

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, October 14, 1993**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 93/10/14

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province and ourselves.

We ask You to ensure to us Your guidance and the will to follow it.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today is Mr. Brian P. Austin, the new consul general of Her Majesty's government, the United Kingdom. I'd ask Mr. Austin to rise as I introduce him. Mr. Austin was appointed this past September as head of the British consulate, which is responsible for the province of Alberta along with British Columbia and the northern territories of Canada. This is Mr. Austin's first official visit to Alberta, and we welcome this opportunity to meet with him to discuss Alberta's ongoing relations with Great Britain particularly in the areas of trade, investment, culture, and educational exchanges.

In 1992 the United Kingdom ranked seventh in terms of Alberta's export markets abroad at approximately \$126 million. British investment has also played an important and vital role in the economic life of this province. A number of Alberta companies are active in the United Kingdom, and potential trade opportunities for Alberta companies in the United Kingdom have also been identified in the areas of high technology, oil and gas equipment sales, agricultural products, and forestry. Alberta and Great Britain also enjoy established and strong ties in the cultural sphere due principally to the export of 1 million individuals of British descent living in this province. Of course, this parliament itself is based on the traditions that come from the Mother of Parliaments located in London.

I would ask all of my colleagues to welcome the British consul general to western Canada.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I request that the petition I submitted yesterday be read, please.

CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the government to reinstate the cuts made to social assistance and in the future to consult broadly with clients, labour and professionals to determine where savings can be made that will not harm Alberta families.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give notice that pursuant to Standing Order 40 I will move the following motion:

Be it resolved that this Assembly abhors the senseless violence that claimed the life of Cons. Richard Sonnenberg of the city of Calgary

police department and extends to the family of Cons. Sonnenberg this Assembly's sincere regrets and condolences and, further, that this Assembly again urges the federal government to immediately proceed with an intensive review of the Young Offenders Act and to make necessary changes for the protection of law-abiding citizens.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 10 Alberta Registries Act

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Alberta Registries Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill creates an agency to provide for the delivery of one-window shopping for certain services through the private sector to the public of Alberta. Over 25 percent of the computerized information services of the government will be delivered through this agency. These specific areas will be motor vehicle services, personal property, land titles, corporate registry, land information registry system, selected consumer services, and vital statistics.

[Leave granted; Bill 10 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to file three documents, one being a press release issued by the government this afternoon regarding its agreement to sell 5 percent of its interest in the Syncrude project to Calgary-based Murphy Oil Company Ltd. for \$150 million; as well, the terms of the agreement, the agreement in principle, regarding this sale; and, finally, copies of advertisements appearing in Alberta dailies last Friday regarding the public consultation process associated with the Alberta Tax Reform Commission.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table with the Assembly today a response to Motion for a Return 164.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 137 guests from Red Deer. They are the students of Eastview community school, a school my kids have attended. The teachers with them are Norm McDougall, Mary Parker, Charese Jones, Sheridale Pearman, along with parents Ken Pozzolo, Lynn Martin, Kathy Noble, Laurie Tornack, Joe White, Darlene Mayer, and Brenda Neufeld. I would ask them to rise. They are seated in both the members' gallery and the public gallery. We fill them up and Red Deer dominates again. May we give them the traditional welcome of the House.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Theresa Letal, who I believe is seated in the Speaker's gallery. She is the mother of one of our pages Peter. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to present to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly Shirley Yunker, a guest from St. Albert who is in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. She is the mother of one of our pages Warren Yunker. I would ask that she rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**
Teachers' Retirement Fund

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of inaction and denial the previous Treasurer finally accepted responsibility for dealing with the unfunded liability of the teachers' retirement fund. He promised to pay some \$2.7 billion over the next 70 years from the general revenue fund. The government's share for this year alone is \$18.6 million. Now the education roundtable documents are showing us that the Treasurer will take these moneys, the \$2.7 billion, from education rather than from the general revenue fund. My first question to the Treasurer is this. I'd like the Treasurer to justify for Albertans taking \$2.7 billion out of education funding and hurting the next three generations of Alberta schoolchildren so that the government can pay for the government's negligence in this whole area of pensions.

1:40

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Education I would happily take the substance of the hon. member's question as notice. Suffice to say that this government, working in full co-operation with the Alberta Teachers' Association, did come to an important agreement to fully fund the teachers' retirement fund and to secure the future for teachers and for taxpayers in this province.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm alarmed that the Treasurer would pass this off.

Perhaps I can ask this question then. Mr. Minister, justify and explain to the schoolchildren and to the teachers, who will lose \$1,000 per year because of this grab out of education, what they should do without.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is now asking me, and I'll take the question as notice as the Acting Minister of Education.

Suffice to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is exactly what the roundtables are really all about. It is to consult with Albertans as to just exactly what kind of an education system we want for our children, recognizing that we want to improve the quality of education in this province. The Minister of Education has gone out and is now seeking the advice of hundreds of Albertans in both formal and informal sessions, the first roundtable taking place in Calgary beginning tomorrow. I applaud the Minister of Education for this initiative in asking Albertans exactly what kind of an education system we want to have for our children so they're prepared for the 1990s and the next century.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Treasurer is responsible for the moneys of this province, where they come from and how they're allocated. Yes or no. Are the moneys going to come out of the general revenue fund, or are you going to steal them out of the education area?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, you talked about inflammatory language in questions yesterday. The notion of a criminal act, which the hon. member is suggesting across the way – I would

suggest that perhaps fear mongering is not yet a criminal act. I think what's sad about the hon. member's language is that all he is doing is preventing the education system from getting better. He loads up his questions and scares people so that they're distracted from the important task of addressing what Albertans, especially parents and children, want to see in an improved education system.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, you expect clear questions of this caucus. We expect clear answers.

Health Care System

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, in May the Premier of Alberta predicted with absolute certainty that 110,000 jobs would be created in the private sector. He even told us the various sectors where these jobs would be created. Today neither the Minister of Labour nor the Minister of Health can say with any kind of certainty how many jobs are going to be cut out of the public service even though they know the exact amount of money that's going to be cut out of health care. To add to the difficulty and insult to Albertans, particularly those working in the public sector, they won't release information to this caucus or to Albertans on key data, data that relates to the health care system. My first question is to the minister responsible for Labour. I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, how the government can be so precise before an election about job creation and so fuzzy after the election about how many jobs are going to be lost in the health care area.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it's important to recognize that there are discussions going on right now in terms of restructuring and delivery of services, innovative approaches to health care. So to try and presume how many jobs would be lost would be an exercise in conjecture.

It is interesting to note, though, if a person wants to look at history, that when California went through a time of severe financial contraction, the unions and certain members of the government were standing and really shouting a lot about 450,000 public service jobs – that was the figure – that were going to be lost. In the final analysis it was about 5 percent of that amount. So it just shows that playing the guessing game while discussions are going on is very risky at best.

MR. DECORE: I would like the Minister of Health to tell Albertans and to tell this caucus why she refuses through her officials to provide this caucus and Albertans with key data; namely, how many jobs have already been lost in the health care area, the current occupancy rates for hospitals in Alberta, waiting lists for hospitals in Alberta, bed closures of hospitals in Alberta, and productivity studies that relate to the health care industry.

Speaker's Ruling
Supplementary Questions

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Before the hon. minister responds, the rules are that there's supposed to be one supplemental question.

MR. DECORE: Why has she refused?

MR. SPEAKER: Well, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, that should be the question then, not how many jobs.

MR. DECORE: That was the question. Read the Blues, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: What is the question?

MR. DECORE: Why has she refused this data? That was clearly the question. Answer the question.

Health Care System

(continued)

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I have not refused that data. In fact, I verbally mentioned to one of the hon. members opposite who requested that data that I had it almost put together for him. There is a bit of difficulty in some of the data that's requested inasmuch as the reporting function from the hospitals, for example, or long-term care, is done on an annual basis and sent in in a rather complex form. So to give current, like today, is one thing. I am preparing the data on all of the questions that were asked. It will be provided to the hon. member I would hope before this week is out, and it will be as complete as I can possibly make it. However, I would say that that information is available in many cases in the annual reports of the hospital information that comes in. I thought that to help the hon. member, we would try to put the data into a form that would be more useful to him and less time consuming, so I am endeavouring to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental, and perhaps we can do without the postamble.

MR. DECORE: Thank you. My last supplemental, Mr. Speaker, is this. I'm sure that the Minister of Health has had experts advising her on the \$900 million cutbacks in health care and on people that will be let go. I would like the minister to tell Albertans what her experts tell her; that is, how many people can you afford to let go out of the health care system before the health care system falls apart?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member loses the point of the whole discussion of restructuring of a health system. It is agreed by people who work in the system, by labour, by the people who are the providers, the boards and administration of the institutions, and by the people who consume and who access our system that we do need to restructure our system so that what we have is appropriate to delivering services today and into the future. Also, we have offered to do that in a collaborative way. I won't go through all of the exercises that we have gone through. At the present time, this month we'll conclude the roundtables which have been held across this province, which include the health care workers, very important, the people who are involved in delivering the system administratively, and perhaps most importantly the people in the communities who are accessing the system and have, I think, the expertise to give us the guidance we need. We will have a quality health system in this province, and the plan and the design of that will be done by the people of this province, not by one person in Edmonton.

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

Senior Citizens Program

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the seniors' roundtable report the chair and the group leaders clearly noted the weaknesses of the roundtable process. The chairperson herself questioned the validity of using the roundtable results as the basis for making any changes to seniors' policies. My question is to

the hon. Minister of Community Development. Will the minister admit that coming from a sample of only 66 relatively healthy and wealthy people, this report cannot be used to set policies which will directly affect the lives of 230,000 seniors?

1:50

MR. MAR: I will not make such an admission, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that Mrs. Bowker did express concerns in her report about the process. As the chairman she certainly had every right to do so. I welcome her input. But I want to point out that it is impractical to canvass the opinions of 230,000 people. The fact is that each one of the some 230,000 people that are seniors in this province have something valuable to say, have valuable input into the programs that affect senior citizens. The 66 individuals that were selected by Mrs. Bowker, at her invitation, represented people from all over this province, represented low-income seniors, also represented Metis seniors, also represented women seniors. There were many, many different groups represented. The individuals who were selected by Mrs. Bowker clearly represented organizations that represented thousands of seniors throughout this province. The process that Mrs. Bowker put together, although it is not perfect, is the very best one that she could have put together, and I am persuaded that it is a strong report.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister put more weight on the report from 66 people than he does on the more comprehensive Looking to the Future report done by 2,000 people?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the report that is referred to by the hon. member is a valuable document. It was a starting point for consultation for dealing with seniors' programs throughout this province. This roundtable is also an important part of that consultation process. The consultation process does not end with a single report. It does not end with a single roundtable. It is a continuing commitment that we have to consult with seniors in this province.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why the final report of the 2,000 people was censored by the government by cutting it from 164 pages to only 36 pages?

MR. MAR: For the purposes of dissemination of information, Mr. Speaker, it is rarely practical to publish reports of great length, so summaries are prepared. It is rarely useful to have a 165-page summary of a 165-page report.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by Edmonton-McClung.

Syncrude Share Sale

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Transparency and disclosure in the government of Alberta's financial transactions are important. With this press release we are announcing the sale of the 5 percent Syncrude interest, and I'd like to direct a question to the Treasurer. Can the Provincial Treasurer highlight financing details that include down payment, financing terms, and protection of the province's interests, and in what account will the proceeds of this sale be placed in the government of Alberta?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we announced today that Murphy Oil Ltd. of Calgary has purchased a \$150 million interest, some 5

percent of our 16.74 percent interest, in the Syncrude project. That deal was negotiated over the last number of weeks and has been announced today in Edmonton. What has been arranged is that there is a \$60 million down payment at the time of the closing of the agreement. The remaining \$90 million will be paid in annual installments, and interest will be calculated annually at a rate of 6.25 percent, a commercial rate of interest for a transaction of this kind.

Mr. Speaker, when you think back about what this government did in 1973 to save the Syncrude project and the actions that were taken then, the results have been some 5,000 jobs created to strengthen the economy of northeastern Alberta, to become a major producer of oil in the Canadian domestic market today. It's our philosophy that having gotten into it in 1973, now 20 years later it is a successful operation and in keeping with Albertans' desire and this government's desire to try to get out of the business of business, while we will continue to have an interest, we believe the future of this project rests properly in the hands of the private sector. So I'm proud of the initiative that we've taken today, and I think it's a good deal for Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Provincial Treasurer been advised and by whom that this is indeed a good financial transaction and a profitable transaction for all Albertans?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, we acquired the services of an agent who did scour the community for a purchaser. We feel that on that advice and the advice of several others we have a very sound, fair market value for the Syncrude plant. It is a very large undertaking such that there is not what I'd call an enormous market for a company wanting to buy this kind of a large interest in a very large asset. So I believe the stability of a company like Murphy Oil participating with the other partners in the project, as it will now do, gives Syncrude the kind of security for the future.

One other item, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member asked me a question earlier about where the proceeds, these funds will be placed. This is and has been and continues to be an investment of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund and has been a good investment, and the proceeds from this sale will be returned to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

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

Health Care System

(continued)

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Labour said that it is irresponsible to speculate about 15,000 health care workers losing their jobs. Today I'd like to talk about the irresponsible. To the Minister of Labour: how can it be anything but irresponsible for this minister to talk about \$900 million in health care cuts while refusing to tell health care workers what he estimates will be their job losses and leaving them with nothing to do but to speculate?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, to paraphrase an old song, from the halls of Principal Trust to the fields of the Legislature we see a continued distortion of reality.

What I said yesterday very clearly was that it was irresponsible for the member opposite to say I had come out with a figure of 12,000 or 15,000. He also indicated that it was even reported that I had said that. None of the media reported that. Nobody in fact

reported that. I asked him who told him that, and he wouldn't say. What I said was irresponsible was for him to knowingly say something that was not indeed fact and to say that I was the one saying that these were the figures. I've been very clear about that. He continues to perpetuate an irresponsible story here, and that's what was irresponsible, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: How can it be anything but irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, for this minister to ask health care workers to take a 5 percent pay cut while at the same time not having the common decency to even address their concerns about job security, about labour force redeployment programs, about early retirement packages, and, yes, about the integrity of the collective bargaining process?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to be generous to the member. He's either operating in a total vacuum, or he is deliberately continuing to enhance his own image of irresponsible reporting.

I have been very, very significantly involved in meetings with all union representatives, even over the last two weeks, dealing with a long list of questions and concerns that they had, which we went back and got answers for, had another meeting. They still had other questions and suggestions. I've said that we're going to get answers to them on that.

In terms of work force adjustment, I've been very clear in the media, in this House. We are working right now, not just with Calgary district No. 93 but also another hospital district that wants to come into this process, to look at what's available in terms of work force adjustment. Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear and open about this, and this member, because he's hoping for a nine-second sound bite on the 11 o'clock news, stands up and says it's not happening.

2:00

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I think in fact that this minister should talk to the health care workers that he thinks he's talking about and get the story that in fact they're indicating. He's not telling them. He's not addressing their issues.

My third question is to the Minister of Health. How can it be anything but irresponsible for the Minister of Health to ask health care workers to break their collective agreement by taking a 5 percent pay cut while at the same time arguing that certain hospital construction projects can't be stopped because construction agreements are in place?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I will contain my comments to the ones that apply to my portfolio. It is very much in keeping with this government's commitment to Albertans that we would work collectively and co-operatively with them on the future directions for health care. That includes the request to health care workers in this province across the sector to bring us their plans for a 5 percent voluntary rollback in wages, fees, or benefits by November 23. I think that is quite in keeping with our government's commitment to people to work co-operatively.

What I don't think is in keeping is putting out figures that are picked out of sentences. I asked yesterday for a filing of the paper and I received it and I raise it because of the \$900 million. The hon. member stated that we had said that \$900 million would be cut. In fact it says in the paper that "the precise health sector financial target is not yet available. However, if we assumed . . ." So I raise that, Mr. Speaker, because of the lack of substance to the preamble and the information that is carried in some of these

questions. I believe very sincerely that the health care workers in this province are prepared to work with this government to restructure the system and to match skills with jobs and to ensure that we have a quality health system and a quality health work force. That's their aim and it's ours. I will continue to work with them. I wish that others would.

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

Barley Marketing

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the six weeks that the continental barley market was in operation, it clearly demonstrated how important it was to Alberta producers. The prices received were beyond what the Canadian Wheat Board could offer. The volumes exceeded what the board had been able to sell in a whole year previously. To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: could you please update us and tell my constituents what is the current status of the lawsuit, the court challenge, where it's at and what might be happening?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very important at this stage to recognize what these endeavours are all about, and that simply is to achieve the highest barley prices for our producers. In the process we seem to have got involved in process, we seem to have got involved in things that really don't reflect what the ultimate objective of this should be, and that is a better return to our producer. At the present time it's very unfortunate. I've been advised that barley sales are at an all-time low as far as the Wheat Board is concerned. I've been advised that there is no barley available along the American border. So there are some complex problems starting to develop as a result of this court challenge. As a province and as a government we have decided to become involved in the court process, and we have asked to be acknowledged as an intervenor. We have been recognized in this process, and indeed we will be part of the intervention process on November 30, when the hearing is held.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Well, if we have this intervenor status, are we any way tied to the federal court action?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Obviously this is a very important question, and I appreciate it being asked in that the status that we have been recognized as is a third party intervenor. So it will be important that the whole process is allowed to proceed, and we will play our role in the process.

MR. LUND: To the same minister. There were many contracts in place. I'm wondering if there has been any accommodation for those contracts.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding in the discussions that I have had with the trade that there seems to be a lot of problems developing with the process in that there doesn't seem to be any assurance at this time. It is my understanding that barley is not moving into the United States

in any great volumes at the present time, and indeed there seems to be some concern as to the status of these contracts. The dialogue is continuing, but unfortunately there doesn't seem to be a clear and set policy as to the progress of this particular endeavour. It's unfortunate because at this time Saudi Arabia, for example, who is one of our major customers, has to date not entered into the purchase of barley. The American market is the best opportunity that we as barley producers have, so it's very important that we are able to access that opportunity at an early date.

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

Child Welfare

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the province asked the Edmonton Social Planning Council to conduct a review of services to 16 and 17 year olds in this province. The terms of reference provided by Family and Social Services for the review stated that these young people are ill equipped to make it in society and the cost in personal, social, and economic terms is substantial. The planning council then produced several recommendations to improve services, including the critical and needed area of prevention. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Now, Mr. Minister, we all know how much your budget is for child welfare, so please don't tell us again. How could you proceed with the cuts to child welfare in the Edmonton region when yet another study commissioned by your department says that resources for adolescents need to be beefed up, not torn apart?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, today I will not tell the hon. member what my child welfare budget is, but because she mentioned prevention, I'd like to advise the hon. member that under my budget we spent \$38 million under FCSS specifically for preventive programs.

Specific to the issue, the plan I intend to file here within two weeks will include dealing with 16 and 17 year olds. You can be assured that I will be dealing with the issue. Again I would like to advise the hon. member that I would be very, very happy if they would file their plan on welfare reforms which I asked for April 1, 1993. I would have liked to incorporate their good ideas into that plan. It's a complicated issue. There's no one quick answer, and we need to work together to resolve the problem. I'd like to also advise the hon. member that in my plan I intend to make sure that families, parents, and extended families are more accountable and responsible when we are dealing with 16 and 17 year olds.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's the children, the 16 and 17 year olds themselves. I know parents being accountable is one thing, but the fate of the children is very important.

At a time when all Albertans are screaming about something being done about young offenders, why is the minister cutting services that his own department says will only increase the number of young offenders?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the problems we have, I believe, with the welfare reforms. Certain members do not understand why there needs to be a change in how our welfare system is being delivered. The welfare system has been around over 40 years, and when you're dealing with welfare in northern Alberta with native people, it's been devastating. More welfare is not the answer. That is the irresponsible way of providing

assistance to people that need it. People need jobs. People need programs in prevention. That's what this minister intends to do. I have reduced the caseload by 18,000, which is \$180 million annualized. I want to make sure in the future when my plan is filed that we redirect dollars in the right places to make sure that we provide the services where they are needed.

2:10

MS HANSON: Mr. Minister, back to talking about 16 and 17 year olds. The Child Welfare Act clearly states that 16 and 17 year olds are to receive protective services. Is it the minister's intent to now restrict this mandate and no longer provide teenagers with child welfare services?

MR. CARDINAL: As I indicated before in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, my plan is to make sure that wherever possible the parents of the 16 and 17 year olds are responsible and accountable. In fact, I've given direction to my department officials that any time a 16 or 17 year old that has a family and is not coming from an abusive situation applies for assistance, they will be required to have a personal interview along with the parent to ensure that the parents are also satisfied that these people are getting the proper assistance.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

Teachers' Labour Dispute

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Labour. The teachers of the Rocky View school division have recently voted to go on strike. While the date of the strike is not yet known, I have a number of concerned parents already calling. My question to the minister is: could he please advise the parents of Rocky View if there's anything the government can do to help at this time?

MR. DAY: There was a strike vote taken on Tuesday, Mr. Speaker, by ATA local 35. For a strike to take place, there still has to be 72-hour notice given. In terms of what the government can do, this is a dispute between two parties. We would be available upon request of both parties. For instance, if there was a request for voluntary binding arbitration, then there could be some things that would take place to put an arbitration council in place. There has to be agreement from both parties for that type of thing before we would enter into that dispute. I think it's fairly early on in terms of the strike vote. There are 120 days now where something could take place. So I would just be hopeful that both parties would be working together, keeping in mind the needs of those students.

MS HALEY: With regard to the parameters of bargaining I'm wondering if the minister could just outline what should be taking place now in the Rocky View school division.

MR. DAY: There's a report that's out called the education bargaining review, the completion of a process which took place over a year. In that review there were parents, teachers, school board trustees all talking about the bargaining process. One of the things that all agreed on was that there should be more full disclosure for both parties and for parents as this type of discussion moves along. So I would encourage the MLA, as I know she is in touch with her constituents, to make sure that all information is available to both sides and to the parents and to be

encouraging the parents in that process which was agreed on in that education bargaining review.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Loan Guarantees

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Financial Review Commission recommended that loans, investments, and guarantees given by government – and here I quote from the Financial Review Commission – “should be approved either by the Legislature or by an all-party investment committee.” This is from page 8. The Premier is currently assessing six or seven outstanding guarantees that have already been approved using who knows what type of criteria. Over three weeks ago the Premier told us that he would report to us shortly on the status of these guarantees. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Given the government's commitment to be open and accountable and to follow the recommendations of the Financial Review Commission, can the Provincial Treasurer explain why the government continues to approve and review loan guarantees behind closed doors?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister of economic development might want to supplement my answer, but that review is ongoing. The Premier has made a commitment to make that review and share that review with members of the Assembly. I know that the Premier is a man of his word and he'll live up to his word.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, what the Premier said several weeks ago holds true today.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, obviously they didn't hear the question.

Again, to the Provincial Treasurer or whoever would like to answer in the front bench: why doesn't the government start from a clean slate and bring these outstanding guarantees forward either to the House or to an all-party committee for review as recommended by the Financial Review Commission?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, if no guarantees are given, there is nothing to review.

DR. PERCY: I'll get an answer yet, Mr. Speaker.

When will the Provincial Treasurer follow the recommendations of the Financial Review Commission and ensure that all subsequent loans, loan guarantees, and investments be approved through public debate in the House or by an all-party committee, since the government still appears committed to being in the business of being in business? Just follow the Financial Review Commission. That's all we ask.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of this question period we'll be outlining the business of next week. One of the departments that will be under review Monday evening is the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development with a review of their estimates. The minister of agriculture is the minister responsible for the Agricultural Development Corporation, and that particular corporation provides loans and it provides guarantees for literally thousands of farm- or agriculture-oriented activities on an annual basis in the province. If the hon. member

chooses to attend the House Monday evening, the hon. member would be able to raise such questions of the minister of agriculture, and I'm sure the minister of agriculture would want to deal with the whole loan portfolio of the Agricultural Development Corporation.

It was last Thursday that this member was designated by the Official Opposition to appear before the House. One of the responsibilities this member has is the responsibility for the Alberta Opportunity Company. If my memory serves me correctly, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't one question addressed to me of this particular nature last Thursday afternoon, when I was here for three hours, designated by the Liberal opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore, if there's time.

International Aid

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are directed to the minister responsible for the Wild Rose Foundation. Alberta's international aid development program was funded through the general revenue fund. Now, why has the program been transferred to the Wild Rose Foundation, which means funding by lottery dollars?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government's history of contributing to nongovernment organizations assisting in developing countries was reviewed very carefully through the complete review of all of our government programs, our boards, agencies, and commissions as part of the budgeting process. This program was removed from general revenue where it was housed in the department of economic development and trade. However, it was felt that if we were going to continue to assist nongovernment organizations in working in developing countries, we should find new revenues in fact in order to continue. We looked very carefully at where that should be housed, and as it well fits under the mandate of the Wild Rose Foundation, it was decided to move it to that foundation.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister taken into consideration that some religious institutions feel it is morally wrong to access lottery funds?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are aware of that. Basically lottery funds under this government's direction are intended to be directed back to the communities for necessary and, I believe, valuable services. The lottery fund is well suited for that, and I should say that this particular program is oversubscribed and has continually been oversubscribed. It is certainly the prerogative of any organization to choose or not to choose to access that program. I would say that we've had commendation from a number of organizations for our activity in this area: from CARE Canada, from the CODE, from World Job and Food Bank, and many others that I could list. Certainly it is the prerogative of the organization whether or not they choose to access that fund.

2:20

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What are the funding priorities, and how can the minister be assured that the funds are used for the stated purposes in these foreign countries?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there are clear guidelines for the accessing of this program, and I'll list a few priorities: primary health care, small business training, vocational training, and food production. I think those are probably the primary priorities for this program. I think that when you consider that it is used in developing countries, those are most appropriate priorities.

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

Access Network

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Access broadcasting provides extremely important and valuable services to thousands of Albertans who rely on it for educational and other forms of information. As evidenced by the recent success of its community fund-raising campaign, public broadcasting is alive and well and indeed very well supported here in Alberta because of the tremendously vital role that it plays. My question is to the minister responsible for Access. Since this government is imposing such devastating cuts in health care and social services and has similar slashes in store for education, will the minister please tell us what plans he has in mind for Access?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As we looked at the boards, agencies, and commissions, Access was one that came up on the view screen. It is under complete review and will be challenged through the test of what role government should be in and should not be in. When that review is done, we'll give a full reporting to the people of Alberta.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans strongly rejected an earlier attempt by this government to sell off one aspect of Access, that being CKUA radio, I wonder what assurance the minister can give us that he won't ignore the thousands of pleas from those Albertans and proceed with something such as the privatization of Access.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, as I said, as we look at the role that government should be in and the prudent expenditure of dollars as we go forward, I can't give that assurance to the people of Alberta. I know that we spend anywhere from \$16 million to \$18 million a year on Access Network. It doesn't mean because somebody made an innuendo that you privatize, you get rid of – and that's what people insinuate – that those services have to be deleted from the province of Alberta. There may be a better way and maybe some of it the private sector could continue, whether it's the radio with the good jazz music and other things that are on it or whether it's the television or whether it's the production studio. I cannot give an assurance that there won't be privatization.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Along that same vein, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister would at least be willing to share the report on Access that was prepared by Dennis Anderson at a cost of some \$14,000 to Alberta taxpayers.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, over the last period of time there has been various information gathered and put together for internal review, and we are looking at all of that information as we look to the future of this network.

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

Hospital Discharge Policy

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. It was reported in Calgary last week that the Foothills hospital has begun to tell patients that they will be charged a thousand dollars a day if they don't agree to be discharged. Some have said that they were told that they would be charged with trespassing if they refused to move. Can you tell this Assembly if the Foothills is actually doing this?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I was certainly quite surprised to read those allegations late last week, and I did ensure that contact was made with Foothills administration to clarify this matter. According to the information from the Foothills administration staff, the hospital does not have a policy to charge per diem rates, nor does it have a policy to charge any legitimate visitors or patients at the hospital with trespassing. I expect all patients in Alberta to be treated with dignity, and I am assured that Foothills hospital also feels exactly that way. Hospitals are not allowed to charge patients for insured services. However, there is a process to charge a per diem rate under certain circumstances, and I'm quite confident that Foothills hospital will follow those guidelines.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, the story does raise, though, the issue of discharging the frail and the elderly back into the community. If it is true that hospitals are working to discharge people earlier and earlier, could you tell us what services are available in the community to make the transition easier?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, Foothills hospital, like other hospitals in this province, has a discharge plan. It works with patients, their families, staff at the hospital, the home care staff through public health to plan for orderly and smooth discharge back to their homes. I do believe that where it's appropriate, Albertans prefer to rest and recuperate in their homes as long as there are appropriate support services for them. So these support services are a shared responsibility between Health on the home care side, between the families, and of course the health system. We do fund comprehensive home care programs, and the amount of home care allowed for acute care discharges has been increased significantly. So there is an organized plan through the hospital to ensure that there are orderly discharges back home.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been reports recently that many of the acute care beds have been taken by patients who need long-term care. Could you please tell the Assembly what you're doing to address this matter of waiting lists for long-term care?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we're certainly aware of pressures on long-term care. We are aware that there are some patients in acute care facilities that are awaiting placement. We

have done a number of things in this province in the last few years to ensure that we have a managed system. Some of those are the single point of entry, the patient classification system, increased home care, and an increased number of seniors' day programs. I should say that in the city of Calgary those are very important, and we appreciate them being offered through the Kerby Centre and others in that community. We are also building a number of long-term care beds. Hon. members would recall that some of the facilities that were allowed to proceed include long-term beds to take pressure off that system.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

Edmonton Airports

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today more so than at any time in our history we are dependent upon a global economy to ensure economic prosperity. A critical component of the global economy is quality air service to a city. It is apparent that this air service issue, so vital to the northern and central Alberta region, has become jammed at the municipal level. My question this afternoon is to the chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council. For your benefit, Mr. Speaker, that's Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Would the chair of this council tell the Assembly what action they have taken to date to assist in the resolution of the airport dilemma in Edmonton?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to NADC involvement, I can only comment at this time with regard to the time that I have been responsible, which is since August. At this point in time there has been no brief submitted to the NADC. Our role is one of providing advice to government in response to briefs, and we have received none to date.

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, in light of the very critical aspect of it, I wonder if the chair does not feel it incumbent upon his leadership and the council to solicit input to assist in resolution thereof.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member.

2:30

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The terms of reference with regard to the NADC and its role are very clearly specified in the Act, and certainly our actions to date reflect that. I would also point out to the hon. member that in the past the NADC received many representations on the subject and indeed has tried to take at best, if you like, an accommodating approach with regard to the issue, recognizing that there were different issues and certainly different views on behalf of northerners in terms of the municipal versus the regional airport.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third supplemental will be to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. I would ask the minister if he has a plan or strategy to prevent the closing of the International Airport due to its lack of financial viability caused by the loss of flights to the municipal.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I'm absolutely impressed with the responses to these questions by the

chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, and I hope that the hon. member was listening.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is very fortunate to have two international airports. I guess it's rather unique here in the city of Edmonton where you've got a very active and a very aggressive Municipal Airport and you also have a very large International Airport. There are dynamic changes going on in, I guess, air travel. The government is very concerned about any negative impact that might be received by the Edmonton International Airport. We've in fact been involved in some discussions in the past with respect to this matter. All members will recall, however, that not too long ago the citizens of Edmonton held a plebiscite on this matter. There was a pretty definitive response from the citizens with respect to the role that they wanted to see the Municipal Airport play. Our actions have been governed by, one, listening to the citizens of Edmonton with respect to this plebiscite, which is direct democracy, and also, by the same token, by our concern about the need to see more international and domestic carriers using the International Airport.

In this regard the member who raised the question can be very helpful. The member himself was an air traffic controller, I believe, in a previous life, and he may have some very helpful insights that might help the government as we attempt to try and assist in ensuring that the Edmonton International Airport will remain very viable. Mr. Speaker, we would welcome his personal input and, in fact, the input from the whole Liberal caucus, which dominates the city of Edmonton. It's a very important point for all of us. This is not a political matter; this is an economic development matter. We very much welcome the input from the Liberal caucus with respect to this matter of how we get these two airports to work together. If they have any wisdom in this regard assisting us in dealing with the city of Edmonton, the Edmonton Economic Development Authority, we'd welcome them, very much welcome them.

MR. SPEAKER: Before proceeding to the next order, might there be unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of 33 exchange students, a good number of them from Harry Ainlay and a good number from Germany. They're sitting in the public gallery. They're accompanied today by two educators from Germany, Brigitte Güth-Mayr and Ingrid Krumscheid, and from Harry Ainlay, Erich Wurmman. I would take this opportunity to say to them *guten Tag*, and I would ask that all members of the House give them the warm welcome they deserve.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the Assembly a group of 23 students from Leduc Estates school. They are accompanied this afternoon by their teacher, a good friend, Mrs. Arlene Van Diest, also Mrs. Fritzke and Mrs. Reynar, who have volunteered their time to assist

with their outing this afternoon. Would the Assembly please give the grade 6 students and their escorts a warm welcome?

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Minerva Institute

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Alberta government accepted the challenge of balancing its budget in four years, it also accepted the principle that certain programs and services can be delivered more efficiently in partnership with the private sector. I am pleased to inform this Assembly that Merck Frosst, a pharmaceutical company, has taken up the challenge to the private sector and recently agreed to fund a chair for the Minerva Institute at Grant MacEwan Community College.

The Minerva Institute is an award-winning community resource. The institute encourages lifelong learning as a way of continually enriching our lives by providing special learning opportunities for seniors. Minerva recognizes that seniors are rich in life skills, work skills, and survival skills, people who are wealthy in experience and accumulated knowledge. They are people who are willing and able to sharpen their skills and refine their knowledge through continued involvement in the education process. So it is with great pleasure that I congratulate the Minerva Institute and Merck Frosst Canada for their imaginative work and thought in creating the Merck Frosst chair. The money provided by Merck Frosst will be used to pay the cost of bringing in experts to do workshops and speak on wellness topics. The idea is to encourage seniors to take care of their mental, spiritual, and physical health. In addition, Merck Frosst is funding a \$750,000 research chair at the University of Calgary.

Merck Frosst Canada Inc. has responded positively to the challenge to the corporate community to be involved in their community. Their gesture is a further challenge to the pharmaceutical industry and to the corporate community at large to seek out and support worthwhile projects. I hope they will share with their corporate-sector colleagues some of the analysis that went into their decision. Their rationale and their vision could be just as influential in the long term as their action. I invite all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Merck Frosst Canada, Grant MacEwan Community College, and the Minerva Institute for working together to establish this chair at the Minerva Institute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

Edmonton Airports

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take with my private member's statement the opportunity to offer the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism a little advice on the airport. I relish the opportunity to expound upon the concern, a very critical issue, the dual airport issue in Edmonton. It affects all northern Albertans. There can be no question about that. As we know, northern Alberta is a resource-rich area, and a considerable amount of wealth flows south from this area of the province, blessing the entire province with the economic prosperity that flows from it. Economic development for the entire province benefits from this resource-rich area. Unfortunately, this prosperity is threatened by the potential closure of the International Airport if it cannot maintain its financial viability. The solution,

of course, is obvious: consolidate all scheduled airline passenger traffic at the International Airport.

I'm sure when I suggest that in fact we as provincial legislators should become involved in what is perceived as a municipal issue, many would wince at that particular aspect. However, I think as political and provincial visionaries we can elevate this debate beyond the present territorial and emotional state that it is stuck at. As I stated in my opening comments, it's a problem that impacts dramatically on all of northern Alberta. I think it is incumbent that we become involved. Realistically, if the hon. Premier and his party have concern about becoming involved affecting their popularity in Edmonton, they have nothing to lose and everything to gain really. I think that in fact if we look at attempting to bridge the north-south split in this province, this is an opportunity to undertake that as well. Clearly, I think everyone here today realizes that the momentum to change that poorly worded referendum has reversed itself. Clearly, we see that daily. I would suggest that the hon. Premier and his government have everything to gain by accepting leadership in this, guiding it to its natural conclusion, and that's consolidation of scheduled airline traffic at the International Airport.

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

Licensed Practical Nursing

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to be under the two-minute time limit.

The Professional Council of Licensed Practical Nurses has followed issues and trends related to health care carefully over the past six years. They know that future systems of health care will be very different from the present one. They know that service delivery will be based upon community needs and will be increasingly provided in the community. In 1992 the council conducted a needs analysis of the potential role of licensed practical nurses in community-based health service delivery. The results of this study, Mr. Speaker, confirm that currently there are not a large number of practical nurses employed in this setting, but as the delivery moves in this direction, there is indeed a possible role for the knowledge and skills of the licensed practical nurse in a home and community setting.

2:40

The council made a proactive decision in the fall of 1992 to allocate funding for the development and implementation of the community care certificate program for licensed practical nurses. An advisory committee was established with representatives from Minburn-Vermilion and Peace River health care units, the Edmonton board of health, LPN practitioners, and educators. The committee identified the role, knowledge, and skills needed by LPNs in this post basic certificate program. On October 8, last Friday, the community care certificate program began with 15 LPNs. The purpose of this program is to prepare the licensed practical nurse to function as a member of health teams in the community and to care for clients in their own homes and communities by supporting or maintaining their self-care.

As chair of the Professions and Occupations Bureau and on behalf of this caucus I want to congratulate the Professional Council of Licensed Practical Nurses on this important step in helping to meet the evolving health care needs of Albertans.

Thank you.

head: **Projected Government Business**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the government the opportunity to specify next week's agenda. I will say

that the Government House Leader and I have discussed the matter of next Thursday's designation of business, and owing to the availability of the Premier, we are accepting that the Executive Council designated supply subcommittee report should be made Thursday afternoon, understanding that FIGA would also be debated. Given that there will be perhaps time, as well we would accept that the Treasury's designated supply subcommittee review could be returned to the Legislature.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the proposed order of business Monday afternoon would be Committee of the Whole dealing with the two Bills on the Order Paper: Bill 8, the School Amendment Act, 1993, and Bill 9, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1993. If progress carried through to the conclusion of committee work, on Monday afternoon we then would advance to second reading of Bill 10, the Alberta Registries Act. In all likelihood, however, the Alberta Registries Act would not first come to the Assembly till Tuesday afternoon under the one hour allocated for government business.

Monday evening it would be Committee of Supply with Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Tuesday evening it would be Committee of Supply with the Department of Labour. Wednesday evening it would be Committee of Supply with the Department of Education. As the House leader for the Liberal opposition has indicated, on Thursday, October 21, the Premier will be present to review Executive Council, Federal and Inter-governmental Affairs, and the Provincial Treasurer will be present to conclude the review of the estimates in that regard as well, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader had a point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(i), which relates to the question of one member imputing "false or unavowed motives to another member." I refer to the Minister of Labour's suggestion that members on this side are motivated by somehow achieving a nine-second media clip in asking their questions and entering debate in this Legislature. I simply want to make it clear to the Minister of Labour that the official reason for question period is to hold the government accountable. We on this side of the House, and I'm sure most members on that side of the House, take that particular task and responsibility very, very seriously. I think that the Minister of Labour should know that he debases the work of all members in this Legislature by making a statement of that nature.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to that purported point of order simply because to me it lowers, I think, everything in this House to the level of childishness. I have been carefully and diligently keeping track of what was going on in here for the past month or two in question period. I would cite to you, Mr. Speaker, that today there have been no fewer than one, two, three, four, five, six violations of *Beauchesne* by the opposition side. There have been references on previous points of order about length of time taken in question period. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, took one minute and 22 seconds to preamble his question. That was six sentences. You talk about imputing motives under *Beauchesne*. Today he made reference to the Treasurer, which we in a gentlemanly way let go without a point of order, to stealing, which is use of an unparliamentary word. Here after frivolous

questions being placed, drawn out of a purported media report which didn't exist, the Minister of Labour had the courtesy to reply in a very gentlemanly way to that member across the way not only twice but three times that he was wrong. Just to suggest that it was for grandstanding – I see no other reason. So there is no point of order.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair is going to take the position that both hon. members have had a chance to make their points and their complaints about the behaviour of each other's sides of the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

Constable Richard Sonnenberg

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, before I speak on my motion, I would like to comment on the urgency of this motion. As many of the members here today know, the funeral for the late Cons. Sonnenberg was held in Calgary this morning. I think it's the correct time to deal with this very unfortunate incident. I ask for unanimous consent from all the members on this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the request by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, is there consent to the presentation of this motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Moved by Mrs. Forsyth:

Be it resolved that this Assembly abhors the senseless violence that claimed the life of Cons. Richard Sonnenberg of the city of Calgary police department and extends to the family of Cons. Sonnenberg this Assembly's sincere regrets and condolences and, further, that this Assembly again urges the federal government to immediately proceed with an intensive review of the Young Offenders Act and to make necessary changes for the protection of law-abiding citizens.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very sad day in the city of Calgary and the province of Alberta as the funeral for a very special officer of the law was held today.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support this motion. We all deplore this tragic and violent incident. It's a senseless death and waste of a young person in the line of duty. I think it's most appropriate that we express our sympathy to the family and his friends and his colleagues and to all of those people who serve us in this fashion with courage and commitment. We expect a great deal from those who enforce our laws and protect individuals and communities. We expect them to be in our schools and on our streets and in our communities, and we expect them to prevent crime and maintain order. From time to time they do put their lives at risk in order that we can live in safety. It is appropriate that we express our concern for his family and for those that he loved and those people who loved and worked

with him and to give them a time to mourn and a time to grieve and a time to treasure their memories of their work together.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I regret that the member felt it necessary to include the second part of the motion. Somehow I think that reduces our message to this family, somehow draws into our sincere message of sympathy a suggestion that a piece of legislation is responsible for the tragedy. I feel this to be a separate matter that probably could have been better dealt with in a separate fashion. Our message, I believe, should be clear and should be singular: I share their pain; we share their pain; we pray for their comfort and strength to sustain one another in their bereavement.

2:50

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it was not long ago that as solicitor general I walked in a funeral procession in Calgary for Cons. Rob Vanderwiel, shot in the line of duty. Today I can visualize the procession in Calgary, and my heart goes out to the family and to the force and to the police forces across this country.

As to the second part of this motion, I totally support it in this: that any society that abrogates its responsibility to put in place the tools to protect the front lines of people who put their lives on that line so that I can walk about in a free, democratic society – any society that abrogates that responsibility is wrong. We need to go back in and change the laws of this country and tighten them up so that the deaths of Cons. Ezio Faraone, Cons. Rob Vanderwiel, and the constable being buried today do not stand as a loss without contributing to and changing this society. As a statement to their families, a statement to the family today, taking forth a strong message to have the laws changed will be the highest honour we can do in respect to what has happened to their lives. We should fight constantly until that day comes.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say a few words in support of the motion that's in front of us. I suppose in the House here there would be different levels of urgency in terms of a review of the Young Offenders Act, particularly as it equates to this particular incident that revolves around the motion we're dealing with.

It is really, really sad when one reads about a young person caught up in that type of situation. I read the article in the *Edmonton Journal* that followed on the passenger in that vehicle, the 18-year-old that told his story as to how he can't sleep at night. It is sad, and I sympathize with the family very, very deeply. There's something there that I assume: that if that youngster involved could live that night over again, they would live that night over again. Unfortunately, that individual isn't given that opportunity. That individual did break the law; that individual has to pay a price. There was a loss of life involved, and society will no longer tolerate the softness that we see within the whole justice system.

I sat through court myself once as a witness. I witnessed a beating, and I sat through several cases before the particular one I was involved with was dealt with. I was astounded at the light sentences being given to these individuals for the crimes that were being committed. It was mind boggling. When it came my turn to testify, I could not say 100 percent sure that it was the individual involved. I could only say 99 percent because he had a suit on, he had his hair cut, and such. The case was dismissed for lack of sufficient identification although three of us said 99 percent. That left a sour taste in my mouth.

There are numbers of cases like that that one could point to that involve young people: the situation in Calgary where we saw a young fellow stabbed to death – it's a school my niece goes to, and she knew the victim involved – a case that I rose on here in the House with the Attorney General where two individuals were given community service for participating in the brutal beating that led to the death of a mentally retarded individual. That type of sentencing, that type of justice system is not acceptable. So I can support the motion on the basis that, yes, we have to review the Young Offenders Act, but we also have to somehow get a message across to the courts that there are provisions there and mechanisms in place. They can move, for example, an individual classified as a young offender into adult court if they choose to. So often it is not necessarily the legislation at fault. It is not the penalties that are expressed in that legislation at fault. It's the handing out of the sentencing, the handing out of the penalties for crimes committed that can lead to the perceived softening that we see within our system.

So yes, I do support this motion. It is a step in the right direction. It sends a message to the individuals in Calgary that this Assembly is not prepared to tolerate that type of action that affects the lives of those that protect us within our community.

Thank you.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Let the record show that the motion carries unanimously.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Royal Assent**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

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

[The Mace was draped]

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

3:00

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

MR. SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Gordon Towers, and the Deputy Premier entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has, at its present sittings, passed certain Bills to which, and in the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the Bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

No.	Title
5	Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1993
7	Alberta Energy Company Act Repeal Act

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

CLERK: In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these Bills.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

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

[Mr. Speaker took his place in the Chair, and the Mace was uncovered]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I ask the committee to come to order. For the benefit of those people in the gallery this is an informal part of the Legislative Assembly where members are allowed to move around, have coffee and juices, indeed to sit in one another's chairs, take their coats off, whisper quietly to one another, or go out to the lounge if they want to engage in conversation.

head: **Main Estimates 1993-94**

Public Works, Supply and Services

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call upon the minister for his comments.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's indeed an honour for me to be asked back here for another go-around with the opposition. On September 27, on my first appearance before the Committee of Supply, I listened patiently to the questions of the opposition for some two or three hours at that point in time and was unable to answer all of their questions due to lack of time. Yesterday in the House I tabled some 28 pages of answers to those questions, and I hope that has satisfied to some extent their thirst for knowledge and information. At this point in time I will again listen very patiently and avidly to their questions, and we will go through the same procedure as we did last time. Hopefully we don't have a lot of duplication, because I'm sure there's a lot of information there that you wish to have, and I'll do my best to provide it to you.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Rutherford. Nope, Edmonton-Roper.

MR. CHADI: Rutherford, Roper: what's the difference, eh?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there's a difference.
You're recognized now.

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the opportunity to speak to public works, because the last time, on September 27, I didn't have the opportunity. It seems like so many people went for 20-minute spans that I seemed to be left out. Having said that, this is my first opportunity to ask the hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, and it also gives me the opportunity to now congratulate him on his appointment. I feel confident that he's doing a great job and will continue to do a good job, provided my questions are answered of course.

Let's get right down to it then. I've got some concern particularly in program 2, with reference to 2.1, Administrative Support. I have real difficulty understanding what Administrative Support is. It amounts to \$1,600,000. Now, when I look at \$1,600,000 and then I look at what Administrative Support might be doing, particularly under the program of Land Assembly, I suspect that it is the amount of money that we spend to acquire goods. If it is, the total program and the capital expenditure under 2.1 is \$1.9 million. So, Mr. Chairman, it leads me to believe that we acquired \$1.9 million worth of goods, but we spent \$1.6 million to get them. It just doesn't make sense at all, and I would hope that the hon. minister could give me some sort of an explanation as to why we would be doing that. If indeed I am correct in saying what I'm saying, have we done some sort of efficiency audit to see that indeed we are getting the best value for our money? I suspect that any corporation out there right now that is spending \$1.6 million to acquire \$1.9 million worth of goods will not survive very long. I suspect that's probably one of the reasons why we're in debt so heavily at this point in time. I do know that the hon. minister is serious about his responsibilities and frugal management, and I suspect that we are going to get to the bottom of it.

My next area of concern is with respect to the leases that we do pay, and that is particularly in program 3 with reference to 3.3.2 and the fact that we've got about \$5 million less expenditures this year. So we're paying in terms of our leases \$88 million. The question that I have to the hon. minister is: what have we done differently that we are down by \$5 million in this particular year? Have we bowed out of some leases or have some expired? I note, though, that the hon. Member for Medicine Hat asked it, and in *Hansard* it clearly states that exact question. I note from the responses that the minister gave that the answer wasn't in there, and I would like to know if the hon. minister could respond to that.

3:10

With respect to leases as well, I do know of situations where we have vacant space, vacant space that we're paying on currently. My question to the minister is: how many square feet do we have out there, and what are we doing about trying to perhaps get out of those leases, maybe reviewing those leases? If there are ways to get out of those contracts, then perhaps maybe we should be getting out of them. If indeed there isn't any way to get out of the lease, then we should be considering every avenue, and one of those avenues would be to mitigate our losses and consider subletting the spaces. Now, I suspect that's what we would be doing, but if we're not doing that, then I think we should be.

Again our budget is \$88 million thereabouts for these leases. I think we have to also look at those leases that we are paying and find out if there isn't any way, particularly the ones that we may

be paying exorbitant lease rates, that we could perhaps have them lowered. I do know as a landlord – and I do have a number of buildings throughout this province – that many, many circumstances arise with tenants. They come to me and say: “I can't make it based on what we are now faced with. Could you lower this for us based on maybe taking a longer term?” There are many ways that we could work out new leases if we really put our minds to it, and I think we could lower our lease rates if we consider at least looking into it. I know with such a magnitude of properties out there that we should be able to even get not a \$5 million reduction for next year but perhaps even more than that.

A question was asked by the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan on September 27 in Committee of Supply. The question referred to Olympia & York. Now, this is one that concerns me greatly, simply because of the response that the hon. minister gave in the responses we received yesterday.

Just to give you a little background, Mr. Minister. In 1989 I leased offices in Scotia Place, which is right across the street from CityCentre. In 1989 I made an arrangement to lease my space, which is only about 2,500 square feet on the 15th floor. We arranged to lease it for the next 11 years. The lease expires in the year 2000. After some tenant improvement allowances and other considerations my net leasable costs are going to be in the range of about \$4.50 per square foot. Now, that doesn't include operating costs, and operating costs, as we know, fluctuate from year to year. You have things like taxes and maintenance and insurance that keep rising, so that is something that we can't control. What we can control is the amount of money that we're paying on those leases. If I'm paying \$4.50 per square foot on 2,500 square feet in a deal made in 1989, it would appear to me that we should be looking at almost the same amount of money, if not less, because we have leased in reality 400,000 square feet. *Hansard* of April 24, 1992, page 479, indicates that indeed we've leased not 400,000 but 420,000 square feet.

I did a deal back in I guess it was 1991 for my brother who is a lawyer. I put him in Scotia Place on the 19th floor. There I took about 3,000 square feet, and I negotiated until the year 2000. In that deal we ended up with about the same amount of money. We were paying a net of about \$4.50 per square foot.

Now, goodness, it would appear to me that when you're leasing 420,000 square feet – and the times are not different here, back from 1989 to 1991 or 1992. That was perhaps about the same time that we did the deal with Olympia & York. Before I ask the question of how could we be paying \$8.75 per square foot, which I get out of page 479 of *Hansard*, April 24, 1992 – and the reason I did that is because your response to the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan was, and I quote:

On April 24, 1992, my predecessor, the Honourable Member from Barrhead-Westlock spoke to the Legislative Assembly concerning the government's lease with Olympia and York Developments Limited for office space in CityCentre Building. Please refer to the *Hansard*, for that day, Page 479 for details.

You left it at that.

Well, when I pulled 479 of *Hansard* and I look and I read, it is a response that was given to a member by the name of Mr. Hawkesworth, I believe, at the time. Your predecessor, the now minister of economic development, trade, and tourism, if that is the correct term, said that the lease amount that is paid – and I quote again – including the \$8 million-plus in improvements plus some “parking stalls . . . for some five years, the net effective rate on an annual basis is \$8.75 per square foot for this first year.”

Now, I don't think the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan was asking about that one year, the first year. I want to know about what the rate is that is charged to this

province, to the taxpayers, to us, Mr. Minister, for the second year, the third, the fourth, and for the duration of the lease. That's what we want to know. I would hope that you could perhaps look and consider sending a copy of the lease document over to me. Barring that, at least advise us as to what the net overall cost to the province is. Is it \$8.75 as it says in *Hansard*, which was just a misprint here or something to that effect because it was only the first year? Did he honestly mean the first year, or did he really mean for the duration of the term? I've got to know that. I think Albertans have to know that. I do know that we are not paying market value based on what I've just told you about my own personal experiences. I'm right across the street. Building for building they compare. They're both first-class office towers, Mr. Chairman. I would hope that we can get a response to that. I know that if I was doing a deal on 420,000 square feet, I certainly would not be paying \$4.50, because that would be the price that I would be paying for 2,500 square feet or 3,000 square feet.

I do have some concerns as to why we moved to CityCentre in the first place, but that's another matter, and I won't get into it. I understand that we've done a deal in Calgary that was almost around the same circumstances as the O & Y deal. So what I'm getting to, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that we've been doing these deals, and now we're in them. Are there ways to get out of them? Can we get out of them? We moved government offices from different office buildings around town and moved them all into CityCentre, thus leaving all sorts of vacant space. We've got high rises that are vacant now as a result of that, and if we're paying \$8 or \$10 or, as some hon. members alluded to, a figure of \$22 per square foot for Olympia & York or for CityCentre, then we're paying something that we shouldn't. We clearly shouldn't be paying that kind of money, especially when we've left landlords with vacant buildings all across the city. I don't think Edmonton is unique. I think Calgary is about the same and perhaps other centres around this province.

3:20

Within the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services I believe we have real estate. We certainly have real estate that is sitting vacant right now. What are we doing to sell those properties, and what are we doing to lease them? I guess my question with respect to that is: what criteria do we use to choose a particular real estate company? I know that if we go on the MLS system, we get the exposure that's necessary, but there are many real estate agents in this province that would dearly like to have a crack at some of the province's real estate. I would hope that there would be a mechanism in place where we could distribute them amongst the different real estate companies and not just deal with one that is favoured. I believe there has to be something in place, and I look forward to your response in that respect.

On September 27 when we sat here and I listened to the hon. minister, Mr. Chairman, I was thrilled to hear that privatizing property management was in the works. I applaud you, Mr. Minister. I think that's the best thing that we could do in this province, because I don't think it takes a government employee, as the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs says, to do a job that somebody else can do, that you can contract out. I do notice in program 3, property management, particularly 3.5.2, Property Management Contracts – now, that must be the privatized portion of the property management already – that there is still a substantial amount of money that we pay each year and is budgeted for property management. I would appreciate knowing when we will be going on stream with privatizing that property management segment and what mechanism would be in place to see who out in the marketplace would be getting these contracts. That's a

tremendous amount of money, and I believe there'd be an awful lot of people that would dearly like to get their hands on some of these property management contracts.

Those are my comments for today. I look forward to the hon. minister's responses. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Three Hills-Airdrie.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions are not as specific as the hon. member's across but more just a general concern that I have that we have buildings out there which we're looking at selling or closing because we're going to be transferring programs in or out of certain regions of the province. I guess I just want to ensure that the minister is looking at all of these buildings with an eye to what's needed in those areas and also an eye to what's being requested by various agencies as per new construction to ensure that we in fact don't duplicate building space and end up with buildings empty while we're constructing others in various parts of that constituency or area.

Also, because I'm concerned about it, to the best of my knowledge public works looks after construction of buildings and they look after payment of leases throughout the province for just about everything except for health units. I'm concerned that we can run into a duplication of space on various properties if we don't have everything under one ministry. I would like to hear the minister's comments on that and if there are any steps being taken to ensure that one department handles all needs of space and leases in the province.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few comments and a few questions I would like to ask, but first of all I want to commend the minister. I think for a new minister he is doing a good job. He takes it very, very seriously, and he has a certain style that is not as offending to us on the other side here as some of the ministers, particularly when they're responding. In other words, he does have some respect for this side of the bench as well. In the five years that I've been here, it's the first time there's been that extensive of a response in written form to questions that have been raised in this House. The answers to those questions become very, very valuable.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

There are still a few points I want to pick on. First of all, the separation of the lottery from public works I think was good. I think having a minister in the position of being able to award contracts and so forth and so on and also in control of the lottery was giving one individual a great deal of clout in terms of being able to direct, sometimes possibly for political purposes, certain events. At least this tends to separate it to a degree.

When I read the answers and responses to the questions that had been asked previously, there were a number of them that kind of struck me. There was reference made to the accessibility question. It's a given that accessibility within the province of Alberta has come a long, long way in the last 20 years. We have a fairly extensive Building Code, probably one of the better ones. Of course, government buildings should go beyond the minimum standards that may be imposed upon the private sector, because those standards are there as minimum standards, not to be said

that this is the way it should be done. For example, my son who is an architect did his thesis on barrier-free design. He took that Building Code, and he went way beyond and came up with a thesis called *Beyond the Ramp*. It looks at making life a whole lot more comfortable for persons that have various disabilities, not only persons that have to use a wheelchair but a person that may be blind, a person that may be deaf, that may have his hearing impaired.

About three years ago I raised the question of special aids within the auditoriums for the hearing impaired with the minister of culture. That is a government building. The government, I believe, has an obligation to go beyond and to make that building accessible to all segments of the population. Accessibility, of course, involves the enjoyment of being able to hear the performances. For a person that has a hearing impairment to the degree that they can't hear under normal circumstances, to go to the Jubilee Auditorium and listen to the symphony it would not be the same delight. Now, I believe that has been corrected. I believe it has, but I'm not a hundred percent sure. I was given assurances at one particular point that it would.

This building, generally speaking, as I spoke during a private member's statement, is pretty good. It wouldn't rate a 10 out of 10, but it's pretty good, and with the changes that we're going to see yet, it's going to improve considerably.

So that accessibility to all segments of the population, them being taxpayers, becomes very, very important. That direction has to be given periodically from the minister of public works to ensure that the proper renovations are being done in buildings that are occupied by government offices as well as buildings owned by the government.

Another question that was responded to in that report talked about shredding, and the question related to: was there a need to put on hold the shredding of documents until such time as the freedom of information legislation has been reviewed, dealt with, and approved in this House? The response talked in terms of the vast majority being routine and of little interest to the general public. When we say "the vast majority," it leaves a little bit of doubt. In other words, it's the vast majority; it's not all the documents. So that leads me to suspect that possibly there are some documents that may be of interest to the public that should not be shredded at this particular point, that should be kept on file until such time as that freedom of information Act is put into place.

The question on the use of government aircraft and the logging of that government aircraft has been asked in this House on prior occasion, and that information was not provided. I would again ask the minister to reconsider rejecting that particular question. I think it becomes very, very important that the public be aware of what use of government airplanes, what use of government vehicles is for government related purposes or purposes relating to the activities of an MLA. Possibly the minister might be able to respond further to that.

3:30

Now, the question of tendering has been brought up by the Member for Edmonton-Roper. Olympia & York has been a sore point for years and years with the business community, with the BOMA group, the Building Owners and Management Association, in that buildings that contained government departments lost those departments as tenants. There's always been some question as to whether that lease was the most favourable lease at that particular time in protecting the interests of the government or if there was some favouritism shown to a particular developer who was very, very good at lobbying and knowing the system and working his

way around government. I would hope from that particular experience there has been a lesson learned and that we won't ever find ourselves in that situation that the government is accused of overlooking the best benefit in terms of leasing and, instead, providing a leasing agreement to the favourite few. I guess until those documents are fully, fully, fully released, which they never have been, the public is not going to be fully satisfied that everything was aboveboard. So the minister may want to respond further to these questions, and, again, if that comes in writing further down the road, that's very, very suitable to me.

I want to raise again the question of the restricted development areas surrounding Edmonton and Calgary. I know it's been dealt with in the past. There have been variations of the policies. There have been instances in the past where developers, speculators have gone in there, taken an option on the land, then turned around and sold that land to the provincial government, made themselves a nice little profit. Meanwhile, there are others that hold land who haven't been able to dispose of that property. At the same time, the government is not in a position to acquire all that property, and in some cases there's disagreement as to what that land is worth. I know of a couple of instances in the Edmonton area specifically where there still is, unless it was resolved without my knowledge, an ongoing dispute as to whether there was a fair mechanism to ensure that the individuals got what they felt was a reasonable or fair price, that they weren't being driven down in terms of the market, such as the river valley bylaw situation with the city of Edmonton a number of years ago. So if the minister could provide a current plan: where do we sit with the restricted development area? What is the current situation? What areas are protected? What options do the landowners have at the present time? Is it a wide-open ball game? There have been court challenges on that particular one, so there's got to be something more current.

A question I had sent in written form to the minister – it was actually to a different minister, but I believe it was then turned around and directed to the minister responsible for supply and services – was the disposal of goods that related to illegal firearms, or firearms that are confiscated, fishing equipment that may be confiscated from people violating regulations. Whether that's disposed of by Public Works, Supply and Services or whether those items are disposed of by fish and wildlife, I'm not sure at this particular point. There is a review going on; I'm aware of that review. I don't know how long that review is going to take, but there have been questions raised as to what happens to these firearms once they're confiscated. Do they get back out to the public? Are they put up for tender? So on and so forth.

That raises the whole question of the tendering process as it applies to a number of government items, the surplus for example. I can recall that years ago nonprofit groups were able to access all types of government used furniture. In fact, some of that furniture was pretty good stuff, and it was provided at no charge on a loan basis. Whether that's still being done, I'm not sure. It did serve a tremendous benefit to those nonprofit organizations but, I imagine, at a cost to the provincial government in that they were not able to dispose of it.

I also understand that at one time there was a system in place where for furniture and such that was being disposed of, certain people had first rights to it, like staff within public works. That policy apparently was changed so that all items are either sold off, tendered off, or auctioned off. I'd just like to get a better background as to how those decisions are made when it comes to tendering of government vehicles, for example. Why does one auctioneer have a certain percentage of it and another auctioneer a much lesser percentage? What criteria are laid out to ensure

that the government receives the greatest benefit when those types of goods are disposed of? It also relates to government cars. When the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, for example, gets himself a new car, is that tendered out on a wide, wide basis to ensure that it is the best possible deal, that it is not restricted to a dealer in his particular riding? I believe in this case it wasn't. I believe in this case it was given to the best price. With the repairs of these vehicles – let's say, for example, that a minister's car has to be repainted – is that given to the lowest tender, or is there a tendency to try and direct that to one's constituency? I don't want to get involved with any specifics; I'm just asking what the policy is.

Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes. That's an interesting one, because the Minister of Municipal Affairs touched on that in Calgary at the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association when he stunned the delegates with his announcement of drastic changes in a number of areas. I got the impression that the whole question of grants in lieu of taxes was going to be shifted from Municipal Affairs to Public Works, Supply and Services. Then there was some question as to whether those grants in lieu of taxes would continue, if they would be reduced, or if they would be eliminated. Now, I don't know what types of discussions the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services would have had with the Minister of Municipal Affairs prior to his making reference to that particular change. Unless I read that one wrong – I was trying to listen to him very, very carefully, very, very closely, and he touched on so many items that it was difficult to pinpoint one.

Two other points I want to touch on. Again, the question of the awarding of hospitals, the building of new hospitals or schools. I guess it could apply to any type of facility that is being built on behalf of an organization, a hospital, a school district, whatever, by the government. The reference in the response by the minister the previous time it was raised talked in terms of the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services being responsible for the tendering, the construction, and so forth, once a decision has been made that a certain building is going to proceed. My question: is the minister of public works a servant to the other ministers that may say, "I want this hospital; I want this school"? Does the minister not have any authority at all to say: "No, this is not good. This cannot proceed. I'm going to block it. I'm going to veto that particular facility because I don't think it's in the best interests of the overall department or in the best interests of Alberta taxpayers"?

My last question, Mr. Chairman, relates to the disposal of the properties that are presently occupied by Alberta Liquor Control Board outlets. Now, there are the two issues involved: one is the issuing of licences, of course, which doesn't fall in your department; the other is the disposal of the existing buildings such as the one on 106th Street. When that whole process is completed, when all those facilities, all those properties have been sold, is the minister going to table in this House or distribute to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a complete listing of the tendering that was involved, of the successful bidders, of the prices and so on, and the net gain that may have been gained as a result of the disposal of these properties, taking into consideration the initial purchase price? In other words, I guess the bottom line is: how many actual dollars will the provincial government make or lose when it comes to the sale of those properties? I get to that question because I really question whether the matter of privatizing ALCB is being done as a financial benefit to the government or if it's being done to satisfy a population out there that tends to symbolize ALCB as being the ultimate in privatization, the ultimate in terms of a free marketplace, the ultimate in terms of a free enterprise system. Even if it is, that's fine, but there still

has to be a balance. We can't just simply sell off assets that are very, very favourable to this government to satisfy political whims that may be out there, to try and satisfy a certain target that the government may be trying to cater to, may be trying to keep on board.

On that note I'll conclude and allow other speakers to ask questions. Like I said, the responses can be in writing.

3:40

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

The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like my colleagues, through the Chair I'd like to thank the minister for the timely replies to the questions that were asked when we appeared before the minister. I would like to continue discussing policies or lack of policies related to capital projects. I'd like to look at capital investment and follow the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in asking the minister to indeed elaborate beyond the point that my colleague for Edmonton-Rutherford had asked for – that is, to clearly lay out so that Albertans can fully understand the relationship between the department of public works and Alberta Health, Alberta Education, or any other government department that has a capital responsibility – because I think it's important that we as elected officials understand how decisions are made with regards to capital projects.

I'd like to focus at this time specifically on hospitals. I had stated in this House that I had very grave concerns about the conditions of Alberta Hospital Edmonton. I did point out at that time that it's certainly not within my constituency, that it services all of northern Alberta and to some extent even southern Alberta in the forensic area. Now, the buildings that I'm referring to do service acute psychiatry and rehabilitation. The first question I have to ask is: how can we as Albertans or indeed the government of Alberta allow facilities within the health care field to fall into such disrepair or, in reality, totally inappropriate facilities to give any quality of health care delivery? Fortunately, we've got very dedicated staff, and I'm sure that they do the best job that they possibly can under very difficult circumstances. I'd like to suggest that when the government is making decisions about capital projects, they take the time to visit the facilities. For example, when the decision was made as to whether it should be Westlock, Slave Lake, Alberta Hospital Edmonton, or Sherwood Park long-term facility, did the ministers and the MLAs within those areas take the time to go and visit these facilities? I would suggest that before you can make an informed decision when it comes to capital projects, indeed you have to physically see those facilities. I would ask this House, particularly the Minister of Health and the hon. minister of public works: if they've not been to Alberta Hospital Edmonton to visit these facilities, they indeed should do that.

I would also like to follow my colleague in saying: does public works, through the professional people that they have on staff, lay out their priorities to the different government departments, saying which school should have improvements done to it, which schools should be replaced, or what new schools should be built? Likewise, does this happen in the hospital sector? Acknowledging that we have seen long-term care beds close and yet we're seeing a new facility in Sherwood Park, how did we arrive at a policy decision that said we would spend capital dollars to create a new facility, yet allow other beds to be closed? What's the role of public works when it comes to that policy decision within cabinet or indeed within the caucus?

Now, acknowledging that significant capital investments are now on hold and knowing that your department, through the Chair, Mr. Minister, has a significant project team of staff members, whether they be architects, whether they be engineers, whether the people have landscaping abilities or project management abilities, what is going to happen in that area when we are not seeing the capital expenditures being realized? Are we going to see significant changes in staff complement within that area, or are we going to wait till the roundtables are finished and see if indeed they support the decisions of this government?

Which brings me to my next point. Through the Chair, not only to the minister of public works but also to the Minister of Health – I think the House has to have an answer – how can people at a roundtable give you informed recommendations or decisions with regards to capital projects if they're not totally familiar with those facilities? So I'm asking once again: is this government going to allow key people at the roundtables within Health to become totally familiar with these facilities to ensure that the right kind of recommendations and informed decisions are indeed made? I would like to see the suggestions that I'm making for Health also be carried through in Education.

I can think back to the time when I was mayor of the town and now the city of Fort Saskatchewan, when I saw Alberta taxpayers' money having to be expended on the old correctional system to meet legislative requirements while we were building the new facility. I hope that we're not going to have to see the same happening at Alberta Hospital Edmonton. I think it's impossible, quite frankly, to put water in the dining room that I referred to, to make a public health standard of the only washroom, the only bathroom where someone can have a bath. There's no shower. They've got to walk through a linen storage area, walk through a sluice area before they can have a bath. For those of you who don't know what a sluice is, it's where the cleaning materials are kept. I don't think anyone in this House would want to have to bathe under those conditions. So I'm asking: please, public works, ensure in future that we don't allow our facilities to fall into such disrepair and that people have to work under these shocking conditions.

I'd like now to move on to procurement, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I also appreciated the reference back to *Hansard* on O & Y and read with great interest your comments. I'll have more to say about that in a few minutes. I think all Albertans will benefit from procurement practices which are open, accessible, and nondiscriminatory. What I'm looking for, Mr. Minister, is: what policies does Alberta public works have when it comes to procurement? Certainly in a time of fiscal restraint and with all governments, whether it be Alberta or any other province in Canada, facing substantial budget deficits, spiraling debt and debt servicing costs, we must have cost-effective and efficient ways of procuring, whether it be contractual arrangements or goods and services. It's certainly got to emphasize quality goods that are going to be required by government for the lowest possible cost regardless of the supplier's location.

3:50

What I'm looking at here – and this is a personal view – is indeed opening up the boundaries. That procurement system has to be fair, as I've stated, and it has to give opportunities for the private sector to fairly bid during that process. We know we have a province that emphasizes entrepreneurial spirit, yet I would suggest to you that past practice by the government of Alberta hasn't acknowledged that. When we looked at the North West Trust Company contract, it appeared that they were given that contract, in relation to NovAtel, without any competitive factor

being involved at all. Based on the information I've got, the Olympia & York lease likewise: it was not open to public tender. I think that these practices of the past have got to stop. We've got to see reform by this government to ensure that that doesn't happen again.

I'd also like to suggest that when we look at what's happening with NAFTA, free trade, it's only appropriate that we indeed break down those barriers within Canada, province to province, to ensure that we get the best value for our dollar. In fact, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in 1991 reported on interprovincial barriers to trade and identified over \$6.5 billion in savings that could have been achieved by reforming trade practices in Canada. According to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, a more efficient system of government procurement, which eliminates discriminatory practices in purchases based on province of origin and emphasizes the acceptance of lowest cost bids, could indeed save us \$2.5 billion. I'd ask that serious consideration be given to that.

In closing my discussion on government procurement, I'd like to once again go back to the fact that we've seen the abuse of the taxpayer's dollar not being used in a cost-effective manner, and I wanted to share with you my information on Olympia & York. I'm hoping that for once this government will come clean and tell us indeed what it is costing the taxpayers of the province of Alberta. My understanding is that we've been paying \$22.86 per square foot, or approximately \$9.1 million per year, on the first five-year installment of the agreement to lease space in this building. This is approximately \$4.3 million per year, or \$10 per square foot, above the current rental market value for similar prime office space in downtown Edmonton. It should also be noted that in the next 15 years of the lease we will see a rental rate of over \$20 per square foot in effect. Now, what I'd like to know is: is this fact, the information that I've been able to access to this point in time? If it isn't fact, will the minister please release what is factual information so that we know indeed whether we are getting value for our money? Or, indeed, are we looking at more wastage by this government?

I'd like, Mr. Chairman, to thank the minister. I look forward, like my colleagues, to either a written or verbal reply today to the points that I've raised.

Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would commend the hon. minister. I think he was very, very forthright and thorough with the information he's provided, and I certainly appreciate that. I would apologize also that I haven't had much time to go through it. But as I skimmed through it quickly, several questions beg to be answered, I guess, as a result of the quick answers I looked at.

Just on the basis of page 22, I'm having a little difficulty justifying or rationalizing in my mind that we show \$45,000 for an uninterrupted power supply for a computer system. On page 25, when I asked the question about the Terrace Building, the increase there, we show a \$660,000 cost for, as it's explained here, "an uninterrupted power supply." I have a little difficulty with the large difference in those two. Certainly I understand that the computer centre may be far more extensive or larger than what is evident by the answers provided.

I look at page 23. I asked a question about Blue Lake, and I'd like to pursue that a bit. Blue Lake certainly, for those that have never visited it or taken the opportunity to access some of the

courses that they offer there, has excellent courses. I know that when I was on a level 4 and 5 kayaking course at Blue Lake, it was a mere \$25 a day for all the food and accommodation and any equipment I wanted. It struck me that that was the deal in Alberta at the time. I wonder, in fact, if we have adjusted those rates to reflect more the reality and costs. I wonder if the hon. minister would also share with us the number of clients that use that facility. I see where the potential expenditure there has been put on hold pending a review of the situation.

On page 24 I asked about the Whitecourt courthouse, and I see that it is a newly approved project. One thing that would be interesting to me is the date that that project was approved. Along the lines of courthouses, I will try to follow up on a question that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo inquired about in the Justice debates. Again, I would apologize; I wasn't paying as much attention as I should have to his questions. There are two expenditures in Calgary there, \$1.1 million and \$1.6 million. Now, the question that he was asking was whether in fact we are looking at a combined facility there to reduce costs, to capture some common area, and again for efficiency, if I understood his question correctly. I wonder if in fact we might expound upon that aspect.

I had asked some questions about the Dash 8, and there were other questions asked, I see in the answers, about the aviation aspect of the Alberta government. The Dash 8, certainly I'm aware, is more active during some parts of the season than others. I wonder if the department actually has done a cost analysis to find out what it's costing us, including the capital expenditure, on a per hour operational rate. In the back of my mind I suspect we probably could do considerably better if in fact we were looking at a charter situation.

I would have liked to have drawn a lot of comfort from my questions pertaining to the family counseling and social services move out of Leduc. I quoted a \$4.50 per square foot rate offered in Leduc. The minister I guess admonished me somewhat for asking one more time about confidential lease rates. Certainly I understand that in fact some of that should be confidential. I would have drawn – and I'm sure it would have eliminated a lot of the consternation in Leduc itself if I had confirmation that that \$4.50 rate was good and we got one as good or better, without disclosing it.

I would also take that particular topic one step further and ask what we have spent for leasehold improvements on that piece of property that we're now leasing in Nisku. When we look at leases and the likes thereof – and I could tie in that particular aspect of this – there is a third floor in that hospital in Leduc that is unused. Simply, the demand is not there and it was probably overbuilt for the time. We can justify it in the long term, but when we're looking at efficiencies, and we look at a freestanding hospital as such, and we look also at a health unit in Leduc, which is a considerable cost to the government – and I will probably catch the wrath of the local constituents for suggesting it – those sorts of, I think, efficiencies have to be clearly identified. It may mean that the requirements or constraints or restraints or caveats that presently exist on hospitals, what we can use them for and can't use them for, have to be revisited. That may have been an ideal place for social services offices, maybe the ideal place for the health unit. We don't know, but certainly we might just as well use the space we're presently paying for.

4:00

On page 19 – and I forget which hon. member asked it – there was a concern, and I certainly witnessed it as a federal government employee as we got toward the end of our fiscal year. Managers

more often than not were scrambling around to ensure that their budgets were exhausted, or spent, for fear that in fact they would be cut back the next year. I think that the provincial government probably has a little bit of that same mind-set, and I would ask the minister if he would give some consideration to the thought. Maybe this goes against the grain of public service, but we are moving into a privatization aspect. Maybe we should give some thought actually to providing an incentive or encouragement to managers as such that do save money and can turn money back from their budgets at the end of the year. I would expound upon that a bit. I think that with all the civil servants we have in the province of Alberta, we have out there a whole resource of employees that have tremendous ideas. I would ask the minister if he would also look at implementing a program there – call it a suggestion award program or whatever you will – that if in fact somebody has a good idea, identifies where some dollars can be saved, submits it to the appropriate people, and there is a savings realized, we recognize them. It may be a plaque, it may be a percentage of the savings, it may be just a small monetary stipend that they receive, but I do think there is potential to harness the intelligence of our civil service. You would be surprised at how many dollars we can save if we listen to them and they have the opportunity and stage to bring it forth.

With that, I have no further questions to be directed at you.

Again, I would compliment the hon. minister. I find him very co-operative to work with, and certainly it bodes well for the people of Alberta when we can sit down and actually discuss this one on one without being concerned whether I'm red and you're blue. I think that's extremely helpful, and it bodes well for the bottom line.

Thank you very much.

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I must also compliment you on the timeliness of the return of answers to a number of our questions and on your general co-operation, which my colleague has mentioned. That extends more out of the House than in the House, of course, as it comes with your experience dealing across this gap. Those of us that have had something to deal with outside appreciate that a great deal, sir. We only wish you could spread a little of that along the front bench there.

I might say for those on this side and that side within earshot that we are going to finish early this day, because we expected to have some questions asked and answered from your side of the House. We only had five or six speakers lined up today to ask you questions. Unfortunately, had we known you would not be asking questions – some of our members, particularly the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, had to be in Calgary today, as did the hon. Premier, in order to attend that funeral. He was to ask a number of questions relating to the advent of the freedom of information Act, Bill 1, and the changes that will occur to the department. With the Alberta Records Centre being part of your portfolio, sir, it's going to take a great deal of extra work and effort on your behalf to keep up to an initial surge of demand, not the least of which, I'm sure you'll understand, would come from this side of the House.

Some of the questions I'd like to touch on today are with regards to the Alberta Records Centre. The other component of archival and record keeping is the Alberta archives. I'm not too sure where it's housed or in which department, but it's the archives and artifacts, those things that certainly the former Member for Redwater and the now member for the same area

would remember well, some of the things he's come across in his years in and around this province that should and must be maintained. Some of those have been maintained, I understand, through the expenditures of this department – the Reynolds Museum, which are the hard, hard items, the transportation and farming-related items. There are a number of others that need to be preserved, and we're not sure where they are. I understand that with the Alberta Records Centre, the plan in place is to provide a new centre with all the special mechanical and electrical services required for a building of that nature. When you build a centre such as that, you put in the necessary mechanical and electrical services in order to maintain records. It is the same environment that is required to retain special archival material and artifacts. We'd ask if there has been consideration to combine those efforts even to a renovation of an existing structure in the care and custody of the minister and whether it would make sense to bring those three centres and three activities together, particularly in light of the requirement for much more electronic data keeping and records keeping. Again, the consideration for mechanical and electrical services for the housing of electronic data is the same or similar to that which is required for archival material.

Further to dealing with freedom of information and the directories, we understand through the response from the minister that they will be put together from the department. In the electronic end, will it be accessed by one coming to a centre and inputting data on their own through a terminal, or will it be using an operator? If it is an operator, will there be an excessive cost attached to that operator? Will it be actual cost? If in fact one comes in with a reasonable knowledge of operation of computers and access to them and operates a terminal that is at the disposal of the public, what would the fee be? Would one be able to dial in with a compatible modem and access information and have it billed either to a preset file or a credit card of some sort?

Also, the question begged is: if it's going to be retrievable electronic information, will that be offshore? What kinds of guarantees are there that some kind of national security will not be violated? What kinds of systems are in place to block out-of-country calls that would be brought in by modem?

Turning to the directory and the hard copy, how will hard copy be filed so that there is some kind of reasonable access? Will it be through a request and a payment of some fee and a retrieval, or will it be direct access in either microfiche or hard copy?

The indexing. How and when will the indexing be available? Is it absolutely mandatory that the indexing be done and the indexing systems be up and running fully and completely prior to the information being available?

4:10

Moving into another area that concerned me in my former employ much more than some others here. Earlier on last week we heard in this House a number of answers to questions regarding a construction project. That brought to mind a number of questions, particularly about the general conditions of a general contract for construction. The first of the questions is: is there some kind of special case or special provision included in those general conditions that prohibits the Crown from halting a contract at any time the Crown chooses? If there is that provision in some special contract, would that contract then be put through a standard tender method such as the registries, which are all well known to the minister and his department? If they are put through that, is there a provision to allow the general contractors to know about those provisions prior to their tendering? If in fact there is not any special provision – this side expects there isn't – then how is it that the minister or any other member of the government can claim

that some massive amount of dollars could be charged to a project when in fact the costs going into that project may be contracted for but are not delivered on site? I'm sure the minister knows that in any litigation on any contract law the determinant, the simple test on whether in fact a good or service is in this case charged to the Crown should a contract be halted is whether in fact it is on site. There is some mitigation if some special equipment is ordered, but that's generally a restocking charge. This side is most interested in knowing if it is the general practice of the department to assume that once a contract is signed with a general contractor, the contract cannot be stopped at any time without this massive cost incurred to the government.

I'm having a little difficulty reading the notes. They're not nearly as good or as clear as yours, sir, that come from the department.

Another question from the capital works side is: how is it determined when a capital project has reached a point of no return, that point at which one can rationally say that enough money has been spent on the project to render the benefits of the project, should it be completed, of much more value than savings of dollars should the project not proceed at that point?

Other questions. Some of the documentation provided in the estimates begs – well, aside from a general comment, which I started with and will not repeat at length now, is the lack of information herein for anyone, particularly a citizen, wanting to find out how the government operates. There are some things that have to be asked here because they're certainly not explained in the documents and require an interview, in fact, with one of your officials, which, upon asking, I am not allowed to do for some reason. I have difficulty understanding why I as a member on this side cannot ask those questions, yet when I was in private practice, I had no difficulty accessing and speaking to many members in your department, in fact some colleagues I went to university and graduated with many, many years ago.

The question it does raise on page 267 is a question of procurement. There's some 3 and a half million-odd dollars there. The question it begs comes from the acquisition of supplies obviously, but what it doesn't do and doesn't present on the next page and, from what I can tell, doesn't have any correlation with – and certainly the notes don't include it – is what the relationship is between the revolving fund and how the accounting of that revolving fund works versus the procurement. I would have suspected, just reading it, that Procurement versus Administrative Support, and that's reference 5.1 versus 5.2 – it's rather difficult to determine whether those funds are the administration of purchasing those and whether in fact any depreciation on existing stock is calculated in these numbers.

It would be nice if the minister could provide a one-page summary or perhaps a two-page summary of the accounting of the revolving fund and how assets are disposed of that in fact are not delivered to a department and therefore are not recoverable in revenue and how that in fact is worked into the revenue picture or the expenditure side in order to net a revolving fund that is sustainable.

There are a number of questions that come to mind when dealing with the potential downsizing. At least one member from that side late last week told a great deal of municipal governments in this province that downsizing was coming not only in his department but throughout the entire government. Downsizing brings a number of questions to mind in this department in particular, being that this department is geared to acquire goods and services from the private sector in supplying all of the government. I would assume that downsizing in the entire government and the purchases there would require downsizing in

the department too, in the procurement end certainly and in property management and over a longer period of time, perhaps not in the short term, certainly in capital works. I've heard other members from that side of the House say that over the next couple of years we're going to have to really curtail the capital works side of our government, and that directly relates to the size of your department, sir.

My questions are these. In acquiring new furniture for all departments, I understand that oftentimes furniture is not returned to your department until it is well spent, so when you dispose of it your department does not retrieve a great dollar from that. On the other hand, massive amounts of furniture are accumulated, in fact, and stored and then passed down so that in some cases in some parts of the province, certainly in Edmonton, a secretary has some desks that are far, far beyond her station, and you cannot really access that material. We'd like to know if in fact you're able to make some changes in that end or whether they're actually required and you have some plans in progress.

There's the question of the revolving fund and the effects a substantive cut in acquisitions will have on a revolving fund. That again relates to the accounting and how one accounts for the depreciation of that which is in stock or that which is, in the case of automobiles, on the road, or furniture which is in buildings, and the like.

Aside from the downsizing effects on the goods and services the department has purchased, there certainly is going to be a great deal of loss of employment, which begs the question of repositioning or retraining some of the staff, particularly your professional staff. When you downsize in capital works, those professionals are fairly narrow in their area of expertise and it is almost impossible to relocate those people within government. It's not as easy to deal with them as it is with a middle manager in finance, who could well be placed from supplies and services into health care or social services or one of those other areas. My questions are: what plans do you have in place for professional staff if there is this potential downsizing of professional staff? Will they be assisted in working with the private sector to sell the expertise acquired in the department in other places in the world where capital work is ongoing and, in fact, in dire need of some of the management skills of your department?

4:20

With that, sir, I ask the last question. It's dealing again with an area where someone who doesn't have a great deal of experience in reading these documents has some difficulty understanding. A member from the public might see page 265 of your estimates, program 4, Planning and Implementation of Construction Projects, and in fact see two numbers: 4.1, Administrative Support, and 4.12, which is Multi-Use Facilities, PWSS, some \$70 million. With that, the last question: sometime in the future could you give us some kind of idea what those numbers mean?

Thank you, sir.

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

The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a rather scattergun approach here. I want to ask a number of questions. First of all, in my constituency I've had a certain amount of complaint about labour moving in from province to province and competing with local labour. I'm just wondering what the minister's department does or does not do about inserting clauses in contracts as far as importing labour from other provinces, or if there's any restriction, or if there is something – the first offer has

to be made locally, or just what? Is it wide open? If it isn't, I'd like to know which provinces are hard to get along with and which ones are easy. In other words, do we practise different standards between each province? I can imagine B.C., for instance, they're very restrictive on labour coming in. Albertans might be quite justified in being suspicious of giving them a break, but, on the other hand, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have a tendency to let Albertans move in there, so maybe we're easier that way. I just wonder what's going on.

The other area I'm interested in is what this department's interface is with highway construction. Now, bridges I would think are done by the department of highways and utilities, but I'm just wondering if any part of highways is handled by the minister's department. It looks as if the land acquisition is not done, so therefore there's probably no other construction done there, but I wondered if there was an interface there. Also, while we're on transportation, how about the railways? Is the department of public works involved at all in level crossings and in doing anything about railroad rights-of-way, or does that come under transport? Particularly, not only level crossings, but if he has anything to do with level crossings – I don't know whether the minister does – what are the parameters under which people in an area can ask for and get warning signs or whatever it is? I can imagine, if it's a high enough activity, maybe even an arm that goes up and down. Just how much does the department of public works interface with that at all?

The other area, while we're on it – I don't know if this is in transportation or public works – is railroads being fenced, as far as access, not on the highways but off the highways. I get quite a few complaints from farmers that can't leave their livestock loose because railroad fences are in very poor repair. What kind of heat can be used on that? While we're on railroads, too, I'm kind of curious – and there again the minister would have to help me – in northern Alberta railways or railroads to resources, whether his department does any construction for the railroad. If they do any construction for the railroad, how about the spur line into the pulp mill up at Peace River? That's along the banks of the Peace River. Being an old engineer, I noticed the thing was built on bentonitic shale, and I'm sure it's going to keep sliding. The banks of the Peace River are around Peace River town. They're not quite as slippery as a ski slope, but they come very close to it. We've been building houses and railroads for some years there up the side of the hill and then looking for them in the river bottom. After a few years and a few rains, there are a few wet spots, and my understanding was that our government was on the hook if the railroad moved. The Japanese people were smart enough to make us guarantee the railroad and have got us over a barrel there. I'm just wondering if that's in his line or not.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

The other area: as you know, the Liberal opposition has argued for some time that the minister, not the minister of environment, should be responsible for irrigation ditches and environmental work, straightening out creeks and everything else. We figure your department should be doing it rather than environment from the point of view that you're an operating department, not because you're a nice guy or anything. An operating department in environment is really a discipline like a policing department, and it doesn't make sense for the policeman to be doing the construction. So I was just wondering if there's been any move by transport. I know we have been arguing that for some years, so I'd be interested in hearing the minister's opinion – well, I guess you're not allowed to ask for opinions – if the minister and his

department are working towards taking more of the public works part of environment away and doing it themselves. I'm particularly thinking – I may be asking the wrong person – if Waskatenau Creek and Namepi Creek in my area have had some of the curves straightened out by public works.

I'll wait until your House leader is finished. If you blow in his ear, he'll follow you anywhere. I'm just waiting for the Whip to finish, because I'm talking to the minister.

I'm interested in whether the minister has any input at all in what the environment department has been doing as far as creeks and waterworks are concerned, our natural watercourses, sometimes in drainage, sometimes in straightening out the creeks. In this day and age I don't think we should be touching it. I think God and Mother Nature knew a lot more about engineering than I did or the Liberals or Conservatives; nevertheless, we seem to be out there tampering with it quite often. That's saying a lot when I say neither side. But I do find and I see around the province where we're mucking around with our little shovels and stuff, moving around there and trying to fix up something that shouldn't be touched. I just wonder what is interfacing that too.

I'm sorry not to be a better expert on what you're doing than I am, but I thought I might as well start pushing buttons somewhere. He's always been a very congenial gentleman. By the way, congratulations too. I'm not sure I have done, but I might have written you congratulations. I'm sure that if I'm on the wrong track, you will be able to point me in the right direction.

Thank you.

4:30

MR. CHAIRMAN: The minister in summation.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As usual, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, they have a very large thirst for information, and the rest of the projects they have described here are very interesting.

I would start with Edmonton-Roper's comments when he was talking about 2.1, Administrative Support. The figures, I guess if you don't read them properly, may lead you to think other than what is there. Administrative Support provides manpower and related funding to manage the negotiation and finalization of purchase agreements, granting or obtaining interests in land easements, travel required for negotiation of purchase agreements, and a variety of things other than just administrative support. Of course, that's gone down again this year by \$5 million because again we're involved in a downsizing of government. We're involved in a downsizing of government departments, involved in a downsizing of government space. So as you go through this process, of course it starts to cost you less as you start to amalgamate and go through the process of space audits to try and determine where people would best be situated.

We do have about 625,000 square metres of leased space in the province, and that's the space that this department handles and tries to keep tabs on and amalgamate for the variety of other departments we deal with. As you are aware, we are more of a service department to the rest of government than we are a stand-alone department, so it always depends on what the other departments are doing. Certainly when you have that volume of leased space plus all the owned space we have, we try and amalgamate things as things are downsized. We're very interested in trying to keep track of when some department has downsized in a specific area. We do space audits to try and determine if there's space available there or if we should be moving them to another floor, a part of a floor in another building, to another city or another town, or wherever it might be. That's an ongoing process.

Some of the leases, of course, we have to look at as this process takes place to see if there are some adjustments that can be made – if there are leases that can be dropped or, if we're out of a building, whether we can sublease or, where the lease is up, whether we can let that particular lease go – and thus save some more money for the taxpayers of Alberta. Certainly each lease when they're first made out, when they're first determined, is determined on different factors. Sometimes there's a renegotiating clause in there. Sometimes there's a penalty for us trying to get out of it earlier or later, so we have to deal with that on an individual basis as we go along.

We are in the real estate business to a certain extent. We have an agreement with the real estate firms in Alberta through the multiple listing service, and we've felt for some time that we're better to use this multiple listing service wherever we can. There are some areas in Alberta where there's not an MLS agent in the particular area, so then we try and determine some local real estate firm to handle the sale. In most cases you find that the real estate firms have a better handle on what the market is, and we try and establish market price on nearly everything we do. That seems to be the best way, as opposed to us having staff go out and try and negotiate and get into the marketplace. These people are experts in their own field, so we try and deal through them. It promotes some private enterprise and some business out there as well.

Our property management contracts were mentioned as well. These again are dealt with on an individual basis. The contracts are many and varied in stature, depending on the needs in that particular area or in that particular vocation. We have management contracts that deal strictly with cleaning. We have management contracts that deal with repairs. As I said, there are many different types of these contracts. They also vary depending on whether you're in Drumheller or in High Prairie or in downtown Edmonton. In most cases where we have privatized the property management things, we have not only helped to create some employment out there, but it has saved us money, because then you establish the market value of whatever process you're trying to get into if you go to the public with these.

As I mentioned before, Three Hills-Airdrie had some interesting questions about the space and the duplication of leasing abilities and facilities. Now, there are some departments that do some leasing on their own, but for general purposes our department is given the responsibility of trying to take care of most of the leases in the province. We are involved in space audits, as I said before, to try and determine how we keep everything flowing in an orderly manner as we downsize government.

As was asked by one hon. member, there is always some risk of people being put out of work. Nobody likes to see somebody out of a job. We have a mandate in this government to downsize it. The Premier has downsized cabinet from 27 to 16. We've downsized the executive fleet. We've downsized the wages of cabinet members. There are some negotiations in place now to take MLAs' salaries, which will be downsized when it goes to the Members' Services Committee. That's the request. Our pensions have been downsized out of existence. So there's a continual downsizing of this government until we get to the point where we feel that government is lean and mean and efficient, and I think that's what the people of Alberta want us to be.

You always run the risk of some people being put out of work, but I've noticed in several cases where some of the operations have moved out of different areas – now, I can give you an example of one company that was quasi connected to government that moved out of the town of Drayton Valley and the people were laid off. These people that were laid off have formed two smaller companies. They carry on with the same work they were doing

there before, and we find that there are more people employed and they're better employed and doing better than they were working for the larger company. So I think if people have the incentive and the wish to go out there and do some of these things in the private world, in the long run they're better off anyway than working for government on a long-term basis.

Edmonton-Rutherford had some concerns about the separation of lotteries from public works. I didn't have a problem with that, because I know how you've worked on the minister that's responsible for lotteries for the nearly five years that I've been here. I wouldn't want anything to do with it, to be honest with you. You've been trying to get at that particular minister for a long time, so I'll leave you in his care and just stay with public works.

Certainly we try and do the renovations necessary to all buildings, whether leased or owned, to make them accessible for handicapped, because it's very important that all people have access to these buildings, particularly government buildings. Sometimes we don't get it done just as quickly as you would like, but hopefully it will proceed and we'll be able to help you out in that area.

4:40

Now, I would like to perhaps touch on the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the legislation and the implementation of what will probably come out of all the public correspondence and the public meetings to do with that freedom of information Act. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about shredded documents. I don't find that as large a problem as the overload of documents that we presently get in our storage facilities, and we have no way of knowing that there's not 17 copies coming to us. Sometimes we would wish they would shred some more. In most of the information that's shredded – and I don't know this for a fact because I've never gone through the process of shredding my information – there are not all that many secrets, but a lot of this paper should be shredded because it's garbage anyway. Sometimes we have an overload. As I've mentioned before in this House, we have paper piled up five feet deep the size of a Canadian football field, and in my view I don't think it's absolutely necessary to have that much paper. We have documents in some cases that are decreed to be kept for a hundred years. Now, I know we all want to know when the hon. Member for Redwater was born and I'm sure that's in some public information, but I don't know if we need to keep it much longer than that.

You talked about the logs of the aircraft, the helicopters and the fixed wings. I can understand your concerns on that, but there's also a concern that this is very scattered use, and 90 percent of the work that's done by the rotary-winged aircraft is used by forestry and other departments. We use very little of the time ourselves, and the time usage of all our aircraft has fallen off in the last few years because of public concern. Certainly we're looking at that and reviewing the whole aspect of owning aircraft of any kind. Now, I happen to think there is some merit in us owning some for some purposes, because the first use of any of these aircraft is for life and death situations. After that, then it's used by forestry in fire fighting and natural disasters and things of that aspect.

He talked again about the RDAs around Edmonton, and I know that's always a controversial topic. They're near completion around both cities, but it will probably take another 10 years to get those in place. There are a lot of land negotiations that take place in order to establish the restricted development areas and the utility corridors, because if you need a part of a piece of land in that RDA, you end up buying a larger chunk. You negotiate for that,

and then you have to try and sell the rest of it to keep the RDA intact.

The other thing. I know you offered some criticism about the prices that have been offered and the way the negotiations had taken place and that there was some question about that. I think if you look at the price of land 10 years ago, it was very high, and then it's gone to lows and it's come back in some areas for different reasons. It's always a judgment call as to whether you wait for a while to try and establish these RDAs at the most economical price to get the best price for the taxpayers or whether you pay the price they're asking. You pay for loss of use and a variety of other things, or you try and go back in history and say, well, maybe it was worth that much 10 years ago. Then do we pay that price today, when it's worth only 10 percent of that? That will always be a problem, to try and determine whether you're right or wrong.

He talked about surplus equipment, firearms, et cetera. I can't answer that reasonably at this time. I would suspect that any firearms that go through there would be dealt with either by fish and wildlife or the RCMP, but I suspect very likely the RCMP. The surplus equipment we have – and it can be a variety of objects that show up in surplus equipment from all departments – we've determined that rather than giving this away for a dollar or giving it away for nothing, unless it's a very good cause, I try and retrieve some money back for the taxpayers of Alberta. We put a very minimal cost on a lot of this stuff, and I've found that it's being accepted quite well within society since we've decided to go that route. It was paid for by taxpayers' dollars, and if we can retrieve some of that purchase price, certainly I think it's well in mind to do that.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I haven't dealt with all the questions here, and certainly in some cases I'd be better to read the Blues or read *Hansard* to maybe get a little better perspective on what the hon. members were asking at that time. I will do the same as I did the last time I appeared here: I will provide you with answers in writing in the very near future.

One of the things I'm not going to get into here today is the contracting or the capital construction of hospitals, because we will have a session here later on where we can deal with some of the capital. It would be a protracted debate here in this House, I'm sure, if we get to arguing about the commitments on contracts and what actually represents a definitive commitment and where you pass the point of no return, et cetera, et cetera. Most of these are a judgment call, and what I try and do as the minister involved in that is to inject common sense into it and try and preserve the integrity of this government, including those members sitting over there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Program 1 – Departmental Support Services	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$10,554,000
Total Capital Investment	\$146,000
Program 2 – Land Assembly	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$1,600,000
Total Capital Investment	\$1,900,000
Program 3 – Management of Properties	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$303,582,000
Total Capital Investment	\$4,668,000

Program 4 – Planning and Implementation of Construction Projects	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$87,500,000
Total Capital Investment	\$35,050,000
Program 5 – Central Services and Acquisition of Supplies	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$19,132,000
Total Capital Investment	\$218,000
Summary	
Total Operating Expenditure	\$422,368,000
Total Capital Investment	\$41,982,000
Department Total	\$464,350,000

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

Hon. Member for Highwood.

4:50

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1994, for the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services for the purposes indicated: Operating Expenditure, \$422,368,000; Capital Investment, \$41,982,000, for a total of \$464,350,000.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: All in favour of that report, say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, say nay. Carried.

[On motion, the Assembly resolved itself into Committee of the Whole]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the Committee of the Whole would come to order.

Bill 9

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1993

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Peace River, do you have some comments to start off the Committee of the Whole?

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Chairman, I made my opening remarks and comments the last time we dealt with this. I believe we were in question mode.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, the response given isn't sufficient. On second reading of this particular Bill we asked a number of questions. We asked: was there consultation with the AUMA? We asked: was there consultation with the AAMDC? We asked for some direction as to whether this amendment was proposed by any of those bodies by resolution or if it's a question of this government imposing something on the municipalities against their wishes.

There were two aspects of the Bill that I interpreted. One was the new structuring of capital funding, the capital funding to include the preliminary costs like architectural fees, engineering fees, surveying fees, and all that. I don't have any difficulty with that. That makes sense. That's the way the private sector would do it. The second part was the transfer of certain powers and the impact it would have on establishing improvement districts, for example. I was not clear on that at all.

I was hoping that the member who introduced the Bill would give us an explanation at this particular stage as to what's behind the Bill, as to why it's in front of us. I'm quite astounded that we don't have that, quite frankly. At this point, Mr. Chairman, until we have that, I'm not prepared to support it, because I can't support a pig in a poke.

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Chairman, I was of the impression that there were other questions coming as well and we were just going to group them together and respond at once, but I certainly can. I understand that the question that concerned you was whether the associations dealing with the improvement districts or AAMDC had been consulted. The Improvement Districts Association has been consulted, and they concur with the amendments pertaining to changeover from improvement district to municipal district status.

I believe you were asking also about the capital costs section of it. The definition of capital costs was that which was established at the time the interim provision was made. We've also contacted the Auditor General's department for clarification. A member of his staff informed us that they were satisfied that the definition was in keeping with the terms set out by the association of chartered accountants.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, we had done some research into the Bill in addition to what the member has said, and, yea, I have to concur with the comments of the member. I wanted to kind of hear it from him. We in fact have contacted the associations, and the member is correct. They don't have any objections to the Bill. My understanding is in fact that they favour the Bill. On the basis of that and the basis of what the member has said, I don't have any difficulty with it. I don't know what kind of stage that leaves us in at the present time. There are other members that want to speak to it that may want to ask some questions on the fee aspect of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield.

MR. WHITE: Just briefly, sir. In the transfer there's responsibility, and the responsibility of taking on municipal government is rather onerous for an ID because there are a lot of areas that hitherto they have not had to deal with, and it would be incumbent upon the government to assist in some training on this. I would ask the minister responsible if there is some training for the staff of the IDs that are taking on this responsibility so that when they

do become fully fledged municipal districts, they will in fact be able to handle the rigors of the job that this Bill adds to them. Is there, in fact, some kind of transition period in there where some training is involved or not?

DR. WEST: Mr. Chairman, the question is valid. If you study the unique nature of the improvement districts over the years, they have their own administrative offices now. A major part, about 70 percent, of the service of many of the municipalities is transportation and utilities, and they have an infrastructure in place where they have worked with the department of transportation in delivering those services. Those will be transferred. They will take on those services from transportation as well as continue their administrative services. We have been working with them in the transfer of many of the administrative functions that were done here in Edmonton and literally stamped by their reeve, which is the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in approval. Their budgets were all approved originally through the Department of Municipal Affairs, and now that function will be transferred as they become an MD.

They're fully capable administratively – and their staff is too – of taking these over almost immediately. We will work with them and have said that they must maintain the existing staff for a year, because after we move them forward, they will make those decisions of who they hire and what they do just as a normal municipal district does. There are certainly individuals who thought that we shouldn't even be passing a restriction of a year onto them, but we think that's fair to the employees of the present system, and that will allow a transition and a continuity in service. So the question is a good question.

5:00

The unique nature of IDs and how they were structured with the Department of Municipal Affairs answers your question in that they're already trained. All we have to do is sever the cord, and they will function very well. Part of the reason for this is that many of them originally did not only have the expertise but the tax base to go on their own. Many of these IDs have increased their population as well as have tremendous resource and tax base there and can certainly function as a municipal district. Some of the IDs – and I say this without hurting some of the municipal districts that are there – can function better as a municipal district than some of the MDs that are there now. They have a better tax base, and they have infrastructure that's as good or better than other areas in the province for their tax base. So we look forward to a speedy transition.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's not a very long one. I'm just kind of curious about the purpose of the Bill. Maybe I should have done more in second reading, but I'm going to take a little advantage here in committee.

My understanding of IDs is that they are for people that couldn't afford in most cases to be MDs, and therefore they give up a certain amount of autonomy. The minister, as he said, is the reeve really for the ID. In this day and age when government is downloading onto MDs – and I'm not trying to be political here. It's just the nature of events. The local government is carrying more weight than it did in the past. The grants are drying up, and this minister has said that he's cutting back 20 percent. Why would we try and facilitate IDs becoming MDs when it's not as desirable as it was a few years ago? There didn't seem to be any great demand by IDs then to become MDs. Why do we have a Bill that to me looks like a dead end? Why would IDs want to be MDs now that didn't want to be a few years ago?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a few comments. I certainly agree with the minister and the sponsor of this Bill. I've said for the last 20 years that we don't need four or five layers of rural local government. We can start with special areas. We can start with improvement districts, MDs, and counties. I don't agree with the hon. Member for Redwater there that IDs didn't want to become MDs a few years ago, because we have continued to get IDs. I can remember distinctly that the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House was – I think they called them an advisory council at the time, and they've become a very good MD. I might add not because he was on the council but because of their tax base, really what it's all about.

I personally won't be happy until we do get maybe two layers or three layers at the maximum of counties and MDs. For years we called them advisory council board members. I personally have four improvement districts in my area, and I can tell you for sure that we don't need the Minister of Municipal Affairs being the reeve for the improvement districts. It's not being fair to the minister, because how can the minister know the circumstances that he's signing as reeve of those improvement districts? Sure there are going to be some transaction problems, but the outcome, when this is all done, is the improvement district residents are going to be very happy.

When IDs were first started I don't know how many years back – we'd have to ask the Member for Redwater because he's been around quite a while; some of us younger people wouldn't know – they were started for an absolutely good reason: they did not have the proper tax base. I personally have land in an improvement district, and I have land in an MD, just a little bit in each, I might add. Certainly we treated improvement districts a lot differently than we did MDs, but they have grown up, and some of the best land in all Alberta is in improvement districts.

So although we maybe have to look at the transportation grants and the municipal grants, there is no reason in my mind that they can't some day all become MDs, and I hope they do. Just because I was there 19 years as a councillor and reeve for the MD of Fairview, I'm not suggesting that the MD is any better than a county system, but I'm sure I'll live long enough that we'll have counties and we'll have MDs in the province of Alberta. It will be a very good system, and it will be a burden off whoever's the minister, because I can't see a minister sitting there and signing documents when how could he possibly know what's needed in the area and why they're doing this and why they're not doing that.

So I look very favourably on this Bill, and I support it 100 percent. Thank you.

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

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't going to make any comments at this stage, but I was provoked into it. The comments that the hon. Member for Redwater makes – really just a bit of history. I was chairman of an advisory council, and we did go through the incorporation process. We were very ready for it. I guess if you look back to why IDs were set up, they were set up because of a very low tax base, and they could not support the administration and the infrastructure that had to be in place. But they have grown beyond that, and I'm not as optimistic as the hon. Member for Dunvegan that all IDs will eventually be incorporated, because I don't believe they have the people in a defined area, nor do they have the tax base to support the infrastructure that's necessary.

Certainly since '85, '86 many of the IDs that are currently IDs have been wanting to move to the MD status. There have been a number of issues that have prevented that, and this amendment Act really allows that to happen without a separate incorporation being set up. When the MD of Clearwater was established, we had a separate Act that set us up, and currently there is no mechanism in place to allow that to happen without a separate Act coming through.

So I certainly support this incorporation portion of this Act, except that I do not agree with having to take on the staff as they incorporate. In our situation when we incorporated, we contracted out the maintenance. We had 12 grader beats. This is going to be extremely important. When the municipality wants to get to the efficient way of doing things, I'd like to know how they're going to keep the Transportation staff on. They don't own any graders; Alberta Transportation owns the graders. So now we're going to be into a situation where they have to take the staff, and they don't have the graders. I disagree with that.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I'm very insulted to see the sign over there. I know it had to be intended for us, because no Tory over here could read it. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have a citation? [interjections] Order. The Member for Redwater in debate.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, we're getting to the point now. I understand and I really appreciate that the members for Dunvegan and Rocky Mountain House have enlightened me on that. The Member for Dunvegan was worried about the minister not knowing what he was doing when he signed the papers and that, but I don't see why it would start to bother him now because in all the years I've watched this government, they quite often signed things when they didn't know what they were doing. So that didn't make an argument in my case.

I want to add only one more question. Maybe the Member for Peace River or anybody could answer it here, have input. How is this driven? Does an ID have to initiate it if they want to become an MD, or can it be forced on the ID? [interjection] This member says that they don't have to, and I always listen to him.

5:10

MR. CHAIRMAN: Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the initiation process would still start with the improvement district. The ones that I am aware of have actually asked the minister to initiate the process. I had mentioned in my remarks during second reading that in fact four improvement districts had made application and were hoping for a tentative target date of incorporation of January 1, 1994. That would definitely be the process.

Mr. Chairman, unless there is additional discussion, which I perceive there is not, I would like to call for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I guess I want to direct a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Member for Peace River has responded to a degree. I'd like to have a response from the Minister of Municipal Affairs giving us some indication that this in fact is not going to create a hardship for any of the existing improvement districts. I don't want someone coming

back to us a few months down the road saying, "Why did you guys support that Bill?" I don't have any indication that there's objection to it, but I just want to be assured. I want it on the record.

DR. WEST: The history of improvement districts becoming MDs has been very positive. Having autonomy has efficiencies in it as well as being a benefit to self-determination in planning and a lot of other things. I can just say that I see it as a positive move for them, and I can see growth coming out of this in these new MDs.

MR. WHITE: Further to the minister. That being the case, that the minister is fully convinced that benefits will accrue to those that live in the IDs, is it not incumbent upon him, then, to ask not merely the appointed representatives but to ask the people by way of a plebiscite or something of that nature? How does the minister know for certain the people that live in these areas do in fact want that to happen and have the knowledge to know whether the benefits are there or not. There are some definite changes.

The second question, so we needn't prolong this any longer, sir, is will there be – section 13(2)(i):

The members of the advisory council for the former improvement district are deemed to be the council of the municipal district until a new council is elected under the Local Authorities Election Act. When will that election occur? Is it to occur in the normal case so these people are assumed to be elected and have all the power to set their own rate of remuneration as well as a number of other powers that do not accrue to them under the current Municipal Government Act?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if the member is aware that the improvement districts now do have elected advisory boards, which for all intents and purposes deal with local issues, deal with their electors the same way as the municipal districts would do after incorporation. In improvement district No. 23, which happens to be one of the four awaiting approval, they have requested that the minister approve a plebiscite which will be held. I'm not sure if this is the case in each improvement district, but I anticipate that it would probably be one of the methods. Certainly the presently elected board does speak for the residents of the improvement district in the same fashion.

Your question about the election of a council: the present improvement district board would stay on as an interim council until the next election period, at which time they would then go through the election processes the same as municipal districts do now.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 9 agreed to]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

5:20

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills, and the committee reports that Bill 9, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1993, has been passed.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, we've had a tremendous week in the House, and I'm sure that all members are eager to go home to their loved ones.

[At 5:21 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]