to talk about today does involve a portion of the University of Alberta, that being the Michener residence. We know that there's a study going on at the present time about the future of the Michener residence, which incidentally is in my riding of Edmonton-Rutherford. This particular student residence not only serves as accommodation for a large number of post-secondary students, particularly foreign students, but at the same time it also serves as a cultural, a social, and a learning hub.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the surrounding communities have taken a very, very keen interest in this facility and as to the future of the facility. Now, there is a study going on at the present time as to what's going to happen in terms of the facility. The threat of privatization looms over their head. There is no question about it. The government does have a role to play in this matter. Their role is under the Universities Act. As this review is carried on and when decision-making time comes, I would hope the minister of advanced education looks beyond the simplest way out. I would hope the minister recognizes the great loss of the cultural and social experience that now happens that would be lost in a private project. I would hope the minister respects the input of the neighbouring communities. Finally, I would hope the minister will only approve of a decision that will prevent the anguish the residents fear could occur if the wrong direction is taken on this matter.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

#### **Education System**

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the issue of education in our province. We know that certain school districts are at a disadvantage because of their limited tax base as compared to other districts. The impact of this fiscal inequity is that students in poorer jurisdictions have less access to experienced teachers and do not perform as well on provincial achievement tests and are less likely to attain a high school diploma. Fiscal inequity is a serious problem in my constituency of Taber-Warner, which is one of the poorest districts in the province. I myself have a child who had to take math 10 by correspondence. This is another result of the lack of local tax base funding available in my constituency.

A quality education does depend greatly on available funding, but students should not have to suffer because of this. This problem requires immediate attention, and I support this government in its efforts to address the issue of inequity in funding, especially in some of the rural areas.

We also have to keep finding ways to improve our education system. One of our biggest concerns should be to ensure that we have quality educators in this province. Teachers have an increasingly demanding job in our society, and we need to do more to reward the achievement of excellence in teaching. This could be accomplished by means of objective teacher evaluations that would reward good teachers based on a merit pay concept.

We also must have some measure of academic achievement in this province. Having standardized student exams not just for students in the last year of school but throughout their education would provide a measure of the output of the system and a reliable indication of weakness within the system. As well, if students were to take this type of exam every year, it would become a normal process and not a traumatic experience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Projected Government Business**

MR. DECORE: A point of order. I had a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order will come, hon. leader, but these points of order come after we've done the routine, and this weekly question on business is a matter of routine now.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I would like to give the deputy House leader on the government side the opportunity to explain to the Members of the Legislative Assembly what the government's agenda will be for business next week. At this time I would like to also specify for the members of the House that we will be selecting the ministry of Municipal Affairs for estimates next Thursday afternoon.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the ongoing spirit of openness and pursuant to Standing Order 75 we are delighted to indicate that on Monday, September 27, in the afternoon, under Government Bills and Orders we will be dealing in second reading with Bill 7, Alberta Energy Company Act Repeal Act, and 8, the School Amendment Act; and if there is time, in Committee of the Whole consideration of Bill 5, Financial Administration Amendment Act. In the evening we'll be in Committee of Supply giving consideration to the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services.

On Tuesday at 4:30 we will hopefully find ourselves in Committee of the Whole dealing with Bill 7 and Bill 5 and in the evening giving consideration in Committee of Supply to the estimates of the Department of Energy.

Wednesday evening will find us in Committee of Supply dealing with the estimates of the Department of Health. We've already had indication from the member opposite that on Thursday afternoon Municipal Affairs estimates will be dealt with in Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Before proceeding to the point of order, might we have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

#### **Introduction of Guests** (*reversion*)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a former member of this Assembly who is seated in the public gallery. This member took great delight in recycling and rearranging numbers, especially when it got around midnight. I would ask former member Alex McEachern, who is seated in the public gallery – and incidentally he represented the former riding of Edmonton-

Kingsway – to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

#### Point of Order

##### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

2:40

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise under *Beauchesne* 410(5), *Beauchesne* 410(11), and Standing Order 13(2). *Beauchesne* 410(5) states that “the primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account.” *Beauchesne* 410(11) says that “questions should relate to matters of . . . urgency.” Standing Order 13(2), sir, says that “the Speaker shall explain the reasons for [his] decision upon the request of a member.”

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order relating to the hon. Member for Leduc's inability to put his third question, the second supplemental. Yesterday this Assembly went through a lengthy debate – and I think this needs to be reviewed in terms of what has happened and how relevancy is important here – on a point of privilege involving the minister of transportation. That point of privilege singled out the fact that the minister of transportation had threatened another member of this House not once, not twice, but three times .

##### Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. member, but the Chair is certainly not going to allow a rehashing of that debate. That debate was held yesterday. The Chair is going to be ruling on that question today. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has so far, until he started mentioning yesterday's debate, been talking about the question period today. The Chair is quite willing to listen to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's complaint about the question period today.

#### Point of Order

##### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the observation. The point I was trying to make was that there is relevancy: the relevancy of the issue of paving, the relevancy of this particular minister and his relationship with other members of this Assembly, the issue of fairness, the issue of ensuring that all Albertans are treated equitably and that somebody isn't given advantage over others. That's the reason I raised that. I think it's an interesting side note to note that when those comments were made by the hon. minister, nobody stood up. The Deputy Speaker said nothing to bring that under control.

We have now questions that were attempted to be put, and the question that was, I thought, easy to answer and easy to dispel in terms of if there was some difficulty was whether or not the minister was concerned that his wife, son, and daughter own a business on the main street in Mayerthorpe. Mr. Speaker, I know and we know that the minister of transportation does have that business on main street. Is there fairness? Is there equity? I don't think it's the right way to simply play word games, to say that overlay is different from paving. Are people being treated equitably? Our argument and what we were trying to ensure was for the minister to stand in his place and convince us and Albertans that there was fairness, that there was equity, that there wasn't somebody that was getting special advantage. I think we should be entitled to pursue that matter.

The last point that I wish to make, Mr. Speaker, is that I would gratefully request that you provide us with the reasons as to why we couldn't proceed with that second supplemental question.

Thank you, sir.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on the nonexistent point of order I'd like to express some naiveté and some generosity towards the Member for Leduc: naiveté because I'm going to suggest that being a newer member, he's not fully conversant with the rules of order in this Assembly, and generosity in that I won't presume certain elements of character or imputation because of that naiveté on his part.

The Leader of the Opposition very weakly referred to the fact that there are some indications in 410 stating the purpose of question period, but of course as we have become more than accustomed to in his style, he leaves out very pertinent facts and information. [interjections] The fact is you can't simply get up in this Assembly . . . You know, I listened with patience. It wasn't easy, but I listened to the drivel coming from across the way. I was quiet, and now we're getting drivel back while I'm talking.

I would like to suggest to the Member for Leduc, because some members here are experienced and should know better, that when you are asking a question, if you'd like to refer to Standing Orders, first of all – and I bring this point of order to you, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the fact that they seem to not be wanting freedom of speech in this Assembly – 23(h) talks about making “allegations against another member;” 23(i) talks about imputing false motives; 23(j) talks about using “abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder;” 23(l) talks about introducing “any matter in debate which offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly.” *Beauchesne* 487(2) talks about words that are “plainly intended to convey a direct imputation.” Those are just a few references, hon. member, which suggest there are ways in which a question can be put.

I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition stood not to protect a member but to condone a practice and practices that these venerable Standing Orders and tradition say are totally unacceptable. For a member to stand and draw in the names of family members and draw in these types of allegations is a practice which has long ago been ruled against very clearly in this House. If that's to be the line of thinking, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the minister of agriculture better not ever even think of doing anything for agriculture if he has any relative who's a farmer. The minister of the environment better not think of protecting the environment if he's got any relatives at all who have or visit campgrounds. Social services, the same. Education: I sure hope investigation doesn't show the Minister of Education has anybody in school, a son or a daughter. Shame on him.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing my remarks, I'm not surprised at all at a so-called experienced member condoning a practice that has been condemned, but in generosity towards the member opposite I hope he is now more familiar with the ways in which questions may be put.

MR. SPEAKER: If there are no further interventions on the point of order raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Chair will be prepared to state the reasons. The Chair feels that the legitimate point of order by the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Standing Order 13 requiring the Chair to give a reason for not allowing that question.

The Chair would refer primarily to *Beauchesne* 409(7). The Chair notes the hon. Leader of the Opposition's reference to 410, but 409 comes before 410. Number (7) says:

A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition in explaining his point of order went on to certainly use this as a vehicle for getting out the opposition's point of view on overlay paving in this province, but the main question before the House was the criteria used for the distribution of funds for overlay. The Chair felt that that second supplemental, when it refers to the minister's personal family, was indeed casting aspersions and imputing motives against the Minister of Transportation and Utilities and was not germane to the question of the criteria for the disbursing of government funds for overlay paving.

2:50

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Point of Order

#### Unrelated Supplementaries

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on my point of order that I indicated earlier. I rise under sections 410 and 414 of *Beauchesne*. Specifically, the Member for Lesser Slave Lake asked a question of the minister of social services, and if I can editorialize, I think it was a valid question. However, the supplementary question had very little if anything to do with the first question. The initial question was very specific in regard to waiver of standards for day cares. If I can refer to *Beauchesne* section 410(8), I won't read it all but the last sentence says:

Supplementary questions should flow from the answers of Ministers. Section 414, specifically on supplementary questions, states:

Although there may be no debate on an answer, further questions, as may be necessary for the elucidation of the answers that have been given, within due limits, may be addressed to a Minister.

I felt that the Minister of Family and Social Services adequately answered the question and finally got to the point. He did answer the question. However, I think if another question regarding training standards or if another question regarding waiver of certain other kinds of requirements had been made, that would have been in order, and I believe that the supplementary should have been ruled out of order.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake wishes to speak on this point of order?

MS CALAHASEN: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. When you read the question – I don't know if the hon. member had a chance to look at the Blues – but when you look at it, the question specifically indicates that there are problems relative to the High Prairie day care. In that context it was regarding the financial position, for a number of reasons. When we're talking about the financial position, that means that we have to look at solving how the financial position can be taken care of. I think that it was adequately covered in the supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair is prepared to look at the Blues and revise its ruling, but in an effort to get some of these off, I'm prepared to make this preliminary ruling: the Chair does recall the import of the main question as meaning that the staff training and other requirements of the new manual were creating a financial problem for the High Prairie day care.

MS CALAHASEN: I'll be addressing it.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member will not be addressing it. The Chair is going to be ruling on this. We're not having a debate, particularly when the Chair is primarily agreeing with the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

The Chair also recalls the minister responding on all the money that is being made available for day cares, but the main question did have a financial implication, and that's why the Chair allowed the supplemental to the Minister of Justice, to see how this problem could be addressed.

#### Privilege Intimidation

MR. SPEAKER: Before Standing Order 40 comes, we must deal with another outstanding matter. That's the question of privilege that was discussed yesterday. A question of privilege was raised by the Member for Calgary-North West on Wednesday, September 22. The Chair notes that proper notice of the question of privilege was given pursuant to Standing Order 15(2).

The facts giving rise to this question of privilege are these. One, on Tuesday, September 21, 1993, the Member for Redwater rose in Committee of the Whole to apologize to the Chair and withdraw certain remarks he had made previously in Committee of Supply. Two, that being done, the Minister of Transportation and Utilities rose to ask if the Member for Redwater was prepared to apologize to him for remarks the Member for Redwater had made on the same occasion which the minister felt impugned him. Three, after some debate over what the Member for Redwater said, what he might have meant, and whether or not an apology was in order, the Chairman asked the minister:

Do you wish this referred to the Speaker, or are you satisfied now?

Four, the Minister replied:

Mr. Chairman, no, I wish the House to continue in its work, but I can assure the hon. member across the way that he has lost any road program for the next four years.

Five, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar arose on a point of order and asked:

Mr. Chairman, I'd . . . like to inquire if that last comment was made in jest. I'd like an answer.

Six, the minister replied:

Mr. Chairman, as we go year by year, we have to put in our priorities, and each year the hon. member will know whether I was jesting or not.

Seven, approximately an hour later, at 5:25, the minister arose and stated, quote:

Mr. Chairman, this afternoon we've had some debate. The hon. Member for Redwater and myself couldn't see eye to eye. Being a man of principle, I will withdraw any remarks I made in that regard.

On raising the question, the Member for Calgary-North West referred to *Beauchesne* paragraph 99, which states in its entirety:

Direct threats which attempt to influence Members' actions in the House are undoubtedly breaches of privilege. They do, however, provide serious problems for the House. They are often made anonymously and it is rarely possible for the House to examine them satisfactorily. The common practice today is to turn the responsibility for investigating them over to the ordinary forces of the law.

This paragraph contemplates threats against members from persons outside the House. This does not necessarily mean it is not relevant, but it has to read in context.

The Member for Calgary-North West also cited *Erskine May* at page 126. That passage refers to a resolution of the English House of Commons made in the year 1733, which reads

that the assaulting, insulting or menacing any Member of this House, in his coming to or going from the House, or upon the account of his behaviour in Parliament, is an high infringement of the privilege of this House, a most outrageous and dangerous violation of the rights of Parliament and an high crime and misdemeanour.

This resolution clearly contemplates threats to members made by persons outside of the House. Again, this does not necessarily invalidate it, but it does limit its application.

In the ensuing debate several hon. members made a number of points, for which the Chair is grateful.

It seems to the Chair that two questions have to be answered. First, do the minister's words to the Member for Redwater constitute a breach of privilege? Second, was the minister's withdrawal later that day sufficient to dispose of the matter? The powers, privileges, and immunities of Parliament have been settled since 1704. No new privileges may be added to this list. Parliament may only expound and apply the law of privilege as it exists. After an extensive review of the powers, privileges, and immunities of Parliament, the Chair finds that these words as spoken by a member of the Assembly do not fall under any of these powers, privileges, or immunities.

The Chair has considered whether the words spoken are a contempt. The classic statement of a contempt is from *Erskine May* at page 115.

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

Threats of this kind are an extremely serious matter. There is no doubt that the implication by a minister that action might be taken with respect to another member's words or actions could have the effect of inhibiting freedom of speech in this Chamber. Such threatening words could constitute a contempt. It would be up to the Committee on Privileges and Elections to decide. However, in this case the minister withdrew his remarks.

This raises the issue of apologies and withdrawals. On the matter of apology Maingot in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* says at page 228 under the heading "Where a member is the subject of a question of privilege":

An apology by the offending member will invariably close the matter without the necessity of putting the matter to a vote.

**3:00**

*Erskine May* at page 140 notes that even where a member has been found guilty of a breach of privilege

in consequence of the full and ample apology he has offered to the House, or that having regard to his withdrawal of the expressions complained of, it would not proceed any further in the matter.

The Chair has not found a prima facie breach of privilege in this case. Had it done so, however, the Chair imagines that the withdrawal offered by the minister an hour after the words were spoken would be at best just barely enough to close the matter. An apology should be timely.\* If a member intends to apologize for and withdraw any remark, whether as a result of a point of order or a question of privilege, the apology should be sincere and the withdrawal unequivocal.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines apology as a: "regretful acknowledgement of [an offence] or failure; [an] assurance that no offence was intended." If an apology is in order, then the honourable thing to do, the courageous thing to do is to apologize in a straightforward way. The Chair feels that during this incident two members fell short of the standard in their apologies or withdrawals. What good is an apology or withdrawal if no one can be sure if there was in fact an apology or withdrawal? Members are human and subject to all the emotions that come with that territory: anger and pride are two that come to mind. Sometimes this job seems to require that we be superhuman in

controlling our anger and our pride and in exercising good judgment, and we just have to do it. If we fail, we must make amends.

Finally, there is the issue of the rule against anticipation when there is an outstanding question of privilege. Speaker Carter dealt with this exact issue on April 22 of this year: *Hansard* page 2335. *Beauchesne* 410(14) states: "Questions should not anticipate an Order of the Day." The privilege issue was held to constitute an order of the day, since notice had been given. There is also an issue of sub judice. If the matter was to be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, it would not be appropriate for the Assembly to risk in any way prejudicing the deliberations of that committee.

The Chair has left the matter of the timeliness of the question of privilege to the last. It seems to the Chair that this question could have been raised when it happened. There is an argument that it was necessary to wait for the Blues to confirm what was said. Members must be diligent in raising matters of privilege at the earliest opportunity. That being the case and since the Chair ruled on the question on other grounds, the Chair decided not to bar the question on the basis that it was not raised at the earliest possible time.

Thank you.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

#### **Manning Award Winner**

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 40 to ask for consent of the members of the Assembly to deal with my motion. Copies of the motion have been distributed to members of the Assembly previously. On the matter of urgency I can advise members of the Assembly that the award referred to in the notice of motion was presented to Professor Schindler last evening at a special awards banquet in Montreal, so today will be the first opportunity that the House will have to extend congratulations to Professor Schindler on his receiving of this award. I note that with the new structure for sittings we will now not be meeting again until next week. In light of the time I will leave my remarks at that on the issue of urgency and encourage all members to allow this motion to go forward at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly prepared to give unanimous consent to the putting of this motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Moved by Mr. Collingwood:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate Professor David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology, University of Alberta, on receiving a Manning award in recognition of his contribution to the fight against water pollution.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening Professor Schindler of the University of Alberta received an award called the Manning award for his work in fighting water pollution throughout Alberta, Canada, and North America. The Manning

\*see page 479, left col., para. 3

awards are named after the former Premier of Alberta, Ernest C. Manning, administered out of Calgary, and the awards recognize and encourage excellence in Canadian innovation.

There are a number of awards granted each year. They are broken down into the principal award, the award of distinction, innovation awards, and young Canadian innovation awards. This year, Mr. Speaker, Professor Schindler was awarded the award of distinction for his work in fighting water pollution, as I had indicated.

Some background, Mr. Speaker, on Professor Schindler. Some of the members of the Assembly will know of Dr. Schindler's work in the province of Alberta. Professor Schindler received his doctorate from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes scholar. From 1968 to 1989 Professor Schindler founded and directed the experimental lakes project of the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans near Kenora, Ontario, and conducted research into the effects of eutrophication, acid rain, radioactive elements, and climate change in boreal ecosystems. His work has been widely used in formulating ecological management policy in Canada, the U.S., and Europe.

Currently Professor Schindler is on the pulp and paper round-table, which is one of the task forces set up by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. Professor Schindler has headed the International Joint Commission's expert committee on ecology and geochemistry, and the U.S. Academy of Sciences committee on the atmosphere and the biosphere.

I will also mention, Mr. Speaker, that Professor Schindler has received three honorary doctor of science degrees, from North Dakota State University, the University of Victoria, and Athabasca University, and that he is credited with having written over 150 papers. His 17-year study on the lake in Ontario was instrumental in convincing regulators in the U.S. and Canada to control phosphates and sulphur dioxide emissions. His work is considered to be largely responsible for the banning of phosphates in detergents. Professor Schindler is now working on the ecology of mountain lakes, and he is taking an active part in pollution concerns as a member of the northern river basins study science advisory committee, strongly supported by this government.

The achievements of this eminent limnologist were recognized two years ago, when he was awarded the Stockholm Water Prize, which is an international prize for outstanding contributions in the field of water conservation.

Mr. Speaker, Professor Schindler is a world-renowned scientist in the field of limnology and water pollution. He has made significant contributions to Alberta and to Canada as an advocate for environmental protection and enhancement. I believe the work this individual does deserves our recognition and that as the recipient of the Manning award last evening he deserves our congratulations. I encourage all members of the Assembly to acknowledge this fine Albertan and to forward to him our congratulations.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to join the hon. Member for Sherwood Park in congratulating Dr. Schindler. I am very grateful for him bringing this Standing Order 40 forward. As the hon. member has indicated, Dr. Schindler worked for a number of years with the federal government with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the honour that was bestowed upon him last night was for work that he did on Ontario lakes with respect to acidification through phosphates

while he was an employee with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Dr. Schindler is now a resident of the province of Alberta. As the hon. member has indicated, he serves as a member of our science advisory committee on the northern river basins study. He is truly an expert in his field. He is making a substantial contribution to the province of Alberta. The government of the province of Alberta is dedicated to our environment: to clean air, clean land, and clean water. These factors lead Alberta to have the best quality of life anywhere in this great country of ours called Canada. It is with the help of citizens, experts, those in the private sector, and the work of individuals such as Dr. Schindler that will ensure that we continue to have the cleanest land, air, and water and continue to have the best quality of life here in Alberta.

I recommend that all hon. members join in this congratulatory message to Dr. Schindler, and I hope to have an opportunity to congratulate him directly in the very near future.

3:10

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Sherwood Park, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried, let the record show unanimously.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

head: **Main Estimates 1993-94**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. For the benefit of those in the gallery, I would let them know that committee stage is the informal stage of the legislative process. Members are able to take off their jackets, have juice or coffee, visit with one another very, very quietly, even move around and sit in chairs other than their own. They must speak at their own place. It is, as I say, more relaxed and less formal.

**Education**

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that introduction we would ask the hon. Minister of Education to give us his remarks and comments.

MR. JONSON: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to provide some preliminary comments with respect to the estimates before the committee this afternoon.

Mr. Chairman, the Alberta government places a high priority on the quality of education and equitable opportunity to acquire quality education for all the students in the province. The education system for levels K to grade 1 and then grade 1 to grade 12 is a very large and dynamic one. We have 532,800 students, which represents about 20 percent of Alberta's population; 1,953 schools; 145 operating school jurisdictions, including 77 school districts, 31 school divisions, 30 counties, and seven other jurisdictions.

In terms of the priorities in education at the current time, the government's vision statement sets out priorities for the performance of the education system. These include excellence for all students, challenging our most capable students, improving our

results, making sure that disabled students can take their full place in education, providing equity of opportunity – and we want to improve that further – building a strong future in a number of the courses under scrutiny at the present time such as mathematics and science, and very important, Mr. Chairman, building partnerships with parents, businesses, and communities.

I'd like to just make some comments on some of the features of this year's budget estimates, Mr. Chairman. Albertans invest over \$3 billion in basic education. On average, education in Alberta costs about \$5,870 per student, or over \$150,000 for a class of 26 students. The funding of education is a joint responsibility of locally elected school boards and the provincial government. The provincial government provides about 58 percent of all school board revenues. School boards requisition about 37 percent from local properties, and the remainder is revenue to school boards from fees and other sources.

In 1993-94 the province will provide \$1.89 billion in education grant funding, \$1.72 billion to school jurisdictions, \$45 million to private schools and early childhood services, \$119 million to the teachers' retirement fund, and \$5 million for learning resources. These provincial funds come from general revenues, \$1.664 billion, a tax on nonresidential property totaling \$214 million, and the provincial lottery dividend of this year targeted to additional equity provisions of \$30 million.

I would like to also indicate with respect to this overall equity funding, Mr. Chairman, that 40 percent of the equity funding goes to city school jurisdictions and the remainder to smaller centres and rural Alberta.

The various program grant categories are outlined. I will just skip over those, Mr. Chairman, because I know that because of other matters previously we are running perhaps at less time this afternoon than was originally planned. I would like to feature some of the major budget decisions for 1993-94. There is a \$37 million increase to provide for increased student enrollment, a \$23 million increase to stabilize the pension benefits of teachers, a \$16 million increase as a carryover of the 1992-93 grant rate increase, a \$9 million increase for repaying debt arising from the construction of schools, the one-time lottery dividend that I referred to earlier, a \$3 million increase to private schools to access 75 percent of the grant for eligible programs. Nine grant programs that were formerly separate and distinct have been amalgamated into a general block grant. There's been a \$21 million savings in transportation grants and other grant programs. There's been no increase in the school foundation programs mill rate applied to commercial and industrial property. The net increase in financial assistance to schools for this fiscal year is \$93 million, an increase of about 5 percent over the previous fiscal year, but perhaps to be more on target, Mr. Chairman, school year to school year the increase will be 3.5 percent.

I'd like to go on, Mr. Chairman, just to make a few comments about the operations of Alberta Education. The department has been downsizing on an ongoing basis since 1982-83. In programs one and three, full-time equivalent staff have been reduced by 269 or 29.9 percent since 1982-83. Even with an accounting change which required inclusion in the budget of full-time equivalent staff funded for education programs in the young offender centre and the Oakhill Boys Ranch, full-time equivalent staff numbers have been reduced. In 1992-93 the number of divisions in Alberta Education was reduced from four to three, the number of branches from 25 to 16, and the structure was reorganized to improve efficiencies and effectiveness. Estimated expenditures in 1993-94 are \$53.7 million, a reduction of \$2.5 million from the previous year or about 4 and a half percent.

Second from finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to comment on a priority of Alberta Education, and that is to be candid about what we are doing, to measure it, and to report to the public with respect to its performance. We've made a commitment to that, and we have a number of reporting mechanisms in that regard. I'd just like to mention the overall report card was released earlier this year where we rated ourselves as having a B-minus, similar to the previous year, and where we acknowledged that we have to do additional work in providing for strong, basic skills, equity of opportunity for students, and success for native students and immigrant children within our system.

3:20

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to conclude my remarks by indicating that I am impressed by the education system in the province. It certainly has a number of issues and challenges facing it, but I think that school boards, all those involved in education in this province, the teachers, the support staff certainly need to be commended on the ongoing effort to deal with problems and to provide a quality education for our students.

I think we have a number of exciting innovations going on in education in the province, and we have the need for more, particularly when we're looking at ways of maintaining and improving the quality of education in the province and dealing with difficult budget circumstances.

Along with the many innovative and new things that are going on in the schools, I would like to conclude by acknowledging that I think it is very important that at the core of our education system we have schools across this province which are focusing and working hard on what I think are the essential elements of a good school and a good education for students. In these schools, Mr. Chairman, there is a focus on teaching and learning, there is an orderly and safe environment, there is assertive, on-the-spot leadership, there are dedicated teachers, there is accountability, and there is a work ethic that is emphasized.

Finally, the component, if I could use that term, that I am most impressed with in the overall education system is the students that I meet across this province in those all too rare but certainly important opportunities that I have to visit schools and meet with students. Overall, Mr. Chairman, I think they are achieving. They are concerned about the betterment of Alberta. They are concerned about living responsible and successful lives and helping people that are in society with them. Those students are very important to our future, and their future is very important in this province.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to publicly congratulate the Minister of Education on his reappointment. I think it was welcomed by the many teachers in the province because of the minister's extensive experience at every level of education, including the trenches.

Mr. Chairman, I was pleased to see that the general revenue budget for the Department of Education actually saw a very modest increase. After all, the Alberta Liberal Party campaigned on a platform of only spending a little more money on education. That was the only department, and we're pleased that you've taken our hint. However, the question of course is always: are the funds allotted to education well spent? The department has over the past few years shown a marked propensity for lurching, as I'd like to call it; that is, hastily striking out in all directions without any solid planning. By the way, this really started with the present

Treasurer, who was at one time responsible for Education. So I'm not really laying any blame on the shoulders of the present Minister of Education. I'm referring to the vision 2000 document which, I think, generated far more controversies than the former minister envisioned. I'll touch on a number of controversial issues, and my colleagues will go into greater detail regarding some of them. I intend to ask a few questions as we go along.

My first question deals with Information Services, as it's called. I'd like to ask the minister: why does this Information Services item have a budget of \$6 million, which is an increase of \$1 million? I'd like to know what it does as well. Perhaps the minister can answer later, if that's okay.

The former minister plunged Alberta into a lengthy debate on equity funding. This started about three or four years ago, and the matter still has not been resolved. I do sense, though, that the present Minister of Education is willing to consider other proposals of equity funding instead of taking the original proposal from the government and jamming it down the throats of Albertans and their elected school board trustees. I do hope the minister will be able to hold his own in caucus and get approval for a far simpler solution which is being proposed and supported heavily by the ASBA. School board trustees are looking for a decision, and I know it will come soon.

I have a question here too regarding the \$30 million one-time infusion from the lottery fund. Is it just indeed a one-time occurrence, and does that mean that the solution to the equity funding will come soon?

There are other controversial issues introduced by the minister's predecessor. They all resulted, in my opinion, from mandating changes without proper consultation and planning. Integration of special needs students into the mainstream was essentially a good idea, except that in some schools these students were integrated 100 percent of the time, which was not necessarily good for them, but this happened because no funds were provided to hire more teacher aides or to continue with the use of special education teachers. I think the minister knows that at present some of these students are not necessarily well served. I have a question here in this regard. I notice a decrease in special assistance to school boards of about \$6 million, and yet there's an increase in school funds grants of about \$34 million. My question is: does the minister foresee an increase in the number of students and at the same time a decrease in the number of special needs students? I'm going easy on the minister, again, because he's not responsible for these problems, but I do hope he will find a solution to them.

There are some other issues on which Alberta Education is what I would call lurching. What is happening with continuous progress? This minister has placed a moratorium on that innovation, and I would like to know what he intends to do with this particular item because in spite of the moratorium, many jurisdictions are continuing down this path in pursuit of outcome-based education and other offshoots of continuous progress. These changes are all moves in the direction of individualized instruction, which perhaps constitutes a move in the right direction, provided there are extra funds for smaller classes. I think that's extremely important. Furthermore, surely parents have to be consulted on such basic changes.

Here's a question again. In view of these different approaches, why is there a decrease of half a million dollars budgeted for Curriculum Services? There's another effect of this move to individualized instruction, and that is on the Carnegie unit, that unit on which instruction is based: the time of instruction, 25 hours per credit. I think the Department of Education now allows school jurisdictions to loosen the bounds of that unit, even though the previous Minister of Education insisted – I think it was as

recently as three years ago – that all jurisdictions should offer the stipulated minimum of instructional hours to all students. There seems to be more evidence there of, shall we say, lurching.

Individualized instruction would also make the Department of Education testing programs obsolete, at least at all levels below grade 12. By the way, there are some serious questions about the usefulness of these achievement tests, especially at the grade 3 level. Are these kids really mature enough for that kind of testing? I have a question here too for the minister. There's an increase of \$700,000 in the Student Evaluation Services budget. I would like to know if that means more testing. Perhaps the minister would explain that.

Also the reporting of progress is affected by all these changes towards individualized instruction because it means inevitably that schools start looking at anecdotal report cards, and the question I think there is: were the parents consulted? I know this is probably left up to the independent and individual school jurisdictions. Nevertheless, perhaps the minister could explain this, because to my knowledge the parents are adamantly in favour, at least in my area, of reporting in terms of hard percentages. I remember that 20 years ago when I arrived in my riding and started in the school there, the reporting was done in letters. Achievement was reported in letters A, B, C, and the effort was also reported in letters E, S, and U. The parents objected strenuously to this, probably because some of their kids came home with combinations like B, S and F, U. Consequently, it was wiped out, and the parents, unanimously I might add, favoured the reintroduction of percentages.

### 3:30

Another item of concern is home schooling, which is actually one of the subjects of Bill 8, the School Amendment Act. We will speak to the supervision of home school students when we debate that Bill, but just briefly, the proposed change will probably cause more jurisdictions, including private schools of course, to compete for a slice of the burgeoning home school market. I really question the fact that access to home schooling is so easy. Surely there are very legitimate cases where students need to go on home schooling, but there are also more and more students who opt for home schooling for other reasons, some of which are not necessarily legitimate, in my opinion. It seems to me that we should at least ask home school students or parents to bear the cost of their lessons up front and rebate that expense upon successful completion of the course. I assure the minister that that would generate quite a savings because of the failure rate of students taking home schooling, which I think, at least in my former jurisdiction, runs at about 80 to 90 percent.

What it adds up to, Mr. Chairman, is that there's a great deal of uncertainty in education. Certainly the teachers feel, as the ATA study proved, a tremendous amount of pressure while trying to teach. The demands, as you well know, are often contradictory and increasing all the time. In addition, probably the main reason why teachers feel put upon is that they frequently have no say in changes that are introduced. Parents, who supposedly have a major involvement in educational changes, certainly at the local level, feel very much alienated because their input is not sought in a sincere manner. The students, once again, at the high school level certainly should be consulted regarding any major changes, but that often is not the case either.

So, Mr. Chairman, the minister faces an onerous task, but I am hopeful that he will be able to end the lurching and that he'll be able to introduce some measure of stability and, above all, that he will be able to restore morale amongst the teachers and get the

parents back into the decision-making process, in which they ought to be.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-South.

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, as you are quite aware, Red Deer seems to hold a special place in our hearts for education, being that we have a number of independent schools there, a fiscal equity problem, Dr. Freedman, home schooling. So we've got it all in Red Deer.

I want to address some of my questions, first of all, on the fiscal equity problem. You're well aware of our problem, which I think is similar to my compatriot's from Taber-Warner, to do with the fiscal inequity. So I'm not going to belabour that point. I know that you're working on a solution. We appreciate that, and we want to encourage you to carry on with that task.

The second point I would have is on the independent schools. Again, you know that a large number of my constituents are involved in the independent schools. Seventy-five percent of the funding that public schools get from the school foundation program fund is granted to independent schools. You also are aware that the independent schools have no access to the residential tax base. In effect, those parents that choose to send their children to independent schools are penalized, because not only do they have to pay taxes to the city, which then go toward the public school system, but they also have to pay extra for tuition to the independent schools. So I would certainly support a move and ask if there is any suggestion given to the thought of moving that funding from 70 percent to 100 percent, realizing that that still won't bring them up to par with the public school and the separate school systems.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

I'm wondering, in terms of statistical data, whether you would be able to provide us with the trends in home schooling in terms of the number of students across the province that are moving toward home schools, the number of students moving towards independent schools, public schools, and separate schools, just as an information matter for myself. That's more in line, as you know, with Dr. Freedman, and his video *Failing Grades* has leveled some discussion points on the quality of education. I think some parents are certainly agreeing with him, and I'm wondering whether the trend confirms that. I do note in your document Education in Alberta, the one you handed out, that you have recognized several key priorities there. I think that we're in the right direction, so keep it up.

Specifically in the numbers category, in Program 3 there are two assistant deputy ministers' offices, both with increased budgets over last year. I guess in keeping with our theme of asking the administration to look at their own budgets first and take the cuts and take the leadership, I'm a little curious why those two areas both happen to have an increase in their budgets. I would have thought that they would have led the way and had a decrease.

Looking at the revolving fund – and now I'm looking at the big book, Government Estimates – there's a revenue and an expense item called Distance Education. I'm not too familiar with that particular program, so I'm looking more for an explanation. I see the '92-93 estimate was \$1.9 million, whereas the actual expenditure was \$2.9 million. That's on page 97. [interjection] The minister is very interested in this question, so we're giving him time to find the page so he can reference it. The revenue projection was \$1.9 million; it went to \$2.9 million. It's a million

dollar increase, which I'm assuming is good, but I don't know what that's from, so an explanation would be appreciated.

Mr. Minister, that concludes the questions that I have on Education. You have a significant challenge ahead of you, and we're behind you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

3:40

MR. HENRY: Than you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few comments I'd like to make and a few questions for the minister. This is the first time that we've had a chance under the current minister to review the budget, and I'd like to remark that several people in my riding were pleased to see the reappointment of the minister, having a background in education and specifically as a former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I'd also like to register a thank you to the minister and his office for their willingness, to date at least, to share information with the opposition, with myself specifically.

Some of the issues that I'd like to address have been raised. I'd like to point to them again, and I'll try not to take more time than is necessary. Firstly, of course, we have the problem of fiscal equity in our province. It's a complicated issue; it's perhaps a simple issue and a complicated solution. I think we all agree that there needs to be more equity and fiscal equity between school divisions in our province, and several associations, boards, and individuals have made various recommendations. I know that the matter is under consideration as we speak, has been under consideration by the government. The matter has been around for a number of years. There have been inequities in our school system funding for a number of years. This is not an urban/rural issue, and I think the minister pointed to that earlier. This is an assessment issue, where, I believe, 40 percent of the low-assessment boards are nonrural boards. I'd like to encourage the minister to keep searching for the solution. I think that some very valid points have been made in the government's financial planning committee. I'd like to ask the minister if he can outline perhaps a time line for resolution of the problem. We've been discussing the problem for five, six, seven years that I'm aware of, and we need to come to a resolution.

I applaud the government's move in taking \$30 million of the lottery money to help with the situation this year. However, I would suggest that if school board trustees were to look at those dollars, they would be uneasy. They wouldn't be prepared to make the best decisions about spending those dollars because they are not sure whether those dollars are going to continue or whether it's a one-shot deal, although we've been promised – and I can cite documents where it was said two years ago, three years ago that it's an urgent matter and we have to come to a solution. School board trustees that I've spoken to have said to me, "Are we really going to see a solution this year?" I hope so. I hope we can see it sooner rather than later so that school boards can get on with their planning. I leave that one with the minister, but I would like the minister to indicate what the process is and what the time line is for a decision.

One of the major issues that has been brought to my attention by school divisions is what school divisions are calling off-loading of funding responsibility to the local school divisions. I recognize that there has been an increase in the funding of education, but there has not been an increase in funding on a per pupil basis. The funding, as I understand it, is going to be used for population growth and student population growth. We need to have some discussion in our province about what education we're going to



fund, what portions of education are going to be funded from which department. I know that's part of the confusion, but we do need to recognize that local school divisions are under increasing pressure and the local tax base is under increasing pressure, and we're going to have to address that. I don't see anything in the current budget specifically that addresses that.

One of the issues related to perceived off-loading or pressure on the local tax dollar is the issue of schools providing services in any sort of rational plan, perhaps in history even, that should be provided by other government departments or other community departments or agencies, specifically Health and Solicitor General. We increasingly hear from teachers and school divisions that they're expected to do more with education dollars than just educate. It is for that reason that I had Written Question 200 that actually asked the question: how many students received services from occupational therapists and physiotherapists in Alberta schools that were funded by school dollars, education dollars? We know there have been cutbacks in Calgary because of the fiscal pressure that's on everybody, but I guess one of the issues I'd like to raise is that in the document *Vision for the Nineties*, there was a commitment, and I'm quoting, to "implement a province-wide student information system" to collect information. I also note that the most recent Auditor General's report, for the year ended 1992, says that there were no information systems standards in the Department of Education. I'd ask the minister to perhaps update us now or at another time as to what progress has been made in addressing that particular recommendation or observation from the Auditor General.

In order for us to make informed decisions about how to use education dollars, we have to have information. If we don't know the kinds of education dollars that are funding occupational therapists or physiotherapists or other kinds of services that are not strictly education services, if we can't quantify that, how can we make decisions about perhaps suggesting to the Minister of Health that those services should be exclusively funded through the health units? I think we could do a lot better in collecting information.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to ask a question of the minister regarding the two-count system. That is a system whereby rather than simply taking the enrollment of schools at September 30 and determining the grants on that basis, there was one count taken September 30 and one at the end of the year. If I recall correctly, the department had indicated that that would save the department \$5 million. I recognize that it's just been in effect for one school year. My question is specifically related to the rationale that was given when the two-count system was brought in. One of the reasons for it was to address the dropout rate. I'd like to ask the minister if there are any data available. Again, recognizing we've only had one year, was the dropout rate in the last school year, when we had a two-count system, any lower than previous years? Has there been any impact? Do we perceive any impact? Are there any projected impacts for the current school year?

Another item, Mr. Chairman. I note that the Transportation Grants were reduced, and I think that's been alluded to and will be talked about again, I'm sure. I'd like to get some information from the minister as to what his thoughts are or what the long-term plan is. Is it the intent of the ministry to eventually pull out of providing transportation grants? Is this the beginning of a trend? What are we looking at? Or is this just simply a one-year shot? Should school boards expect to see that in future years?

My reason for asking this is that in discussing education funding and education budgets with school board trustees and administrators who are making decisions, one of the big difficulties is uncertainty. We don't seem to know what's coming down the pike next year, and we're constantly reacting to what's happened.

If there is a plan to reduce expenditures by 20 percent, as has been indicated in other departments, it would be useful to school boards to have it laid out. I recognize that some of the issues will be discussed next month at the roundtable. If the minister is not able to provide that in the short term, I would ask the minister to indicate perhaps a time line, after the roundtables even, as to when school boards and school divisions can find out exactly what's going to happen and what kinds of dollars are going to be downsized, if indeed that's the case, over the next few years.

I'd also like to ask the minister about the education revolving fund. I have two questions there. Number one, my understanding is that the education revolving fund runs primarily on a break-even basis, providing school textbooks, supplies, other kinds of resource materials through the Learning Resources Distributing Centre. My understanding is that some materials are currently being provided by the Material Resources Centre for the Visually Impaired on a non fee recovery basis. There has been some suggestion by some groups who work with people who are visually impaired that there is a suggestion to transfer this over to the Learning Resources Distributing Centre, in which case individuals who are visually impaired, if it's falling out of the revolving fund, will be expected to pay a fee. I'd like to know if that's going to happen, when it's going to happen, and also what sort of time line we're looking at. If that is the case, I would ask the minister to delay any sort of implementation of that, number one, so that groups can be consulted but also, number two – and I'd ask the minister to address this – the Auditor General also indicated that there were not adequate controls over inventory in the education revolving fund; specifically, the Learning Resources Distributing Centre. He indicated that the central warehousing was overcrowded. Now, is that central warehouse the building that was just outside of my constituency with school books in it that was torn down a couple of years ago? If that's what they are referring to, I'd like to know one way or the other. It was a good thing it was torn down. It was one of the ugliest sights, I guess, on the edge of my constituency.

### 3:50

I know I've raised this in question period, but I'd also like to bring to the attention of the minister the actions of Family and Social Services with regard to reducing to \$25 the amount available to parents for school fees and school supplies. I don't want to get into a debate here as to whether that was a wise move or not. The issue I'd like to raise with the Minister of Education is the impact on local jurisdictions. Several school districts and administrators have indicated to me that they were not priorly consulted. One of the challenges facing the government, frankly, as we reduce expenditures over the next four years – and I hope that we do reduce expenditures over the next four years – is to make sure that we do this, number one, in a rational approach, that we consult with people, and, also, that the left hand knows what the right hand is doing. We're dealing with \$13 billion-plus of expenditures.

If the Minister of Family and Social Services and his department make a decision – again I'm not wanting to get into a debate of whether that was wise or not – and that has an impact on another tax-supported entity such as school divisions, then we have to know that prior. We can't just leave school districts in a lurch. School districts have people coming to them asking for waivers, and some school districts have told me they didn't know anything about it. In fact, they are very reluctant, and a couple have absolutely refused to get into waivers because that means setting up some sort of means testing or some sort of line as to what are you opening up here.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of increased funding to private schools: I have to admit I find myself in a bit of a dilemma here. I'm a major proponent of the public education system. I think and I believe very strongly that if individuals are not happy with the public system, and I mean public and Catholic systems in our province, and they choose a different kind of education for their child – and I have to admit I've on occasion thought about that for my own children – then the individual has some responsibility or the community has some responsibility for funding that. I don't think it should be 100 percent tax supported. However, the recent move to provide other than basic instruction grants to the private school system I agreed with at the time and I still agree with. I'm worried about the integrity of the public education system. However, if private schools or independent schools are going to have children with special needs, are going to have special costs, then funding should follow through, and I understand that that's the nature of the change.

I would caution against creeping into a privatized school system in our province by increasing that to 100 percent, et cetera. If a decision is made – and perhaps I'm in the minority in our province – to open the door and to have a private education system essentially fully funded, I would hope that we would have wide public discussion on whether that was wise or not. Again, it's my view, and I think a significant number of Albertans agree, that if you're not going to use a public service and you want to use a private service, then you should be willing to pay for that. I can't say that I don't like the garbage disposal at my house and go hire somebody else to do it and then ask for the tax dollars to do that with. If I choose to have somebody else do it, then I need to pay for that out of my own . . .

I guess that brings me to the voucher system. I know there's a lobby right now seeking support for a voucher system, and I would like to know from the minister if the department is investigating this, if they've considered it at all, and what the minister's stand is on that particular issue: whether we should be going towards a voucher education system or not.

The issue of home schooling. I don't want to get into a debate on Bill 8; we'll do that on Monday afternoon. I applaud the minister for initiating a review of home schooling. We have a big, big problem in monitoring home schooling in our province. I believe that most people involved would agree with that statement. We need to ensure, if parents are going to make the choice to keep a child at home, number one, that there is some monitoring in place and that we have some way of ensuring that if at a future time that parent or that child wants to re-enter the public or group kind of situation, they're not disadvantaged because they haven't had the education at home. Right now, with nonresident boards supervising home schooling, I think it this a tragedy and a lapse of public responsibility to allow this. A school district supervising an individual 400 miles away in home schooling in terms of a child is quite absurd. I recognize that the minister's move to allow private and independent schools to supervise home schooling is an effort to address that. However, I caution again that I think we're opening the door too wide here, and I think there are potential funding implications. We can discuss that again.

I have some concerns related to integration. I know that's been discussed and probably will be discussed again. Specifically, I believe any rational person would be a proponent of integration of special-needs or disabled individuals, but I think we also have to recognize that there are limits and that we have to look at what's best for the individuals involved, the class, the teacher, society as a whole, and the cost involved as well.

I would like to ask the minister – and I'm not expecting a specific response, but I just wanted to bring it to your attention.

The Action Plan Report Card published by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities expressed some disappointment at several things that had not yet been addressed in Alberta Education with regard to the action plan. If we're going to have a Premier's council and we're going to have an action plan that's adopted by the council, then we have to have some attention to it. As the minister responsible, I'm going to urge the minister to specifically address those deficiencies. It's a sad comment on the Department of Education when it comes out as one of the lowest departments in terms of addressing the needs of individual students and persons with disabilities.

Again I don't expect a reply at this point, but I would refer the minister to the Action Plan Report Card, on page 2. I'd like to just quote a couple of lines, if I may, of the current report card, which was released in I believe August of this year:

The current review was more "investigative" in nature and found that some of the "status" notations in the original roll-up were completely unfounded and inaccurate, most likely because they went unchallenged.

I'm willing to accept that perhaps there was some misinterpretation or miscommunication, but if you've got a Premier's council investigating the implementation of a plan and the information provided by departments – and this may not be specific to Education – is later found to be not accurate information or not to reflect the true nature of what's happening in that department, then we have a problem in reporting. I would urge the minister to follow up on that as well.

One of the concerns I would like to raise is that I did hear the minister at one point in a financial planning committee meeting allude to moving in the future towards more diagnostic testing. I'd just like to comment – my time is just about up – that it's not worth testing unless we're prepared to follow up on the results of those tests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, as I indicated earlier to the minister, I'm not expecting a full response at this point, but at some later date, perhaps in writing, that would be fine.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

4:00

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few specific questions for the minister today.

Before I get into those questions, I'd like to just preface them with a few remarks. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the minister, as other members have, on doing a fine job in the ministry. I'm new to this Legislature, and it's my privilege to serve on the special planning committee on finance. One of the departments we're responsible for is Education, and I've found the minister to be most informative and co-operative. Certainly I have a lot of questions that perhaps I should know but I don't know, and it's because I'm trying to learn a lot of things about the way things happen here.

I'd like to deal with a few specific questions. First of all, a very simple question dealing with the Minister's Office budget, 1.0.1. I note that the '92-93 budget was \$347,600, which is the same as this year. However, the actual was only \$316,000. I wonder what the cost savings were last year that we don't anticipate will be around again this year in having the budget back up to the same level.

In that same program, 1.0.10, Information Services, I see there is a million dollar increase in this budget. First of all, I'd like to

know why the increase was necessary, but more importantly, I'd like to know what Information Services are. I'm a little unclear exactly what this line refers to, and the fact that it had such a significant increase . . . I'd like to know what change took place that would result in such a big increase in budget.

I'd like to move on to program 2, and this is in the area of grants that some other members have referred to already today. The first line is Equity Grants. We certainly have been dealing with that in SPC. We've had a number of options presented to us for ways of attacking that, and I look forward to further discussions. I have been convinced at least that something needs to be done, and I do look forward to having some discussions, both at the committee level and ultimately here in this House, on how we resolve the equity funding problem. I see in the estimates here that there is roughly \$80 million budgeted for Equity Grants, and I wonder: does that include the \$30 million from lotteries, or is the \$30 million from lotteries in addition to what's shown here? I wonder if you might address that.

We also have Special Education Grants. I'm familiar with what those are. I'm not familiar with Student Program Grants and General Education Grants, and I'm wondering if the minister could explain a bit more thoroughly what those two programs refer to.

Moving on to program 3, there's Student Evaluation Services. I'm under the impression that that would refer to provincewide examinations and the costs involved with that. I really don't have any comment on that other than to say I feel very strongly that provincewide evaluation is very important. I think if we're looking at ways of cutting costs in this department, that's not one of the areas that should be considered, because I do feel it's important that we know on a provincewide basis how all our students are doing in relation to one another. I think that's one of the only ways it can be done, so I would encourage the minister to certainly continue with that program. If there are cost efficiencies that can be found within the program, fine. I certainly hope a priority for the department is that that program would be kept in place.

My final comment and question is with regard to item 3.2.9, Teacher Certification. I just have a question on this item. Of course, we want to have a lot of control over the certification of teachers, as they are indirectly employees of the government, but they are also professionals. I'm wondering why as professionals they're not involved in funding their own certification programs. I'm wondering why, like a number of other professionals involved in certifying doctors or certifying lawyers or certifying accountants, teachers as a profession aren't involved in their own certification as well.

I guess I had one other point here, but it's already been covered, Mr. Minister. So I think that basically is all I have for questions. I'll let someone else have the floor.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I, too, welcome this opportunity to explore the Education estimates. There are a number of important government decisions reflected in these estimates, and I would like to question just how wise some of those decisions are and in whose interests they really do operate.

First, I would like to focus my attention on program 3 and the items in that program. These include the funds that determine what will be taught in Alberta schools and in great measure influence how those subjects are going to be taught. It's this

budget area in particular that has caused great distress among teachers and nonteachers alike. In spite of the minister's report card, teachers in this province would make some other judgments about the operation of the department in this area. I refer him to their report titled *Trying to Teach*. *Trying to Teach* outlines a number of the frustrations teachers in this province feel. The paper, widely distributed and widely contributed to by teachers, states that teachers feel they're in an impossible, lose-lose situation. They maintain in that paper that they're being asked to do more and more for students with less and less support. It's within that context that I'd like to ask some questions.

One of the points they make is that there are . . . I would ask: how does this budget specifically address the problem of unrealistic expectations and some of the contradictory demands that are being placed upon teachers? If the budget cuts are of the magnitude we expect they will be, they're going to be forced to face larger and larger groups of students and, on the other hand, provide them with individualized programs. How do you balance those two items?

The articulation program – some schools are continuing with it; it's supposed to be on hold in others – was originally based on the notion that all students would progress through K to 12 in a continuous program. How do you match that notion of education with the other notion that all students must do well on achievement tests at 3, 6, and 9 and the diploma exams at grade 12? Those seem to be contradictory, putting in place locksteps and hoops that students must jump, yet still maintaining they can continue at their own progress. The whole notion of what teachers are expected to do with youngsters and the expectations imposed on them by the department have a number of them distressed.

The second question I'd like to ask is also raised in *Trying to Teach*. That's the whole notion of piloting of programs. I'd ask: how much money is spent on piloting new programs prior to classroom installation? How much money in this budget is set aside for piloting? The history of piloting in the department has not been exemplary. The programs are tried out piecemeal, often in classrooms. The results of that kind of piecemeal piloting are then brought back and programs are revised. But those revisions are not then taken out and tried in classrooms, so the piloting remains incomplete. Teachers in *Trying to Teach* complain that the impact of programs – what they can expect will happen if they teach these programs to youngsters – is never laid out in new programs. That impact information is not made available to students, it's not made available to parents, and this is a source of distress to them.

#### 4:10

I'd ask also – and I think it comes out of the vision statement – how much money is being spent on defining expected outcome criteria for school subjects. This has a number of people in the province alarmed. The whole notion of expected learning outcomes is not a new notion. It has its roots in the scientific movement that hit education in the early 1900s. In fact Bobbitt in 1918 – this is a 1918 text – insisted that human life, however varied, consists in its performance of specific activities, and the objectives of the curriculum will be: they will be definite, and they will be particularized. That sounds very, very much like what was contained in the vision statement. Six years later another author, Pendleton, came forward with 1,581 objectives for the English program. Along with that, Guiler listed another 300 for arithmetic in grades 1 to 6. My fear is that 70 years later we find ourselves proceeding down the same route, the notion that we are going to be able to define all the outcomes of all the programs, put in a simple testing system, and that's going to cure the ills of

education and bring on this great wave of quality and excellence. I don't believe that for a moment, and there are a number of teachers in this province who share that view.

So I'd like to know how much money is in the budget for that kind of activity. It would also be interesting to know how much background work has been done in looking at the American experience with those kinds of activities in the '60s and how successful the American experience with learning outcomes really was. It may have something to do with the overlap of personnel in certain public school boards and certain Department of Education departments, but I seem to have gone through these notions before in another life.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

I'd like to know how much money is being spent on dictating and producing the very detailed instructional manuals being given to teachers in subject areas. It's rather ironic that we have moved over the last 30 years from a teaching force that was predominantly one-year trained, normal school trained, to a teaching force that now is, without exception, degreed and in many cases with two degrees. In the 1970s in this province, when we had teachers, many of them with one-year training, curriculum manuals contained a list of topics, for instance, in social studies that teachers would pursue and a sample showing them what a unit might look like. Today, with the very best qualified teachers, we feel bound and determined to give them volume after volume of detailed manuals, and these manuals, although often it's indicated they're resource manuals, carry the weight of prescription. That's particularly true in the third and sixth grades with the achievement examination expectations. So it seems to be a big contradiction. There seems to have been an increasing lack of trust in the professional kinds of work teachers are able to do with children.

The fifth question I'd address is: how are people that are affected by decisions in this budget involved in those decisions? One of the frustrations teachers indicated in Trying to Teach is that they have been kept out of the process. I know that the department hires individuals to write programs; they have a series of consultants that work on programs. But those people are really involved with a very small number of the teachers that end up having to put programs in place in the classrooms in our province. There's a feeling on the teachers' part of being helpless and powerless and victimized by program changes they have had nothing to say about. I think the present process tends to result in programs that somehow or other attempt to change teacher behaviour and student behaviour regardless of the kind of classroom situation the programs have to be implemented in. So I'd like to know: are there places in this budget where the whole notion of consultation with those involved is addressed?

I'd like to know what funds are provided in this budget to help teachers refine and perfect their instruction. At one time in this province there were a number of places where that was done, but at this present moment there's nowhere a teacher can go and see a program modeled as it should be taught. Laboratory schools or model schools or magnet schools other jurisdictions have moved into, lighthouse schools – the notion of having a place where you can go and see a program being put forward at its very best has somehow bypassed the efforts of the department.

In trying to teach, teachers have for years complained about the lack of provision for in-service when new changes are announced. It seems that somehow or other the Education department is a little schizophrenic in this area. They've taken on responsibility at some points. The Social Studies program a few years ago was a good example where there was extensive financing of in-service

across the province. Yet when the question is raised for other programs, it's indicated this is somehow a local board's responsibility. I don't think the problem is severe for urban boards, who in many cases have very sophisticated consulting and supervisory staff. But for many rural boards with very limited resources, in-service is a major problem. I'd like to know how this budget is going to help address those concerns.

One of the things that permeates the department and the approach to program development is a top-down technical model of management. It's a model that places extreme emphasis on efficiency. I think it places emphasis on efficiency over effectiveness. I think that in many cases it's been dehumanizing in its application. It's also something that worries me about the expected learning outcomes, that that is based on a management system that tries to control teacher and student behaviour. The notion of efficiency rides paramount in that kind of application. The whole notion smacks of the teacherproof movement of the 1960s when people tried to put in place programs that supposedly would control teachers and wouldn't allow them to deviate from the objectives of the program. I think there are management models, particularly at this time when there are declining resources, that are much more appropriate for education – and I know in the past the department has explored some of those – the whole notion of exploring mutual management models, collegial management models, models that try to make education meaningful in local situations, models that involve students and parents in decision-making about programs, not models that give programs to those people and say, "Here, it's your job to try to implement them." So I'd like to ask if the whole notion of how education is managed in the province has been a consideration in this budget. If so, what will be done about it?

4:20

I'd like to move to the business of achievement testing, and I speak as someone who sat on the achievement test committee for a while. I'd like to know how much money is spent on achievement testing compared to how much money is spent on diagnostic testing. The achievement testing is after-the-fact testing. You know, teacher after teacher has made the same claim: it would be nice to know where youngsters are before we start with them so we could plan instruction, rather than having these labels tagged on students in our classes after the instruction is over. If you ask what is the value of that achievement testing, in some cases it seems to be more political than academic and instructional help to teachers. I think certainly diagnostic testing has much more potential to change instruction. When I first joined the committees that were considering it, I understood that that was to be a long-term goal, that once the achievement tests were in place, diagnostic testing was to come to the fore and would result in some instruments being prepared for teachers' use.

I think the tyranny of the testing program has to be addressed. I've spent time in inner-city schools in Edmonton, and the day before the achievement tests are given, the staffs there are completely demoralized. They ask time and time again: "What is the purpose of this? Is this to make us feel bad? What do we get out of this? Is this to make people in high socioeconomic areas of this city feel good?" Some elements have crept into the achievement testing program that I think work against it and aren't in the service of children and students and teachers.

I'd like to move, if I could, to the whole business of student appeals, another area in the budget. What funds are included in the budget to address the growing problem of student appeals? Student placement appeals in the province has become a growth industry, and I've heard from several boards who are frightened

about how they're being pushed into more and more legal-based and legal costs surrounding those appeals. There's a line item here about appeals, and I wonder what the accommodation is in the budget for that.

I'd also like to address the whole notion of regional offices. I ask seriously: what is the role of regional offices, particularly in urban areas? Is it a service that's now needed, or are all their services now needed? In urban areas the regional boards' profile is very low, to say the least, and in the past activities such as school inspections that were carried on by the regional boards in urban areas were looked on with some skepticism, and I'm being kind. So I would ask: what is their role, and is it a needed service?

I'd also question how much money is being spent in this budget monitoring classroom spaces in the province. It seems to me the obsession of the department with school buildings and knowing where every space in the province was located and the number of children that were in those spaces is really a waste of time. It's the only area of school board budgets monitored in that way. No one monitors the largest resource, the teachers in the province, and says, "Have you got those teachers working every hour they possibly can?" That is not done, at least not centrally by the province. So why in this case, with buildings, is there this concern? I would ask: is it a good use of resources?

The last question I'd like to address is: has the notion of block funding for capital projects been explored? Again, I refer particularly to urban areas of the province. The history of the capital funding has been that the fund has not been divided equitably among school jurisdictions across the province. I know in the past there were proposals to allocate it on a per-pupil basis, and I think we all know that won't work in some small jurisdictions. On that basis they would never get a school. I wonder about the monitoring and whether for some large boards the option of having block funding for building based on their student population doesn't make some sense.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.  
Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to take the opportunity to identify three or four areas for discussion, and I'd start particularly with some concerns I have on curriculum, program 3, and a budgetary item you've designated. I'm not specifically concerned about the money spent there at this point, but I want to inquire, from your perspective . . . I appreciate this is not necessarily an answer that will be forthcoming this afternoon. However, it's my understanding that Alberta Education sets certain standards in curriculum. If I look at the beginning document when you refer on page 2 to the School Act and the role of school boards, they are cited as acting within broad parameters established by the province, and trustees are delegated the power to make decisions with respect to education in the school jurisdiction and to establish local priorities and meet the needs of the individual students.

I have a concern that in budgets a lot of money is spent on curriculum as is necessary to meet the standards provincially, but then we have a wide range of curriculum departments in our school boards. I'm wondering – recognizing we've given them this broad base – if indeed it's necessary to double fund curriculum departments. I take that, you know, with the exception of those local curriculums that may be pertinent, whether it's to a native community or a religious program they want to develop or even a unique language program that's specific to their area. But I do have a concern that boards have taken that ownership for

curriculum and are using their funds in that way when we have obviously designated a significant number of dollars in a specific curriculum area.

I take it one step further and ask whether or not at the federal level, where we do have some of these agreements in place, we are looking at a national curriculum. While I'm not necessarily convinced that the local geography of Newfoundland is going to be the same as Alberta and therefore we would need some specific material related to our own province, I am hard-pressed to believe we need to have a biology curriculum, a physics curriculum, a math curriculum, and even a French language curriculum or even English literature curriculum which is unique to Alberta.

My comment on that takes me to an opportunity to applaud some of the high standards that are developed in Alberta Ed. and recognized throughout the country, giving us a high standard in these areas. So the third step in my kind of argument here is: is it not possible that we would have the opportunity to buy and sell curriculum in areas which are standard across the country? I see that as a sort of financial opportunity for us. But in addition to that, we have a problem nationally in looking at the education level of our students, and I see it as a way we as a province can show some leadership in setting the standard for quality education not only in our own province but in Canada as well. I'm sensitive to the fact that it is a provincial jurisdiction, but in light of the financial situation we're in, I think we have to look at things in a different light. I do believe other provinces who are struggling with budgets as well may be more receptive to sharing a curriculum or selling a curriculum, and it's something that should be looked at. As I say, I don't know that it's an answer that specifically can come today, but it's something I would like to see spoken to.

Another area I'd like to talk about – and to the minister: he knows my area of interest in this – has to do with technology. I have pointed this out at standing policy, and I bring it to the attention of this Assembly not because I think there's one answer today but I do believe it is something we have to talk about in our local communities. On page 19 of the document Education Alberta that was distributed earlier this afternoon, I want to refer to the area of technology, and it appears there are a few areas that are spoken to. One talks about teaching strategies, and the other talks about the implications to our students in terms of their ability to learn in different settings, in different ways, and then specifically that technologies will ensure that our students are prepared to take their place in the more global economy.

4:30

I'm just frustrated with the lack of specifics in this area. If you bring it down to estimates and you bring it down to dollars and cents, I don't know how we can expect local school boards to adopt a technology policy which may have an open-ended dollar number to it when the department does not have some specific guidelines. These may be in the making, but given that this is the document as an overview, I'm frustrated that there is no specific plan.

I'm also concerned that technology is limited to the sense of how our students will be educated and not to how we will run our school systems. I don't advocate establishing new commissions or bringing new task forces into play because I think it could swallow up a lot of money, but I have to think we could get some support from private industry to assist us in developing an economic strategy that addresses the issue of technology. I think it's significant, because I do believe it will affect the types of schools we operate, where they are located.

That brings me to my third point, with respect to the capital expenditures and new facilities. I am very supportive of the maintenance program that is in place. Many of you who have been involved with school systems know the implications to letting a plant run down and not house our students efficiently. The fact is that these schools are looked at, with their needs prioritized; budgets are considered; and there's a very strong commitment to maintaining the quality of physical plant that our students are educated in, which provides a good environment for our teachers and I think gives some assurances to our parents with respect to the safety and the overall morale of the school environment they learn in, particularly in light of examples we see to the border south of us.

However, in the city of Calgary, for instance, they are having phenomenal difficulty in funding new mini towns on the outskirts of the city. There are not municipal funds to build the infrastructure vis-à-vis the roads, and in these areas there are designated park settings where the schools have been tentatively committed to. I'm certain – in fact, I'm positive – that some of those designated school sites that are committed to by the city through their joint-use facilities will never be schools. There is no way, no hope that we will have the resources to build those schools. I believe it sets up a false expectation in an urban centre. They are looking for a school community. They've got a sign on a piece of grass that says it will be a school community, when in fact the priorities of the school board and where the local population is and the capital funds they can access may restrict a decision in favour of that setting over the next decade.

I'm not certain, sir, what the answer to that question is, but I think it starts with significant consultation with our municipalities to verify exactly what our building opportunities are going to be, a clear discussion with boards about their priorities, based on current demographics. I think, in light of the municipal discussions that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs was referring to during question period, if we are going to be looking at reduced funding to the municipalities in this area, we have to be having a conversation with them. I think it should be paramount and something that we treat urgently. As I say, it is not something that can be answered today. It's just a direction I would like to see to alleviate the school boards having to take all the heat for not building schools in that community, because obviously the planning goes far beyond the local boards and, rightly so, has some responsibility in this department.

My fourth and final area of discussion of course is a hot topic these days: the modified school year, as I prefer to call it, rather than year-round schooling. I know an awful lot of attention is paid to the additional opportunity to use our facilities or save money on our facilities by having them not operating for a certain portion of time. However, I'm very concerned that we need to modify our school year from a curriculum point of view. It's something that I know hasn't got a lot of research to it, and I had asked for a motion and a study done at our board level and was quite satisfied that it's an area of concern but also recognize that it needs more attention. The concern I have has to do with the fact that if our students are off school from roughly the end of June till the beginning of September and they spend most of their June time in preparation for exams and most of their September time catching up to speed with where they've left off, we significantly are diminishing the effectiveness of our teachers. I also believe we put our children at risk because they have to be retaught. I believe, like any muscle that's well used, the more you use it, the better it gets, and the longer you leave it in a state of decline – it takes a while to get it back up to speed.

When I was questioned by the media yesterday, they said: "So you're concerned about the length of time they're out of school. Does that mean you're saying that teachers aren't teaching any more than eight months of the year?" I state before this House that my response was, "No, I believe students aren't learning more than eight months of the year." I have a very serious concern about that.

If we're going to tie our method of delivery to our outcomes and results in education, specifically if we talk about math curriculum, it is something that you build on. It's not something that you just set aside after you've learned it. In the area of math and I believe in some areas of science, when they did the testing that the Calgary Catholic school board brought to my attention in terms of research, they showed that there was a significant increase in retention and success in mastery of those subject areas when the curriculum was taught more consistently.

I'm using the example today in the House of the summer break, but I think it's more significant when you take the semester system that exists in high school, where you have a young person who takes math 10 in the first semester of his grade 10 year and in grade 11, second semester, picks up math 20, and has completely lost 12, probably 18, full months of retention. While our semester system allows flexibility and has in it some inherent strengths, I believe in our core areas it is a mistake not to insist on an opportunity for students to work in a continuous fashion.

I take it one step further by also remarking that if you have a student with learning disabilities, that student may struggle to maintain their course level from September to January. Basically because of scheduling, they can't pick it up again until the following September or possibly a year, the following January. You have done them a terrible disservice. For them to get back up to speed, these marginal students who are trying very hard to maintain their curriculum, we do them a disservice by only offering them segmented and not necessarily the strongest curriculum in that delivery model.

I think it's important that we look at the students we serve and try and address that area. I'm not certain – and I don't want to tie in all curriculum that is taught on a semester system and put it in a diminishing light, but I do know that we're not utilizing the learning skills of our students when we have an opportunity to segment their studies in this fashion.

Standing here in Committee of Supply and looking at where the dollars go in education, as a former trustee and as a parent of four teenaged children, two of whom have made it to university at this point, I have to suggest to you, and I'm sure it's shared by all in the House, that a tremendous amount of work is done in our school system by our principals, by our teachers, and with a great deal of support by the Department of Education. I don't know that all parents or all members of this Assembly have had the opportunity to look at some of the strengths of the department and some of the commendable efforts they have made: some of the programs in terms of teacher excellence, some of the awards that our teachers achieve, and some of the national standards that we set here in Alberta. I think often we don't give enough credit, because sometimes the heat just comes down when there's a problem in a school. I'm a firm believer that when you stand in a public office, you have to be an advocate for the various responsibilities that you administer.

I urge people in this House to be advocates for education, for the professional teachers who work in our system, work on behalf of the department and ask the tough questions that they need to hear and are more than willing to address. I think we have to serve our local boards with factual information. I have a very serious concern when the minister of social services takes a tough

question about young people not able to get pencils and pens, and it looks at the government as taking money away from the needy, when school districts have the moral obligation and the fiscal responsibility to meet the needs of those students. We have to assist them in becoming more accountable, whether that's by identifying to them that if their provincial grant is 3 percent, well, that is your budget, and to settle at 4 or 5 percent puts those students at a disadvantage. They have to be responsible to deal with that.

**4:40**

I also think we have to work with the teaching profession. I question whether or not, as we bring this document forward, we are effective enough in liaising with the universities, who offer the Faculty of Education programs where our teachers are trained. If we are not consistently advising the departments of education at the university level what our mandate is, what we need in our teachers, then we bring into the system teachers who are qualified to teach but may be missing certain elements in their professional careers that are essential to the strength of our provincial programs. So in consultation with local school boards and local municipalities, as I alluded to earlier, I think it's also incumbent upon the minister and the department and MLAs to engage in discussions with the various faculties of education to ensure that what they are being taught, as it will apply in the classroom, is consistent with what we need to work hand in hand with our ministry.

I don't think that is overstepping our responsibility. I think we're seeing an awful lot of integration in terms of outcomes and in terms of setting goals and expectations, and I believe we've got committed people who enter the educational profession. I just regret that after spending three or four years, they may not have all that they need or all that we need. One example that has been looked at is practicum teaching at the university level. I believe some universities don't hold that until the teachers are in third or fourth year. As a result, they may find that they don't like teaching, but they're so far into it that it's kind of hard to pull out. I believe the University of Lethbridge has a different scenario, where it's done right at first year. It helps to formulate a good teaching base right from the beginning. I appreciate that that kind of steps over into the Ministry of Advanced Education, but I think it's tied into how we provide this service with these dollars to our students.

Mr. Minister, my questions, as you probably know, are often more philosophical than practical. However, I would ask you to take them under advisement. I don't really believe they need to be answered this afternoon, but I'd appreciate your interest in assisting me with a response.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Edmonton-Strathcona.

**MR. ZARIWNY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I will address my comments to two items in your budget. One is Native Education, and the other is English as a Second Language. I'll handle each of those in that order.

We know that the federal government is responsible for the education of Indians on reserves, but the Alberta government is directly responsible for approximately 30,000 native students, in Edmonton and Calgary primarily. I will be addressing my comments to these particular students and the concerns and the problems they appear to be having.

It would seem to me that there are three overriding issues you as minister will have to address at some stage if you want to provide a level playing field for these students. The first issue

would be to ensure that native children learn about the culture of their own First Nations through the school curriculum. Making courses culturally relevant in my estimation would decrease the dropout rate for natives. We understand that it's high. We don't know the exact number. We know that the problem is greater in junior high and high school and lesser in elementary.

The second issue that I believe you have to at some stage address is funding for native students over 19 years old who want to continue and go back to school in a comfortable environment. In particular I'm talking about the special schools like Ben Calf Robe Centre in Edmonton and the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School in Calgary.

The final general issue that will have to be addressed by your department, if you want to provide again this level playing field, is that you have to put an emphasis on the other side of the spectrum. You have to encourage nonnative students to learn about the culture and the society of the First Nations. The thrust here can be achieved through your social studies programs.

As if to underscore these three issues, Stats Canada released some distressing information this week on the employment and education of native students and natives generally. I'm sure you're aware of them, but I feel they're so important that they should be mentioned again in this review of your budget. I am also aware that some of them impact on your colleague the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. We know that native unemployment, for example, is up to 25 percent. That's two and a half times the national jobless rate. Unemployment ranged from 31 percent among natives on reserves to 22 percent for Metis. Edmonton, however, really fared badly in this regard. When the figures were broken down, unemployment for Edmonton Indians was 27.5 percent, 2.5 percent above the national average for Indians.

Now, in regard to your department, the question may be asked: so what? Well, 40 percent of the natives that were interviewed in Edmonton said that one of the reasons, if not the major reason, they couldn't find work was their education. So it seemed to me that surveys, then, would indicate that the native students' preparation for life beyond high school needs improvement. Mr. Minister, we would ask that in this case you challenge the school systems to meet the educational needs of these 30,000 students, that you try to challenge them to improve their academic achievement. We look to you, Mr. Minister, for leadership in this area.

Having given you those general remarks, I have some specific questions which deal with your budget and native education. They are, as the hon. member on the other side just mentioned, philosophical but also very critical. Can you assure us, for example, that your budget for native education helps prepare native students for citizenship, helps prepare native students for success in the workplace, helps them meet the challenges of postsecondary education? Does your budget, for example, assure us that schools in cities actually will meet the needs and interests of native students? Is there any way, Mr. Minister, that you can tell us whether we're going to have more native students graduating from Edmonton and Calgary schools and some of the other bigger centres? Is there any way that you can tell us that the budget allocated for native education will allow school jurisdictions to provide native students with training or native languages in the elementary levels? Again, can you assure us that all the students, regardless of whether they're native or not, will have a better understanding of native cultures and values?

In conclusion on this part of the budgetary review that I'm addressing my comments to, Mr. Minister, it would seem that if you're going to be looking for an evaluation measure of your department's success in this area, you should seek the answer to

this question: are native people satisfied with their education and their involvement in the education system?

#### 4:50

The other area is English as a Second Language, which is known by the acronym ESL. For the immigrant, for the Indian, and for the disadvantaged, ESL presents itself as a means to fairness. Again, we talk about how if Alberta Education is going to provide an equal opportunity to succeed, going to allow that level playing field to develop, then we believe it's not appropriate to have the failure of groups of students predetermined. I submit to you that those students who don't speak English are those whose failure is almost determined. Your constituents as well as mine, I believe, have some concerns about what ESL is not doing.

If I can share with you the result of a letter we received from an ESL teacher in Calgary. She had conducted her own research into the ESL program, and about 156 students were surveyed. She found that there were a number of factors which predicted academic success, including age upon arrival in Canada – and we're talking about the immigrant students here – the linguistic background of those students, the educational gap, and the level of language competency upon entry into the school program. Now, I understand that information like this is not tracked by Alberta Education. Perhaps you can answer the question I have: what is tracked when you consider the immigrant students?

This same ESL teacher from Calgary also notes that there's no tracking of children of immigrants born in Canada, since they are not officially ESL students. I'm talking here about children born in Canada of immigrant parents. At present, the funding, as I understand it – again, perhaps you can clarify this – for ESL students is up to a maximum of three years. I would suggest, as this ESL teacher from Calgary suggested as well, that it would require approximately two years of ESL support for immigrant students to become proficient in basic interpersonal communications and as much as six to seven years to acquire a cognitive academic language proficiency. I would ask, Mr. Minister, if you have at any time set up consultations with the ministers of immigration and, I gather, public security now to see whether or not this kind of funding system is possible to share with them.

Now, here in Edmonton our ESL consultant that we talked to presents results similar to the ESL teacher out of Calgary. Again, Alberta Education, as I understand, funds only those children born outside of Canada. The Edmonton public school board uses other funds to cover the ESL requirement of students born to immigrant parents but born in Canada. We also understand that if the funding continues to be cut for children with special needs, the Edmonton school board will switch its priorities, will remove funds from that particular program. We ask whether or not you as minister have taken this into consideration in developing your budget for ESL.

Again, if we look at the statistics, it becomes clear that the ESL program is a considerable force that should be strengthened. When I say "force", again I'll go back to the statistics. We know that 85 percent of the immigrants that come to Alberta, for example, end up here in Edmonton and in Calgary. We know that 85 percent of these don't have a native language other than English, that at least half of the student immigrants don't know how to speak English, and 18 percent of them don't have schooling at all. The majority of them, 85 percent, are between five and nine years old. I would submit, Mr. Minister, that these children again don't have that level playing ground. I'm not being critical of your department, because I think you've made strides in this area and they are definitely good points to be attained. I would

like to say, though, that this particular area is an area that needs more emphasis.

I again have some specific questions that I'd like to ask you about English as a Second Language. Knowing that you track some of these students, is it possible for you to tell us how many students from grades 1 to 12 that arrived in Alberta who are immigrants have been funded by Alberta Education through the ESL program over this last year? Again, studies conducted show that 23 percent of students in early childhood and 50 percent of students from grades 1 to 12 are in need of ESL programs. We're again talking here about immigrant students.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

The second question I have is provincial funding. We've been advised that the school boards consider ESL funding as being inadequate. Can you tell us whether your particular program is keeping pace with the immigration levels in Alberta? As well, can you advise us whether or not your program has been extended to Alberta students who are born in Canada: the immigrant students, but in addition to that, the natives, the Mennonites, the Hutterites, and the linguistic minorities.

The last two questions again deal with the immigrant students. Does your program provide enough money to allow the diverse needs of immigrant students to be taken care of? What is being done, if at all through your program, to get immigrant parents involved in the education of their children?

In conclusion, it would seem to me that you will have a big problem, if you haven't right now, in the area of ESL. With the influx of children from Somalia, with the influx of children from Bosnia, from Kurdistan, with those children that want to come to Canada to meet their family, from Vietnam to India, not only will these children be deprived of schooling, but they also will have no English training at all. So they will be speaking a native language that is not native here. In fact, I would assume that they will be illiterate as well in the native language they speak at home. I urge you in this case to consider new methods of dealing with those children.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the minister on being reappointed the Minister of Education. I know he's a very capable individual, and I'm glad he was reappointed to Education.

I'd like to say a few words about equity funding. I'm looking forward with great interest and anticipation to his solving the problem of equity funding in the next short while. The one area that I think he's aware I'd like to see in any formula for a payout of equity funding would be to use the average assessment per student along with the mill rate, but not use a mill rate that is based on a certain percentage of average mill rate where they have to chase that average mill rate in order to access funding from the equity pool.

The other question the hon. Member for Medicine Hat brought up, on your estimates in program 2, in 2.2.1. I would like the reply. Last year we had \$83.3 million in the equity fund, and this year it's \$80.5 million, and we're supposed to have put \$30 million more in out of lottery funding. So I'm looking forward to that answer.

Also, another question I'd like to ask is on the Teachers' Retirement Fund Grants. This year there was an increase of some



\$25.5 million. I realize that's to try to fully fund the teachers' fund. My question is: will this be the largest increase? Will it start to go down after this year, or will it keep increasing for the next few years in actual dollars?

5:00

Then I'd like to mention a few remarks about the regional offices. If you go from program 3.2.4 all the way down to 3.2.8, there is a decrease of some \$2.7 million, which is quite a drop and saving. I sometimes am questioned by my constituents on the need for regional offices, so maybe that amount of decrease reflects that maybe the need isn't as great as was anticipated before.

Then I'd like to go on to 3.2.9, Teacher Certification, where we spend \$1.2 million. I would like to know what that is spent on. The interesting thing I noticed is when you compare the capital investment from the two years, \$87,500 is spent each year on capital funding under that program. I'd be interested in what the capital investment in that particular line is; it's \$87,500.

I'll close with that and hope to hear the answers to these questions. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Education.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all the hon. members that have taken part in the debate. I would like to use the time available to me to answer some of the 61 different topics that were raised during this afternoon's debate.

First of all, I'd like to talk about equity. Several members referred to that as being a very important item to be addressed, and I certainly agree. I think as members of the Legislature know, that is currently under active discussion. I feel that it is a pressing problem or issue that has to be solved. It is one that we have to look at the best solution for certainly, and I can only say at this point in time that it is certainly my intention and my commitment to work on that particular issue. Also with respect to equity, I'd like to address the matter of the missing \$30 million. Well, it's not here. The \$30 million, as you will remember, is in the lists of allotments under the lottery funds, and it will be applied to the funding of equity for education in the schools, I assure you, but in terms of the way it is accounted for, it is not in this particular budget.

Secondly, a number of hon. members addressed the item of Information Services. They came at it from different angles, and I think the questions were certainly good ones. The Information Services of the department, first of all, went up significantly for two reasons. We're trying to do a better job of providing information to people, but, secondly, in the reorganization of the department certain items that had been in vote 3 were moved into vote 1 and consolidated under a deputy minister responsible for that particular area.

I'll just give you some examples of other information services that involve extensive expenditure. This year we will probably put out over 25,000 high school diplomas. We will provide to the public of the province, to students particularly, over 120,000 transcripts. I received a letter from an individual not too long ago where the person, actually it was a student, was expressing amazement at the fact that we were giving away transcripts. She'd come to the office fully expecting to pay, you know, \$10. I didn't ask in a reply letter how much she expected to pay, but I think it was about \$10 that was mentioned in the letter. So that's something that is a viewpoint on this. At the present time you have some information on your desk which comes through

information services. It is a very important aspect of the department's operation.

Related to that, there were questions raised about the need for more information, more data with respect to the operation of the system. Certainly with Alberta Education the officials there are working hard on improving our data bank, so to speak, so that we have a better base from which to make decisions. Of course, how far you progress in that regard depends upon the budget available to do so in terms of training personnel, in terms of buying equipment, and also the impact upon the school systems has to be considered as well.

Several of the members speaking this afternoon mentioned the topic of the integration of special-needs students, and I appreciate and in most cases agree with the points of view that have been expressed. In the near future we will be releasing a policy statement on the placement of students with special needs, and I hope that that will certainly in part address some of the concerns that were raised here today.

A specific question was asked about the funding for special-needs students and the overall decrease in the budget. Members will recall that in those grants that were reduced was the special-needs grants and the different categories, and their rate was reduced 8 percent in this particular budget. I do not think you will find an 8 percent reduction in the estimates because you have increases in numbers that take up part of that, and we fund on a per pupil basis in all cases.

Two or three members referred to something referred to as continuous progress, and I have a hunch, hon. members, that that's not what you're referring to. You're referring to an initiative taken several years ago called program continuity. Continuous progress has been around at least three times since I've been involved in education, and it has become an interpretation or an application of the program continuity program. I fully recognize that there has certainly been some concern and certainly confusion with respect to that particular policy statement. I have tried in my brief time as minister to clarify my position with respect to program continuity. I have emphasized that reporting to parents must be accurate; it must be by grade level; it must be understandable. I haven't said that it must be in percentages, because I think that particularly in the very, very early grades – even perhaps in the Member for West Yellowhead's riding I don't think they go to minute percentages. Certainly later on numerical gradings are appropriate.

I've also indicated that we should be looking at the delivery of programs in the school system in terms of methodology, using what works, and we should be providing maximum freedom to teachers to apply the methodology which works in a particular situation. I have also indicated that in keeping with the vision statement, Alberta Education will continue to specify the objectives, the results expected through the grade levels of the curriculum so that that is well defined and clear and can be explained and justified to the student, to the public, to the school system itself.

In the context of this discussion there was reference to the Carnegie unit. I have been a defender of the Carnegie unit, and I think we should not be moving away from the Carnegie unit unless we can be assured that the standard of education – in other words, the learning of students – will not be negatively affected. However, it is rather interesting that for probably the last several decades we have had something called the correspondence school branch, now the distance education centre. We did not specify Carnegie unit hours. Of course, you can't when you're dealing with distance education. So I think we have to be open to proven variations to the Carnegie unit in the future. We cannot just completely stay rigid about it and not be open to approaches

which will be clearly better than that particular approach. In the meantime, I think we should be supportive of it.

### 5:10

There were several remarks with respect to achievement tests. The cost of evaluation is outlined in the document that I passed out, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the breakdown as to how much is spent on diagnostic testing and achievement tests and diploma examinations: I will try and get that to the members who raised the questions, but I would not go into that right now.

In the overall comments with respect to achievement testing – and most of these comments came from across the way – I have read the Trying to Teach document. I've tried to listen as I go around the province to this whole debate on testing, but I would like to remind hon. members about the degree to which Alberta Education is involved in testing. We test one subject every four years in grade 3 – we rotate it through four subjects – every four years in grade 6, once in grade 9, and then we have our diploma examinations. Now, quite frankly, I do not think that is at all onerous, not at all. Anyway, Mr. Chairman, grade 3, grade 6, grade 9, and grade 12. I expect that teachers probably give at least one test a month. I just think that to provide the information that is needed so that we can fulfill our responsibility of reporting the performance of the overall system to the people of Alberta, to the students, to the parents, this is probably not enough in terms of overall testing effort.

The issue of independent and private schools, private schools in terms of the School Act, was raised by several members. Three or four comments that I'd like to make there. First of all, going back a number of years – and that discussion has continued – we had in a general kind of way said that we would look at 75 percent funding in terms of the provincial contribution to funding for eligible programs for private schools. We are moving towards that with the additional money in the budget. I think we have to keep in mind that as far as we can note, we've got private schools which are overall doing a good job. They are certainly interested in the educational program, and they are a part of our education system, something that has been duly recognized. We also have to keep in mind that they do not have access to the local tax base. The 75 percent is not 75 percent of the total; it's 75 percent of what the province contributes.

On the other hand, I think we could have quite a long philosophical debate over how high the level of funding should go for private schools, because it seems to me that you have to bring in a number of other factors. New private schools accept all the responsibilities and all of the programs that the public and separate schools have to offer. We could have quite a philosophical debate about that. Private schools have a place in our education system in Alberta. They are fulfilling the desire of parents to have their students educated in that type of school, in most cases with a strong religious orientation, and that is their right and their choice in the education system of Alberta.

Several members referred to the overall importance of involvement in the field of education and in the decisions that are made, whether we're talking about curriculum or whether we're talking about what programs are offered at the local level. Certainly Alberta Education agrees that we should be listening, we should be consulting, there should be involvement. I could go through a litany, Mr. Chairman, of all the consultative activities that are currently going on. We plan them so we hope they fit together in our overall roundtable discussions and some long-term planning and decision-making thereafter.

I would like to talk about one particular type of decision-making which was referred to, I believe, by the Member for Edmonton-

Strathcona. Alberta Education certainly tries to involve educators in the whole area of curriculum development, but we've got to remember that teachers develop that curriculum. I'm not sure that five and seven years is really a realistic time, even under the present system. I think we're taking too long to turn curriculum around. But in an effort to consult and develop and test and retest, it sometimes takes us that long a period of time to implement new curriculums. So I appreciate the hon. member's comments, but I think there's a practical situation here where decisions have to be made and things have to be done.

Certainly I also appreciated the comments by the hon. member that was talking about top-down or bottom-up decision-making in Education. Once again I think there has to be a balance there. Alberta Education has its responsibilities. It has to listen and make decisions and so do school boards. The hon. member, I believe, was formerly a school board chairman, and I would just by way of a side thought wonder if the collegial model and those things were piloted when he was a school board chairman. Perhaps we could have a private conversation sometime to find out how they worked.

I note the detailed analysis given by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods with respect to native education and English as a Second Language instruction. I recognize the difficulties in the issues that he raises. We are certainly endeavouring to address those, but they are complex. I will try and reply to him in more detail in written form after this debate is completed.

Those are some of the general items and main items that I wanted to respond to, Mr. Chairman, but I look forward to any further debate and also assure members that I will respond to all of their questions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's been an afternoon of intensive scrutiny and suggestions, and we appreciate that. Given the hour I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

### 5:20

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Education, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

### Privilege Clarification of Speaker's Ruling

MR. SPEAKER: Before proceeding further, the Chair would like to clarify the ruling made earlier today. Earlier today the Chair made a ruling on a question of privilege raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West. The Chair would like to clarify a statement made in that ruling. At one point the Chair stated:

The Chair has not found a prima facie breach of privilege in this case. Had it done so, however, the Chair imagines that the withdrawal offered by the minister an hour after the words were spoken would be at best just barely enough to close the matter. An apology should be timely.

This statement was neither intended nor correct. What the Chair wanted to say was: the withdrawal offered by the minister an hour after the words were spoken would be, at best was, just barely enough to close the matter. An apology should be timely.

The ruling was in essence that a prima facie case of contempt did exist. However, the ruling was that the minister's withdrawal was sufficient, but barely sufficient, to close the matter based on the authority cited in the ruling. The Chair regrets any confusion which may have resulted.\*

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an eventful week. All of us, including yourself, are learning as we go. We appreciate that.

[At 5:23 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

\*see page 464, left col., para. 11

