

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, October 5, 1993** **1:30 p.m.**  
 Date: 93/10/05  
 [Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, we give thanks for the bounty of our province: our land, our resources, and our people.

We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition signed by 186 residents of the Bethany care centre in northwest Calgary. The residents protest, sir, what the petition describes as, and I quote, an "exorbitant increase in [the] monthly room rate as imposed by Alberta Health Care."

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give notice that the written questions appearing on the Order Paper for tomorrow will stand and retain their places with the exception of the following, and that would be written questions 149, 152, 153, 199, 206, and 207.

I'll be moving also that the motions for returns will be standing and retaining their places with the exception of the following, and that would be motions for returns 175, 176, 177, 180, 183, 188, 189, 190, 191, 193, 198, 202, and 210.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file four copies of the Alberta gas operating fund for the year ended March 31, 1993.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislative Assembly several distinguished representatives of the Siksika First Nation who shortly will be participating in a ceremony to sign a memorandum of understanding between Alberta and the Siksika First Nation. The memorandum of understanding will establish a process for provincial involvement in the community self-government process in which the Siksika First Nation has been participating with the federal government. I would ask the Members of the Legislative Assembly to extend their warmest welcome to Chief Strater Crowfoot of the Siksika First Nation and the following councillors: Angeline Ayoungman, Larry Waterchief, Leonard Good Eagle, Adrian Stimson Jr., Gerald Sitting Eagle, Ronald Many Heads, Eldon Weaselchild, Clem Doore, Clarence Wolfleg, Clifford Many Guns, and Morris Running Rabbit. [remarks in Blackfoot]

Hello and welcome. [as submitted]

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Barbara and Scott Miller, who are here from Alaska. My understanding is that they have cycled from Alaska to Edmonton on their way cycling to Wisconsin. We should welcome these adventurers. I believe they're sitting in the public gallery. I hope the Assembly will join me in welcoming them and wishing them a great stay in beautiful Alberta.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is again my privilege and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly grade 6 students visiting us today from Wes Hosford school in Sherwood Park. The contingent today consists of 58 students and six adults accompanying the students. In attendance are Marilyn Macyk, Sherry Lukinuk, Jane Sheward, Linda Hantelman, Shelly Collins, Joyce Clifford, a Japanese exchange person by the name of Yumiko Takabe, and also the driver accompanying them today Mr. Don Chapman. Staff and students are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly teachers Mr. Doug Cowan and Mrs. Bea Hutchings, parents Mr. McGeachy and Mrs. Nikipilo, and their grade 6 students who are engaged in a study of government at Kameyosek school in Mill Woods. The group is in the gallery, and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would ask them to please stand and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

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

### Women's History Month

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take great pride in informing this Assembly that October is Women's History Month in Canada. October was chosen to coincide with the commemoration of the Persons Case. On October 18, 1929, women were declared to be persons, thereby being eligible for appointment to the Senate. This victory was the result of the enormous efforts of five Alberta women: Henrietta Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby.

This year the theme of Women's History Month recognizes the historic contributions that women have made to Canada's social and economic development through their paid and unpaid work. Throughout Alberta's history women from a wide range of cultural backgrounds have enriched society. Women's contributions have been crucial to developing the society which we are privileged to live in today. Women's unpaid work in the home and in the community as volunteers has laid the ground for healthy and prosperous families and a prosperous province.

Recent statistics show that 64 percent of all working aged women participate in Alberta's labour force, the highest participation rate for any Canadian province. Today all sectors of the work force benefit from the skill, knowledge, and expertise of women workers. Today Alberta women are care givers, artisans, farmers; they are workers, entrepreneurs, homemakers; they are leaders, visionaries, role models. Today's women continue to build on the

tremendous legacy left to them by women who have gone before them.

Women are the catalysts behind the growing recognition of the interdependence between work and home life. Today's workplace is being physically and philosophically reshaped to reflect the understanding that family responsibility is a workplace issue for both women and men, a process of change that includes innovative practices such as flexible work hours and job sharing.

The Women's and Seniors' Secretariat is waiting to hear from corporations like Eaton's who are sponsoring programs across the country, including the city of Edmonton, for a program outline.

I invite all hon. members and Albertans to participate in Women's History Month by attending events in their own communities and celebrating in their own way.

Thank you.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased and honoured to have an opportunity to speak on a topic dear to me. This speech today is intended as a tribute to the tremendous accomplishments of Alberta women. However, women in our province need more than speeches. If this government is truly committed to honouring the achievements of Alberta women, there are steps that we could take this afternoon that would immediately improve the quality of life for thousands of Alberta women.

1:40

We can deal with the ongoing struggle of women in poverty by implementing a number of things: pay equity, amend employment standards, toughen up maintenance enforcement, clean up taxation. We have to focus our attack on the reasons for poverty, not poor people themselves. We can stop the punitive cuts in social assistance. We can stop the endless cycle of abuse and violence inflicted on women. We need more comprehensive programs for counseling. We need to adopt the safer cities initiatives recommended by our local municipalities. The government can also clean up its own backyard. Even on the Legislature grounds, Mr. Speaker, women are not safe in the middle of the afternoon. Expand women's political clout by securing the future of the women's advisory council. Fill the vacant positions on the board, and let it get on with the job that it needs to do. Implement its recommendations. These are the things that we can do to show the women of Alberta that we recognize their commitment and their courage.

Mr. Speaker, we should celebrate history by acting on these lessons and the gains made by these honourable women. My suggestion is that the minister take Women's History Month to heart, do some reading, study the long and proud history of the movement for equality, acknowledge women's past and continuing courage and commitment by action.

head:

### Oral Question Period

#### Health Care Wage Rollbacks

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, our staggering deficit problem in Alberta is not the health care workers' fault; it's the Conservative government's fault for squandering the money. It's not fair to ask a \$20,000 a year nurses aide for a 5 percent rollback and to call the \$1,000 a year that you're grabbing from her "a small, small sacrifice." Mr. Premier, that's not only unfair; that's downright mean. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier require that wage rollbacks are graduated, more for those who earn more and less or nothing for those who earn less? Will you require that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the sort of nasty prelude the question wasn't bad. Indeed this is something that can be discussed over the next six or seven weeks as we go through this process. I have said that what we would like to do is achieve 5 percent. How we do that is a matter for those negotiations, and certainly the graduation of the reductions could be very well put on the table.

MRS. HEWES: Well, then, Mr. Speaker, does the government plan to offer job security to these workers in return for a rollback agreement? Is that your plan?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously doesn't understand the process. The process is to sit down over the next seven weeks and discuss all the options available to us in the spirit of co-operation.

MR. DAY: Just to briefly supplement that, Mr. Speaker, in meetings yesterday with all the health care union representatives suggestions about a graduated and phased-in approach were clearly listened to and appreciated. Other suggestions were also brought to the discussion table, and we will be getting back to those various representatives with an analysis of that and a possible response.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental on the first main question.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interest of tight questions, no preambles, is it the Premier's plan to legislate the breaking of collective agreements between health care institutions and their employees after November 23? Is that your plan?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously hasn't been listening, because I've answered this question at least a hundred times. The press have asked it a hundred different ways. My answer is: I am not going to speculate on this issue as to what might or might not happen.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across-the-board wage rollbacks simply plaster over the cracks in a crumbling health care system and raise serious doubts about the government's competence. To put things in perspective, will the Premier please confirm that the \$37 million cuts to health care wages won't even cover the interest for one year on the government's \$700 million loss to NovAtel?

MR. KLEIN: Well, you want to talk about apples and oranges and peaches and pears.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do is put this whole issue in perspective. Since 1981 Alberta's population has grown by 13 percent, but since 1981 Alberta's health care spending has grown by 215 percent. If you look at it another way, after this year's reductions we will still be spending more on health care than we were spending two years ago. We aren't, as the hon. member suggests, dismantling the health care system. We are trying to get 10 years of runaway spending under control, and they should be aware of that.

MR. MITCHELL: Since 1986 the debt has increased by \$32 billion.

Why can't the Premier see that across-the-board rollbacks gloss over the real structural problems affecting the health care system, structural problems that can only be addressed through fundamental changes like labour force adjustment plans, like community-based health care, like preventative health care, like regional governance, and so on and so on and so on?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely delighted that the hon. member finally understands what we're going through. That's what the roundtable process is all about. That is precisely what this government has been going through.

I think that is a much more reasonable approach than that proposed by the Liberals. I quote the hon. Leader of the Liberal Party. This is just a blunt statement; this is their approach; no plan: city and rural hospitals will have to be closed in order to wipe out the \$2.47 billion deficit, Liberal leader Laurence Decore told a Nisku business luncheon Thursday. Willy-nilly. Just go in there, slash, cut, burn, and wipe \$1.1 billion off the books this year without any plan, without any thought, without any rhyme, without any reason in typical Liberal fashion, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: Why would the Premier expect union workers or anyone else to accept a wage rollback this year when he and his cabinet and his Minister of Labour are refusing to reveal to these people what kinds of cuts are in store for them and for their lives in the next year and the year after that and at least the year after that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is all up for discussion over the next seven weeks. I can indicate this, though, that I have indicated from time to time, quite often as a matter of fact: if we expect those in the rank and file to sacrifice somewhat, then we have to start at the top. I think we have led the way. It was this government that abandoned our pension plan and their pension plan. We scrapped it, scrapped it altogether. It was this government that rolled ministerial salaries back 5 percent. It was this government that introduced the motion just yesterday to have Members' Services consider a further 5 percent for all MLAs and compensation for committee work. I think we are leading the way. We have appealed to the administrators of hospital boards, the superintendents of schools, the presidents of colleges and medical institutions to do exactly the same thing and lead the way. Let's get everyone to buy into this.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Fort McMurray.

**1:50**

### **Hospital Construction**

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you. On September 17 this government notified Fort McMurray that their vital extended health care project was a go. On September 22 the Premier of this province was in Fort McMurray taking credit for this vital, essential project at a \$100 a plate political dinner. On October 4 this project was deferred. My question to the Premier: if this was an essential, vital project on September 22, why is it a deferred project on October 4?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there were numerous projects. We had to make a tough decision, and that was to defer those projects that have not yet been started. Now, it may very well be . . . [interjections] Just, you know, sit back. Relax. As I say, close your eyes; open your ears. [interjections] That's right. We have decided to defer, not to cancel, those projects that have not yet been started pending the outcome of the roundtable. It may very

well come about that these discussions will recommend that the project in Fort McMurray go ahead, or it might be quite the opposite, or maybe there might be another way to skin the cat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Defer Westlock.

MR. KLEIN: Westlock is in the ground. When we're speaking of Westlock, Mr. Speaker, let's put this on the table. It is quite true that the Westlock hospital was . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. The Chair must ask for a supplemental to the first main question. That may give the hon. Premier a chance.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you. This is a dangerous place to close your eyes, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of public works: did the minister know that the letter of September 17 was one of false hope and that the project would be canceled after the Premier's visit?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, as has already been answered by the Premier, there were a number of projects put on hold. They're deferred. It does not mean they're canceled. The overall context of the health roundtables so far has been to have all projects put on hold that it was possible to, and that's what we have done. We've tried to do it in a humanistic way. If it's not in the ground, it's a little easier to stall and to hold for a little while till the discussions are finished with.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, to supplement, please. As I pointed out, there is nothing political in this at all because 17 of those deferred projects . . . [interjections] Wait a minute; just listen. Seventeen of the 27 deferred projects are in government-represented constituencies.

I just wanted to add relative to the Westlock hospital, because it was brought up. It is true, Mr. Speaker, that the Westlock hospital was approved in large part due to the pleadings of the local MLA. That MLA was Nick Taylor. [interjections]

### **Speaker's Ruling**

#### **Referring to a Member by Name**

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. The Chair would remind the hon. Premier that the member he's referring to is the hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, when they vote for me, they get action.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The opposition was complaining about the Premier mentioning Westlock. That was in response to the catcalls and the heckling from the opposition benches. Therefore don't complain about something that you've said yourself.

Final supplemental question.

### **Hospital Construction**

*(continued)*

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health: did you know that that letter of September 17 was a letter of false hope when it was sent out?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the letter that was sent out that was signed by the minister of public works and myself was

in response to a question on a change of scope and approval on that change of scope to proceed with planning and design for that facility. That was the letter that was sent out. It was not a letter of false hope. It was a letter responding to that community, who I might add responded very well to addressing the changing needs of their community in their request.

#### Teacher Remuneration

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask my questions today to the Minister of Education. Alberta has over 140 separate and public school boards who enter into collective bargaining agreements with the local units of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I want to ask the minister to reveal how many school boards have settled with their ATA locals for the 1993 and '94 school years.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, going back to 1992, because I think this is in keeping with the general thrust of the question, there are still three agreements outstanding, and we are hopeful that those will soon be resolved.

With respect to contracts which expired August 31, 1993, 82 are still to be concluded. Of course, for 1993-94, going into 1994, we have the majority still in negotiations, although I would like to mention, Mr. Speaker, that there are 29 agreements which affect the 1994 year that have been concluded at present. I hope that more will shortly be concluded.

MR. TANNAS: Would the minister, then, report to the Assembly as to how many of these approximately 65 settlements contain rollbacks or raises?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure which year the hon. member is referring to, but I would like to note for the information of the Assembly that in the 1992 calendar year the average settlement increase was 4.6 percent and in the 1993 calendar year, 2 and a half percent. However, I think it's also important to note that for the agreements currently coming in, out of the 35 agreements that have been concluded for 1993-94, 29 have settled at zero percent as far as the salary grid increases are concerned.

MR. TANNAS: Well, I'm interested in the 1994 one. Will the minister, then, be undertaking a strong suggestion to school boards that they negotiate voluntary rollbacks or zeros for 1994?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I think the hon. member well knows, we are in a process of discussion about future funding for education. That is part of our overall and very important roundtable process. It has been an ongoing process for over a year. Back in the fall of 1992 there was a round of discussions about fiscal realities in the province. There was a report issued which identified a number of areas that should be looked at as alternative areas in terms of reducing education spending. In the recently released education roundtable workbook, we have identified the cost of salaries along with a whole host of other alternatives, and I think that provides useful information leading up to the roundtables.

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's announcement yesterday regarding rolling back health care workers' wages and services is caused in part by this government's poor judgment over the years regarding private venture investments like NovAtel and the long list of others that we've heard. On one hand the

government asks members of this province to make do with less and on the other hand continues to dole out money to companies like Beatrice, Skimmer Oil, who say that they don't even want it, and another \$29 million, in fact, in loans to NovAtel. So my question to the Premier is this: how can Albertans really believe that there's a plan to resolve our debt crisis when the actions of this government and this Premier are so contradictory?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, our actions are not contradictory. This government has said that it wants to get out of the business of being in business. With respect to Beatrice the hon. member well knows that that was an ADC loan. ADC has been in place for years and years to do precisely that. This matter came to the public's attention because they exceeded their loan limit. He knows the full story, and to use Beatrice as an example is entirely unfair on the hon. member's part.

2:00

Mr. Speaker, what we're trying to do is to really get a handle on expenditures. We've said time and time again that we don't have a revenue problem in this province. We have a spending problem, and we've got to get spending under control. I think my colleagues in this government are doing an admirable job in addressing the very difficult and complex issues we have to face today.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Premier is simply this: why are this Premier and this government letting Albertans down by continuing to give money to NovAtel, to Skimmer Oil, yet on the other hand not fulfilling their commitment to individual human services like education, health care, and social services?

MR. KLEIN: Well, the last time I looked, you know, we're still dedicating some \$4 billion less \$122 million to health care. Now, if the hon. member doesn't think that that is a sizable sum, then his value of money and finances is a lot different than mine; I'll tell you that for sure.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I would certainly agree that my value of money is different than his; that's obvious.

My supplementary question: how much longer will the sick, the poor, the disadvantaged of this province have to bear the burden of your mismanagement?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the preambles get more ridiculous every, every day. This is coming from the same MLA in Calgary-North West who says: oh, I have a nice recreational centre up in my constituency; will you please send a million dollars over there, just kick in a million dollars or so? I mean, he doesn't mind, but maybe a million dollars doesn't mean much to this hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### Hospital Accreditation

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Hospital boards across the province are searching diligently for ways to become more efficient, saving dollars wherever they can in order to provide the excellent health care that we Albertans are so fortunate to receive. High standards and overregulation hinder that process. Could the minister tell the House what value there is to the costly process of hospital accreditation?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, accreditation is provided by the Canadian Council on Health Facilities Accreditation. I believe it is a worthwhile investment for hospitals. I do know that some hospitals think it's more applicable to larger hospitals, and the council has produced an accreditation package specifically for smaller hospitals. I would hope that that is more acceptable to them. I also would note that this is the only standard, the only guidelines that are generally accepted across this country, and I think it has some importance to our health care system.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. Given the cost, has the minister considered reviewing this process?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I should explain that accreditation is not required by the Department of Health, and I do know that some hospitals are not pursuing accreditation. However, I also believe that all facilities, whether they're pursuing accreditation or not, are dedicated to quality health services and to very high standards. So it is not a requirement of the Department of Health to pursue accreditation.

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

#### Advanced Education Roundtables

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the government's own poll conducted in March 1993 81 percent of the respondents said that the government should spend more on education to be more competitive. If the current roundtables that are being held agree and conclude that more money should be spent on advanced education and career development, will the minister rescind his July decree that there must be a 15 percent cut?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to be clear that the minister did not give a decree of a 15 percent cut. What really happened is that we had a workshop for two days here in Edmonton, where the presidents and the board chairmen were each invited to bring one other member of their choice to a two-day meeting where we discussed alternatives for budgeting in the forthcoming year. The number that the hon. member is alluding to was arrived at by taking the Advanced Education and Career Development share of the budget, which approaches 9 or 10 percent, and then equating that into their share of the deficit in order to have some numbers to work with. By no means was it put in a hard, fast rule that there would be 15 percent, because this minister doesn't know at this point what he may be called upon to find in his department by way of cuts in the forthcoming year.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister, then, indicate that roundtables will be able to decide that more money should be spent on Advanced Education and Career Development?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, we're certainly positive and optimistic about the information that will be forthcoming from the roundtables. This roundtable process that is being put in motion will be without a doubt the most far reaching of any that has ever been conducted by this department in the province. I believe that those people who will come to the roundtable are Albertans who are aware of the circumstances that we have by way of a deficit. They will certainly have as part of their input, for our purposes,

to put in place some restructuring that will allow us to have a system that will be here for five, 10, and 15 years into the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I still don't think the minister quite heard my question. Is the decision to spend more money open to the roundtable participants?

MR. ADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I suppose the hon. member has looked at last year's budget and has come to the conclusion that because Advanced Education and Career Development received an increase in their budget last year, one of two departments, I might add, that there will always be more money for them. I think that would be very nice, but we do live in a province that has a deficit. I anticipate that the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development may have to play some part, some role as yet not defined, in assisting through restructuring and innovation to play their part in the deficit reduction plan of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by Edmonton-Norwood.

#### Library Funding

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. The library Grant Review Task Force Report was due on September 30. When will the minister be tabling this report?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I have not yet received this report. However, as I committed to previously, I will be tabling it with this Assembly when I receive it. I am expecting to receive that report on Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From an MLA who is partially involved with the Chinook Arch library system: how does the minister plan to deal with the funding of this system?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the Chinook Arch library system represents the seventh and quite likely the last system to join the provincewide network of systems. Through memberships by municipal library boards and regional library boards, the systems help hundreds of local boards and thus thousands of Albertans. I'm of the opinion that this library system in this province will not be complete until Chinook Arch is operating as a full partner in the network of systems.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding that library grants have been frozen at \$12.3 million, will the minister commit to increasing funding to ensure the viability of the Chinook Arch library system?

MR. MAR: The simple answer is no, Mr. Speaker. I will not be increasing those funds. However, I will restate that I am committed to making the Chinook Arch system viable.

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

### 2:10 Workers' Compensation Board

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To assist injured workers, the WCB hires private consultants to teach job search techniques and résumé writing. Advanced Education and Career Development provides similar services at no cost. To the minister responsible for the WCB: will the minister explain why the WCB has hired a Calgary consulting firm to teach a course on job search techniques and résumé writing in Lloydminster for a 17-day period at a cost of \$75 per student hour?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, Career Development and Employment has certain capacities and the ability to handle certain numbers of people in their programs, and WCB also makes decisions in terms of meeting the needs of injured workers. The member across has raised a very specific item and question. I'm happy to look into it for him, and I would have been happy to do it if he had simply given me a phone call this morning.

MR. BENIUK: Mr. Speaker, where is the co-ordination between departments when the minister is using a private consulting firm while Advanced Education and Career Development has a network of proven expertise at career development centres in 20 locations throughout this province, including Lloydminster?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat alarmed at the lack of understanding of the person who professes to be the critic of what goes on in WCB. WCB is not a government department. It is an arm's-length agency from the government totally funded by employer dollars, and he's throwing it in as if it's a government department.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, if there are ways that service can be improved in any particular way, we're always happy to look at that and to do it, but let's realize that this is a very distinct, separate agency. It is not a government department.

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

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you are the minister responsible for WCB, how many millions of dollars has the WCB paid private consultants over the past year to teach courses that are offered free by the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development?

MR. DAY: Well, I've already answered, Mr. Speaker. WCB does not pay for courses that are being delivered by career development. It's totally separate, totally different. The member has asked for a very specific dollar figure. Again, a quick phone call to my office this morning would have had it to him in a matter of minutes, as I always do. Estimates were available. We'll get that information to him.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

### School Taxes

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Following our meeting with the school boards in Calgary caucus on Friday a particular concern was raised with respect to the issue of fiscal equity, which you mentioned earlier. Now, the roundtables are just getting under way, yet this issue is being discussed at the standing policy committee on financial planning. So my question to the minister is with respect to fiscal equity. Is this decision a done deal?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this very, very important issue has been under consideration for many months, in fact years. Previous ministers of Education, the current Provincial Treasurer included, have laboured very long and hard on resolving this very important matter. It is important that work go forward, careful consideration be given to the specific alternatives that have been put forward to resolve the equity question, and that discussion is ongoing at the current time. Certainly it is an issue that is identified in our workbook leading up to the roundtables. This is a decision long overdue, in my view, and we'll be working forward on this particular matter.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister of Education please advise me on how we could incorporate the findings of the roundtable on this issue into the discussion on fiscal equity?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, certainly there is a need to provide an overall improvement in the degree of equality that there is available per student in this province for the funding of education. That particular need has been identified and has been there as a challenge for government to resolve for a long time. Certainly the issue of fiscal equity and how to resolve it is something that can go forward and be discussed further at the roundtables. I fully expect that is to be the case, and I would hope that by that time we might be able to have a definite proposal to discuss in terms of how this might be arrived at.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Tax Reform Commission includes the review of the Ramsay formula and M and E, can the Provincial Treasurer please explain how we can deal with fiscal equity in advance of the recommendations of the Tax Reform Commission?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, while the two issues have a link, the Tax Reform Commission frankly is taking a broader view of the tax structure in this province and what we need to do to make it the most competitive tax structure in this country. When I look at the terms of reference of the Tax Reform Commission, it's bottom line question is how we make our regime the most competitive one, looking at the whole array of taxes that exist today, whether it's machinery and equipment, whether it's property tax, whether it's power and pipeline, or whether it's corporate or personal income taxes. While I appreciate the hon. member's attempt to connect the two, I would prefer that we try and separate the two and deal with them as two separate issues with the objective under the Tax Reform Commission of making our tax regime the most competitive one in this country.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Bow Valley.

### Tax Reform Commission

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Treasurer on September 27 announced the membership of the Tax Reform Commission and its mandate: assess how Alberta's competitive position can be improved. The members of this commission, while all capable individuals, hardly represent a cross section of Albertans. There are no representatives from labour, none from

agriculture, nor are there any Albertans from the education and health care sectors. This commission represents the voice of business. My first question is to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Mr. Treasurer, our labour force, agriculture, and the quality of our health care and education sectors all create wealth. Why have you ignored the voices and insights of representatives of these groups in setting up the commission?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, no voice will go unheard. Any voice wishing, any person, any Albertan wanting to raise their voice and raise a concern, raise an issue, bring a matter before the Tax Reform Commission will indeed have a full opportunity to do so. For the hon. member to stand before this Assembly and say that Mr. Donald of Red Deer or Mr. Forest of Edmonton or Mrs. Hunter from Calgary or Ms Parkinson from Fort McMurray or Mr. Hamilton from Calgary or Mr. Proctor from Peace River are incapable of hearing those voices and listening to what they have to say and then taking that advice and delivering the best possible recommendations to the government, I believe, is a bit of an affront to these people, many of whom the hon. member probably hasn't even made the acquaintance of. I would encourage him to do so, rather than judge these people from a textbook, academic approach. Let him ask those people. Let him hear their concerns and be able to respond to them accordingly.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the mandate of the Tax Reform Commission also include assessing the impact on business and Albertans of the wide array of user fees and hidden taxes this government is continuing to impose each and every day?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the tax word, whether it's a sales tax or whether it's other kinds of taxes, is very much in the vocabulary of the Liberal Party, but it is not in the vocabulary of this provincial government. We have made it clear that we want the Tax Reform Commission to review the following kinds of questions. Is Alberta's overall tax regime competitive? How important are provincial and local taxes in determining Alberta's competitiveness as a place to do business? Now, the hon. members across the way may not be interested in that, but Albertans are. Albertans want a competitive tax regime, and most of all Albertans want a strong economy that creates jobs, long-lasting permanent jobs for Albertans.

2:20

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is to the Minister of Education. Will the minister commit to this Legislature that this government will not introduce legislation on equity financing in education until the tax commission reports, since there are so many tax ramifications of changes to equity financing?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, obviously, as the hon. member should know, the determination of when various pieces of legislation come before this House will be determined by the overall government of this province. In terms of the meshing, if it is that term that is appropriate, with respect to legislation pertaining to equity funding and the recommendations of the Tax Reform Commission, I'm sure we'll be able to work that out.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bow Valley.

### Health Care Fee Schedule

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. On October 1 a new Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission schedule of medical benefits was implemented. Now rather than approximately 1,000 diagnostic codes, there are 6,700; rather than a hundred pages of fees and procedures, there are now 620 pages. I would like to know: how is this massive document going to be cost-effective to the health care system?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct that a new binder, a new guide has gone out to physicians. I believe it will be a cost saving to the system. I believe perhaps more accurately that the diagnostic codes have increased maybe from 5,000 to 6,700 or to 6,000. I think it depends on how one might categorize, but I would not dispute the hon. member's knowledge in that area. The number of codes is important to us. They're important to us because we would like to analyze that very useful information so that we can assess the information to the future planning of health needs.

I should also just mention that truly the reason the binder is so large is that this year we chose to include in the same volume the procedural codes and instructions associated with them. So that definitely did increase the size of the binder.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly: how is it going to benefit patient care?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, anything that we can do to cut down costs of administering the health system will allow us greater flexibility in providing patient care. However, information is more accurate, it is more specific, and with the new systems that we have in place through the claims development project, they are on line. We're starting to be able to use that very valuable information we have within our health plan, and that is very important to us when we can look at health utilization around the province. Certainly physicians are being much more accurate in their coding to help us with gathering that very valuable information.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Theoretically there will be much more information available from an epidemiologic point of view. How will this be utilized?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, having that type of information will give us a better idea of usage of the system, of utilization of the system and indeed if there is a high utilization in one area or another. All I can finally sum up with is that this information is very important to us in the long-term planning of delivering health services in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

### Advisory Council on Women's Issues

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the minister responsible for women's issues says that the future of the women's advisory council is secure, government members in the back bench ask for the council to be scrapped, leaving Albertans to wonder if

the government once again is hiding their real agenda. My questions are to the minister responsible for women's issues. Once and for all, is the future of this important council secure, not just in the mind of the minister but in the minds of the entire cabinet?

MR. MAR: Yes.

MRS. SOETAERT: That's a real commitment, Mr. Speaker. It's down in black and white. If it is, then when is the minister going to fill all the vacancies on the board of the council that you are so committed to?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, this government and this minister are committed to the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. As a mark of this commitment I'm treating this council in the same way as my other important boards, the Seniors Advisory Council and the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission. I am recommending that one of my colleagues serve as a chairperson. This will give the council a direct access to an elected member of this Legislature who will be able to spend more time in dealing with the important issues raised by this council.

Now, this Department of Community Development is currently looking at a new system of advertising and appointing members to all of its boards and commissions, a system that will be open and accountable to all Albertans. I'm looking forward to a large number of nominations from Albertans throughout the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A political colleague for this council is not what the mandate is.

Will the minister support our Bill that amends the council's legislation so that the board always has a full membership and is not at the mercy of this sluggish and indifferent government?

MR. MAR: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, followed by Sherwood Park.

#### **Plains Indian Cultural Survival School**

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. The Plains Indian Cultural Survival School first opened its doors in February of 1979. Since that time, the school has provided programs for both regular and overage students of aboriginal descent. I understand that through serious negotiations funding for overage students was secured until the end of August 1994. Would the minister please tell me if these worthwhile programs will continue to receive funding after 1994?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings forth a very important question. I think we need to understand a little bit about the function of the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School. It was originally started by the Calgary board of education back in 1978 or 1979 to deal with K to 12 students. Over the years there's been an increasing number of adult students who have found their way to that school and have benefited in a dramatic way from it. That has caused a problem in that the Calgary board of education does not receive the per pupil grant for the adult students. That's caused a funding deficiency which frankly the Calgary board of education has carried through their own initiative for a number of

years but find that in today's circumstances they've not been able to do that. In the past year we have found ways to do that, and it is our intention to carry on discussions to accomplish that for the next year.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is encouraging to hear that discussions are currently under way for the funding support. However, would the minister please give me an indication as to when the school will know whether or not funding will be made available in the future?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with perhaps a number that may approach \$250,000 to accomplish this over the next year. It's anticipated that we should be able to have all the players at the table that are involved in this to date that have helped over recent years to keep this program in place and that we should have an answer before the end of this calendar year.

MR. SPEAKER: Last supplemental?

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**2:30**

#### **Burnstick Lake**

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Residents in west-central Alberta have expressed to me concern with the prospect of a new privately owned campground complex on leased Crown land at Burnstick Lake. This proposal for a new campground is despite concerns expressed over the financial viability of the project, the recreational capacity of the lake, the lack of any area master plan, the suitability of the proposed site, and the lack of previous experience of the developer. Inexplicably, a proposal for a natural area at the lake has not been allowed to proceed until a lake management plan has been completed. To the minister: why is it that a tourism proposal that could have an environmental impact on this lake moves along on the government's fast track while a conservation proposal gets relegated to the slow track?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are two separate issues that the hon. member has dealt with. Back in 1992 the local approving authority, the municipal district of Clearwater, gave approval to a proposal for a campground on Burnstick Lake. We're talking about some campsites, some cabins, a boat launch, and a beach area. Now, that has gone through a number of reviews, and we're currently looking at it with respect to a water resources permit.

The scenario that has developed as well is that some of the residents in the summer village, many of whom are from the city of Calgary, who live on the north side of the lake have indicated that we should look at a designation of part of the southern shore as a natural area. In point of fact the natural area that's proposed is at the west side of the lake; the development is at the east side of the lake. We're certainly looking at the proposal for the natural area. It has a process to go through. We're following through with that process. Again, with respect to the campground development, we're looking at a water resources permit.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.



MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the existing campground on Burnstick Lake is always underutilized, what needs assessment did your department consider that another campground on this lake was necessary?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, we go through a proposal for lease of public lands. This Burnstick Lake area is very close to the city of Calgary. As I've said, there's a summer village there already. That encompasses a population in the city itself of well in excess of 700,000 people. It's in the Eastern Slopes area, and there is a great demand by Calgarians and others living in the area surrounding the city of Calgary for recreational properties, recreational opportunities in the Eastern Slopes and particularly water-based recreation opportunities. That's the reason the Department of Environmental Protection has looked at the application by the proposed developers – who, by the way, are a husband-and-wife team from the area – and has seen that it has merit at least in principle.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the water resources permit or any other permits that are required by your office, is the minister prepared to defer any of these approvals for this campground until the lake management plan has been completed and the natural area development has been considered?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, on September 11 of this year my department held a public meeting in the area of Burnstick Lake. At that public meeting a number of people, to be honest, expressed some concerns about the development going ahead prior to preparation of a lake management plan. We're talking about phase 1 of the development, which has already received an approval. Before we go on to any additional phases of that proposal, we would certainly be looking at a lake management plan. That's in keeping with the concerns of the people who live in the area and others that have made application to us through the water resources application process.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired, but the hon. Minister of Health has indicated to the Chair that she's prepared to respond with further information to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont, if there's consent to that, from a question that arose yesterday. Is there consent? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?  
The hon. Minister of Health.

#### Long-term Care

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont asked a question in the House regarding long-term care. The member asked why extended care centres are subjected to a two-tier subsidy based on when they were built. I thought it was important that I try to clarify this for the hon. member because, as I indicated then, we do not have a two-tiered system. I have looked at how we fund long-term care in this province, and the only suggestion that I might have for him is under the support services funding to long-term care facilities.

In 1989 the province began to integrate the funding methodology for nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals, and now we fund long-term care facilities. Since that time all facilities have received support and other funding at an average rate for long-term care. Prior to that time, however, each new facility negotiated a funding level based on their operating needs. This has perhaps caused some historical anomalies in long-term care, and I believe that is perhaps where the differential is.

I do want to tell the hon. member and the House that in 1989-90 we introduced the patient classification system – this is to address part of those difficulties – and also that we have recently struck a committee from the Alberta Long Term Care Association, including both rural and urban facilities and facilities of different sizes.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly lengthy discussion. I intend to follow up with more historical data for the hon. member, but in the interests of providing information to the House and ensuring the House that we do not have a two-tiered system in this province, I thank you for the opportunity to respond.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there a supplemental question arising out of that?

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that answer. The only question I would have is: when will the committee report on the Red Deer roundtables?

MR. SPEAKER: Could the hon. member repeat the question? The Chair had trouble hearing it, and I guess the hon. minister did too.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. My question is: when will the long-term care committee report?

MRS. McCLELLAN: This committee is meeting this month. I would expect that they will have some ongoing discussion. I'm not sure just exactly how long it will take them. I know that they will move as expeditiously as possible, because their interest is in developing a very objective and fair funding formula. Certainly I will be pleased to make the House aware of their findings.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

#### Access to Legislature Facilities

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Access by virtually every member of this House is taken for granted, whether it be into a committee room, whether it be into washroom facilities, whatever. It's ironic that in the early '70s I was one of those activists that fought for changes in accessibility. It's ironic that one of the Members of the Legislative Assembly at that time that we dealt with very closely was Neil Crawford, who himself was later stricken by Lou Gehrig's disease. We saw the changes that occurred to accommodate that member. Those changes should have occurred, and they did occur. We saw the emphasis placed when Rick Hansen came to our city, the ramp that was built and so on and so forth.

Access is a given these days. There are some areas yet in this building, in the annex that I've fought for – the Deputy Premier is one who has been sympathetic towards my plight – particularly in room 512. I'm still denied the opportunity to attend meetings there, and a great number of meetings are held there. There's a Christmas party coming up that I've been invited to take my

grandchildren to, but I have to say no because there is not access into that room yet. Three months I've waited for a 15-minute renovation to the sixth floor of the Leg. Annex so I could use the washroom there rather than go down to the second floor six or seven times a day.

**2:40**

Mr. Speaker, what I'm asking for is not a great deal. I've communicated with the minister of public works on several occasions, and I would plead with him that he read *Hansard* and that he take it upon himself to ensure that the requests I've made on several occasions, three in total, are complied with so I have that same access in this building that I have in virtually any other building throughout the city.

Thank you.

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

### **Export Highway**

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to speak to the Assembly today about the importance of completing the export highway. This highway is a divided or twinned highway stretching southward from Edmonton to Coutts, Alberta, at the Canada-U.S. border.

Now, there are two important economic reasons for the completion of this roadway, and they are trade and tourism. Firstly, trade. The export highway provides an artery for business to pour goods and services into the United States and into Mexico. The export highway becomes an unbroken economic band from Edmonton to San Diego and beyond. In tourism, while the export highway carries Canadian goods and services southward, it carries tourists and investors north. Residents of Chicago or St. Louis or Pittsburgh look at a map and see the extension of Interstate 15 north of the border. In this way they gain confidence and act in a positive way and make arrangements then to visit the serene beauty here in Alberta.

Now, the current status of this roadway: the twinning is almost complete to Fort Macleod; we need only to turn east and go through Lethbridge and then on to Coutts. The future holds this for Albertans with the completion of that highway: firstly, we place ourselves in a position to fully participate in the economic development of the western half of the continent of North America; secondly, the geographical shape of Alberta becomes a stylized arrow pointing south, the direction of our future, and Lethbridgites, once isolated in a railway dominated east-west Canada, find themselves now in the middle of the road to prosperity in the next century.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

### **Native Hunting Rights**

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to speak on something, a storm that's building up throughout Alberta. It's not restricted to rural areas; it also applies to the city. I'm referring to the whole question of hunting rights for both the aboriginal and the nonnative peoples.

Just as a brief background, Mr. Speaker, I think we have a big education job to do on both sides of this House. There doesn't seem to be an understanding or an acknowledgement that Alberta and Saskatchewan, being two of the last provinces in the west to become provinces in Confederation, inherited laws and treaties that were put together by the national government in 1885 and subsequent to that – we didn't become a province until 1905 – that

basically said to the natives that they would always have sustenance rights and have certain hunting rights around the provinces. Nothing much was done about that till about the 1930s. Because game was plentiful, outside of buffalo, you might say, both the aboriginals and nonnatives were able to hunt.

Since 1930 we've had an acceleration in oil and gas exploration as well as timber exploration, culminating after about the 1950s with road access all over this province. Plus the advent of no longer riding a horse: Mr. Speaker, I date back to those ages when I used to do surface geology on horseback. Now with the combination of helicopters, planes, trikes, various all-terrain vehicles, access to our wilderness areas by both aboriginal and nonaboriginal hunters is very easy indeed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have is also the Supreme Court deciding just recently that natives have sustenance rights to hunt all year-round, yet we have not done anything. We have not tackled it. We must meet with the natives. We must meet with the government of Saskatchewan. We must work out a long-term policy.

### **Point of Order Projected Government Business**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader indicated he wished to rise on a point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 7(5), which of course is the new rule that allows me to question the government each Thursday afternoon as to what their agenda will be for the subsequent week. This has been working quite well. There's been a spirit of co-operation. We've been very happy with it. It's certainly, I believe, facilitated the work of the Legislative Assembly, and I think that my caucus would agree, but in the last two days we've had a bit of a departure from that rule.

Yesterday Bill 9 was brought to the Legislature for debate, and we received literally no notice whatsoever of that possibility, in fact, until it occurred. Our information was that we would be dealing with Bills 7, 8, and 5. Then today again, while we received some notification slightly before question period, we didn't receive adequate notification, I would argue. So while we've always accepted that there will be some difficulties, and the agenda will have to change, perhaps, from time to time, this one is odd to us given that there was further debate to be undertaken from our side on Bill 8 yesterday afternoon and we could have extended that debate. It strikes us that they should be able to tell us that a Bill as important as Bill 9 is coming up further in advance than literally five or fewer minutes before the time that it was actually brought to the floor of the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In answer to the comments from the Opposition House Leader, a bit of history of what was transpiring in the House yesterday. We had spent a considerable period of time in Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 8 and knew full well that we would be getting from that point on to Bill 5. I had in my capacity as Deputy Government House Leader spoken with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud opposite, who I believed was leading the charge in terms of the opposition. It is my recollection that I had mentioned that if there was time remaining after we dealt with Bill 5, we would move then to second reading of Bill 9. If I neglected to mention that to

the hon. member opposite, then he certainly has my apology for that.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, hon. members should well realize looking at the Order Paper that we have in sum total three government Bills that are being reviewed. In point of fact we are awaiting Royal Assent on both Bill 5 and Bill 7. Very, very few pieces of government legislation on the Order Paper and, of course, I'm well aware that there is a substantial research budget which is available to the hon. members opposite to ensure that they have the time to review these Bills and to be up to date on them.

That being said, we were dealing with a very short period of time here, Mr. Speaker, some 10 to 15 minutes. It is the government's position that we must make the best available use of the time that we have before us. As a result of that, the only matter that we could effectively deal with within that short time frame was Bill 9. The hon. member who is carrying this for the Minister of Municipal Affairs brought his opening comments, and then we welcomed some introductory comments by the opposition. This was hardly an attempt by the government, either veiled or overt, to try to be one up on the opposition or to embarrass them in any way, shape, or form. I want that to be perfectly clear to all hon. members. We respect, certainly, the rules that have now come into effect. We see it as a great improvement in the process. We abide by both the rules as written and by the spirit of these rules, and we will continue to do so in co-operation with the members opposite.

So in closing, this is probably an unfortunate misunderstanding, and I trust that both sides are now fully understood.

2:50

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will accept that and hopes that the hon. Opposition House Leader will also accept the response of the hon. Deputy Government House Leader. The Chair feels that these rules are still new and that there's probably some learning. The Chair would suggest that the only positive suggestion could be that there could be some options if time is available on the answers as to what the government might have in mind that may not be coming but could come if time is available on the projections, but that may be a matter to be worked out.

The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order

#### Questions by Standing Policy Committee Chairmen

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on page 20 of *Hansard* on September 1, 1993, the Member for Edmonton-Centre raised a point of order. At that time Mr. Speaker said:

The Chair has heard the point of order as raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and will in fact take it under advisement.

Well, a few days have gone by. Perhaps it's time to add to this particular point of order.

Mr. Speaker, there are several points that the government would like to make with respect to the particular issue raised by the member. First of all, the citation used in bringing the point of order before the Assembly is *Beauchesne* 413, and it relates specifically to parliamentary secretaries.

MR. N. TAYLOR: A point of order. Just for information, would you say again what day it is you are speaking of?

MR. SPEAKER: This is the point of order that was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre I believe on September 2 or 3. The Chair made some preliminary remarks and asked for the government to supplement its position before the Chair made a

final ruling, so that's what the Chair understands is happening now.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, this is a point of order raised by a member of the opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thirty-four days later?

MR. KOWALSKI: You know, if the deputy deputy House leader for the Liberal opposition just chooses not to raise it for resolution, well it's incumbent, then, upon the Government House Leader to raise it to resolution. We've waited 34 days. [interjections]

Anyway, getting back to it, to the point in question . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The hon. Government House Leader is attempting to put forward some information that has been requested by the House. If the hon. members aren't happy with what he has to say afterwards, then that's your opportunity to make statements on this matter, but give the hon. Government House Leader a chance.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question arose out of a point of order raised by the Member for Edmonton-Centre quoting *Beauchesne* 413, with reference to parliamentary secretaries, and in the context of the chairmen of the four standing policy committees being in a position to answer questions if they were directed to them and at the same time being in a position to raise questions if they should choose to do so. I repeat again: the citation used in bringing the point of order before the Assembly was *Beauchesne* 413, and it relates specifically to parliamentary secretaries. We do not have parliamentary secretaries in the parliament of Alberta, and that was pointed out by Mr. Speaker himself when he first dealt with the matter. It would seem to me from a logical point of view that if we do not have parliamentary secretaries, then it is quite impossible for someone to raise a quotation from *Beauchesne* with reference to parliamentary secretaries. On that point alone, it would seem to me that there would be no point of order.

However, Mr. Speaker then also stated, and I quote, "The Chair appreciates the logic of the hon. member's point of order." It is on that point that I would like to make additional comments with respect to this matter. I would think at the outset that the traditions of this Assembly must be considered. In the past chairmen of government agencies such as AADAC, the Northern Alberta Development Council, the Water Resources Commission have been allowed to receive questions and have been allowed to answer questions from members of the Assembly, and at the same time they were allowed the same rights as other members to ask questions of ministers and/or chairmen of other agencies. That traditional right was established long ago in this Assembly and it would seem to me in 1993 should certainly not be eroded in any way, shape, or form.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the whole point of order probably comes down to: just what is a standing policy committee? Now, I recognize that the point of order was raised on September 1, 1993. There was some merit, in fact, to letting some time go between the time that the point of order was raised and dealing with it today, because that interim period was an opportunity for all hon. members to feel a comfort level with respect to the operation of the House, to have an opportunity to attend a meeting of a standing policy committee if they so chose, to in essence then see the reforms that were brought into this Assembly, to see an instrument of a subcommittee used in dealing with the Committee

of Supply, and then to see the functioning of the various chairmen who are associated with standing policy committees.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that a standing policy committee is in every sense of the word very similar to an organization such as the Northern Alberta Development Council or AADAC or the Water Resources Commission. In the past those members of this Assembly who have been chairpersons of such committees have always been in a position to answer questions with respect to the functioning of that particular committee, and at the same time they've been in the position to ask questions of the government.

These committees ask for and receive input from the general public, and their purpose, Mr. Speaker, is to receive advice for the formulation of policy. They are not – and I repeat, they are not – in a final position to determine government policy. Each chairman has committee chairmanship responsibility for up to four different departments. In addition to that, under the rules on the amendments that have been made in the reforms of this particular Legislature, they are now also in a position to deal with chairmanship of subcommittees.

None of these individuals has taken the Executive Council oath of office and, as importantly, none has been asked to take the executive office code. Mr. Speaker, they are in fact not in a position and they have no responsibility for answering on behalf of the government. They certainly do have responsibility to answer on behalf of the operations of the committees they are chairmen of, and on that basis it would seem to me that they have every right, as every other member of this particular Assembly, to ask questions of the government. When questions are asked of them, they are responding to questions in their role of the chairmanship of the various committees that they are chairpersons of, and they certainly can be asked questions in that regard.

I repeat: I do not believe there is a point of order, but I think it's a point of clarification in terms of the governance of the House and the functioning of the House in this regard. I would ask that you in fact rule that there is no point of order with respect to this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments on this point of order. In reviewing the *Hansard* of September 1, 1993, quoted by the Government House Leader, I reviewed the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I looked for any and all comments by members of the government, and I found one reference, that being the Deputy Government House Leader, the Member for Red Deer-North. Nowhere in there do I find any request from the minister saying, "Can we wait 34 days before we finally decide what it is we want to do with this?" or any other time frame or even a request to wait any time at all.

When I look at the citation originally made on that day by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, the Government House Leader has chosen to key in in particular on the title. He says: well, because we don't have a title called "parliamentary secretary," therefore it can't possibly apply. Mr. Speaker, the operative words here are "such as." This is one citation, and of course as you well know, if we look at our list, for example, of unparliamentary language, there's no way you could list all of the terms. Similarly, in this kind of a quotation such as "parliamentary secretary," nowhere could you possibly conceive of all the multiple variations of titles that you could possibly use in place of parliamentary secretary. I'm not negating the importance of the phrase "parliamentary secretaries," but I think the operative part is: "Those such as

[title] who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the Government."

3:00

Now, when we review the standing committees as created by the Premier and the government, the mandate of those committees is indeed to go out and listen to the people, bring back suggestions from the people, and help in the formulation of policy of the government. So, Mr. Speaker, because they are, if you will, conduits from the people back to the government and help in the formulation and in fact can be directed by respective ministers to investigate certain issues, collectively those committees are in fact answerable to the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, the chairmen of those different committees, who have the title and the responsibility of calling meetings and so on, are in fact responsible to this Legislature to be answerable for the government, as cited in *Beauchesne* 413.

First of all, just in closing the two points, I'm wondering why the government has waited so long to even look into this. Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the intent, the drive behind the citation is not bound within the two words "parliamentary secretary" but in fact has a broader application. I believe that's what the Member for Edmonton-Centre, who I'm sure wants to add a few comments, will say in support of this point of order.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to repeat the comments made by the Member for Calgary-North West but simply reiterate very briefly that my purpose in quoting *Beauchesne* 413 was to point out that indeed the four standing policy committees of the government are in fact acting for the government and "are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the Government." So in that sense they are like parliamentary secretaries. I recognize that in other senses they are not parliamentary secretaries because they are called chairmen of standing policy committees, not parliamentary secretaries.

I hasten to point out as well that with regard to the hon. Government House Leader's comments, it was my understanding from the Speaker's comments earlier in September and as well today that the Speaker was waiting for the government to provide more information, not for the opposition to raise the issue, as was indicated by the hon. Government House Leader.

In addition, without prior notice, after 34 days of waiting for the government to provide more information, we are now suddenly going to deal with this. I'm afraid that I don't have the specific notes, but I'm really puzzled, because I hear contradictions from the other side of the House on this issue. I hear the hon. Government House Leader saying that these chairmen of standing policy committees do not act and do not speak as if they were cabinet ministers or members of Executive Council. Yet approximately two weeks ago – and I will provide you in the next 24 hours with the specific citation – the hon. Premier specifically said, "These are committees of cabinet." I believe I'm quoting accurately. I may be paraphrasing. I sat in my place here and heard the hon. Premier say that.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. I understand that we can't always have our way, and perhaps the government needs to learn that. The reality is that you cannot sit in a position and have the Premier say that you are chairing a committee that is a committee of cabinet that recommends policy to cabinet, as any other member of Executive Council would do, and then all of a sudden say: oops, but we're really private members, and we can ask questions like private members. They are either private

members, in which case we have to question why the compensation packages for the four chairmen are in fact very much parallel to a minister without portfolio, slightly more I understand but very close. Either they are being compensated for chairing what are essentially, as the Premier says, committees of cabinet or it's some sort of other payoff, and I'm not sure what that might be.

However, Mr. Speaker, I will provide you that reference from the Premier's comments, and I'd ask that you defer ruling until you receive that. I'll get that to you in the next 24 hours.

Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I would refer the hon. member to *Hansard* of September 9, 1993, pages 119 and 120. Therein contains the comments of the Premier of the province of Alberta with respect to the citation the hon. member's talking about.

Let's go back to the date in which it was, September 9, and let's deal with it in the context of which it is, because I've had an opportunity to discuss this matter with the Premier of the province of Alberta. In essence, he was responding to point out that the standing policy committees are not committees of the Alberta Legislative Assembly per se. They are committees of cabinet. In other words, the cabinet in terms of appointments of people of the government caucus will always play a role. It is not the Premier by himself, nor is it the Government House Leader by himself or the Deputy Government House Leader who would appoint members of the governing caucus to a particular committee. It is to be shared in the context of a cabinet decision-making mode. It was in that context that the Premier was making the reference that the hon. member has made. In essence, the cabinet would recommend a list of people from the government caucus who would be members of a standing policy committee and in the sense as well that the Premier voices and views things in the collective. It is always the collective of the whole group, rather than the collective of only the Premier. That is the unique aspect of the leadership style chosen and led by the current Premier of the province of Alberta.

So when the reference is "and these committees report to cabinet," well, in essence it was in the context of the greater usage of the word rather than the restrictive use of the word, that of a political context. It was in the decision-making process. Mr. Speaker, it's in that sense that these standing policy committees are open to the public. Anyone who wants to attend the meeting is permitted to attend the meeting. There's an agenda with respect to that in fact. The standing policy committee chairman will introduce the various people that come.

I can understand part of the reasoning in which the focus would be with respect to this. I hope that I've added something to this. But it is the reference that I've cited in which the Premier has made his comments.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What page?

MR. KOWALSKI: Page 120, on September 9, 1993.

MR. BRUSEKER: Left-hand side of the column.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yeah.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. The Chair will not rule until the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has – but the Chair does hope to rule on Thursday. So if hon. members could get any further information to the Chair as soon as possible, it would be appreciated.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield.

MR. WHITE: Thank you. I rise to question how this all occurred today in that I read the Order Paper and I find no place here for . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will attempt to help the hon. member. Following question period every day, that's the time when point of order business is raised on all four days of our working week here in Edmonton. The Chair will quote from page 79 of *Hansard* on September 3. The Chair is quoting itself:

The Chair will rule on the point of order after making that determination but in the meantime invites the Government House Leader or other members of the Assembly to speak on that either today or later next week.

I guess the operative word in this particular case is "later." Nevertheless, there was an open invitation to the Government House Leader to let the Chair have his views, which has now happened. It happens to fall because this is point of order time every day.

MR. WHITE: Yes. I'm happy with that explanation save and except that if there's to be this discussion, it would be nice if both sides were aware of it. That's all.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair understood that other members had had their input, and basically it was just the government side that the Chair wanted to hear from before making a final determination.

head:

## Orders of the Day

head:

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

head:

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#### Bill 204

#### Stray Animals Amendment Act, 1993

[Debate adjourned September 28: Mr. Evans speaking]

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In summation with respect to Bill 204, the issue is clearly the humane treatment of feral horses. I hope hon. members will be aware that we do currently have legislation that addresses the issue of cruelty to animals and also the unauthorized use of public lands for the capture of feral horses. Therefore, the question is: how can we protect a sustainable number of these horses without creating an unwieldy bureaucracy that would unjustifiably restrict owners of horses from claiming their rightful ownership rights? A permitting or a licensing system may be the answer. It would identify to enforcement officers those who are authorized to capture animals and would thus expose those who were not.

Again, as I mentioned the last time this matter was in debate, I want to thank the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury for introducing this private member's Bill. I believe it has merit and deserves serious consideration by the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I brought forward a proposal to deal with the feral horse issue to the standing policy committee on natural resources and sustainable development. At that time I was asked to consult with aboriginals, with outfitters and guides, and with ranchers about their legitimate concerns for their legal rights. This consultation has been done, and I'm ready and in fact anxious to meet with the standing policy committee again and to seek approval of a resolution of this issue. This debate and the

member's initiative in sponsoring Bill 204 will be very helpful in the final review of this matter and in ultimately identifying a plan to deal with the issue in a responsible and comprehensive manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

3:10

### Bill 205

#### Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act

MR. N. TAYLOR: On behalf of my colleague from Lethbridge-East I'd like to move Bill 205 on ag resources.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that's reappeared in different forms for some years now. I think it's been well understood by members of the Legislature and the public in general that farmland is a very finite and irreplaceable resource. Once it's disappeared under a parking lot or to a housing development, it's rarely ever brought back.

In fact, if you like history, Mr. Speaker, and I know you do, Rome was never able to defeat Carthage – remember? – until they not only destroyed cities, but they ploughed salt into the ground to ruin the farmland. Carthage never rose again. I think if you go on to farmland history – I can't remember who it was. I think it was William Jennings Bryan who said that you can destroy our cities and they'll build them in the next generation; you can destroy our harbours and airports and they can build them up in the next generation; but if you destroy our farmland, that cannot be built up in the next generation. In other words, it's probably one of the great jewels that has been passed on in mankind, yet we continually exploit and move it under our system of higher use at the time.

Maybe the whole system of the economics that we use does not take into consideration the long-term needs of food production. Unfortunately, maybe the food production community itself due to its efficiencies and its better methods of raising food, biogenetic engineering and all the rest, has resulted in food surpluses. So it becomes all too easy for us to say: "Ah, what's farmland? What's a few acres here, a few acres there if we're going to build a school or a high rise or a parking lot? The increased efficiency of farmers will more than make up for it." I think it's rather a fool's paradise when you think that way, Mr. Speaker, because the end may be coming closer than you think.

As a geologist and an earth scientist, Mr. Speaker, for many years I worked in the Middle East. If you fly from Cairo across through the Tigris-Euphrates, the so-called Garden of Eden as it was established many years ago, up through the mountains of the Hindu Kush, which is supposed to be where the Hindus and the Aryan races had so much of their civilization and everything was green, then across China – I used to work in Peking and through there – you find that nearly 90 percent of China's population is still in three valleys. The hinterlands in between are all bare. You suddenly realize what a fragile thing we have in our agriculture and in our farmland. When it disappears, it disappears for good. It changes the economy; it changes the whole outlook.

I won't go into cultural anthropology and all the rest, but I think there's quite a close connection to the type of people we are and the type of land we have. That might account for the fact that the Scots have been populating the world for years, cross-breeding with all the other people that are there and supplying good soldiers. Anything to get out of Scotland was considered a step

upward back in my day. I'm not doing it for the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan because my ancestry comes the same way. Half my ancestors got out of Scotland looking for good farmland, and the other half were here to meet them in Canada when they got here way back then.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, when you take that step of what farmland is, you then realize what we have here in western Canada or in Alberta. When many areas were first colonized or civilized, the castles were put on rocky points or hillsides for defence, or they were put on oceans where there was quick access in and out by boats. But in the west when we established a town, it was nearly always in the middle of the best farmland, because you must remember that the railroads opened up the west. The railroads were given land, so many sections per township, and railroads deliberately laid out their pattern and their surveys in such a way that they went through the best farmland. After all, they wanted to sell to the new people, and they wanted the settlers to come in to settle. So what we have in the west is the growing point of our cities – unlike many other cities in the world that were for various other reasons that I've already mentioned: a defense for trade, in the Middle East it was the great trade routes where the cities built up – nearly always springing up where our very best farmland was, maybe 95, 99 percent of the cases. Consequently, when our cities expand today, they spread out like a cancer across our best farmland and take out forever any chance to produce food, particularly in this modern day and age when it's considered more wise to put the whole backyard into cement rather than a garden.

However, Mr. Speaker, be that as it may, we end up with a lot of our farmland adjacent to our cities, an economic structure that aids and abets the destruction of our farmland. A family can farm for years, and then the land developer comes out and says: "Well, you've got great farmland, Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, but \$1,000 an acre or maybe even \$1,500 an acre is all it's worth as farmland. It's worth \$10,000 an acre if we can put high rises on it." Now, we have in the past tried sometimes to zone land and say that farmland cannot be used for other uses, as we have in northeast Edmonton. That puts up a very, very big question: why should the owner of number 1 farmland or number 2 farmland be deprived from the right of economic progress, you might say, getting \$1,000 an acre for their land rather than \$10,000? Yet if we don't zone it, it disappears. There is a free enterprise method used in the United States to get around that, whereby society says, "All right; if we want to preserve this number 1 farmland or number 2 farmland, we'll all pay for it and we'll buy the development rights from the farmer." So if the land agriculturally is worth \$1,000 an acre but it's worth \$10,000 to develop, society pays the farmer \$9,000 an acre for – some call it air rights, development rights, or whatever it will be. Then the farm family has received the money for the development equivalent. This is on an arbitrated basis. [interjection] I'm sorry; I didn't know if you were making noise or what. I thought the hon. Member for Dunvegan was asking for time for a question, but indeed all he was doing was nodding twice to his boss as he was leaving.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, back to the argument here. We haven't devised a system yet that properly works. Now, this Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act is just an Act that may work in the direction that some 13 U.S. states are going when I talked about purchasing development rights. It may go another way. There are two or three ways that various areas of the world are developing, and we may work out another area. The point is that we have a natural resources conservation Act that applies to oil. We have a

conservation Act that applies to natural gas, a conservation Act that applies to gravel, applies to gypsum. We have our parks that worry about our recreation space. We have our timber preserves, as they call it, and nature reserves. Nothing protects farmland, yet it is probably the most important commodity we have. We can always create more timber by planting more trees, but after the farmland has either disappeared under buildings or under highways or floated down the rivers to the Hudson Bay or the Arctic – it depends which way our drainage runs – it can't be restored. Yet we have no Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act.

If you came here from Mars, Mr. Speaker, you would be right to assume that we drink oil, because we go to such a fuss to make sure there's a conservation board to look after it. You'd have a right to assume that maybe if we don't drink oil, we eat wooden stakes, because we go to all the trouble to make sure we have forest reserves. The prairie farmland which raises not only the grain that feeds the protein that we eat but also will in the future maybe supply a great deal of our energy, whether it's in a field of canola, a type of canola oil that can be used in the diesel truck or car that you drive or whatever it is. Good farmland in the future can be used for a lot more than food. It can be used for industrial uses and for substitutes for various other manufactured products. As a matter of fact, years ago when I was just a little tad, mustard seed was the biggest source for plastic manufacturing. That's before hydrocarbons came in for that.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are many others in the Legislature that want to say more about this. I don't want to take away from that. There's so much that can be said for the preservation of our farmland that it is a crime not to pass an Act to make sure that we have an agricultural resources conservation board. I might mention to all members that we're not getting into the idea of much legislation. We're getting into a board that will recommend how we preserve farmland in the future.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to participate in the debate on Bill 205, the Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act. It's rather ironical that I'm following an oilman speaking about soil conservation. It's like asking a barber if you need a haircut.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill addresses very important issues. We all know that agriculture is the backbone of our province. Indeed, Alberta was a province that was pioneered by farmers and livestock ranchers, and agriculture still continues to be a major component of our economic livelihood. As Albertans we would do well to take all necessary steps to protect the investment we have in the agricultural sector. Bill 205 seeks to establish the agricultural resources conservation board. The board would, as I understand it, monitor the use of prime agricultural land while providing farmers with advice and education with respect to land and soil conservation.

At this point I would like to go on record as an earnest supporter of these goals. Unfortunately, I do not wish to go on record as supporting this Bill. The obvious reason for not endorsing it is that there are boards and committees and agencies already in existence that do almost exactly the purpose of the Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act. Mr. Speaker, Alberta already has a board that is responsible for encouraging "the minimization of use of good agricultural land for other purposes," as section 4(a) of the Bill so succinctly puts it. It's called the Alberta Planning Board, and it was created as the executor of the Planning Act in 1980. Quite frankly, I must say that I am surprised that the hon.

Member for Lethbridge-East, who is sponsoring the Bill, does not recognize this. Perhaps, then, I will provide a brief overview of the Alberta Planning Board and its related agencies and what role they play in the agricultural community for the benefit of the hon. member and the rest of this House.

The Planning Act establishes procedures and rules by which the orderly development and use of land are achieved. It also assigns particular responsibility to the Alberta Planning Board, regional planning commissions, municipal governments, and the individual landowner. Most decisions rest with the locally elected representatives, with the provincial government's role being to spell out broad policy guidelines and oversee the system's proper functioning.

So the way it works, then, is that the government departments lay down a broad policy guideline which the experts in the Alberta Planning Board can work within. The Planning Board has the authority to approve or disapprove of the regional plans that are brought before it. The board is also vested with the authority to adjudicate any disputes that may arise between a landowner and a municipality, a municipality and a regional planning commission, et cetera. The province is divided into 10 regions, and each of these 10 regional planning commissions works in conjunction with the separate municipalities in determining the use of the agricultural land in each region. Throughout the process opportunities are provided for citizen involvement via the public hearings that are mandatory under the Planning Act. These processes are designed to ensure that the regional plans reflect public wishes to the fullest extent possible.

Now, if this sounds a mite complicated . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair regrets to have to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(2)(b) we must move to the next order of business at 3:30.

#### head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

##### **3:30 Casino Regulations**

204. Moved by Mr. Jacques:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to change casino regulations to permit chartered nonprofit organizations to fund-raise anywhere in Alberta.

[Debate adjourned September 28: Mr. Wickman speaking]

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion that was introduced was touched on relatively briefly last week. My understanding of the intent of the motion from the member bringing it forward is to allow for a situation where a group, say, in Lethbridge or a group in Millet, a group in any part of the province could in fact go and conduct a casino in some other part of the province, whether that be Red Deer or Edmonton or Calgary. I raise some of the concerns that I raised last week. I talked in terms of the possibility of too many casinos being affected in the sense that there could be an overload in one particular municipality. There are only so many dollars out there of disposable income that people are prepared to spend. When we look at the nature of the competitiveness for those speculative dollars – gambling dollars, dream dollars, whatever you want to call them – we see the buildup happening more and more, particularly with the video lottery machines, which have become the real draw to Albertans, and that will increase. Our figures show that there is great, great potential in terms of raising money

for government. Of course, it's to the government's benefit to have as much of those speculative dollars being raised through the VLTs in that the government then controls those moneys, whereas if it's raised in other forms like lotteries, raffles, bingos, the bulk of those dollars by and large are controlled by nonprofit organizations, which then guarantees or assures that those dollars will be spent for charitable purposes, for purposes that will enhance, will benefit the community.

The claim was made that, yes, moneys from lotteries and VLTs are used to benefit the community. In a lot of cases they are. The community facilities enhancement program, for example, is a case of that, but the community facilities enhancement program, when it's in the hands of government, can create problems. There have been accusations made by this particular side of the House that those dollars are not always distributed fairly. Again it's come to our attention from one of our members that a constituent, when asking for dollars from the community facilities enhancement program, was told mistakenly, thinking it was a government member: "You go to your constituency office and talk to your MLA. That person has the applications. That person knows how much money is allocated to that particular constituency, and that person has the right to review the applications." This comes from an official within that department. Now, we've raised that a number of times, and of course the minister responsible will get up and deny that it's done on that basis. So that's a concern that I have when we look at this whole question of changes in casino regulations or any type of fund-raising regulations, but here of course we're concentrating on the casinos.

I think there are two things that we have to bear in mind. Number one, we have to look at the community-based groups. We have to look at the impact on the community-based groups. We have to look at the potential they have to raise more dollars to provide greater service, because I maintain that the community can provide programs more effectively, more efficiently than government can. In other words, they get a bigger bang for the buck than government would if government assumed total responsibility for those programs. So I think our first concern has to be to develop a mechanism where we can ensure that the charitable groups, the community groups are going to receive their fair share, a reasonable share. Under the existing system there is argument that that is not happening because of the extensive control of the gambling dollars by government. When we look at mechanisms to do that, the casino is one of those.

Another way, as I pointed out last week, would be changes within the federal legislation that would encourage people to give more directly to charitable organizations so that those organizations aren't so dependent on government to fund their particular programs.

Another aspect of this particular motion, Mr. Speaker, that we have to look at and we have to examine very, very closely is the impact that it would have on the municipalities. As we know now, the municipalities are structured in such a way that the larger municipalities have control of the charitable activities within their particular community. They don't approve the casino applications, they don't approve the bingo applications, but they do approve fund-raising: door-to-door drives, the United Way, even chocolate candy sales door to door. So municipalities are going to be concerned when they see this type of motion. Municipalities are going to say: "Well, is this going to affect groups within our municipality? Is it going to take dollars away from our municipality? Is it going to bring people to our municipality that are going to be here for one reason: to gamble and then get back out?"

When we talk in terms of this type of change, it becomes very, very difficult for government to simply do it. There has to be a

mechanism in place that allows for a review, and when we get into that review we should go beyond the review of just the casino regulations. If this particular motion were to be put out to the public, if municipalities were notified that this motion was there and that they had the opportunity to express their concerns, to make presentations on it, I'm certain we would get a great deal of presentations. To go ahead without the opportunity of first doing that does pose a problem, Mr. Speaker. I would venture to say that the mover of the motion has not had the opportunity to solicit municipalities individually or through the established organizations like the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association or the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties or the Improvement Districts Association, the IDs.

When we go on with this particular motion . . . If I could ask the Speaker at this particular time if he can just indicate to me how much time is left on this motion before we have a vote on it.

MR. SPEAKER: As far as the Chair can see, there's about five minutes left.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Mr. Speaker, the concern I have is that if I stop debate now, a government member gets up and simply talks it out without putting the thing to a vote. My understanding is that if a government member stood up and moved to adjourn debate, it would not come to a vote, and I would like to see this come to a vote. I'd also like to know if the person that moved the motion would have the opportunity, if I gave up the floor, to close debate on the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, on that point of order, the hon. mover of the motion would have that right if there was no other member who wished to speak.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm going to conclude and use that opportunity. I would hope that other members respect his right to conclude debate on the motion.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to be as quick as I can. Regarding the motion, I want to say at the outset that while I support increasing the number of licences issued by the Alberta Gaming Commission in Calgary and Edmonton, I want to make it clear that the restrictions on location that currently exist are well founded and should remain. Therefore, I will be voting against the motion. When one considers these long waiting lists in Calgary and Edmonton, it perhaps provides, then, some justification for an increase in the licences.

I want to get to a point quickly, though, regarding the profits that were listed. They talked about how, with the profits being so large, it could accommodate more gaming. I feel that if the number of licences were increased perhaps to 10 or 12 a week, this would be reckless and perhaps might lead to bankruptcies of some of the charitable organizations. A second caution would be a sociological one in the sense that I don't think we want the folks in Alberta to see casinos sprouting up every third and fourth block.

I don't want to see the elimination of the current restrictions that stipulate that only Calgary- and Edmonton-based groups can hold casinos and bingos in their respective cities. More importantly, to organizations from Lethbridge it also means that they cannot seek licences outside of their jurisdictions. It is this latter part of the motion that worries me most. What I've observed and what nonprofit organization members are telling me is that the market, specifically in Lethbridge, is saturated.



3:40

Some of my colleagues have stated that there is room in Lethbridge because the profit per casino was around \$12,000. But, Mr. Speaker, I'd point out that these are 1990 statistics and are somewhat dated. The evidence that I hear and see regarding the city of Lethbridge – and this is the only accurate instrument that I have to gauge the situation – is that Lethbridge could not handle an influx of nonprofit organizations from Calgary.

Therefore, I will be voting against this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question on the motion?

[Motion lost]

### Health, Social Services, and Education Funding

205. On behalf of Mr. Decore, Mrs. Hewes moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to demonstrate its commitment to funding for the human services departments of Health, Family and Social Services, and Education by developing a comprehensive, long-term plan for funding priorities in these departments, including three-year funding frameworks for organizations involved in these sectors, extensive consultation with affected parties, and a public process for informing Albertans what the government's plans and priorities will be.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In presenting this motion, I acknowledge and recognize that we are all deeply concerned about the deficit in this province. Certainly it's high time that we are concerned about it. We have to ask ourselves how we got into this position. I can remind the House that the Liberal opposition has been preaching fiscal responsibility for seven years, since I got here in 1986. The Premier and the Treasurer of the day kept telling us that everything was fine, that everything was okay, reassuring us and presenting yet another deficit budget. We had eight in a row, and we lost millions and millions. Also, we in the Liberal opposition kept begging for pension reform, none of which was acknowledged as even being a problem until it was almost too late. We were spending beyond our revenues, and we continued to spend beyond our revenues. Meanwhile, we continued on a senseless and ill-thought-out path of loans and loan guarantees, with disastrous results.

So here we are now in a serious deficit position with an accumulated debt that is absolutely staggering. We find ourselves desperate to bring this deficit in line and to balance the budget, so we look around for likely targets to help us achieve that. I have always been of the opinion that when people say that we have to have a healthy economy in order to support health care and education and social services, their thinking is upside down. I believe that if we do not have healthy people who have an education and have training, who live in healthy communities and work in healthy workplaces, and if we don't support those who need help temporarily or for over a longer period of time, we won't have any economy. The economy is dependent upon healthy, educated people in healthy communities, not the reverse. Healthy people are productive people, and healthy communities are productive communities. Education is the major driving force. Social assistance and child welfare are investments in people. We must learn to think in those terms, but for some reason these

programs are often the first targets of cuts, the first place that government looks to reduce expenditures.

These targets are the programs that are for the most vulnerable people in our society: those who are on social assistance, children who are wards of the province, the mentally and physically disabled people who are dependent on AISH, the sick in acute care, the sick in extended care, people in group homes, people in work programs, children in school, young adults in postsecondary education and training schools, workers applying for loans for training or retraining. All these people are vulnerable. These departments, Mr. Speaker, have large budgets, and they become easy targets.

We desperately need to know where we're headed. We plead for a plan. We desperately need some understanding of what this government's priorities are in regard to all of these services. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the roundtables are an excuse for consultation. They are not real consultation as we understand it. Decisions are being made by balance sheet. Decisions are being made with little understanding of the very grave consequences that will destroy many of our investments and not capitalize on the investments that we have made to date. We plead for a plan. We ask the government to tell us where they are going with these devastating and punitive actions that cut people's livelihood, that cut programs that people are dependent upon.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to make a few comments about the various so-called human services, although in my opinion all services of government are human services and should not be differentiated in that regard. Related to health care, a year and a half, 18 months or more ago the minister of the day began a plan. At that point we had two-year funding for hospitals, which was acknowledged by our opposition as being a good idea. The minister embarked on a plan for reform of health care, something that we had been asking for for years. That was not continued. It was scrapped, and really no reason has ever been given to us as to why it was not continued, and another series of events were set into place. The result of this is that we are meeting with Albertans and asking them for ideas of where to cut our present budget. We are not meeting with Albertans and letting them help us to determine how, in fact, health care can be reformed with real priorities and real funding plans over time. We have no idea at this point where we're going. Even the chairman of the roundtable acknowledged that there is no plan, but cuts are being made, people are being asked to take 5 percent rollbacks, and devastating decisions are being made that I think have the potential of destroying much of our investment.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, there is a tremendous need for longer range budgeting in order that our institutions in health care and our organizations that we depend upon in our communities can make long-range plans. The administrators at the roundtable talks have been expressing their difficulty in making any kinds of plans when they don't know what funds are going to be available, so we're in a circle. The Health Planning Secretariat says: tell us where you think we should cut. The people who are there to help say: well, tell us how much money you're going to give us, and then we'll work on it. We can't possibly continue with what I consider to be not a useful process.

Mr. Speaker, at Wainwright the hospital administrator said he didn't know how much money he'd have six months from now. How can we plan with that kind of situation? This year has been particularly difficult. The last round of cuts of \$67 million was done across the board. It was just announced and implemented.

Further across-the-board cuts continue, but they penalize the most efficient of our institutions and often reward the least efficient. Those facilities which have already cut away the fat are being asked to make the same percentage cut to their overall budget as those which still have something left to cut. Long-range budgeting, I submit, would support long-range planning. They inevitably go hand in hand, one being impossible without the other.

### 3:50

Our health care system and the people of Alberta need some direction from this government. They need to know what's at the end of the road. The government holds out the roundtable process as public consultation. There have been six so far – is that right? – five left to go. The first one in Red Deer had zero time for the general public. Since then, approximately half the time has been allotted to the public, some of that taken up with remarks from the minister and the chairman. The result is that roughly 20 hours have been allowed for Albertans who are not invited guests to make their comments about or their recommendations for the health care system. If each person were allowed 10 minutes, 120 noninvited Albertans could voice their concerns through this roundtable process. I don't think that's a very significant kind of statistical sample of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Instead, I think the government should be undertaking a comprehensive consultative process in which health care users as well as professionals have equal opportunity to have their concerns heard and debated and discussed. I think the government should be soliciting community views on allocating the health budget for services within that community and that it should be community driven. This should happen before any more punitive cuts are made.

Mr. Speaker, we've been preaching health care reform since 1986. Seven years later we're still wringing our hands, saying: health care crisis on us. The Premier today told us we cannot any longer continue. We're demanding salary rollbacks. Seven years later, we've known all that time – if we hadn't had defensiveness on the other side of the House – and here in 1993 there is still no plan.

In Family and Social Services we have all kinds of supporters in our communities for long-term funding for both contracted agencies and programs of the department itself. That kind of long-term funding, Mr. Speaker, would depoliticize that budget process. With a three-year budget, a nonprofit agency delivering therapeutic foster care, for example, would be free to focus on the children it serves and not be subjected to a constantly changing government agenda that is generous in an election year and then turns miserly afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, security of funding is far-reaching. It gives the community and the agencies of the community stability as well as stability in the department. Long-term funding would allow the various programs and contracted agencies the ability to make plans well beyond the usual 12-month fiscal period. A three-year budget would give agencies security and peace of mind so that they could develop new programs and shed old ones. As it stands now, agencies are in real fear whether or not they'll receive any funding next year, let alone how much. Given the current mean-spirited climate of the government, agencies can barely manage to fund their existing services, so planning future programs is impossible. Yet we see the Premier going out and saying at his various meetings with people, talking about United Way and other funding agencies, that the people will have to give more, that charities will have to do more.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of long-term funding are not restricted solely to contracted agencies. The entire department would benefit immensely, I submit, by knowing what their budget is going to

look like 36 months down the road. Managers could plan projects that are not at the whim or mercy of next year's budget. Staff could be hired or redeployed and sent for training according to the real needs and not simply respond to the demands to spend the rest of the budget before the end of the year. Long-term funding would allow contracted agencies in the department to be more responsible and flexible. Programs could be dropped as they were found unnecessary. Programs or services could be developed in response to changing demographics or in anticipation of changing community needs. They could help to head off a potential problem.

As it stands today, even if problems are forecasted, managers can hardly do anything about it because funding is so insecure. The existing budget process, where agencies are notified of budget cuts three or four months into their fiscal year, leaves directors and managers simply reeling to find the necessary dollars, yet we expect, in fact we insist that they fulfill the requirements and the needs of people. As a result, these agencies have no choice but to slash funding across the board, sometimes dropping total services. Warned in advance, these same agencies could take the time to look for inefficiencies and possibly avoid layoffs or canceling of services.

Mr. Speaker, we have been particularly critical of the government's failure to consult on any level with any group about the latest cuts to social assistance and to AISH. By not talking to community agencies or consumers, the government can only rely on their own distorted perceptions of what life is like on assistance. They have no idea, for example, what it's like to go begging at a high school registration to try to get the fees waived or worrying about how you're going to buy \$200 worth of school supplies with the \$25 that's been allotted for that purpose. I think had the minister bothered to talk with parents on assistance, he would have learned that they have enough trouble keeping the child interested in going to school, let alone forcing them to go without supplies. This undermines the child's already precarious self-esteem, making school an intimidating and unfriendly environment and further jeopardizes the relationship with school boards who simply don't have any extra money to meet the special demands. Cuts to the bus transportation for school makes it harder to get that child to go to school. Where is the saving if we're increasing the number of dropouts? What's it going to cost our province when all of these young people drop out of school and simply are expecting to be looked after?

Mr. Speaker, the imposed quota on AISH I think is punitive. It's draconian; it's cruel. We have been inundated, besieged in our constituencies with persons who are terrified that they are going to be cut off. Not even the Premier's own advisory council on persons with disabilities has had the courtesy of a contact from the minister. By not consulting, the government also sends the message that they don't care. They simply don't care if their budget decisions are hurting people. They don't care if children are hungry, go without proper clothing or school supplies. If they truly cared, the government would have talked with professionals. They would have talked with their own staff, the people who work on the front lines. They would have talked with the professionals and they would have talked with consumers to determine how these cuts were going to affect families before they were made.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of consultation also shows that the government has very little understanding of what brings people onto social assistance in the first place. If they were really talking and listening, the government would learn that the economic downturn and changes to unemployment insurance have forced people to turn to assistance for the first time in their lives. These are not welfare bums, as the Klein government seems to want to

believe. They are families who through no fault of their own have become victims of an unstable economy. Consultation has to extend to include all of those affected by budget changes. Cuts to social assistance are going to have a very determined ripple to a wide area of services: food banks, schools, policing, judiciary, local municipal governments. True consultation also means more than the government's attempts called roundtables, a euphemism, where the agendas are predetermined, the audience is handpicked, and the outcome predictable. Albertans need and deserve an opportunity to question the government on policy, exchange ideas, criticize, and, most importantly, see their suggestions dealt with and acted on.

Mr. Speaker, if I could turn for a moment to education. The lack of planning and the absence of the government telling us what their priorities are is just as serious in Education as in Health and social services. The difficulties for school boards when the provincial government doesn't plan or doesn't let them in on what they're planning to do are immense. Now we've embarked on a series of roundtables in education. We know predictably exactly what the government is going to do – we know they're going to cut, we know what their determination is – yet we persist in this notion of roundtables.

**4:00**

Mr. Speaker, there is a tremendous problem of fiscal equity and a need for a sensible solution. Last year we saw a \$30 million lottery grant popped into education. This isn't a long-term solution. This is no way to solve the problems we're seeing. There are many contradictory signals. The question of aboriginal youths who would prefer to attend a native-centred school rather than a vocational college: we had a good question today about the PICS school in Calgary. This year funding for school boards wasn't announced until the beginning of March. Since there are no long-term funding plans, it's difficult for school boards to plan ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the present situation begs for action, as described in my motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister without portfolio responsible for the Health Planning Secretariat and AADAC.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take time away from the Member for Calgary-Currie, but I just want to have the opportunity to question what the hon. member across the way said with regard to health roundtables. I believe the process should be explained to clarify. Will you allow that?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'll ask. I'm the creature of the House. Would it be acceptable, hon. members, to let somebody give a word of explanation and not take away someone who is on the proper list?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

MRS. HEWES: I don't quite understand. Mr. Speaker, is the member speaking to the motion? If the member is speaking to the motion, of course it's acceptable.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to the motion and also the comments the member opposite was making with regard to roundtables and the process of planning. Planning is ongoing year after year after year. The member has been in this Legisla-

tive Assembly since 1986 and should be aware that planning doesn't ever stop; it is always ongoing. But there are constant changes in a system, and the health roundtables have been extremely productive. The people who have attended have enjoyed participating in open public meetings. Also, the invitations have been open to the public, written submissions have been accepted, and the consultation is very, very broad. It is not handpicked. People who want to be part of it are invited when they phone our office, and no one – no one, Mr. Speaker – has been refused attendance at the roundtable, whether it is the public meeting the night before or closed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If I understood this correctly, this was an explanation as opposed to somebody in debate. Is that not so?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes. [interjections]

### **Speaker's Ruling Speaking Order**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is an awkward point. Normally the debate goes back and forth. If the House views the comments made by the minister responsible for the Health Planning Secretariat – then I guess I can't argue with that. I thought we had an understanding that it was an explanation and then Calgary-Currie's place would not be taken. But if you insist . . .

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to defer to our colleagues even though that was our understanding. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly.

### **Debate Continued**

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal Party has long been a strong supporter of medium- or long-term funding for both contracted agencies and the department. Medium-term funding takes the panic out of developing budgets. It allows decisions to be made in a careful and cautious and considered manner. With a three-year budget, a nonprofit agency delivering, for example, parenting programs to single mothers would be free to focus on the communities they serve, on the families they serve and not be subjected to constant changes from one year to the next so that they never know whether to put any time into planning a program, whether things are going to change. This is particularly true of nonprofit organizations, which have changing agendas because of the changing community and don't have the staff that larger government departments have. They're hit much harder by sudden changes.

Security of funding is far-reaching, giving stability to the community and the agencies that work there as well as stability throughout the department. It eliminates wasting time with programs that have no chance of being funded. Medium- to long-term funding allows departments and contracted agencies the ability to make plans that extend beyond the year. Smaller agencies in particular appreciate the chance to have some time to think about it with their very small dollars. A three-year budget would give agencies security and peace of mind, and new programs would be developed in a better way. As it stands now, people live in fear. Sudden cuts after months of work by volunteers are particularly disheartening. You lose the trust of the community, and you lose volunteer labour. People are often not willing to do it again if they didn't make it fly the first time.

Given the current funding climate, contracted agencies can barely manage to fund their existing services, so preventive work, which is really the crux of community agencies, is all but

impossible. And the benefits of long-term and medium-term funding are not restricted to contracted agencies. Everyone – businesses, government departments; it doesn't matter who you are – benefits from knowing where you're going at least for a year and maybe for the next 36 months. Managers find it very difficult to plan when the next year's budget can suddenly change everything. It's so much better when you can hire your staff, when you can train them, when you can redeploy them, and when you know somewhat what the new demands are going to be. Long-term funding allows both contracted agencies and the department to be more responsive in meeting community needs, and programs or services can be developed in response to changing dynamics. As it stands today, even if problems can be forecast, managers can hardly attempt to do anything about it when funding is so insecure.

We have been very critical of the government's failure to consult on any level with any group about the latest cuts in social assistance and AISH. Three-year funding would allow for extensive consultation. You know, it's impossible to make decisions in an office building in Edmonton that will make sense all over this province. This type of decision-making results in a loss of community support and distrust of volunteers. By not talking to community agencies or consumers, the government can only rely on their own perception of what life is like on assistance. Most of us don't know what it's like to have to beg for bus fare to get to the food bank or to worry about whether or not you're going to be able to send your kids to school.

Had the minister bothered to talk with parents on assistance, he would have learned that they have enough trouble keeping their kids interested in school. They're not only forced to go without supplies but are unable to take part in recreation programs, unable to get runners to go to gym, and quite often cannot go on the little weekend trips everybody else goes on. This makes school intimidating and unfriendly for children.

I would ask what it's going to cost our province in the future. It's my understanding that the imposed quota on AISH has also been done without any consultation with consumers or professionals. Not even the Premier's own advisory council has had the courtesy of contact from the minister. By not consulting with the public, the government also sends the message that they don't care. If they truly did care if children go hungry without proper clothing, they would have talked to the professionals and their own staff so people knew how the cuts were going to be made beforehand.

#### 4:10

During the past few months we have seen across-the-board cuts with little or no plan and little or no warning to families, to the disabled, or to community-based agencies across the province. Consultation has to extend to include all those affected in budget changes. For example, cuts in social assistance will have a real ripple effect: food banks, schools, policing, the judiciary, local and municipal governments. For this reason, we urge the government to consider a three-year funding framework for Health, Family and Social Services, and Education.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the House to join the debate on Motion 205 initiated by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. I have to tell you that I am very surprised that my colleagues from the hon. member's caucus, particularly those from the teaching profession, did not criticize this motion for, among other things, being a textbook example of a run-on sentence. I will read this, because I find it an astounding

piece of literature to put before us for discussion, let alone critique.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to demonstrate its commitment to funding for the human services departments of Health, Family and Social Services, and Education by developing a comprehensive, long-term plan for funding priorities . . .

I'm only halfway through.

. . . in these departments, including three-year funding frameworks for organizations involved in these sectors, extensive consultation with affected parties, and a public process for informing Albertans what the government's plans and priorities will be.

Having said that, now I would like to formally discuss it with all the interest I can muster.

To my colleagues. When I ran as an elected official for the Conservative Party in June, I ran not because I had any special talent to bring to this House, but I did believe there was something fundamentally wrong with government. I didn't understand what it was, but I had a sense of it. Part of my problem is that governments are capable of making wrong decisions and governments are incapable, because of the structure, of dealing with wrong decisions. I had felt that part of the responsibility of opposition is to deal with decisions they deem to be inappropriate in a positive way to bring the public into an awareness of what it is we are trying to accomplish. I am embarrassed without a doubt, because what we have in this motion is everything that is wrong with opposition mentality and everything that is wrong with an opposition style of government. I am sorry if the opposition does not recognize that at this juncture in history we are consulting in a very broad way with the citizens of Alberta, and we are contributing to a process they endorsed on June 15. I'm sorry if you don't like it. That is what the public wants.

My next comment. I have a serious problem with a mentality that assumes only government can control the decisions and outcomes of the citizens of Alberta. In this particular motion they talk about "human services" and establishing "priorities" and make the suggestion that the government is going to be the group that does that. I am sorry. This is 1993. Those priorities are going to be set by the people of this province, and they started that on June 15.

I have a problem with the way the opposition party is criticizing the very, very serious intent of the roundtable process. In fairness, they can criticize government all they like. That's the role they've chosen for themselves. I am appalled that they would reflect the contribution of citizens of this province – be it the caretakers, the workers, the stakeholders, the union negotiators, and all those people who have made serious commitments to be at those tables and are taking information back to their communities – in such a demeaning fashion. Their input is important. They are part of the process, and it's about time you recognized it and valued it.

I'd like to suggest further that we have in place in a number of these departments serious groups of people, namely our unions. These public-sector groups – be it the teachers, be it the nurses, be it the employees at the ALCB, all these areas – have a role and a responsibility as union members and union management to deal with these issues. It is not the responsibility of government to tell them what to talk about, how to talk about it, and when to talk about it. I am very critical of the fact that this opposition motion would supplant and subvert the role of our unions in participating in solutions they are going to work with. This motion clearly usurps the authority of those bargaining agencies and the people on whose behalf they act.

I'd like to comment further on the issue of the roundtable as a generic term and the whole issue of consultation. It would be inappropriate for me to set priorities for my family based on my needs only. Quite clearly, if I were to follow this motion – and I suggest that the opposition think this through – the only thing

we would have to do is sit down and listen to the hon. Provincial Treasurer and our job would be done, because quite frankly, the process is there. The deficit would be eliminated within four years. Albertans support that decision. They elected us on June 15 to do it. Business plans are being put forward by departments to meet those targets. End of story; job done. We could just sit here and smile for the next four years. The fact of the matter is that we are taking an active role in developing those priorities by asking the stakeholders to work within the context of fiscal responsibility. Have them establish the priorities. Have them decide what's important. Have them tell us where they need to see changes made. After listening to various members speak, I can't understand why they are so critical of allowing Albertans to have a say in that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't fully understand some of the responsibilities I have as a MLA. It boggles me, and it changes from day to day. But clearly, I have to get up and say that I value and respect the role of Albertans in dealing with these critical issues. I am appalled at this type of motion that would take responsibility for some of these decisions away from Albertans and demean their role in such a negative fashion, as has been put forward in the various debates that have come forward.

In my concluding comments, I can only add that it's going to be four long years if this is the kind of issue that becomes fodder for discussion in this House. I would suggest: first of all, good grammar; and second, deal with the issues in a positive way. It does not help the province of Alberta and its citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of Motion 205. Never have I been more convinced of the importance of this motion than I was after listening to comments from the Member for Calgary-Currie. I think the member can add to her list of lack of special talents the lack of analytical thinking. You know, there is a difference between policy and planning and implementation, and it is the role of good government – something members on that side know little about – to plan properly for the implementation of policy and the expenditure of public funds. That requires long-term thinking, not short-term thinking just for political gain. This side of the House is interested in excellence in all parts of government, excellence in all parts of government planning and policy, and that includes listening to people, all people and not just special friends of government members and government ministers.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, when I heard the minister responsible for health care . . . [interjections] Be quiet and pay attention. When I heard the minister responsible for health care planning . . . [interjections]

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. The idea of debate is to carry it on in a dignified way. If you escalate and cause disorder, then disorder occurs. So I would ask hon. members from both sides to please listen to the debate and the hon. member to not try and stir the pot. Carry on with a reasoned argument.

Thank you.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry if I caused any consternation on the government benches.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. SAPERS: When I hear the minister responsible for health care planning say that everybody is being listened to in these health care roundtables and nobody has been refused, I wonder why she has forgotten about the refusals to board members of the Boyle McCauley health clinic, staff members of the Morgentaler clinics, or union representatives from the health units around the province who were in fact refused, Mr. Speaker. The need for long-term planning and long-term thinking has never been more critical than it is today. In fact, we've seen report after report after report – the Children's Advocate, the FCSS review, the Family and Social Services' review for services for 16- and 17-year-olds, just to name a few – talking about the need for long-term thinking, long-term planning, long-term budgeting, and then the integration of all that planning and all that thinking.

What we have to do is move away from all this stovepipe, short-term thinking and get to a place where we are truly running our government programs to meet the needs of all Albertans and not just those little pieces of them that seem to fit within the mandate of a particular program at a particular point in time. It seems to me that what we really require is the ability to listen to people and then take that information and help local people make decisions that are going to be best for them, Mr. Speaker. We need to do this through a process of consultation and feedback as well as the careful monitoring of the implementation of government policy by those hardworking people in the government departments.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Now, if you look at some issues particular to health care, Mr. Speaker, I think of things like dealing with those Albertans who have the misfortune of suffering with chronic pain or have long-term illness. I wonder about the ability of those people receiving meaningful and helpful treatment and therapy for their illness or their pain when we are lurching from short-term plan to short-term plan to short-term plan, when we're seeing absolutely no recognition of the disfunction being caused in our health care system by a planning horizon that has shrunk from not simply one year but a matter of months and, as we saw earlier this week, a matter of weeks.

What we have to do is start paying attention to the impact this kind of disruption has on the ability of staff to meet needs to deliver services and programs, on the training requirements of health-giving organizations, on the welfare, in fact, of all those patients who come to those health care professionals for assistance, and then of course on the stability of the work force in health care as well. These same comments, Mr. Speaker, are equally true for social services and for Education.

Short-term thinking and short-term planning and the lack of a long-term funding framework have made all those agencies involved in health care, education, and social services specialists in fund-raising and not care-giving, Mr. Speaker. It's about time we recognized that the lack of a long-term funding strategy for all those agencies in the human services has forced those agencies into a situation where they must go begging year after year after year, even at the same time the Premier of this province calls on those same agencies to fill out the social safety net government decisions are taking away. You have to recognize that the people

attracted to work in these agencies are people who have a deep feeling for their fellow Albertans, and they want to provide services. They want to meet that need. They don't want to go around constantly with their hand out begging for more and more resources. If for no other reason, that reason alone makes it very necessary to move from short-term thinking, one year at a time and in this case even less, toward a strategy that will see an integrated development of long-term funding for all the human services. This motion makes sense today more than ever before. I urge all members to vote to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm especially pleased to debate this afternoon on Motion 205. I, too, cannot help but feel I've heard this tune before that the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry has played for us. In fact, it's exactly what the government consistently promised to do before, during, and after the election. I must say that the plan has been such a good idea that even the opposition has latched on to it and has tried to tell people it's their own creation.

Mr. Speaker, the recent election was a first in the province, because this government was elected not for what it promised to build but for what it promised not to build. The election was fought on the fact that the Premier sincerely cares and listens and is committed to balancing the budget in four years. This hope of giving our children a clear title to this province instead of an unpaid bill is very dear to all of us. No longer can any government simply roll the dice in hopes of higher oil and gas prices. Albertans do not want their government to gamble away the hopes and aspirations and institutions we have all worked so hard to build. Government has to start acting like families and the private sector have had to do in these tough economic times, and that is to develop the ability to do better with less.

People elected this government on June 15 because they liked the progress that was made since the Premier took over last December. People knew that fundamental changes to the way this province is governed were vital. They liked the fact that cuts were made from the top down. The cabinet was downsized by one-third. The ministers took a 5 percent cut in their salary. The pension plan for members of this Assembly was eliminated. Government departments and agencies have been amalgamated and streamlined, and more than 2,700 employees have voluntarily left their jobs early under the early options plan. Yesterday the 51 government members of this House asked the Members' Services Committee of this Assembly to cut the MLA salaries and allowances by 5 percent.

Mr. Speaker, the government members of this House have shown the way. They have been the leaders. This government has pledged to work with other levels of government to identify and eliminate areas where duplication and overlap may exist. Early signals of co-operation have come during meetings of the federal and provincial ministers representing economic portfolios. The governments of both Canada and Alberta realize that there's only one taxpayer in our country. No government can simply off-load its problems onto another.

Budget roundtables may continue to identify other areas where expenses can be trimmed. One of the greatest challenges for this government will be to find ways to turn the tide . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(2)(c), we are required to move to Government Bills and Orders.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
head: **Second Reading**

4:30

**Bill 9**  
**Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1993**

[Adjourned debate October 4: Mr. White]

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I adjourned debate on Bill 9, and as the hon. deputy House leader explained earlier, it was in fact an error to bring that item forward at the time. We respectfully request to revert to the Order Paper, which clearly calls for Bill 8 to be rebrought forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield move that the government order of business be changed from Bill 9 to Bill 8. There'd have to be unanimous consent for that, I believe.

The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the deputy House leader, I don't think it's proper for a member on the other side to change the order of business, so I believe we should just move with what's on the agenda.

MR. N. TAYLOR: With unanimous consent you can.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, if there were unanimous consent. But there doesn't appear to be unanimous consent, and it really is in the purview of the government to call for the business that it wishes to deal with in government time.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday both items were adjourned to today, and it was our understanding after the deputy House leader spoke today that in fact what had occurred was not what was intended. However, we're prepared, and are prepared always, to speak to anything this government brings before this House. I said my piece yesterday, as you're aware, and therefore we'll look forward to the other side with theirs and to our side too.

**Point of Order**  
**Clarification**

MR. HENRY: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on a point of order.

MR. HENRY: Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Citation?

MR. HENRY: Standing Order 1.

Mr. Speaker, just as a matter of explanation, with all the new rules and the new arrangements with regard to the changes in the Standing Orders and informing both sides, I think there's been a little bit of confusion. I think we were prepared to go into Committee of the Whole on Bill 8, but I understand we can proceed with Bill 9. That would be okay with our critic, so I apologize.

### Debate Continued

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have no difficulty dealing with the second reading of this Bill at this time.

It was mentioned earlier about our research funds and that, and yes, there is sufficient material that we have dealing with Bill 9. As we deal with Bill 9, what I want to do at this particular point is simply ask some questions to the member moving the Bill on behalf of the government. When we get into committee stage, those questions can then be answered at that particular time, because that member may have to do a bit of research.

My understanding of the Bill is that it's going to achieve two changes. One is the transfer of responsibility. I'm not sure if I interpret it correctly, but I interpret that to mean the municipal district becomes responsible for agreements or actions that may be initiated by the minister. I have to assume that those actions or agreements that may be initiated by a minister would be done in consultation with that particular district.

Secondly, the second portion of it appears to me to be just a technicality allowing for what I call a widely accepted practice of including professional fees such as the architectural fees, the engineering fees, and that in the capital costs of a project. I don't see any difficulty with that at all. So that's my second question, as to whether my interpretation there is correct.

Thirdly, when we talk in terms of the stakeholders, the groups that represent the various municipalities that can be affected, I would have to assume that the stakeholders, such as the Rural & Improvement Districts Association of Alberta, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, have been contacted and have no difficulties with this particular Bill. In fact, my question would be: has this been requested? Have these changes been requested by one of those organizations? Has it been requested as a result of possibly a resolution that was put forward by one of those bodies? Has it been requested by particular municipalities or districts? So my question there is: what consultation process took place?

I can understand if the member can't answer those at this particular time but would prefer to give the information once we go into Committee of the Whole.

On that note I'll conclude.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I have a couple of questions. I'm a little bothered by the Bill, Mr. Speaker. As a general rule, when the government introduces something, especially when they give it to a freshman MLA, there's usually something hidden down deep there. There may be a hidden agenda somewhere. Right now I'm just sort of sniffing around the edge in case I lose some pavement. Otherwise, I'm being very calm about this.

One of the things it mentions is that the municipal district becomes responsible for any agreements and actions taken by the minister. I don't really see anything in the amendments to make sure that the minister has given a clean breast of what all those agreements were before they become a municipal district. In other words, the public may not have voted; maybe the group that wanted to change from an improvement district to a municipal district may have done it on a certain set of facts. Then after it's finished, all of a sudden the minister wanders in and says: "Well, gosh. Oh, gee. There are a couple of these agreements here that you've taken on."

I'm just wondering, maybe when we get to committee stage or somewhere, if the hon. member sponsoring it will be able to

explain that when we take on the responsibilities of the minister or any agreements or actions, et cetera, initiated by the minister – after all, the minister could have promised to do a bridge which the MD will have to pay for, do some paving which the MD will have to pay for, improve a secondary road which the MD will have to pay for, do all kinds of things which the MD will have to pay for. All of a sudden that comes out of the woodwork, yet I understand – I'm not right up to speed on this, and the hon. member will be able to help me – that when an improvement district switches to an MD, there has been some sort of vote, and in that vote there was a set of circumstances and everything put out. Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member, I think there should be some safety measure in here which would say that the municipal district only becomes responsible for agreements and actions initiated by the minister which the public was familiar with – in other words, that were public knowledge – and that any sort of agreement or actions that were not public knowledge shouldn't be saddled on the new constituency.

I think that's enough for now. I'm just speaking about the general principles. I think it looks like a housekeeping Bill, but I've had a lot of housekeeping Bills turn out to be real nightmares. So I'm really going to reserve some things until we see something more done in the – I hope housekeeping isn't sexist. I do all the vacuuming in our house, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to suck rather than to blow once a week. So I'll just sit down and see what happens in committee.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, since I have not been in the House very long, I am perhaps less suspicious of the government's motives. I would have let this Bill pass by rather easily had it not been for the fact that several of my constituents called my attention to the fact that there has been no public input in the change from ID No. 14 to an MD. My questions, therefore, to the member sponsoring this Bill are as follows. What in fact are the criteria by which an ID can switch to an MD? Secondly, and this follows upon the heels of what the Member for Redwater has asked, what sort of input do the residents in fact have? Does a vote take place? Those are the kinds of things I'd like to become aware of, so perhaps the sponsor will be able to tell us that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I certainly won't take long, but I do want to just get on record my support for this Bill. The incorporation of IDs to municipal districts of course has been a desire of people in many areas. In response to the comments the hon. Member for West Yellowhead just made, I am well aware that they have gone through a very extensive process with lots of public input. That has been going on for three or four years at least, since they thought they were in a position to take over the responsibility and run their own affairs.

I must raise the one concern I do have, though, and I will talk to it more in committee. I think it's wrong to order that the MD must take over the employees of the improvement district. Nevertheless, we'll talk more to that later.

The second part of the Bill, certainly the intent of this amendment, I would support as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River to conclude debate.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments that were made by the hon. members, and I certainly look forward to questions in committee on this Bill. I would like to move second reading of Bill 9.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
head: **Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would call the Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill 8**  
**School Amendment Act, 1993**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House adjourned on this on an amendment by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Had you concluded your comments? I don't believe so. Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm speaking again to the amendment I proposed when we last met in committee on this Bill. I'll just recap very briefly. The purpose of the amendment is to amend Bill 8, given that we have decided to extend the right of supervision of home schoolers to private schools, to ensure that we not have home schoolers supervised by bodies, whether they be public or separate boards or private schools, that are in a remote area relative to the student's place of residence. So my amendment would require that the home schooler either be supervised by the public board where the home schooler resides or by the nearest separate school district or by a private school that operates within 100 kilometres of the home schooler. Home schooling . . .

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, we can't hear.

**Chairman's Ruling**  
**Decorum**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee. The Chair has issued the invitation on a number of occasions to please go out and carry on your discussions outside. As long as we have a quorum in here, then we're fine. It's when we have more than a quorum and everybody seems to be interested in talking to each other that it becomes hard here at the Table to hear and I'm certain for other people to hear and presumably for *Hansard* to hear.

So with that admonition, would Edmonton-Centre continue. We apologize for the interruption.

**Debate Continued**

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

If you recall – some historical perspective might be of use here. Home schooling in this province was originally, in my understanding at least, intended for those students who had a reason through their parents, whether it be their parents working in various places in the province, i.e. traveling, or whether it be parents who have a particular want of a particular form of education or to be more involved, or for the reason that the child was not able physically, emotionally, psychologically, or otherwise to attend a regular school. That was the original intent of home schooling. That's why at one time in this province, Mr. Chairman, it was required that if a parent chose to educate their child at home – i.e., to have a home schooler in their home – they be supervised by the board in which they reside, so by the public or separate board in which they reside.

Now, we all remember the Pastor Jones situation in Calgary and the court cases and the various media attention to that situation. It's my judgment and my evaluation that the provincial government wanted to allow Pastor Jones to have his children at

home and that the Calgary public school board was not willing to co-operate in that regard. So rather than deal with that issue and require that in these situations the public school board provide the home schooling, the government and Alberta Education at that time simply changed the regulations to allow for willing nonresident boards, the term that's used.

I'm not going to make a judgment on that particular case, but by making a regulation change to deal with one case, we've opened up a whole series of willing nonresident boards who are supervising children from all over this province. What we're finding, unfortunately, and what this has degenerated into is a competition for students. We find particular boards, because they are allowed to compete for students, offering parents incentives. It's kind of like: buy a Ford, buy a Chrysler, buy a Mazda, and we'll give you 1,200 bucks, we'll give you 1,300 bucks, we'll give you 1,500 bucks. We now have boards around this province who say, "Come and home school with us, and we'll give you \$800." Other boards say, "Come and home school with us, and we'll pay for the swimming lessons and give you \$800." Then you have another board saying, "Come and home school with us and let us supervise your home schooling, and we'll give you \$1,000." Mr. Chairman, I believe that's a less than desirable situation when we're talking about a public responsibility with regard to educating children in our province.

Mr. Chairman, I did raise in my general comments and when we went into committee the limitations that the ATA, the Alberta Teachers' Association, ethical guidelines and rules of conduct have with regard to application to people who supervise home schoolers. Most of the willing nonresident boards employ teachers after hours, essentially moonlighting, in the local jurisdiction to supervise the students. However, they're not being employed as teachers; they're being employed as supervisors. Therefore, the ATA does not have responsibility with regard to the Teaching Profession Act here. At least that's my understanding from the Alberta Teachers' Association. That's a problem. If we're going to have a replacement for a school situation with a professional teacher, that being the parent at home supervised by a professional educator, then let's have the professional body of the Alberta Teachers' Association involved in that in a very active way.

**4:50**

Mr. Chairman, I believe that none of us want to get hysterical about the potential for child abuse in home-school situations when there's a lack of monitoring. That doesn't happen in most home-school situations, but I simply raise the issue as we have to have effective monitoring in home-schooling situations. I believe that in order to do that, there needs to be some proximity in terms of geography. We cannot have effective supervision by a board that's hundreds of miles away. Part of the supervision is ensuring that the child is in contact with public health, ensuring that inoculations happen, acting as a second watchdog for child abuse. I've met several home schooling parents, and I believe they're well meaning. I believe the vast majority are very, very capable as well, but for that very, very small minority of situations where we do not have either the competence or the ethics, I believe the public – as a society, as a government, as legislators – has a responsibility to ensure that very close supervision is there.

There's another very important issue, and I've raised this previously in debate. Just to highlight it, parenting is hard enough in itself. Teaching is not an easy task. Teaching is difficult. It's hard work, and parents who choose to home-school not only need but deserve the support of the professional educators, somebody they can call when they've said, "I've tried this, and Johnny or Susan doesn't seem to be getting it; can I try something else?" or



"I really don't understand this part of the curriculum; can you help me work through it?" I don't believe that having willing nonresident boards several hundred kilometres away can effectively provide that kind of support for parents.

Mr. Chairman, I have heard members from the other side of the House raise concerns about the issue of nonresident boards and supervision. I would urge that they raise the issue with their Whip. It's very clear to me that on the government side the whips are on on Bill 8 and in committee, and I know that some members on the other side of the House – some former school trustees, other people who have been involved in education – share my concerns with regard to the supervision of home schoolers by willing nonresident boards and would like to address that issue. I hope they've not been told to be absent for a vote or they've not been told they have to vote a particular way.

I've been somewhat distressed – that's probably the most accurate description – with some of the proceedings in the Legislature, and I saw it most recently in Bill 5. It shouldn't matter where the idea came from, whether it came from the government side or the opposition side, but if as a private member I propose a piece of legislation and a government member can propose an amendment to make that a better piece of legislation, then I accept that and I want that. I also think and would hope – and maybe I was hoping for too much when I first came to this Assembly – that if the government tabled a Bill and if I as an elected official, as somebody who was elected to represent Edmonton-Centre, as somebody who does have some experience in the field, can suggest an amendment to make that Bill better, to make it stronger, that would be accepted on the merits of what it was and not be judged on where it came from, that it did not come from a government member.

So I'm just going to close by asking the members on the other side to look beyond me, if you can see around me – I know I occupy a lot of space – and look at the wording of the amendment, look at the intent of the amendment, look at trying to make this Bill a better Bill, and vote with your conscience and not with your party.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm speaking to the amendment, and I'd like to point out, if I'm not mistaken, that the minister has promised us new regulations regarding home schooling in the future after the results of the different discussions have been compiled and summarized and so on and so forth. It seems to me that he is putting the cart before the horse by now looking at the supervision aspect of home schooling, which is only a minute part of it. However, that's what he has done, and I do hope he will still see fit to postpone this whole supervision part and put it together with all the other regulations, perhaps waiting until after the roundtable conferences, because who knows? Good ideas might be forthcoming out of those. So much money has been put into them.

Anyway, we're on this particular amendment. We tried another amendment to exclude private schools from supervision of home schooling students. We were not successful, unfortunately, so now we're trying to limit the damage, Mr. Chairman, quite frankly. Unfortunately, because the ministry is taking such a piecemeal approach, we are trying to whittle away at it piecemeal, I suppose, because what he has proposed, that supervision is to be allowed by private school boards, does not solve the problem of lack of supervision. Under that system in Bill 8, and I think we've mentioned this before, there is still a wide-open competition

for home school students throughout the province. It means that the resulting supervision often is lacking. We've mentioned before that there is this distance factor. Sometimes people are unqualified who are looked upon to supervise these students, and we're getting mayhem. We're getting results that are simply not acceptable.

Therefore, we want to assure in this amendment that at least these private schools are relatively nearby, hence the 100 kilometre stipulation, so that perhaps that will assure that there is at least a possibility of better supervision. At least there is a chance that someone is able to visit once in a while, let's say once a month or so. Once again, I'd like to point out that the regulations regarding home schooling are pretty well nonexistent at this time. There is no stipulation regarding how many visits ought to be made to a home schooling student by the supervisor during a given year. There's no stipulation regarding regular testing. There's only a kind of vague stipulation that there should be some achievement test applied every once in a while. I think those things need to be tightened up.

As it stands now, parents are able to shop around. I know there are parents who are genuinely concerned about doing the best possible thing for their particular child in terms of education, but we unfortunately also have those who are shopping around for the board that will provide the least amount of interference, as they call it. I know people like that, who say: "We do not wish to be tested. We do not wish to be supervised. We want to put our own curriculum to the fore. That is what we want to teach, and we're going to do it." It may very well be that it is totally at odds with the public curriculum in any respect, even in the so-called basic three Rs. There is a vast need, Mr. Chairman, for regulations there. Unfortunately, these parents, even those who are shopping around for the least amount of interference, if I could call it that in a negative way, still hold out their hands for public funds. I guess they do not realize that by accepting these public funds, they are also liable and subject to a certain amount of supervision.

5:00

Mr. Chairman, this amendment – I'm returning to it after a little detour – would restrict the scope of the private schools, the reach that they would have, and hopefully they would therefore be able to do some genuine supervision and allow these kids to get the best possible education under the circumstances.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Rocky-Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've listened very carefully to the comments of Edmonton-Centre on his proposed amendment. While I don't disagree with the intent, I do have some problem with the wording of the amendment, the definitions of where you are measuring from – would that be the nearest boundary of the district to your home? – or all of those kinds of problems that I can see arising out of an amendment like this.

I mentioned when I spoke to this Bill in second reading that I really do have a problem with what is currently going on, where parents are shopping around, and I'm sure that it's not just parents that are shopping around. I think there are some school districts that are shopping around and in fact are making quite a business out of this, and I think that's totally wrong. So I want to see it corrected.

I would have a question for the minister, and if he could give an answer before the vote, I would much appreciate it, and that is: can this be handled through regulation as opposed to legislation?

Because as soon as we get it in legislation, we have great difficulty with some of those things that I just identified. I think there should be some ability to compromise – if you're 110 kilometres away, then could you possibly be included, those kinds of things? – as opposed to having it in legislation where it would be extremely difficult to deviate from that. The regulations would certainly have to be tight enough so that the current situation would not continue to happen.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I want a couple of words on this. When the original Bill came out a couple of weeks ago, I sent out I guess about 78 copies to different rural boards in northern and northeast Alberta. I've met with not that many, I guess about eight or 10 counties and boards all together, and some of the things are interesting. I don't think this is a Liberal or a Conservative issue. I think it's an education issue, and one of those things that classically lends itself to a free vote.

We've already decided that private schools can supervise in the same way as public and separate schools, so that's not the issue. The issue here is on how far away they can be. It may sound as if it doesn't matter. A basic part of education is supervision or hands-on; in other words, the school board, the principal, or a director of education dropping around occasionally to see that indeed the curriculum is being taught by the parents or whoever's teaching them in the home like they say they have and that they are keeping up. I think we owe it to our children to see that they get the best possible education.

Admittedly parental rights are important, but if there's anything we find as politicians through the years, it's a constant war or constant push-pull in our minds between parental rights and what's good for the child. Of course, you can err too far, start taking children away from parents that are quite able, and on the other hand you can be leaving children with parents that should have been locked up 20 years ago. So there is a compromise we have to reach. That's almost impossible if somebody in the public school in Fort Vermilion is having somebody down in Milk River's public school supervise the education. It doesn't make sense. The child gets no chance to be supervised or get the direct hands-on that's so important, I think.

After all, if indeed children were better off unsupervised, not educated, we've wasted a lot of money building schools. Think of the money we could have saved with all these teachers that have graduated through the years. All we had to do was mail in to Eaton's catalogue and get ourselves a course and send them out on the back 40, and we would have no problem at all. Obviously our pioneers and our ancestors all decided that maybe the teacher should be around, maybe they do something. They didn't pay them a heck of a lot in the old days, but they at least figured they should be around to break up the school yard fights and a few other things and learn to get on.

So the point is here that they say that if the school board is not going to – and parents don't like the school board. That could happen. I remember being a school trustee one time, and I think there were quite a few parents that thought . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: How long ago?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I won't say how long ago it was. They still had the strap in those days.

I can recall that there were quite a few parents who probably thought that their kids would be better off in another board that I wasn't on. That's quite permissible. I can understand that. The point is that there should be some sort of method of supervision.

If you open up the whole province so they can go around anyplace they want, it doesn't make sense.

The second part is: look at it from the rural board's point of view. They're trying to lay out bus routes, trying to get by with a transportation grant, trying to keep rooms and teachers employed, and each year they don't know whether they're going to lose some kids to home education to somebody in Coutts or Hanna or, worse still, Redwater. You never know where it'll be. In other words, it's a big auction each year who gets the kids, particularly if your children aren't maybe doing so well. After all, it's very easy to blame the board and blame the schoolteachers. That's the easiest thing in the world. Maybe the politicians also. So you'll shop around looking for someone to make junior into a genius. How does that work as far as the planning for the local school board, particularly our rural school boards and particularly laying out bus routes? I know out in our area we had a couple of bus routes that got thrown out because a couple of families on the route decided that they wanted to go get home schooling, particularly when they were offered a few thousand dollars a year kickback – it's not under the table; it's right out in the open – for keeping the kids in their house to educate them.

Another thing too. Because both public and separate school boards out there in the area and the Department of Education and the government indirectly and us indirectly are committed by law to educate all children, they try home schooling for three, four years. Bang, all of a sudden you've got to change the bus routes again because it didn't work out or they decided to come back after three or four years. It's not a case of them opting out for life. As a matter of fact, I think – and I might stand corrected on this – when I checked it a year or so ago, the average amount of time that a home schooler stayed out was only three years, somewhere between two and three years. In other words, they change their mind back and forth. So you have these children dropping into the school system, dropping out, being in some other area, not getting personal supervision.

So I think that if we put in 100 kilometres, they could at least get them so they could be personally supervised. I agree with the Member for Rocky Mountain House that maybe 100 kilometres isn't right on; maybe there's some worry on how we measured it. Take an area like Fort Chip. A hundred kilometres doesn't even get you out of the old school district. Somebody might want to work an amendment in there. When we go into committee, maybe we could do a subamendment, if this is passed, that would cover what the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House worries about and what I would worry about. Having some friends in Fort Chip, that 100 kilometres wouldn't even allow them to get out. Maybe we could say something like 100 kilometres or the adjoining board, whatever it was. Give parents some shopping, but surely if they shop all around the school district, unless you're next to the Saskatchewan boundary, that gives you half a dozen school districts, and that should be enough.

It's very important, I think, that our children be protected from just being put out there in the commercial market without supervision hundreds of miles away and, secondly, that our boards have some sort of idea of permanency so that they can lay out their plans for school bus routes, teachers, and so on, and that there isn't an auction for their children every year. Admittedly they'll still be moving to the adjoining districts, but they shouldn't have to fight every school board in Alberta for their children, from the 49th parallel all the way up to the 60th.

Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stony Plain on the amendment.

**5:10**

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with great interest to the comments made by the various members from across the way, and indeed they do have some very valid observations. I, too, am concerned, as I've mentioned previously, that some of the boards have been, shall we say, less than educationally conscious when they came and approached home schooling over the past few years. There have been, I suppose, wonderings also about how sincere parents are. Certainly the comments that the hon. Member for Redwater has alluded to with respect to the payback or whatever would be a concern too if in fact that is what's going on.

I find it rather interesting that on one side of the coin we have parents paying to send their kids to a school building where you have, hopefully, a much, much better level of service as opposed to – and I know a lot of parents will read this, and my phone will come off the wall. But I do maintain there are better experiences in the school, broader experiences than just at home. However those concerns are valid. I won't in any way, shape, or form minimize them.

If we look at what the amendment addresses, it begs the question: does the amendment address the concerns? I think that the way it's written, personally I would have to side with the Member for Rocky Mountain House and reiterate the question: would this not better be addressed under regulations? The Member for Redwater had a good observation. If you took this particular little distance factor and drew a map around Fort Chip, you'd be sort of stuck without having anywhere to go. So on that basis alone I think it's opened up an interesting area that perhaps the minister could observe through regulations. The spirit of the amendment when taken in context with the contents I don't think very many members on either side of the House would have a difficulty with. I'm speaking of the spirit behind the amendment because it's certainly intended I think from the comments made, from the point of view of the various speakers, that in some way, shape, or form the best possible education should be available to students, and if it's going into the realm of home schooling, there too the intention should be the best intended.

However, it begs a question. To me it doesn't address a lot of what we are speaking about. If you have the parent whose reasons for wanting home schooling aren't valid in the opinion of the speakers here and they happen to be 90 kilometres within that prescribed radius, then this distance factor has given us in fact a false sense of security. We can't address that particular need or desire with a distance. So that gives me a degree of concern. The other side of the coin is that if you're within, you're okay; if you're outside, you're not. I know that certainly is not the Member for Edmonton-Centre's intention. I'm not being critical of his intentions in the least. I'm just trying to look at what this amendment would do.

The other part that I think would subject it to all sorts of perhaps legal action to a point is that it singles out in another portion of the legislation private schools specifically. I would imagine the reason for that is again valid in that you have a sprinkling of private schools and then within that you have the separate and the public. So although the member has looked at this, if I understand the amendment correctly, it would be a public school if you're within that district, the nearest separate school, and then it would give you that hundred kilometre radius if it were in fact towards a private school. It doesn't address the bottom issue of home schooling. It addresses in a different manner home schooling to, in many cases what would happen, a particular private school. Unless I misinterpret the amendment . . .

**Point of Order  
Relevance**

MR. N. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A point of order, Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I think the hon. representative is going on to private and public schools, and this amendment has nothing to do with private and public schools. It's supervision of children by any school system outside the area where they live. It's got nothing to do with private and public.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, it has everything to do with it. I will read the amendment so the hon. Member for Redwater can recall what we're debating:

Subject to subsection (2), supervision shall be carried out by the board of which the student is a resident,

I would assume that means the public board.

. . . or the board of the nearest separate school district,

I would assume that's a Roman Catholic separate school district.

. . . or a private school [board] located not more than 100 kilometres from the place of residence of the student.

Mr. Chairman, my interpretation is – and I will take my place if I am wrong in this interpretation – that the distance factor in this amendment is applied directly to a private school. I will take my place while you clarify that and, if in fact I am correct, will continue debate. If not, I will certainly withdraw my comments with respect to Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I gather you mean that when we talk about 100 kilometres away, that would be from the boundaries of a school district, but when we say private school, it's actually only the location of the private school. In other words, 100 kilometres is discriminating against a private school versus a board; is it? We're talking about 100 kilometres away from where supervision exists. That's always within a board or within a private school. I'm open too, but the English I understand says that that's what it means.

**Debate Continued**

MR. WOLOSHTYN: The hon. member has underlined the basic fault of the amendment. Again, like I say from the beginning, the intent I won't argue on, but the amendment as written here is not very clear at best. We've just had on this basis a difference of interpretation on it. I would suggest to you, however, that if the hon. Member for Redwater's interpretation is the correct one, with all due respect it makes the amendment all the weaker. Then we have a gigantic school area, district, and then we'd start measuring from the edge of the district to the pupil. So then all of a sudden in reality your 100-kilometre limit could become a 200-kilometre limit.

With these observations, Mr. Chairman, I would take my place and let other members get in on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Education.

MR. JONSON: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I think I would like to provide an answer to the Member for Rocky Mountain House. Yes, the matters raised with respect to supervision areas, if you will, could be handled in regulations.

Secondly, I was going to comment on some of the – I appreciate the direction of the amendment. I won't go into detail about the difficulty there is in the amendment in defining what the radius would be and so forth. I did want to make some more general comments but pertaining to the amendment.

First of all, this whole factor of distance. It does seem logical, I suppose, that the distance for supervision should be limited, but we do have and we've accepted in this province for some decades actually correspondence being a viable, accepted way of providing an education for students where that was necessary because of isolation from population centres perhaps but in some cases as a matter of choice. Also, as correspondence has now evolved into distance learning, we have added sophistication in the whole business of delivering education using a technology base. That, too, seems to be an acceptable alternative in the province. It is certainly one that's being utilized in conjunction with the operation of schools in the regular classroom setting, and those distances, Mr. Chairman, can be quite long indeed when you consider that the Distance Learning Centre is in Barrhead and we serve all of the province to a greater or lesser degree with that particular program.

5:20

I acknowledge that we're talking here for the most part about students beyond the age of 18 years, but also accepted in the province right now and considered to be one of our innovative initiatives in education of a few years ago is Athabasca University. Once again, very much a distance delivery of educational programs, and in that context it seems to be working and acceptable.

The important point – at least I hope it's regarded as an important point, Mr. Chairman – that I'm wanting to make on this particular amendment and others that might be proposed in this area is that while I can appreciate the concern about some type of radius, I think the first priority, though, has to be on the policies and regulations within which any sector of our education system operates. The thing that should be first and foremost in my view – and we are, as I've said several times, reviewing these regulations and policies because of some concerns that have been raised – is that we need to have performance measures. We have to have a way of monitoring the performance of students that is acceptable and workable. Secondly, we need to have, yes, adequate supervision. Thirdly, I would like to comment here that we also need to have regulations with respect to the application of resources: what should the resources that are made available to the supervising school boards be appropriately used for and what not?

Those are the kinds of things that I think we really should be putting the focus on so that we can be sure the method of delivering education, the program that is being evolved here in terms of the home schooling program in the province is properly run. As has been pointed out by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, we have some assurance that in those perhaps very, very few cases where there's not that devotion, shall we say, to education quality, we have a means of regulating that and ensuring that these situations can be corrected. Mr. Chairman, overall we need to look at our policies and regulations as they pertain to home schooling. That should be the focal point in terms of dealing with this whole matter.

I would like to make one other observation because of a previous comment by an hon. member, and I was wondering a bit with respect to a remark that seemed to indicate that supervision was not being carried out by qualified teachers. Now, among the concerns that have been brought to my attention, it has not been stated to me that the supervision of home schoolers was not being carried on by certified teachers. That was one of the issues that

I did not have in my mind when I said that there were concerns in this particular area. So I just raise that question in the Assembly.

Those are my remarks, Mr. Chairman, and I would conclude on that particular point. I do not think the amendment, although I recognize the effort that's gone into it, is viable at this time.

MR. HENRY: Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the minister's comments, and I take it from the minister that while he doesn't support the amendment, he also won't be supporting – I would hope to see a measure of this kind in regulation, but I take it from the minister that while that's possible it's not likely. With those comments I will end debate and call the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question has been called. Are you ready for the question?

#### Point of Order Division

MR. HENRY: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. It's my wish to have a division on this. Being new, is that still possible, given the hour?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You could adjourn, hon. member. That's a possibility, but you could adjourn and have the division at the beginning of the next committee's sitting. Just adjourn for now.

#### Debate Continued

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will, then, move that the committee rise and report progress.

Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The committee reports progress on Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. All in favour of that report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in moving to adjourn, I also move that we reconvene at 8 o'clock in Committee of Supply to give consideration to the estimates of the Department of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: All in favour of that motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any?

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]