

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, October 18, 1993**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 93/10/18

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

At the beginning of this week we ask You, Father, to renew and strengthen in us the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of this Legislature.

We ask You also in Your divine providence to bless and protect the Assembly and the province we are elected to serve.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of our Legislative Assembly His Excellency Ugurtan Akinci, the ambassador of Turkey to Canada. His Excellency is accompanied today by his wife, Ayla. His Excellency was appointed the ambassador of Turkey to Canada in January 1992. He is visiting Alberta at this time on his first official visit. We welcome this opportunity to meet His Excellency to discuss ongoing commercial, cultural, and educational co-operation between Alberta and Turkey. Potential trade opportunities with Turkey have been identified in a number of areas including oil and gas equipment sales and environmental services. I would ask His Excellency and his wife, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery, to now rise and receive the warm and gracious welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**

MR. RENNER: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had under consideration a number of Bills and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends the following Bills be proceeded with: Pr. 1, Karen Mavis Poor Eagle Adoption Act; Pr. 7, Gerald Edwin Crabbe Adoption Act; Pr. 8, Michael Caleborn Rothery Adoption Act; Pr. 9, Adrienne Heather Cupido Adoption Act; Pr. 10, The King's College Amendment Act, 1993; Pr. 12, First Canadian Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, 1993; Pr. 13, Gardner Bible College Amendment Act, 1993; and Pr. 14, Benaning Osi Adoption Act.

Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that the following Bill be proceeded with, with some amendments: Pr. 11, Newman Theological College Continuance Act.

Mr. Speaker, I request the concurrence of the Assembly to these recommendations.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give notice that at the end of question period under Standing Order 40 I will be presenting a motion to the Assembly to recognize

Persons Day, the 64th anniversary of the Privy Council decision that recognized Canadian women as legal persons, and as such they were entitled to hold elected office and act as magistrates.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 35 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I table with the Assembly four copies of a list of candidates who have failed to file financial statements within the time frame permitted by statute.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table with the Assembly four copies of page 6 that was used by the special advisory committee that assisted the Minister of Education in the preparation of his documentation for the roundtables, documents that I intend to use in question period.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 44 students in grades 5 and 6 from Princeton elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. David Nelson and Ms Rose Rybotycki. I would ask that they rise and receive the customary warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. WEST: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you six students who are winners of the poster and essay contests for Municipal Involvement Week '93. When I call their names, if they'd stand so we could identify them and then remain standing until I've called all the names out. The winners of the poster contest are Ashley Brown of Rycroft school in Rycroft, Alanna Jayson of Manchaban school in Cochrane, Aimee Rau of Chestermere high school in Chestermere, and Jennifer Warwick of St. Anne school in Fort McMurray. The winners of the essay contest are Jennifer Hale of Savanna school in Spirit River and Vincent Leonty of Two Hills high school in Willingdon. They are seated in the members' gallery. They are standing at the present time. Extend a cordial welcome to these people.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 48 visitors from the Maurice Lavallée school in Edmonton. The students are accompanied by Christine Foisy-Erickson, Stella Rouleau, Marie Deroshers-Kingston, Mrs. Grondin, Mrs. Lachance, and the school monitor Paul. I understand they're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to the Members of the Legislative Assembly today a classroom of students from the Rio Terrace school. They are accompanied by their teacher Claire Desrochers and by parents Mrs. Haug, Mr. Paterson, and Dr. Buka. I would ask that they

stand and receive the welcome of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

Government Appointments

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, during the election the Premier of Alberta promised Albertans that he would clean up the patronage system. On May 25 the Premier wrote to ministers of his cabinet advising them that they were to create review panels to appoint people to provincial boards and commissions. Since May 25, 57 people have been appointed to various boards and tribunals without the use of these review panels, including the co-chair of the Conservative provincial campaign and one of the Premier's closest advisers. The review panels, unfortunately, are as scarce as Conservatives are going to be next Monday. Mr. Premier, the system still smells. You're the boss. How can something as simple as setting up review panels that you ordered to be put into place five months ago – how can they not yet be functioning?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's coming along quite nicely, and I'm sure that once everything is in place the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition will be mighty pleased.

Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate. Appointments to hospital boards are not patronage appointments. This is volunteerism. I will give you an example of what patronage is. Patronage is when a person like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in her previous life gets appointed the chairman of the CNR, which pays a handsome salary indeed. That is patronage. Appointments to hospital boards: that is volunteerism.

1:40

MR. DECORE: Baloney. I wish I could be more profound.

Mr. Speaker, the order that the Premier gave asked that these review panels include members of the public. I would like the Premier to tell Albertans the criteria for picking Albertans to sit on these review panels.

MR. KLEIN: Basically anyone who wants to serve the government in a volunteer capacity submits a résumé, a CV, and those are reviewed by cabinet. I've asked that ministers set up a review process involving the personnel administration office to make sure that the people who are appointed are indeed qualified for those appointments.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, five months is a long time, and the Premier is pretty good at breaching promises with the public. When is he going to stop pussyfooting and tell Albertans, tell this Assembly exactly when this new process is going to start working? When are all of these review panels going to be working?

MR. KLEIN: Perhaps the hon. Justice minister could shed some light on this, because he is the minister in charge of government reorganization. Mr. Speaker, I would say certainly before the end of the year, perhaps within the next two or three weeks, we will have the process in place.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I would supplement that I'm quite certain that within the next two weeks the hon. leader will have the information.

MR. DECORE: Good.

Education Roundtables

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my questions are directed to the Minister of Education. Last Thursday in this Assembly the Minister of Education admitted that he had added kindergartens as a target to the chopping or the cutting lists for education. He did so in isolation from the advice and even the knowledge of his roundtable advisory committee. We've now learned that this same advisory committee knew nothing about the statement in the final document that talks about having programs for disabled children cut out, chopped away from the education process. Mr. Minister, my first question to you is this. You admitted last time that you were responsible for the skulduggery in putting kindergartens on the list. Explain, Mr. Minister, why you have put programs for disabled children on the chopping block.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to indicate that it is quite a standard policy of the government to use the work and advice of advisory committees on various topics, and in this particular case I think the advisory committee did a good job. But I think there is something rather inconsistent in the thrust of this particular question because an advisory committee is an advisory committee. We look at the recommendations that come from that particular source, we add to them, and we make ultimate decisions. The final workbook for the roundtable that was provided to all participants, as I've said over and over again, deals with some possibilities. We're looking for the input from these roundtables and other sources before we make our final decision. I've indicated that the workbook is a product of the Department of Education, and the minister approved the final copy.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Minister, why would your department and why would you manipulate your own steering committee in not giving them the knowledge, not asking for advice on something as critical as this one; that is, chopping away a program that deals with disabled children in Alberta? Why didn't you at least tell them about it?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this is utter nonsense in terms of talking about chopping and so forth. As I have clearly indicated, this workbook was a basis for discussion at the roundtables. A number of alternatives and possibilities were put forward. I'm happy to report that at the Calgary roundtable just completed there were a number of additional items and innovative ideas that came forward, which I think is a very positive thing. In terms of the workbook we wanted to add to it. We wanted to make sure that it was as comprehensive as possible, and that is what we did.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it is not nonsense to cut away programs for disabled children. It is not nonsense to cut away kindergartens. It is not nonsense to ruin an education system that has taken decades to work up.

The final question is this, Mr. Speaker: why, Mr. Minister, are you so intent on creating an agenda where you push costs down to local ratepayers rather than accepting the responsibility yourself for disabled children and for kindergartens?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, unlike the party across the way, the government is looking at the major task that we have ahead of balancing the provincial budget on the basis of first listening to Albertans, putting alternatives forward, providing a great deal of information to them. I find it rather unusual that the spokesman for brutal cuts across the board or other members of the party opposite who have also suggested that we need to have

cuts in the area of education are taking this particular tactic with respect to what is a very open process that we engaged in.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did attend the roundtable discussions in Calgary. One of the concerns that was raised, as the minister heard, was that some of the groups that are going to be potentially affected, such as ECS operators, racial minorities, english as a second language, aboriginals, and others, were either not represented or were underrepresented in the Calgary roundtable. After the minister heard the concerns on the weekend, I'd like to have the minister tell us what he plans to do to change that situation for the roundtable this weekend in Edmonton.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, at the roundtable in Calgary there was a very broad cross section of the educational community including students, parents, teachers, representatives of various stakeholder groups, and, yes, representatives of organizations or of areas involving minorities. I think it was a very broadly represented group, and I think the response from the roundtable was very thorough. There were a great number of ideas brought forward, and I think some of the comments from that roundtable reflected those areas.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, if they were so broadly represented, I'm not sure why the Catholic board had to have another meeting with 400 people downtown.

I'd like to ask the minister to expand the information here and to commit that he will arrange for the roundtables this weekend, for the plenary sessions especially, to be either taped or broadcast by cable companies so that all Albertans can be privy to what happened, not just the 240 people who attend. Will you do it or not?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate again for the hon. members opposite that, first of all, we have now printed and sent out across the province to interested Albertans some 14,000 copies of the workbook, which I think is a major effort to provide information to people across this province. Secondly, we are aware of and encourage local meetings to be held, such as the one in Calgary that was held by the Calgary separate school board. The roundtables are going forward as key meetings in this overall process. There is an overall effort to reach Albertans on this particular question. I could go on to add that we've just completed seven regional meetings on education funding and school building plans and so forth at which over 700 people were present.

MR. HENRY: Last week it was a good idea, a good suggestion to broadcast. I guess the answer this week is no.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: given that he's refused to have hearings across the province following these roundtables, will he at least commit to Albertans and to members of this Legislature that the findings of the roundtables that are being held by groups such as the Catholic school board in Calgary and the Alberta Teachers' Association and many other groups will be a part of the final report and not just the two roundtables in Edmonton and Calgary?

1:50

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it's kind of interesting that the party opposite has been very interested in there being a report on the specific roundtables. Yes, there will be a written report on the two major roundtables which are being held. In addition to that, as

I've indicated, we are looking for, we are receiving, we are listening to input from a wide variety of sources that are coming in on these important issues, and that will be done.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner, followed by Edmonton-Roper.

Energy Programs

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Could the Minister please inform this House as to the value of royalties foregone for the royalty holiday period that expired on August 31, 1993?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, for clarification, the royalty holiday I believe the hon. member is talking about is the development holiday that actually expired originally at the end of March and was extended to the end of June and then the end of July. We only allowed for those that had applications for licences in place to proceed till the end of August. The holiday actually helped our industry very much in that it employed a tremendous number of people in the industry and put the industry back into a full working position where we actually saw through our normal slow time an increase in our rig activities and an increase in job positions opening up in the field. So the benefit was to see the industry come forward with a projection and an ability this year to drill over 9,000 wells in western Canada. Over 8,000 of those will be in the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise the House what the value of the Alberta royalty tax credit is to the petroleum industry?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta royalty tax credit was put in place in the mid-70s to take away the concept of the dual taxation that was imposed actually by the Liberal government under Pierre Trudeau, not that I would bring that up . . . [interjections] The tax credit has been fundamental in ensuring that fair treatment of taxation was in place for the oil and gas industry. As we've gone through, the benefit and the value to the industry is that from the Alberta side – and Alberta corporate tax recognizes this – royalties should be treated almost as an operating expense, which they are not under federal tax legislation. The other value is that it provides the opportunity for dollars to flow back into the industry for further development, and clearly we can see this with the activity levels that have taken place in Alberta and the reinvestment through land sales. These dollars are flowing back into the industry here in Alberta.

MR. HIERATH: Is the minister re-evaluating the tax credit structure to the industry in light of the fiscal target of a 20 percent reduction in government spending?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, as was indicated earlier in this House, particularly in the springtime, all our programs are under review. The evaluations are taking place, and at an appropriate time we will come forward with the recommendations of those evaluations.

Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation

MR. CHADI: Mr. Speaker, this government talks about fiscal responsibility. Unfortunately this supposed shared sacrifice does

not extend to some government appointments. While poor and disadvantaged Albertans are being cruelly singled out by this government, some appointees are being paid more than the remuneration that is recommended. My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain to Albertans how the seven part-time members of the board of the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation are able to roll up \$206,000 in board and committee fees during the last year?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'll just answer briefly. No. I don't have that information in front of me. I'll defer to the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. CHADI: All right. Since there is clearly no answer to that . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Hon. members in the opposition caucus, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper has the floor for a supplemental question.

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me try the Provincial Treasurer then. Can the Provincial Treasurer explain why Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation members are being remunerated by ministerial order at double the hourly rate specified under the committee remuneration order?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'll provide the hon. member with an answer when I have the facts.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as I suggested earlier, there is an amount being paid that is double the amount that's recommended.

My question is going to be to the Premier. Will this Premier tell Albertans now, in front of the cameras and the people in the public gallery and the people in the members' gallery, will he make a commitment to roll back these excessive amounts that are being paid?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we're appealing to all segments of the public sector to sacrifice and to roll back starting with ministers and MLAs and certainly those in senior management positions not only in government but within those agencies that receive government funding. So I would naturally assume that these people would be included in that mix. Absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: When?

MR. KLEIN: The process is going on right now, as you know. Mr. Speaker, we are negotiating now with . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. There are only three questions: a main question and supplementals. "When?" would be a fourth. The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Social Assistance Policy

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. The minister has stated on many occasions that the intent of welfare reform is to get people off welfare and into long-lasting employment. It is also a fact that with a provincial unemployment rate of 9.7 percent and

a job market that does not support merely a high school diploma, returning must be at a postsecondary level. However, universities and colleges are turning away thousands of students every year. My question to the minister is this: given the current state of affairs in this province, where does the minister expect those that wish to get off welfare to go to be retrained?

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question asked of course directly deals with the three-year welfare strategy that this government has in place. As you're aware, our caseload earlier this year had increased to over 91,000 cases, which is around 180,000 people. Since then, of course, the caseload dropped by 18,000, and 5,000 of those 18,000 are taking training programs through different institutions across the province. That is exactly how the program was intended to work: to get people off welfare and back into the work force, hopefully in private industry, through training programs of this nature.

There are other initiatives going on besides that, Mr. Speaker, that will help people get back into the work force, and we'll continue to work at those initiatives. For an example, the Alberta community employment program, which was introduced as one of the initiatives of the three-year welfare reform, as of September 15 placed 427 individuals into that particular program with 46 municipalities and 101 nonprofit organizations participating, a very successful program. The northern Alberta job corps program as of September created 250 new training positions, and people are actively working and off social assistance. A special agreement with the environmental protection branch has transferred a million dollars that will create already 150 positions. I can go on with my list to show how successful the program is.

2:00

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. What is the role of Advanced Education and Career Development in implementing the welfare reform program?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, our department is working very closely with Family and Social Services in providing a variety of services to help the SFI people in this province. We provide counseling services and job search and training and upgrading and placement services. Our department has also acted as an adviser to Family and Social Services in the implementation of their job-creation and wage subsidy programs.

I might also say that Family and Social Services has provided \$2.7 million to training and to access spaces in our public colleges and institutions in this province. As the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services said, there are some 5,000 people that have accessed those programs, and I believe that it's doing an admirable job of endeavouring to address that problem.

MR. PHAM: My final supplemental question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development again. Does the minister have a co-ordinated plan with the Minister of Family and Social Services to set aside spaces for individuals who wish to take advantage of the welfare reforms?

MR. ADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, yes, we do have a program that sets aside specific spaces, and there's funding there.

I suspect that the hon. member is concerned that setting aside these spaces causes an increase in the problem of access for students otherwise. This is not the case, because as I mentioned earlier, there is specific funding available which has served to increase the spaces available for these particular students. So, no, it will not impact on other students as far as access to postsecondary institutions is concerned.

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

Students Finance

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Federal and provincial privatization of student loans will discriminate against low-income students by forcing banks into means tests as part of the application process. What will the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development do to ensure that student loans are not just available to the rich?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, our province for a long, long time has had a student finance program in place that has been based on the needs of the student, and there's an assessment done to ensure that the student has adequate funds to let him access postsecondary education in this province. Certainly there will be a component that will always be involved that will deal with the needs of the student to ensure that he can access postsecondary education in the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister be more reasonable and help students by rejecting an increase in the number of courses a student must take to be eligible for a full loan?

MR. ADY: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. The noise was such that I missed part of his question. I wonder if he could just repeat it, please.

DR. MASSEY: Will the minister be more reasonable and help students by rejecting an increase in the number of courses a student must take to be eligible for a full loan?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, this is a requirement pertaining to the Canada loan portion of the student loan program that impacts on our students and that's brought on us by the federal government. We would have to negotiate with them to have that removed, and at this point it has not been accomplished.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will the minister protect students against increases in interest rates?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why the member would have a concern at this stage about where interest rates are at and where they're heading. I don't foresee that being a particular problem unless the hon. member knows something about what the Bank of Canada plans to do in the near future that I can't perceive. Interest rates seem, in worst case, to be at least stable. If they're going anywhere, it would be down. If the day comes when our students are faced with exorbitant interest rates, I'm sure we would have to look at it to protect them from something they just couldn't handle.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

Chinook Arch Library System

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chinook Arch library system recently wrote to the Minister of Community Development. Granted this letter was prior to the library review task force report being released, but I was wondering if the minister could tell us if he can address the major concern of the task force not adhering to their mandate.

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

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were indeed legitimate concerns raised by the chairman of the task force, but I am pleased to take this opportunity to clarify for all members of this Assembly how very pleased I am with the report of the library review task force. I think that it is very clear from this report that the legitimate concerns raised by the chair were addressed and were not part of the final report.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister, then, tell this Assembly whether or not the Chinook Arch can expect the provincial government to pay for this year's operating costs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fairness to all Alberta libraries I will not be asking for moneys back for this fiscal year, but I am pleased to note that in the true spirit of helping their neighbours, other library systems have advanced loans to the Chinook library system. Certainly the Marigold library system and the Northern Lights library system have shown foresight and fairness in their offer of assistance to Chinook Arch.

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, what assurance can the minister give Chinook Arch that they will not have to borrow money in the future to operate their system?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I will simply reiterate my position of support for the Chinook Arch system and give my assurance that in fiscal year 1994-95 they will receive their share of operating grants.

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

Federal/Provincial Fiscal Relations

DR. PERCY: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this election our Premier and Provincial Treasurer have been strangely mute when it comes to defending Alberta's economic interests and extracting economic commitments from federal politicians. Mr. Provincial Treasurer, the Alberta government released a document last year that put the price tag of federal off-loading on the province of Alberta at \$1 billion for 1992-93 and \$900 million for the previous year. Can you tell me, Mr. Provincial Treasurer, what strategy your government has in place for dealing with whomever becomes Prime Minister to stop this off-loading on the province?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we will encourage the next government of Canada to take a similar plan of attack to what we

have taken in balancing its books: getting its financial house in order by getting its spending in line with its revenues, not to do it on the taxation side but instead to do it on the spending side.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear, then, that the Provincial Treasurer is condoning the off-loading of these transfers onto the poor and Alberta postsecondary students in the province.

Mr. Provincial Treasurer, why haven't we heard complaints from the Alberta government regarding fairness in federal procurement expenditures by supply and services Canada when our share of these expenditures, the most recent data, amount to 4.2 percent and our share of economic activity is over 10 percent? Could you tell me: is that fair?

2:10

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism is chomping at the bit to respond to the hon. member's question, but I would point out, as the hon. member is making gestures towards Albertans, that Albertans should know that the hon. member is talking about one taxpayer. The Alberta taxpayer pays taxes to the federal government and to the provincial government. If he thinks he can play the sleight of hand game of moving dollars from one pocket to another, I'd suggest the hon. member think twice, because I think he's making a mistake in trying to deceive Albertans into thinking that if you just give a little bit more from the federal government, you don't need to take it from the provincial government. The hon. member knows that we're talking about one taxpayer.

I know my colleague the minister of economic development would like to respond further on the procurement matter.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it was only a matter of several months ago when in fact a news conference was held in the city of Edmonton at the federal building when the federal minister of public works, supply and services and the federal minister responsible for procurement and I, when I was Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services of Alberta, signed an agreement which was made public and, secondly, worked towards an instrument that would allow all Alberta entrepreneurs in fact to access federal procurement contracts on a day-to-day basis. Now, this goes hand in hand with our western purchasing information network, the tie-in that Alberta has with other jurisdictions not only in western Canada but in Canada itself. We believe that the instruments are now put in place to in fact ensure that Alberta entrepreneurs have better access to federal contracts than ever before.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, thank you. As an apologist, Mr. Treasurer, for your Tory counterparts where has your voice been and that of your front bench with regards to GST on books, which is really a tax on education and on reading? Where's the fairness in that?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows, because he might even have been a recipient of some consulting dollars, I'm sure, from the department of the Treasury, when this government, the provincial government of Alberta, was the only provincial government in Canada who went to court to fight the GST. It was very clear that when the government of Canada put the GST on schools, universities, colleges, hospitals, municipalities, this was the only province. This was the province that

provided information to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities so they could make their case. Let it be clear that it was this Alberta government that was the only provincial government who fought the federal government on the imposition of the GST, especially as it relates to schools and to books.

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

Senior Citizens Programs

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is to the hon. Minister of Community Development. I had the opportunity on Thursday evening to speak at the Golden Age Club in Calgary to about 80 seniors. I believe this was the first public discussion following the tabling of Mrs. Bowker's report. I would like to bring a concern on behalf of the seniors to the minister. Quite clearly they need to know what the next step is with respect to some of the issues and programs that were tabled in that report. So to the minister: could he please identify the next step with respect to Mrs. Bowker's report?

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

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of this Assembly are aware and as the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has correctly pointed out, that report of the seniors' roundtable prepared by Mrs. Bowker was very recently tabled. I wish to point out that the participants at that roundtable were asked to complete an evaluation form, and the response was overwhelmingly positive: 81 percent of those who responded were satisfied with the role they played at the roundtable.

Mrs. Bowker's report is not the end of the consultation process. We're still talking to seniors about the report and getting their feedback. As seniors have said, seniors have contributed in the past to build this province and they're prepared to contribute in the present to build the future. For the past several months a group of six seniors' representatives, including Neil Reimer, the president of the Alberta Council of Aging, has been working on a plan for an ongoing consultation process. I've been told by this group that I might expect that plan in the month of November. As well, the Seniors' Advisory Council will be meeting with seniors throughout this province to continue the dialogue that was started in Red Deer and to discuss the Bowker report recommendations. As always, of course, I'm happy to personally entertain the views of individual seniors who write or call with their views.

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Speaker, my second question, then, has to do with the fact that this report covered a number of areas, a number of jurisdictions, and they needed to hear what the priorities are with respect to handling seniors' programs. Does the minister have any sense of the priorities that are identified?

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

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the recommendations of the report, there were 20 existing programs that were looked at. The major thrust of the recommendations is towards having seniors pay for services according to income with protection given to low-income seniors and, in some cases, to middle-income seniors. The second thrust involved efforts to improve the administration, maintenance, and delivery of programs. Finally, there were some programs that were identified as programs which should be retained or improved without consideration of reductions.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Forest Management

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rationalization of the forest districts was to have been completed by now. It has been held up for only one reason, and that is the final decision as to the location of the Edson-Whitecourt forest district headquarters. My question is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Have you accepted management's report on the reorganization of the forest districts, including the recommendation from management for the location of the headquarters of each forest district?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I have accepted the rationale that my staff have come back to me with in response to my inquiries to them as to how we can move into a more integrated approach in forest management. We have currently 10 forests in the province and about 40 district offices. I want to get down to about six regional offices and anywhere from 15 to 20 district offices – it's not set at this point in time – that will have more responsibility for managing our forests. The hon. member has talked about one of those either district or regional offices. A final decision has not been made on that. There are a number of others that a final decision has not been made on either. We continue the consultation and the discussion process, and we'll be bringing forward those decisions as soon as they're available.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LANGEVIN: Mr. Speaker, again to the minister of the environment: given that the report was completed and presented to cabinet some time ago, how could the location of mainly one headquarters cause such a delay?

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure where the hon. member gets information about what has gone to cabinet or has not gone to cabinet. I've not brought this matter to cabinet. We are discussing it with my colleagues. We are discussing it with our field people. Again, it's very much a part of the consolidation of the Department of Environmental Protection. It's in keeping with our government's initiative to streamline, to reduce overlap and waste. I want to come forward with a decision on all of these areas of the province just as quickly as possible.

MR. LANGEVIN: My final question, Mr. Speaker, again to the minister of the environment: could the minister advise this House how many dollars this will save Albertans and the efficiency of the proposed system?

MR. EVANS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, of course it's impossible to determine an exact amount that will be saved. Over time there will be very considerable amounts that will be saved. Basically what we're concentrating on now is improved efficiency that will translate into major savings, but at this point in time I do not have at my fingertips an estimate of what that might be.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

2:20

Education Roundtables

(continued)

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend the first roundtables on the future of education in Alberta were held in Calgary. As you've already heard, about 120 people attended the session at Mount Royal College, and I'm told that about 400 or so attended at the Stampede grounds. To the minister: would the minister explain how his expenditures on this roundtable process provide benefits to all Albertans?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Aw, come on. This is the world series; three puffballs and you're out. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order please. Time is flying. We'll make a record today if we keep moving.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think the funds spent on these roundtables and the other provincially based meetings that we have been holding with respect to education represent funds very well applied to a most important area of the government's operations and one of its priority areas. In terms of the benefits, I think the very important thing is that at these roundtables we bring together people that represent a number of sectors that are connected with the area of education. They have an opportunity to sit down, to exchange views, to check perceptions. The common areas of understanding and agreement that are reached at these roundtables are very important in assistance to the government as it goes about making decisions in this area.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, there's only one other education roundtable planned: for Edmonton this weekend. Why are you limiting participation in this important process to only those stakeholders in our two largest cities?

MR. JONSON: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it should be clarified and emphasized that at the roundtables themselves we are not talking to and have not brought to these roundtables just stakeholders in the traditional sense of, say, the Alberta School Boards Association or the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association representatives. We have invited students and parents and members of the business community. So we have very, very large stakeholder groups in terms of the general population represented there.

Another aspect, though, that I would like to emphasize in response to the hon. member's question is that I think it should be really kept in mind, Mr. Speaker, that in terms of consultation on the fiscal realities facing the province and facing education, education was out in front in terms of these discussions, first of all, with our fiscal reality discussions of over a year ago across the regions of the province. I will not go through the whole list of activities we've been engaged in that I've reported on before in question period, but there has been very extensive meeting and consultation.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the deadline for the submission of the responses to those 1,200 or 1,400 or 16,000, I guess – I'm not sure which now. [interjection] Fourteen thousand? What is the deadline for responses to the minister?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that November 1 is the date that we hope to have these responses in.

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

Access Network

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister responsible for Access is undoubtedly aware that satellite conference technology does exist for television and that communication and education are absolutely essential to us as a society. Through this satellite technology other countries and at least one neighbouring Canadian province are able to make credit courses available from higher educational institutions. To the minister responsible for Access: given the government's desperate moves recently to balance its books, has this minister explored the money-making possibilities for Access in utilizing this technology?

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Well, that's encouraging.

I wonder, then, if this minister would at least tell us what Dennis Anderson said about this technology in his report. Is he now willing to share that with us?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I didn't commission any report from Dennis Anderson.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: I think Alberta taxpayers footed the bill for about \$14,000 in relation to something that Dennis Anderson did with Access. I don't see the need for secrecy, Mr. Speaker; do you?

Given that last week this minister did promise us a full report regarding the fate of Access – and I'd like to underscore the word "full" – can he now tell us the date on which he will share that full report with Albertans?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, there is a tremendous amount of review going on: boards, agencies, and commissions. In due course we will reveal those reviews.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

Prostitution

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Justice. A recent article quotes you about the possibility of licensing brothels. Could you please elaborate?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not so certain that I have jurisdiction over brothels such that I could license them, but the item is certainly of interest of late. As members may recall, in the estimates last Wednesday the Member for Leduc brought up the issue of what we might perhaps do as we try to address the plague of prostitution and what it does in our cities and in fact the people that are affected by it. I took his suggestion and perhaps expanded a bit on it, not with any desire to in fact say that we are going to license brothels. What I would like to do is have a full public debate on what we can do with the area of prostitution, because there are three levels of government that seem to be stymied in coming up with anything concrete.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Present legislation does fine the practitioners of prostitution. Would you consider equally applying this legislation to the customers by fining them and publishing their names?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, that's again an item that's been at issue, and frankly it isn't in my jurisdiction as to whether the names are published or not. If people appear at court, all court documents are in fact public, and if the press wishes to publish those names, that's within their domain.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm concerned about child prostitution. What initiatives is the Department of Justice taking forward to prevent the increase of child prostitution?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, probably the most odious part of the whole area of prostitution is in fact child prostitution, as we discussed, and the Member for Edmonton-Centre was very eloquent on the seriousness of this component of prostitution. From the Crown prosecutor's point of view we pursue it with diligence. The police pursue it with diligence. Unfortunately – or fortunately, I guess, in other aspects; unfortunately in this aspect – when you bring the matter to court, you must have sufficient evidence to proceed on. In most instances the parties involved in child prostitution do not willingly come forward with their evidence, be that the prostitute or most certainly the john, and innocent bystanders or participatory bystanders do not come willingly forward. Until that happens or we can get some other concrete form of evidence, regretfully not much more is able to be done, but hopefully through this dialogue we can have any idea, good or bad, brought forward on how we can attack this profession that's been in existence for centuries.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired.

head: Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: Notice has been given of a desire to present a motion under Standing Order 40.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

2:30

Persons Day

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, October 18, is national Persons Day. All over Canada today women and men are remembering and honouring the tremendous achievements made by the five famous women from Alberta: Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, and Emily Murphy. It was through their tireless efforts in fighting all the way to the Privy Council that women today are considered as persons under the law and, as such, entitled to hold public office. Therefore, I ask for unanimous consent.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has requested unanimous consent for the moving of the motion as outlined. All those in favour of this request, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to move the motion.

Moved by Mrs. Soetaert:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta recognize and celebrate Persons Day. This day marks the 64th anniversary of the Privy Council ruling that legally recognized women as persons.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you. Now more than ever this Assembly needs to take some time and think about the contributions that the famous five have made to our province and to our country. It is especially important that we recognize these gains so that our policies promote a positive impact on Alberta women. Some of the issues that still need to be addressed to give women true equality and freedom to participate fully in our society include, firstly, women in poverty. Single women and single mothers make up 53 percent of social assistance recipients in Alberta. In 1992 about 40 percent of all recipients were single parents, and 96 percent of these are women. The proportion of the total welfare caseload consisting of single mothers has remained relatively constant over the past 20 years. Alberta has the second highest child poverty rate in Canada, just two-tenths of a percent behind Newfoundland.

A second issue is maintenance enforcement. There are hundreds of women who are destitute because of the province's inaction to implement a system to track down noncustodial parents. According to the Alberta advisory council on women, at least two-thirds of ex-husbands in Alberta default on their maintenance payments. The national action committee states that a major contributor to the poverty of women and children is the failure of the province to introduce policies that make child support payments mandatory.

The third issue I'd like to address is the wage gap. While 60 percent of all working-age women in Alberta are in the labour force, the average full-time salary for Alberta women is about \$21,000, compared with \$32,000 for men. Stats Canada data shows that on average women with the same education and skills as men performing similar work are paid between \$6,000 and \$10,000 less per year.

A fourth point is politically. One of the most powerful and effective voices women in Alberta have is the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. The council has worked hard to make sure the government understands and acts on issues that are affecting women in Alberta. This is an important council that needs all of our support.

With these points in mind, Persons Day demands our thoughts, respect, and, most importantly, our commitment as legislators that we will not let the contributions made by our famous five be threatened. Women of Alberta should not have to live in fear that their hard-won rights are ever in jeopardy. It is time to make our famous five proud by addressing the needs of Alberta women.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to this Assembly on the subject of Persons Day. This is the 64th anniversary of the landmark decision referred to by the hon. member, a decision that in my view changed the face of Canadian politics. On October 18, 1929, the Privy Council of England, which was then the highest court in this land, ruled that women were persons and therefore eligible to become members of the Senate of Canada. Albertans can take particular pride in this decision because it was brought about through the efforts of the five women referred to by the hon. member, five Albertans: Henrietta Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby. For the interest of members of this Assembly, their photographs and portraits can be found on the walls of this building in the east wing of the main floor.

In honour of the famous five and of this historic Persons Case decision, October 18 is recognized across Canada each year as Persons Day. Before the famous five led this legal challenge, women were considered persons in matters respecting pains and penalties but not in matters respecting rights and privileges. In keeping with that idea, the then federal government would not appoint women to the Canadian Senate because only persons were eligible and women were not technically persons.

Nellie McClung once observed that people must know the past in order to understand the present and to face the future. Persons Day acknowledges the remarkable achievements of the famous five, and it is a celebration of the fact of their legacy that lives on in the actions and achievements of women today. I believe Albertans in this province have the commitment to continuing to build a province and a country in which women enjoy full political, economic, social, and legal equality. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I support this motion.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister who just spoke will know about this case because he will have been one of the students that studied this particular case in law school. Probably every law student, I think, in what was known as the British Commonwealth and is now known as the commonwealth of countries has studied the issue of women being individuals, being people on their own: being people, in fact. For many years there was a belief – and the case law showed it – that women were somehow chattels, that they were owned by men, that men told them what they could do and what they couldn't do.

Now, this challenge to what was then incredible law and understanding came from Albertans, five women who took on the world: the western world, the British world, the British parliamentary system. I hope that the Deputy Premier, if he could just take a moment to listen to this, could take this matter under some consideration along with the hon. minister and perhaps come forward with some collective enterprise, collective recognition, collective something that better acknowledges for Albertans the tremendous contribution that these five women made. There is an Emily Murphy park that we know in Edmonton. That was something that the city of Edmonton did. There isn't the knowledge that there should be by all Albertans of this tremendous accomplishment. Mr. Deputy Premier, it could be in the form of the naming of things; it could be in the form of some school initiative; I'm not sure. Our caucus is prepared to work with your caucus to make this better known, to make this better recognized, to make this better acknowledged for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the debate this afternoon with respect to the recognition of these outstanding ladies and women in our history is indeed a very important one. It is important that we have this discussion. The suggestions made by the Leader of the Opposition are indeed fine ones. It has been in the past, of course, the tradition of this Assembly to in fact recognize outstanding Albertans. As I recall, less than two years ago in the discussions that occurred in terms of electoral redistribution and the naming of constituencies, recognition certainly was given to the name McClung in terms of the designation of at least one constituency here in the city of Edmonton. There is a process for public buildings and other entities, monuments, in the province of Alberta to have names attached to them. We would be very, very happy to have the Liberal caucus be involved in this regard if they choose to be involved and come up with suggestions. There are everything from hills to mountains to rivers to streams to buildings that can deal with this.

MR. DECORE: A special committee.

MR. KOWALSKI: I hear the suggestion being made in the background about a special committee. There is one, Mr. Speaker, that includes various departments of the government, includes representatives from the historical resources people in the province of Alberta. We have the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, which is a lottery funded foundation that in fact looks at this activity and is involved in it. It was just a few days ago that the annual report was discussed in this Assembly when this particular minister dealt with his estimates.

The more we can do to protect and enhance the history of the province of Alberta, the better it is. I might just point out that in the past when the government has taken an initiative in this regard there has been some degree of criticism with respect to this matter, so we always have to find the balance. Why there has been criticism I don't understand and never could understand it, but it seems that Albertans somehow want to stay away from that. The government is wide open, happy to look forward to pursuing this matter and continuing it. I sincerely hope that when the government does move forward in recognizing certain individuals for their historical contribution in this province, in fact the hon. members here in this Assembly today will recognize this brief discussion we've had, so when that does occur, there will not be a great element of criticism addressed to those who have been recognized.

2:40

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to comment a few words on this very, very important motion that's in front of us today. It's difficult to believe that 64 years ago women were not recognized as legal persons, they didn't have the right to vote, they didn't have the right to participate fully, legally within society. There are members within this House – mind you, they'd have been very, very young at that particular time – that could probably recall having fit into that particular status. There is no question that in recent times, in the last couple of decades in particular, we have come a long, long way in recognizing the equality, the protection of individuals. Great strides were made, for example, in terms of federal legislation under the government led by the Rt. Hon. Pierre Trudeau. Great strides were made in the province of Alberta when this government was led by Peter Lougheed, in his very first term, in strengthening up considerably the drive towards equality by enhanced legislation. It has to be the goal of all of us as political leaders, as elected representatives to try to ensure that we do everything that ensures that we all within society are given equal opportunity. We can see in this House the change that has occurred in recent years in terms of people from various ethnic communities that some years ago we would not have seen, myself being a member of a so-called disadvantaged group.

Yes, we're all people. Women are persons. Women at times are regarded as one of those minority groups, disadvantaged groups. Yes, they are disadvantaged to a degree, but as far as a minority group is concerned, in many, many countries they form the majority. Yet when it comes to legislators, they don't form the majority. Again, it's very obvious just looking within this House that the women that sit in this House in terms of proportion to the total number of members is very, very small. We all have to continue to work towards that day when there is full equality for all.

There still is not full equality for women within Alberta, within Canada. There are members within this House that want to

dismantle, for example, the Alberta advisory council, which is very, very difficult to comprehend, or to turn it into a political animal led by a government member, which again would be wrong. The Alberta advisory council is there to promote the interests, to enhance opportunity towards equality for women. It becomes extremely important that we not only recognize women by naming parks, whatever, after them but that we go beyond that and we work to ensure that they are provided equal pay, that they are given an equal place in society, and that they are given the same equal opportunity as men. Only when we achieve that day can we say that we have really achieved equality.

Thank you.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support this motion. I believe it's important that we commit ourselves now to the suggestion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we in fact begin a process that will end in a collective memory of the legacy of these five women. I have spoken often in this House and in public about the difference that women make in public life. I believe that in all parties, all provinces, and all across this great country we have seen tremendous ground-swell attempts to encourage more women to participate in public life, and I am convinced that we have made a positive difference.

Mr. Speaker, the courage and the adventurous spirit of these five women cannot be underestimated. They were working against tremendous odds. They were women from humble beginnings. Emily Murphy was a clergyman's wife and had traveled to England with her husband and had written widely in England on child labour laws under the name of Janey Canuck. We can see her works in our libraries here. That part of her background is not well known. She became incensed when it was clear that she was not allowed to continue to sit as a magistrate in family court, so she collected four women, from again humble beginnings but women who cared about the plight of women in Alberta and Canada. Together they fought through the Supreme Court of Canada and lost and went to the Privy Council in the U.K. and won their case. For that we should be very grateful. All men and women should be grateful.

Mr. Speaker, we have never had, that I know of, a collective kind of memorial to this particular action. There is nothing that I know of in Alberta that says, "The Persons Case is now memorialized," for women not just of Alberta but for men and women of Canada and all of the Commonwealth nations. They struggled not just for the women here; they struggled for women everywhere and for men and women in public life everywhere. I want to ask the Deputy Premier if he will now commit to going along with the idea of an all-party committee, a small group of perhaps three people who can put forward a suitable idea to memorialize for everyone in this nation the immense and remarkable legacy of these five women. We would be very pleased to work along with the Deputy Premier in order to do this, and I'll ask him to commit to that now.

MR. SPEAKER: Regretfully there isn't a role that the hon. Deputy Premier can take. He's already participated in the debate, but perhaps there'll be another occasion.

Is the Assembly ready for the question on the motion as proposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't planning to speak to this motion, but I hasten to do so. I believe it is very important, and I speak in support of the motion. Persons Day is very symbolic. I think it's important for us to recognize the role of symbolism in our lives and in our work when we're in the Legislature and other places. The five women who challenged the law and the times were courageous but were not popular. They took a case on, and many people said that they were foolhardy. Many people said that they were upstarts, that they didn't know their place. Today if you take a survey of the members of the Assembly, I think we'll find unanimity that these women were right. Too often in our society we look – and we as legislators look – on people who advocate for more rights, who advocate for more equality as upstarts, as people who don't know their place or people who don't understand how the system works. I think we need symbols like Persons Day to remind us constantly that we as legislators have a responsibility to not only guard rights but to look to the future and to take risks.

I recommend to all members of the Assembly a book that had a very profound effect on me, Mr. Speaker, by then Justice Thomas Berger entitled *Fragile Freedoms*. I believe it's in our library. The freedoms we have in this country are fragile, and we can lose them. We need to consistently and over and over again remind ourselves of where those freedoms came from. In fact, women in our society do not always have those freedoms.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, we need to move on from here. I am somewhat disappointed that the government did not initiate recognition of Persons Day today. I've been wrestling in the last few weeks, to be honest, with the fact that a number of significant events to remind us, such as AIDS Awareness Week and Schizophrenia Awareness Week, were not recognized in this Legislature. Frankly, that pains me. I acknowledge the fact that I did see the hon. Minister of Community Development and spoke to him this morning at the breakfast of the Legal Education and Action Fund. I would encourage the Minister of Justice to advocate very strongly in this current federal election period and afterwards for reinstatement of the funding for the court challenge program. We need to ensure that when we make mistakes as legislators, when we overlook things as legislators that people who are thinkers in our society have an opportunity to challenge those mistakes or those decisions.

We've come a long way in recognizing rights for women in our society, but we have a long way to go. Poverty for women has not been addressed effectively in my experience. What I see around my constituency and, I believe, our province and our country is increasing violence towards women and children. Until we as a society make a very definitive statement that violence against women and children will not be tolerated, it will continue. We have a responsibility to take opportunities such as Persons Day and to recognize that we have a lot more to do. We have a lot of work to do. My dream is that someday when my daughter and sons are adults, they will live in a country, in a province that is more equal, where women and men and rich and poor and people from different groups, different ethnic minorities, all live together in peace and harmony, all live together under a government that's equal.

I hasten one more time to point out to members that this is a very symbolic day, and we need to think about our role as legislators and recognize that there are times when we have to go beyond what is personally comfortable for us, what might be comfortable for us in our constituency, to do what is right, not just what is convenient.

Thank you.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, just as a point of information on the issue regarding some kind of memorial, if the members opposite at some time would like to avail themselves of the opportunity of a legislative tour, they will find on the second floor portraits, photographs, a plaque all describing and celebrating the accomplishment of these women.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to support this motion. I feel that I have a special place to play in this debate to the extent – and it's a small extent – that my riding is named after Nellie McClung. It came as a very, very pleasant surprise to me that I would be able to represent a riding that was named after Nellie McClung, for a number of reasons. Clearly, her contribution to the nature of equality in this society, in this province, and in this country is, if not overwhelming, one of the most significant and substantive contributions to equality in our society over the generations of its existence. I felt that as a Liberal representing a riding named after Nellie McClung, I had a very special riding name and, for that reason, a very special riding to in fact represent. I was very grateful that the process ended up having the name of Nellie McClung for that region of the province that I represent.

I rise with a sense of urgency about supporting this motion because I feel that as far as we have come from those days of those five women and the effort that they made on behalf of our society, we still have a long, long way to go. Perhaps in a sense it is all that much more troublesome on a day like today to acknowledge not only how far we've come but how much further we in fact have to go. There is, I believe – and I think this is not too strong a word – a prejudice against women in our society. It is a prejudice that is all that much more disconcerting, Mr. Speaker, because it is in many respects very subtle, and it can easily be overlooked, it can easily be justified and apologized for. Yet it is no less corrosive of the nature of our society, of the equality, of the rights of many people within our society, their influence, their sense of place, their stature, their status, the contribution that they can and are able to make to our society.

So when judging how far we have to go, I think it's important to note the condition of many women in our society with respect to poverty, which happens to affect women disproportionately over its affect on men in our society, issues other than that that affect women more generally than they affect men. Violence in our society: it's been said that perhaps the least safe place for a woman in a society such as ours is in her own home. Many women, in fact, are not only physically abused but psychologically abused in their own home. An issue that isn't unrelated to that is the lack of responsibility that many men feel towards maintenance payments that they have been directed to pay by courts. That is a continuing issue, and it has not been addressed by this government as aggressively as it could be addressed. We see child care issues that unfortunately seem to bear more heavily on women than they do on men but still haven't been addressed in the way that they should. Clearly, an overriding issue that remains unattended in our society by most institutions in our society, in fact, is the question of women's equality in the workplace.

For the Minister of Labour to stand in the House and say that the pictures of these five women on the second floor of the Legislative Assembly is sufficient recognition I think is not correct. I would say that, yes, it is something, but it certainly isn't worthy of the contribution. It is not commensurate with the significance, the impact of the contribution that these five people

have made to this province, to this country, to equality not just for women but to the sense of equality that that in turn brought to our entire society. I'm not saying that they're trying to get off the hook from this proposal. For the government to infer that that is sufficient, I'm sure, simply is not correct and is not proper.

Today is a day when we could renew efforts to recognize the contribution of these women, in doing so to recognize the importance of the equality of women in our society. It is not too much to ask that we should have an all-party committee of the Legislature struck to view that and to consider that specifically, to see what more we could do to elevate this great achievement in the minds and in the perspective of all Albertans. So I would turn to the minister responsible for women's issues to see whether he would be prepared to make a commitment today to accept the proposal by the Leader of the Opposition that there should be such an all-party committee to look into what we can do to elevate this important event, this important accomplishment within Alberta.

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

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened intently to the people who have supported this motion that has come forward. I'm really pleased to see that there are both men and women alike coming forward and saying that they are supportive of this motion, because I think 64 years ago it might have been quite a scene to be able to see all, male and female, coming forward and saying that they do support women in getting involved in all aspects. I think 64 years ago the women had a dream and a vision: to be able to see women involved on an equal footing. It's taken a lot of hard work, and it's taken a lot of pain for them to get to this stage. I know that even now we are really making great gains as women. In 1989, 13 females were elected; in 1993, 16 females were elected to the Alberta provincial Legislature. Out of the total population 52 percent are female. It seems that we are not equally represented in the Legislature to date. Eventually, once the females take over, God only knows what we're going to do with the men.

However, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important to note that as Albertans we've always been first on a number of fronts. We in Alberta were the first to elect a female to the Legislature. We were the first to get a female in cabinet. We were the first to have a female Senator, and now we are the first to have an aboriginal woman elected to any provincial Legislature across Canada.

I stand before this auspicious group of people here saying that women have had so much trouble and so much hard work to be able to get where we are, but yes, we still have a lot of work to be done. That is occurring, I believe, in many instances and on many fronts of what we propose to do in this Legislature. I wanted to just indicate that the changes that are occurring presently, I believe, will definitely reflect the goodness of people as we go forward. We've got so many different things to deal with, but we still have so much work, not only in the sexism area but also in the racism area. As a woman I definitely know what it feels like to be treated sexually, no pun intended, as an aboriginal I certainly understand what it feels like to have to face racism, and as a person I'm very proud that the people of Lesser Slave Lake have seen me as a wonderful representative for them.

3:00

I have a concern when we speak of equality. What is equality? What do we mean by equality? To me it means being accepted as a person. In the racism area, to date I don't believe that the aboriginal people have been recognized as persons. It's only been since the '60s that aboriginal people have had the vote in Alberta.

I believe once the aboriginal people come forward to be recognized as aboriginal persons in the whole world, we can begin to say that, yes, we are starting to be treated equally everywhere.

I'm really proud today to stand up and say to all women: get involved, whether it's at the local level, whether it's at the provincial level, or whether it's at the federal level. Once we get involved, we can change what kinds of things come forward so that we can make it better for all our families in the province of Alberta, in Canada, and in the world. Only then can we begin to truly reflect what it feels like to be able to care for everyone. As women we feel that caring is the number one priority, and we do that at all levels.

Thank you very much.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to address and support Motion 40. What I would like to do is bring us forward 64 years and address the issue, in particular, of equality and women in the workplace. I would like to take this opportunity to share some recent statistics from Stats Canada with regards to women in the labour force.

For your information 60 percent of all working-age women are in the labour force and 85 percent of working women are employed in the service sector, where work is mostly part-time and the working weeks are shorter and salaries lower than the goods-producing sectors, where the traditional male jobs are concentrated. In Alberta women still only comprise 22 percent of senior manager positions, and as well women hold 77 percent of clerical and sales positions, with only 27 percent of skilled worker jobs in the province going to women. Judging from these statistics and those presented by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, this government could be finding ways to help support women in the job force and, more importantly, to help them advance into nontraditional occupations.

Prorated benefits for part-time workers, stricter enforcement of employment standards, and greater recognition of women's roles in both the paid and unpaid labour markets are just some initiatives that I would have hoped this government would be talking about in supporting this motion. Unfortunately, though we have been the first in some other areas in terms of women's equality issues, we're not the first in recognizing the inequities of women in the labour force. Instead, we're seeing a government that appears to be going out of its way to hinder women's advancement in the workplace.

It's no secret that cuts to health care and social services are going to hurt women and in particular those single-parent families headed by women more than men and, in addition, the privatization of ALCB against these part-time workers cut off without benefits. We know that the majority of those part-time workers are women. Again, the proposed 5 percent cuts to salaries for health care workers will disproportionately attack women's earning potentials. The cuts to health care have also left unions predicting that more workers will be laid off. Here's another interesting statistic: in Canada – and I would argue that it's proportionately the same in Alberta – 79 percent of women make up the proportion of individuals occupied in the medical and health occupations. So again women will be disproportionately hit by some of the layoffs.

In summary, this government appears to have an agenda – and I would hope it's not conscious but is unconscious – that is forcing women out of the workplace and into the home. The Premier's recent comments on increased emphasis on volunteerism again seem to point out that it's okay for women to work as long

as it's unpaid. I would hope that the members here will support this motion as women do deserve full equality, not only within the Legislative Assembly but also in the workplace, and deserve full recognition for all aspects of their contribution to society.

Thank you.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to briefly add a couple of things that are very near and dear to my heart as I speak in support of this motion. I know that there are many different ways that we can define what is meant or intended by this motion and in particular by Persons Day. I want to just single out one area in particular, and that is with reference to immigrant women. We have seen on numerous occasions immigrant women being somehow faulted by the system and somehow not as well represented through this system of democracy as we now know it. In my particular riding of Edmonton-Avonmore I have a large number of women who comprise or derive from this group known as immigrant women, and I believe it's through some of the special programs that we here in Alberta have set up for these women that they are becoming more and more comfortable with their role and their contribution to society. I'm thinking of things like English as a Second Language programs and other educational programs that we must continue to support if we are truly to believe in the essence behind this and other motions in this relationship.

We see all too often a large amount of discrimination against people from other cultures or at least cultures that we are not as acquainted with as we ought to be in this province, especially given motions like today's. In that regard, we have other bodies that are set up to protect the rights of women and other individuals, groups such as the Human Rights Commission. I would hope that we would see the continuance of that commission throughout this period and during the next several years as this government wrestles with some of the difficult decisions it has.

I know that not long ago women were not even allowed into a lot of private business clubs. I see we have made some strides in that regard too, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to underscore them.

I would just want to conclude my portion by saying how strongly I support this motion, and I would urge all other members to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

3:10

Orders of the Day

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

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd ask the committee to come to order.

Bill 8

School Amendment Act, 1993

MR. CHAIRMAN: This afternoon we are discussing the amendment to Bill 8 by Edmonton-Centre. When we adjourned debate last, Edmonton-Centre had just begun speaking on this in summary, I believe. Edmonton-Centre, can you begin.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't want to spend a lot of time going over the arguments that I presented in terms of the amendment. The amendment again would require that if a parent chooses home schooling, they either be supervised by the resident board in which they live, if that's a public board, or in the case of a religious minority, they could choose the nearest separate board, or in the case of a private school, they could choose a private school that operated within 100 kilometres. That's just to sum up the amendment.

At the roundtable discussions this weekend in Calgary several people spoke to me about the concern of expanding home schooling. I know the minister has spoken to this before. I won't belabour the point again, but we do have a problem, and we've all acknowledged we have a problem. I guess the fundamental point here with regard to the expansion of home schooling in any form, whether it be the private schools or whatever, is that we have a problem with the regulations. I acknowledge the minister has said that he's in the process now of reviewing those regulations, and, with great respect, we heard that last time. When Bill 41 came up, the same argument was made: we're reviewing the regulations on home schooling. [interjection] You're going to do it this time. I know that's in progress and I acknowledge that.

However, I think that if something is broken, something's not working very well – and the situation with regard to the regulations on home schooling is not working well. We know we have to make some changes. I would be much more comfortable and I think it would be much more responsible, frankly – and I'm paraphrasing the hon. Member for Stony Plain when he was on this side of the House – if we could change those regulations, tighten them up, make that system better so that we have adequate controls over curricula and we have adequate definitions in terms of monitoring and supervision.

I hasten to point out that this weekend, as a result of being in Calgary for the roundtables, I was able to meet with a home schooling parent. One of the things they expressed to me – and I'm paraphrasing again – was that regulations and monitoring and supervision are one thing and that's important, but they also said that support for the parent is important as well. This was a parent in Calgary who has a child who doesn't quite fit in the public system and is home schooling and would like to see more support in terms of when she runs into problems or when she's not sure what to do or she's not sure about the curriculum. So that issue as well, as I'm sure the minister knows, needs to be addressed with regard to the regulations. Why are we changing this system and expanding it before – I'd be, again, much more comfortable if we could change the regulations. I know nothing is perfect in this world, but let's see if it works better.

I believe we should also address the issue of the willing nonresident boards. If we're going to have those, let's really zero in and make sure the adequate supervision and monitoring is there, address the ethical questions that I raised, I believe in second reading, with regard to the ATA supervision of, if I can call it, quote, unquote, moonlighting teachers who are acting as supervisors of home schoolers and not specifically teachers, as to whether the ATA has responsibility with regard to the monitoring there. Let's address those issues. Let's get all of that and then come

back. I'm not sure what the hurry is, frankly. I'm not sure why we're barreling ahead with this one. It seems to me that it's been discussed for some time. We're going to be back in this Legislature by February 15. Why couldn't we see changes in regulations and then be able to look at those and test those and also consult with school divisions and parents and home schoolers and then come back?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Could we have conversations carried on outside the Chamber.

Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To repeat, I don't know what the rush is, why we're steamrolling this one through when we know we have a problem. We haven't fixed that problem with regulations, yet we're going to expand the terms of the legislation. It's just going to exasperate the problem and create a bigger problem than we already have, I think, with approximately 3,500 students being home schooled. Not every one of those is a problem. There are some very legitimate reasons for home schooling. There are problems in there, and if we all of a sudden allow for that to be maybe expanded to 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 students and then change the regulations or then see if the changed regulations work – I again would like to acknowledge that the minister has said that he would delay proclamation of this section until after the regulations are changed. I would like to perhaps ask the minister at some point if he could explain to us what the rush is. Let's put this one on the side burner for now. Let's change the regulations, make it so there is better monitoring and support from a societal and government point of view and also better support for the parents from a parental point of view. Let's tighten it up a little bit. Let's examine it. Let's see how it is operating, and then let's look at expanding it, if we want to expand it, in terms of who provides the supervision.

The points I raised on October 4, I won't go through them all again, but we do have, I believe, some responsibility here to respect what I believe is a legislative process. I think the minister has to acknowledge that he's asking us to support totally on trust this portion of the Bill that expands home schooling. We've not seen any draft regulations. You know, we've not seen a time line for when those will be implemented. We've not seen any sort of criteria by which they will be evaluated once they're implemented in terms of how they are performing. Frankly, it's really difficult to support, aside from the ideological or philosophical issue of whether it should be private or not. It places us on this side of the House – and frankly I think people on the other side of the House, whether they be from Rocky Mountain House or Lacombe-Stettler, as I quite often refer to, also should be concerned that there are going to be changes in the legislation. They're being asked to vote on that, and it is totally on trust. We do have a problem, and as legislators we shouldn't be asked to make those decisions totally based on trust. Sometimes the government has no choice but to do that because of urgency, because something is emergent, but this is not a new issue. This is not an issue that's popped up in the last two months. It was on the Order Paper in June of 1992. We were promised a review of the regulations. Frankly, when I was coming into this session, I had hoped, even with the election, et cetera, that we would have that review in front of us. We would see the changes in the regulations. We would have at least a few months to be able to see how they were working and get some input from school divisions and get some input from parents before having to make this decision.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I am going to sit down. I understand that there are two speakers who would like to raise a couple of points, and then we'll go to the question on the issue.

3:20

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the amendment, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think it'll come as any surprise that I'm speaking in favour of the amendment. In fact, I agree very much with many of the items that the Member for Edmonton-Centre has enumerated. I still wonder why the minister insists on keeping this particular item, namely supervision of home schooling, in Bill 8 and kind of making it a potpourri Bill. As I've indicated, there are items I can support, especially the Francophone item, but this is not an item that I find acceptable. We have pointed out repeatedly, I think, that this item ought to be left out and looked at in concert with all the other recommendations from home schooling conferences.

The minister has not listened thus far. I came to this House thinking that perhaps reason would prevail. Thus far it hasn't. I'm directing my remarks perhaps, I guess, to people on the back benches, if I may use that expression – those who sit in the back, anyway – who have before indicated that they have some difficulty with this particular item, the home schooling item, the supervision part especially. I'm saying unto them: you know, there's no need for this item to remain in this Bill. We've tried to get rid of it. We haven't succeeded, so now we're trying to limit the damage that this particular item would do. In our view, it would extend the confusion regarding supervision of home schooling. So I think those backbenchers who have indicated having difficulty should join us and put pressure on the minister to make him see the light.

Mr. Chairman, the roundtable discussions that the Member for Edmonton-Centre spoke of I attended as well. I found them to be very fruitful. Very many interesting comments came out of them. I'm very curious to see what the minister, in the long run, is going to get out of them as well. There were various voices raised against home schooling, period, which I didn't agree with, by the way – in my view, home schooling itself is certainly an acceptable mode of delivering education – and against the supervisory aspect. There was a general kind of feeling that there ought to be more regulations, and I don't think I was reading into that what these people were saying and implying my own sort of feelings.

The principle of home schooling, as I've said, is fine, but there's got to be more strict regulations regarding supervision, regarding the standardization of tests. How are we going to keep track of this? As we've said before, this can only be done, we think, by resident boards. Why doesn't the minister very simply make it mandatory for resident boards to do that, to execute that task rather than allowing the possibility of people going far afield, 800 kilometres or what have you, in order to find a supervisor who may be easy on them? And I quote.

Now, that not being the case, this is the reason for our amendment, of course. We've said that if it must be private schools that are going to be allowed to supervise home schooling, let it at least be private schools within a neighbourhood of about a hundred kilometres. It's a very arbitrary number. We could have said 200; we could have said 10. We had to say something simply because we wanted to, as I say, limit the potential damage that is growing out of this particular item of Bill 8.

Mr. Chairman, let me see whether I've said all I wanted to say here. Yeah. As I've said before, Bill 8 does not help us here. It adds to the confusion, and hence our attempt to limit the damage by the amendment. So I urge everybody, especially the backbenchers on the other side of the House, to consider this and vote for the amendment.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak in support of the amendment. The motion strikes at really the very heart of our obligation to children and to adolescents. We have experienced all too well what happens when we abandon that obligation. The name of Keegstra comes to mind immediately. We must assure and be assured that children and their education are being adequately supervised, that they are pursuing programs that are legitimate, that they're pursuing programs that have the sanction of the public, and that they are pursuing programs that have been arrived at in a democratic way.

We also have an obligation to parents of children that are being schooled at home. Many of them are striving as best they know how to provide quality programs for their own children. Most of them are sincerely interested in trying to do the very best as far as their children are concerned, and most of them welcome good quality supervision and not only welcome it, invite it and actively seek it out. They do that in a variety of ways, by going to conferences and by reading, but the contribution of a live supervisor working directly with them and their children is a very necessary part of the system, something that I know most of them value.

I think we have an obligation to the public. We have an obligation to the public to assure them that the programs their children are receiving and their adolescents are receiving in home school situations are quality programs, that youngsters are not being abandoned to narrow interests, whether they be religious or political, and that the publicly supported tax system – that they are receiving value for that money that's being expended.

It may be an artificial action to peg 100 kilometres as the limit for supervision, but I think that points out the very seriousness of the supervision itself and what is involved in supervising a home schooled student. I think there are a number of prerequisites that characterize not only home schooled students but all supervision of education. One is that there be frequent visits. A supervisor has to be in constant contact with instructors and supervising the kind of instruction that's going on if it's going to be effective. So frequency is an important part of a quality supervision program. It has to be someone who takes supervision as a serious affair. We're all aware of supervisors who breeze into classrooms, go through schools quickly, and make judgments. That is not supervision, and it's not what we should be looking for for home schooled students.

Supervisors of home schooling have to be people who are knowledgeable. They have to be people who are knowledgeable of the school curriculum, the subjects within that curriculum, and the changes that are constantly occurring. It has to be someone who is knowledgeable of child development and adolescent development, who knows the needs and the capabilities of children and can match those needs with programs or can ensure that those needs are being matched with the program that's being delivered in their home. So knowledge is certainly an important aspect of any kind of supervisory process. It has to be someone who is really very concerned with instruction and improving the quality of instruction for students.

Supervisors should be people with good human relation skills. They have to be people who can work well with a variety of parents and who can consult with those people effectively.

I think what all this adds up to, Mr. Chairman, is that we need people who take supervision very seriously and we need an Act that takes supervision of students very seriously. I think if you look at the mechanics of supervision, if a supervisor lives 100 kilometres from you and only visits once a month, that's an all-

day affair with an hour's drive each way. Any school district, be it private or public, that took on the supervision of 50 at-distance students could look at the hiring of at least a two and a half or three full-time equivalent staff member to adequately conduct that supervision.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that the question now be put on the amendment.

Thank you.

3:30

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are you ready for the question? Peace River, do you wish to speak to the issue?

MR. FRIEDEL: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Ready for the question on the amendment to section 23(2) as moved by Edmonton-Centre?

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, on the Bill itself.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm back; wonderful week last week.

I want to make some comments generally about the Bill. I'll make them quickly because I said most of this before, but I think I have to say it again. I realize I must vote for this Bill because of the Supreme Court ruling. However, Mr. Chairman, I find it very unfortunate that we have nine men in Ottawa taking the power of decision-making away from the majority of the people in Alberta. That's what we have with the Supreme Court and its ruling here, and I find that very discouraging.

In regards to the specific contents of the Bill, I believe that this Bill will fragment further Alberta education. I believe that we have good public and separate school systems and a good private school system in Alberta, and we do not need the establishment of another school system. If we insist on doing this, then these schools should only be funded at 75 percent. What we're doing here is beginning another private school system, and private school systems in this province are only funded at the 75 percent level.

Further, Mr. Chairman, in the days of declining dollars we are establishing more boards: regional boards and local boards. We're just going through education roundtables. I believe we should put off this Bill until at least the roundtables have been heard. Furthermore, if we go through with this process, what we're going to have is another great administrative expense which does not necessarily benefit the students of the province as a whole.

So I just wanted to make those comments, Mr. Chairman, and once again emphasize my concern about the nature of this Bill and the process that this Bill has gone through.

Thank you.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Chairman, first I'd like to remind the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who just spoke and made a reference to nine men in Ottawa, that of course it's nine men and women. On Persons Day it's particularly important. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Through the Chair, please.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Chairman, I rise, quite frankly, to propose an amendment to deal with section 21 of Bill 8. That section of course deals with the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, if you're going to make an amendment, that's wonderful, but could you please provide the members with copies? Then they'll be able to follow along in the debate.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: I was going to lead into that, Mr. Chairman.

Section 21 of Bill 8 deals with the establishment and dissolution of regional divisions. Such divisions are established by way of a voluntary regional agreement of amalgamation between two or more school jurisdictions. The issue at stake here is the fate of the employees of these jurisdictions during the process of amalgamation or a while thereafter. There's nothing wrong with the principle, of course, of amalgamation itself. The concern we have is: what happens to the employees?

What in fact has happened is that the proposed amendment will restore, essentially, the provisions of the predecessor of Bill 8, namely Bill 41. Specifically, all employees of the dissolved boards would become employees of the board of the regional division, whereas in section 21 of Bill 8 this is clearly left up to the amalgamated jurisdiction, which means that there is no job security for employees. At least, it's not guaranteed. That, we think, is wrong, Mr. Chairman. That, I think, is wrong – I should speak for myself, because maybe others on my side or the other side of the House will disagree with me.

The transfer of employees to be dealt with in the regional agreement is not fair to the employees. In fact, what is happening is that there is a chipping away at the autonomy of the newly established region. You know, they're in fact told they don't have to employ all the employees. What I would like to see instead is that they will employ all the employees but are allowed to make agreements with the employees that would determine their fate. It might well be that they do that by early retirement incentives. It might well be that as their collective agreement runs out, they would make an agreement that includes job security perhaps at the expense of a cut in wages. Who knows? The point is that it should be left up to negotiation between the parties concerned.

I'm a little suspicious here, Mr. Chairman, because it seems as if this particular item has snuck into Bill 8. It seems like a very minor difference, but considering the record of this government regarding employment, I'm not sure. Therefore, I thought it was better to come up with this amendment. As we know, the ALCB people have not been guaranteed any jobs, and I'm not quite sure how the government intends to come up with 110,000 jobs in four years, when at this rate they're going to lose 110,000. It seems that fewer and fewer people are supposed to keep the economy going and pay taxes and all that. More and more will increase the welfare rolls. Of course, the Minister for Family and Social Services has concluded on many occasions that the rolls are decreasing. I think that's very easily done by cutting back on the benefits or by everybody else going to B.C. I think it's not fair to any employees of the boards that are to be amalgamated, because these people, too, are tied up in mortgages, car payments, kids in college; that is to say, if they can still secure a place for their kids in college these days. All that is going to be tougher and tougher.

I'd like to point out that here, particularly, I think there's a need for good management/labour relations. It is up to those two sides, management and labour, to come up with the solutions to those particular problems, and I don't think the government ought to mandate here or in fact allow any boards to lay off people without their consent. So, Mr. Chairman, my amendment will protect those who need protection most. Those are the unsuspecting, hardworking employees.

I encourage all members to support my amendment.
Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Rutherford, on the amendment as proposed.

3:40

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just speak very, very briefly on it and allow the spokesman in our caucus to elaborate to a further extent.

The amendment brought forward by the hon. member I think is very, very significant, and in the overall Bill, without the amendment, his comments or what he's intending to achieve could have been lost. It could have gone by unnoticed. Never, never in the history of Alberta or in the history of Canada has it been so important as it is today to attempt to preserve jobs, to attempt to show some respect for employees who have faithfully served an organization, a school board, whatever the question may be. More and more as we read the paper every day, we hear about some other major restructuring, of X number of people being laid off or X number of people losing their jobs. We see in the provincial government that thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs.

Mr. Chairman, it was pointed out by the previous speaker that a commitment had been made by the Premier of this province, by the Premier of this government, that 110,000 new jobs would be created by a healthy climate. The thing that was missing when that statement was made, though, was how many jobs were going to be lost. In other words, 110,000 jobs would be created, but nobody ever said how many jobs would be lost. It wasn't a question of 110,000 over and above those currently employed being provided employment opportunities in one form or another. In other words, after three or four years we could technically have 110,000 new jobs, or we could also have 130,000 jobs lost, with a net reduction of 20,000 employees.

I think the important point, when we talk in terms of labour negotiations, is bargaining, discussions at a table where both sides sit down and in a very meaningful fashion attempt to resolve differences, attempt to seek solutions. The obligation of the employer, first of all, is to gain the trust, to gain the faith of those particular employees. Unless there is some sense of job security, unless there is some sense of a willingness to allow them to participate in discussions that lead up to decisions, it's not going to go anywhere. When we have a situation, for example, like we experienced here in the House, where we hear statements about 5 percent rollbacks and then we hear other statements that if it's not done on a voluntary basis by a certain date, legislation will be introduced forcing it, well, that is not meaningful discussion. That is not showing respect or gaining the trust of the employee.

I think what the member is attempting to achieve here is to start in a new direction that would shoot a signal to employees of an organization that is funded by taxpayer dollars that there's going to be a different way of doing things, that there's going to be a way that would ensure discussions, that would ensure that their past experience would be looked upon favourably, that they would be part of that whole process leading to whatever the final decisions are. I think that's the way those things have to be achieved. I think that's very, very important.

This amendment is a step in the right direction, and all Members of this Legislative Assembly should support this amendment to show that we do respect the talents and respect what employees have given to the organization that they work for.

On that note I'll conclude.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise in support of the amendment on the following grounds. First, I think if you do look at the old Bill 41, it was very specific about the transfer of employees, and this Bill is not. It's clear from the ATA that although there are agreements in place, it may be judicable with regard to whether or not in fact there is a transfer that is required under law. Now, I think this is important very much for the reasons of my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. In this economic environment there is significant uncertainty. Certainly the way this government has gone about privatizing, for example, has tended to increase the degree of economic uncertainty and insecurity in this environment. I think at some point we have to send out signals that there is a rational process by which individuals will have their careers evaluated. Right now it's sort of by gosh, by golly, and by whim.

We see that senior administrators, deputy ministers, when they're released from government, always land with a golden parachute. There is no real pain to them when they leave: six months' severance or they move horizontally to another government department. It is the individuals who earn less or are not part of the government system per se: their careers, their livelihoods are at risk. If we look at the health care sector and the rollbacks there, even if they should accept the voluntary rollbacks, it's not at all clear that there's any quid pro quo in terms of job sharing, job guarantees, or something that will make it worthwhile for them to try and achieve some form of economic security in a very, very volatile climate. I think that the fuzziness of the existing Bill with regard to the transfer of these employees should be addressed.

This brings up a more general issue that I think ought to be addressed. If we look at the experience of Calgary when the energy sector was downsizing both after '82 and after '86, it's very interesting that many of the employees in the oil sector who did get golden handshakes chose to stay. They stayed in Calgary. In fact, many of them became self-employed. The degree of self-employment rose dramatically. If you look at the data on self-employment income for Calgary versus Edmonton, that entrepreneurial income is almost 2 to 1. I don't think it says anything about the innate ability of Calgarians, but I do think it suggests something about the nature of the labour adjustment mechanism that was at play there. The ability to have a grubstake provided people with a transition in order to seek out new careers.

I think this is an important issue, because as government is downsizing, we have to be innovative in looking at mechanisms of labour adjustment. It's clear that as we downsize government, there are going to be benefits that accrue to the province as a whole, but right now the mechanisms that we have in place mean that the costs of this downsizing, the costs of achieving this greater good are borne by a very small group at any one point in time. When you're trying to effect economic change, it's always better to, in a sense, at least distribute some of the potential benefits to those employees that are going to be directly affected.

This in a narrow sense is part of a much larger problem: the government has embarked on a very ambitious process of government downsizing, and it has done so because of the size of the deficit, but it has put in place no mechanisms of labour market adjustment. Were we to go about this sensibly and at least ensure that there were some lump sum transfers to those most directly affected, not only would it provide those individuals with the vehicle to make the transition, but it might have the effect that it had on the Calgary economy in terms of providing some basis for these people to move into self-employment or, with these lump sum grants, move into new career changes. As it is right now, the mechanisms we employ really require very, very limited severance

packages, do not give those employees much of a mechanism then for shifting to an alternate occupation or, for that matter, for moving to where there are jobs. We in a sense impose all the costs of economic adjustment on a narrow group, and much of the adjustment that's ongoing right now is leaving the costs of this adjustment to fall usually on those in our society who have the least and find it most difficult to make the transition.

In light of what I've seen occur with the part-time workers with the Liquor Control Board, in light of what I have seen occur with the health care workers, when I see what appears to be an innocuous shift in focus in a Bill like this, it really is worrisome, because it does suggest yet one more chipping away at the collective bargaining process, yet one more effort to achieve what on one hand is a good thing, the amalgamation of some of these boards, yet has the cost fall on a very narrow group or at least generates a much higher degree of economic insecurity in that group, much more than really is required. So I would hope that in a sense this was an oversight on the part of the government, just a slip of somebody's pen in the drafting of this legislation, and that in fact the amendment from my colleague for West Yellowhead would be viewed very much as a friendly amendment.

3:50

So I speak on this both in the sense of the narrow issue at stake here, but I also want to flag the larger, broader issue that if we are going to deal with economic adjustment, let's try and ensure that some of the benefits of this adjustment accrue to those who bear the costs. Right now what we do is pat them on the head, send them on their way, and redistribute the benefits of that to those who already are economically secure. I think we have to be a little more long-range in our perception of how we effect economic restructuring and try and put in place these types of mechanisms either in the form of lump sum grants or what have you. Had the federal government done this with the Newfoundland fishery, we would have prevented billions of dollars being basically flushed out to sea and the decimation of the cod stocks.

I'm a real advocate of the economics of restructuring, but I'm also an advocate that as we do something that is going to benefit the province as a whole, we make sure that those who bear a portion of the cost gain some of the benefits. What I see in present government policies is that there's an absence of fairness.

As I said, I would hope that this is really in the nature of a friendly amendment and is treated as such by the government. Otherwise, it's just consistent with more of the same that we've seen in the way workers have been treated in other sectors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't sure if the minister was standing to speak or not or sitting down or leaving us on our own.

I rise as well to speak to the amendment. I wish I were totally convinced that this was an oversight by the government. I did flag the issue briefly in second reading. I'd like to refer hon. members, if I can, to the previous proposed school amendment Act that dealt with this issue. Let's really define the issue here. The issue very clearly is: when boards amalgamate on a voluntary basis, does everything that is part of that board go with that board? For instance, do all the assets and liabilities? Which is very clear: they all do. Under Bill 8, do all of the employees? Well, that's questionable. Bill 41, as I suggested, actually has in it, when it talks about the effects of the establishment, and I'm quoting 208.4(b):

All assets and liabilities of the dissolved boards are transferred to the board of the regional division.

Here's the most important part.

All employees of the dissolved boards become employees of the board of the regional division.

However, I look at Bill 8. Bill 8 unfortunately omits that last section, section (c), dealing with the employees.

Now, the difficulty I have is that most employers in this province, Mr. Chairman, and I daresay most school boards in this province have acted very ethically, very responsibly with regard to dealing with their employees. However, there are always situations where there are little loopholes in the legislation that allow for employees to be treated less than fairly. I'd like to bring to the minister's attention and maybe draw the analogy that, with respect, this is not unlike a situation at Alberta Hospital Edmonton, where the food services had changed contracts. It was paid for by Alberta Hospital, but they simply changed providers. Of course, the labour legislation, as I'm sure the minister knows, requires that the certified union and the collective agreement that was negotiated transfer to the new employer. However, we had a situation there where the new employer, the new contractor for the food services, looked as if they decided that any woman over 50 years old wouldn't continue to be employed. So the point is that they didn't have to take the employees. They had to take the collective agreement and had to take the bargaining unit but did not have to take the individual employees. Again, by far the most jurisdictions will treat employees responsibly and, if they can, transfer those employees.

However, we all know situations where loopholes have been abused, and I wouldn't want to see a situation where a board just decided: "Well, any teacher who has over eight years' experience we won't transfer to the new board, and we'll hire people who have one year of experience or are fresh out of school. Maybe we'll just do it to 10 percent of those that have over eight years' experience." I know that the Member for Calgary-Bow and the minister himself and several others are educators. I feel that they would want to stand up and ensure that there was some consistency and some equality with regard to our education system and that we simply didn't allow for a situation where arbitrary decisions affected more experienced employees, for instance, who are more expensive, and where they were done away with in the interests of short-term cost savings. I'm not suggesting that this is what the minister is intending, but we all know that when there are loopholes in legislation, somebody's going to drive a truck through it.

Now, the School Act does deal with the transfer of employees when boundaries change or a new district is formed. I guess a very pointed question is that the argument can be made that section 213 of the School Act, if I could just briefly refer to it, says:

If, as a result of a transfer of land or of districts by an order of the Minister, resident students of a board come under the jurisdiction of another board, the board to which jurisdiction is given shall select the proportion of the teachers of the board from which jurisdiction is taken that the number of students transferred to the board to which jurisdiction is given bears to the total number of resident students of the board from which jurisdiction is taken.

Very clearly put, what this says is that if boundaries change or if there's some shifting around and the minister through an order decides for good reason to change the boundary and move one-quarter of the students from a particular school district into another district, then one-quarter of the teachers would go as well.

The argument that's been made to me, frankly, suggests that this clause would actually protect those teachers. If you are amalgamating school boards, the argument is put that if you're going to

have one hundred percent of the students transferred to another jurisdiction, therefore you shall have one hundred percent of the teachers transferred. If that is true, with all the legal expertise and all the resources that the Department of Education and in fact the government have – and I would point out to the minister without portfolio, who's constantly back there, that the issue of employees is very clearly stated in Bill 41 – then I would question: why was it in there to begin with, and then why is it taken out in Bill 8? Is there a clerical error, that it shouldn't have been taken out?

I think what we're asking for here is to put that section (c) back in so that it's crystal clear and there's no confusion in anybody's mind what is meant here. Again, I'm not suggesting that the minister has any sort of deep, dark plans to get rid of teachers. I don't believe that, and I say that honestly. But a lot of teachers have raised this issue with me and have asked: why in Bill 41 was it very explicit that we were protected if an amalgamation happened, and why in Bill 8 are we referred to another section of the School Act? So I put that argument to the minister and ask him to consider this as a friendly amendment, and if he wanted to propose a similar amendment, I'd be willing to withdraw mine.

However, that's only one part of the issue, Mr. Chairman. [interjection] Parenthetically, I thought I was more stimulating a speaker than to have to require a coffee at 4 o'clock in the afternoon for myself. [interjections]

4:00

However, the other issue raised for the minister with regard to our amendment is that even if we buy the argument that section 213 of the School Act protects the teachers – okay, I recognize that argument; I have some uneasiness about it – what about the lowest paid employees of the school division? What about the cleaners? What about the secretaries? There are members, I'm sure, all through this House . . . Having lived in both urban and rural Alberta, most of my time actually in a small town in rural Alberta, I can remember that in Lacombe – and I say this for the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler – while there are some incredibly dedicated and hardworking teachers there, the school division also employs some wonderful and very dedicated and very long-term and committed clerical staff and support staff. I believe, again, even if you bought the argument that section 213 replaces what was taken out of Bill 41, it doesn't cover the nonteaching staff, and that's a problem. I again refer to it. I'm not going to quote the whole section but just the one line. It says, "shall select the proportion of the teachers of the board." It doesn't talk about the other employees of the board, and that's a real problem.

We know that if boards amalgamate, you're going to have a problem if you've got two superintendents. You're going to have to pick one; right? That's life, and I think superintendents know that. My sense from some of the roundtables and talking to some of the superintendents is that they realize there are going to be less superintendents in the province in the long term if we're going to try to rationalize our school system. I don't think superintendents are screaming about that. What I'm mostly concerned about is the nonteaching staff. There is no provision here for them when amalgamation happens. If we have a secretary who's worked for us long and hard and we've given seven or eight increments to her and she's at the top of the scale, there's nothing in this legislation that prevents a school district, when they amalgamate, from saying: "Well, it's been nice knowing you. We've got this nice young thing who's got no experience, but we think she can do the job." That's the attitude, and that's unfortunate.

Again, the vast majority of school boards and trustees will act incredibly responsibly, but if you're going to create legislation and you create it allowing the loopholes, you're asking for trouble.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister to reconsider and perhaps make an amendment to clarify. Either bring in an amendment that amends section 213. If we are to buy the argument that section 213 protects the teachers when an amalgamation happens, the same way when boundaries change, then why don't we have an amendment to 213 that says "teachers and all other employees of the board" so that we don't have two classes of employees? We know especially today, being Persons Day, one of the realities is that a significant number of the nonteaching staff in the school system are women. We're talking about secretaries, teachers' aides, other paraprofessionals, and bus drivers. Certainly, in my experience, some of the best bus drivers in the Lacombe area when I was there – and I'm sure the Member for Lacombe-Stettler can attest to this – were women. The reality, whether we like it or not, is that they're paid poorly compared to men. That's a reality. You get pink collar syndrome when you get a majority of women in a position. They're simply not paid as highly; they are the most vulnerable. Often they are the people who are single family earners. They deserve the same respect as teachers. I point out to the hon. Minister of Energy that if you're going to protect teachers when you're talking about amalgamating, then you have a responsibility to protect the nonteaching staff as well.

We know there are certain staff that are on short-term contract or are term employees. That's not a problem, and it's not affected by amalgamation. But, again, if you've got somebody who is support staff or paraprofessional staff, they have a right to be as protected as professionals are, as teachers are.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to raise something that I raised in the Legislature quite some time ago when we were talking about another related matter, which is – and I think the minister alluded to this today – that there is an acceptance in Alberta that we have to cut expenditures. There's no question about the fact that we have to cut expenditures. I don't think there is one member of this House that would stand up and say we don't need to cut expenditures. We've got a spending problem in this province. A problem we've got – and I notice it in my constituency, being, frankly, a constituency with a lot of public servants right in downtown Edmonton – is anxiety, fear. I think we have a responsibility as legislators to try to minimize that as much as we possibly can, given the financial circumstance we're facing.

This kind of action, where in 1992 we see all employees being transferred to the new school division when an amalgamation happens, and in 1993, one year later and, I guess, a brand new fiscal reality in somebody else's words, we all of a sudden say it's not important, it's covered somewhere else in the Act: I don't buy it. People come to my office, and people have. Nonteaching staff and teachers have stopped me on the street and said: "What does this really mean? Why has the government changed this?" I don't have an answer for them, Mr. Chairman. I have to say: "Well, gee, maybe there was a better way of doing it. Maybe there was a cleaner way in legislation to do it." I look at section 213 and say, "Well, maybe that covers people," but unfortunately it does not cover the nonteaching staff.

So the points are twofold. Number one, why change the wording from Bill 41 to Bill 8? Why delete that section that required not only assets and liabilities – I point out that one of the major assets of a school division is personnel. Why change that so that when you amalgamate they automatically by legislation transfer to the new school district?

Number two, if you're going to make the argument that section 213 takes care of that and we were trying to fix it so we wouldn't have more words than are needed in the legislation, then let's amend 213 to protect the nonteaching employees. Either we do something or hear a response to one of those situations from the

minister that makes sense to people or I'm going to go back to my constituency and hear over and over and over again the level of distrust, the level of anxiety: "What's coming down? What are they trying to do?" We all know that in difficult economic times, whether you're downsizing in government or a factory or whatever kind of business – and I've been involved in both the public and private sectors in this kind of environment – there is an air of uncertainty. There is an air of uneasiness which can lead to paranoia, unfortunately, which can lead to poorer productivity whether you are talking about effectiveness in teaching or talking about a factory making cars. If you're going to have people on the assembly line saying every day, "Gee, are they out to get me?" you're going to have less productivity. So let's clean this up so we can send a message out to people that the intent of this part of the legislation is to allow for the voluntary amalgamation of school boards, which will save costs and will be more efficient.

That came up at the roundtables, and the minister heard it. It came up over and over again: let's regionalize; let's combine some of the smaller school divisions. I applaud this effort of the minister to try to allow legislation in for voluntary amalgamation. But let's not create another problem by creating all sorts of misconceptions out there that in fact this is going to do more than the cost savings that would be natural in terms of that amalgamation and is really some hidden agenda, which I don't believe the minister has. I do know some people believe the minister has or, more specifically, the government has.

Let's clear this up so that teachers and nonteaching staff can go to their workplaces recognizing that we're going to be facing very, very difficult economic times in government in the next three years but also recognizing that nobody is out to get them, that we do value them as employees, that we do value them as citizens and contributors. Let's clear this up. It doesn't make any sense to me, frankly, to create a situation where you're perpetuating fear or anxiety. Let's lay the goods out. Let's tell people: it's not you we're after; it's not every teacher who's eight years older we're after.

I talked with one retired teacher this weekend who's heavily involved in the minister's former association, the ATA. She's been retired since about '85, eight years. She's well into her 70s and still follows, as one of her children is heavily involved, the ATA. She raised the issue with me. She said, "Thank goodness I'm out before they'd try to get rid of me, because I'm too old." Frankly, I think we'd benefit from having her back in the school system. She was a wonderful teacher. But that's the anxiety you're going to create if you don't patch this one up. Either teachers will feel, "Oh, I'm 60 years old" or "I've got more than eight years' experience and you're out to get me, and I'd better watch when they amalgamate because I may not have a job," or even if you can quote section 213, you're going to have, I point out, all sorts of other lower paid employees who are depending on this income probably even more, like bus drivers, like secretaries, like cleaners in a school, who are saying, "Where are we protected?" You create a two-class system if you buy the argument that 213 does cover that amalgamation and protection of teachers.

4:10

I'd ask the minister to consider that. I hope I've made my point clear in a roundabout way. I can understand why somebody might say, "Oh, well, we're covered under 213; let's take that one section (c) out of Bill 41 when we table Bill 8." If somebody's made that decision honestly thinking 213 covers it, I believe and I think this side of the House and anybody looking at it has to believe – just look at it – that it leaves a loophole. If the intent is to try to simply amalgamate and encourage positive – and I will

acknowledge for the minister that at the weekend roundtable I heard a lot of positive suggestions about how to save money and felt some positive energy about doing that both from the minister and from a lot of the participants. But very clearly, we've got to make sure we don't create this air of paranoia and this air of uneasiness. Are we trying to do more than just create efficiencies here? Are we trying to somehow change the rules midstream? I would ask the minister to consider that.

Certainly we've had incidences in this House – if it's easier for the minister to simply table a government amendment to put that in or to table an amendment to 213 that would expand that section from teachers to all employees and then a commitment that that does apply to amalgamation and not just change of boundaries, which is a reasonable case, then we would withdraw ours and accept it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you. I, too, would like to speak to the amendment that was moved by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. It states that section 21 of Bill 8 be amended by (a) deleting 208.1(c) and (b) adding the following after 208.5(b), and that is that “all employees of a board which is dissolved shall become employees of the board of the regional division.” I would urge that government members on the other side look at this amendment as not only a friendly amendment but a reasonable amendment and one that is required given the current circumstances we are facing today with regard to labour relations in this province.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre spoke before me about the level of distrust amongst citizens of Alberta this day and also spoke in terms of the effect that level of distrust has within the workplace, specifically with regard to the productivity of employees within that workplace. I would hazard a guess that everyone in this room has had, will have, or knows of people who are going through the education system. I would not wish those individuals who are being taught within that system to be taught by anyone that is not motivated and that does not have a real desire to be within the school system. By attacking people's security, by attacking their ability to wake up in the morning and know they do have a job waiting for them, what we are doing is undermining their ability to go to work and to be productive in the workplace. So I think from that aspect alone this amendment should be supported by all members within this Legislative Assembly.

Now, we can sit back and say, “Well, there was no malintent on the part of whoever drew up the Bill; in effect section 213, the current provision, does protect individuals within the school board, and really, why worry about it?” Well, I think if you look at the current record in terms of what has been occurring, when you look at the Alberta Liquor Control Board and the employees, when you look at what's happening within the health care sector and negotiations through newspapers, not through government negotiators but within the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Edmonton Sun*, the *Calgary Herald*, et cetera, when you look at what is happening to social service cuts and workers within the social service sector as well as other areas currently funded either directly or indirectly by government, then I think it is not unreasonable that there is a fear of employees within the education sector, that appears to be the next one to be targeted. It seems whenever there's a roundtable, a sector of the government becomes targeted for cuts or some kind of rollback. When we look at what happened and what kinds of overheads are provided in the health care sector roundtables, one

in particular, one of the first ones put forward talks about how wealth is generated within the province of Alberta, and what it shows is that health care, education, and social services are draining the wealth generators. I think what that does is speak in a rather horrific manner as to what this government thinks of education and health care. What it basically says is that to provide good health care, to provide good education is really a drain on resources and is not a business potentially the government should be in.

This government is definitely getting a reputation for wishing to privatize and, in so doing, is putting employees who initially had some form of security out on the streets. That is exactly what I would submit this particular provision does in terms of the omission of any reference to education workers being allowed successor rights, because that is in effect what we are talking about. When there's a loophole, it again appears that this government will take advantage of it. In particular, when you look at the Alberta Liquor Control Board employees and look at the provisions in legislation right now that do provide for successor rights upon the sale of a business, this government has managed to somehow find that loophole. It has managed to somehow find that little spot within the legislation that says: well, if we sell the assets, then we don't necessarily have to provide for those employees. That's exactly what's happened with ALCB, and that's why this government most likely will be in the courts or the appropriate body with a challenge by the unions. That will cost. What is amazing is that when you go through costly court battles, that is a drain on resources. So I think if the loophole was intentional, then employees do have a right to be fearful. If the loophole was not intentional, then, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre so aptly pointed out, it's quite easy to close that loophole either by extending the provisions within section 213 to include all employees within the education sector or by agreeing to our friendly amendment in 208.5 and adding the (c) provision after that.

Now, I get to, I guess, some other intentions of the government that might make employees fearful. Again, this is not a Bill that was put forward by the government; it was put forward by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I'm sure most members within this Legislative Assembly have been receiving calls on the infamous Bill 212 that's been put forward, which says that ATA's rights as an association should, in effect, be dismantled so the association does not have bargaining rights but, interestingly enough, does not set up a provision for teachers to bargain collectively. Again, what are we looking at? Are we looking at the ability of government to willy-nilly do what they wish with employees? Are we looking at a government that wishes to divest itself totally of having any employees? Perhaps the only ones that will be employed by the government of Alberta will be the 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly. What is this government looking at in terms of the kinds of amendments, the kinds of Bills, the kinds of actions we're seeing right now?

4:20

There's a problem with the loopholes in the legislation. There's a problem in terms of how the government is approaching its employee relations with teachers. There's a problem in terms of the potentiality of this being a way for the government to more easily enact contracting-out provisions. For instance, if employees who are former employees of a school board are not taken over by the new school board, does that then leave those caretaker positions open for contracting out? What happens in that situation? Is that the idea behind not having that particular provision, not having the workers, the nonteaching staff guaranteed successor

rights? Again, this is conjecture. I am hoping the Minister of Education will lay all of this to rest, both for the ease of mind of the members on this side of the Legislative Assembly as well as for all those individuals who are listening and will be looking at this with great interest, because, again, it's their future, their jobs, and their children's future that are on the line.

There's another consideration in terms of: is this another way to cut back on the costs of payroll? Again, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre pointed out what might well happen in terms of the transfer of teachers: if you're looking at not transferring teachers that have more experience, in effect what that then leaves open is the door to hire people who are less experienced at a lower range in the pay scale. So is this one way to effect what this government has already said they wished to do in the health care sector? Because the health care sector is so far ahead in terms of the roundtable process, in terms of the process of cuts, in terms of the process of reductions, I think when we look at education, we only need to look back at the history of the last month and we'll see where we will be heading within the education sector if this government's intent is to look at getting people for the least amount of money, which is again what they've stated. Is this, then, one way of doing this? If it is the government's intent, I wish they would be honest and forthright in that attempt and let people know so they can go ahead with their futures, so they can go ahead and plan where they're going to find employment over the next few months.

I've heard from some teachers that they are concerned about this particular area, that they have been told, "Well, given what this particular Act says at this point in time, we don't need to hire you." They've been looking at: how do they effect a transfer into another school board, or how do they manage to keep their position? There's a lot of jockeying starting to happen within the school system. I don't think this is something healthy for the children, because if you're worried about your job, you're not going to be worried about doing a good job in terms of teaching. I think that is a real problem, because the children of Alberta are indeed our future. If we don't consider the environment they are within, then we are not doing a good job as legislators within this Assembly.

There are several organizations that have expressed concern over Bill 8 and the way it's written now. The Alberta Teachers' Association and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada have both expressed concern over this, and their concerns should not be taken lightly. I think there are ways of allaying their concerns. Those ways have been put forward both by myself as well as by hon. members who have spoken before me, and they are quite simple. They are either to amend the current section 213 to include those provisions to ensure that nonteaching staff would be able to access the new school jurisdictions that are formed or to look at passing our particular amendment.

There are some areas that I think this government needs to look at in terms of: why would someone not trust this government? When you look at some of the suggestions re Family Day and the taking away of Family Day, again re the Alberta Liquor Control Board and the successor rights problems within the ALCB with the part-timers issue within the board more specifically, where part-timers have been told by the Premier, "Yes, we will look at your concerns," but then the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs says, "Well, no, we're talking; we're not really looking at it," when you have workers that have spent 15 to 20 years of their lives serving the public and are basically told with a 30- to 90-day notice, "Well, thank you very much, it's been nice dealing with you," and basically shown the door, again there's a reason the people are

worried and skeptical. So for all those, I would urge this government to really look at whether there is a hidden agenda. If there is, you might as well bring it out into the open, because most of Alberta is smart enough at this point in time to see what the trend is. The trend is definitely a move to privatization, a move to a lack of caring, a move towards a lack of listening. It is a move that takes away from all the assertions this government in reality was elected upon.

I think what needs to happen perhaps for your own credibility is to say: "Well, this is what we're planning. We are planning to contract out nonteaching staff; we are planning to look at having the teachers with the lowest seniority brought into the school systems" – the rollbacks have already been talked about, so I don't even think we need to address that issue – "but those are the keys, and we as a government really do not care about the quality of education provided to the children of Alberta, to the future of Alberta." If that is not the case, then I would find it really irresponsible in a sense on the part of this government to not stand up and say: "You're right. There is a point. We don't quite know why this provision is the way it is. It was an oversight; we didn't mean it to be. What we do intend is that all employees, both the teaching and the nonteaching staff, should have successor rights to the respective school boards upon amalgamation." I think if the government were to do that, they would be able to access back some of the credibility they are rapidly losing by their current attitude toward labour within the province of Alberta.

I would like to thank you for your attention. I hope you take these comments to heart and on replying to comments by both myself and the hon. members before me, the hon. Minister of Education will stand up and say yes, there is no hidden agenda; yes, I respect the workers of the province of Alberta; yes, I believe in the successor rights as per legislation; and yes, I will either – and here you have a choice – agree with the amendment as put forward by the opposition party or enhance section 213 as it now stands to provide not only for teachers but for the nonteaching staff as well.

Thank you.

4:30

MR. CHAIRMAN: Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to speak to this amendment as brought forward by the Member for West Yellowhead. I've been listening intently to what all the members opposite have had to say, and quite frankly I agree with a number of the things you had to say. But the members opposite get so carried away all the time that they try to fix a problem by putting a huge roadblock in place. They've done far more than fix the problem they have addressed with this proposed amendment; they have literally made the reason for amalgamation no longer valid.

I think the members opposite have certainly established that there needs to be room for cost cutting, and by amalgamation of school boards and school districts there are some cost-cutting measures available, economies of scale. There are a number of areas where cost savings can take place, but when it comes down to the workers on the line – the teachers that are dealing with children, the paraprofessionals which were referred to that are dealing with children, teaching assistants in classrooms, the janitorial staff, all the staff that go along with running a school – it will make absolutely no difference whether or not two school boards are amalgamated. The schools are still going to be there. To infer that amalgamating school boards is going to cost teachers their jobs and is going to cost janitors their jobs and is going to

cost teaching assistants their jobs is, again, riling the people of Alberta as they're so prone to do across the floor. They talk about irresponsibility on this side of the House. Mr. Chairman, the irresponsibility is on that side of the House, in trying to get everyone all excited about something there's nothing to get excited about.

If you're going to have any cost savings through amalgamation of boards, it's through cost savings in the area of administration. That's where the duplication would possibly exist. In amalgamating boards there's no duplication of effort by keeping two schools open. There is duplication and there's possible cost savings by amalgamating the administrations. To say that you would retain all the employees of the board means that you would retain all the employees in the administration, including the superintendent, the assistant superintendent. It would be like saying you can amalgamate the boards, but you're also going to have to double the size of your school board. All you would be doing is bringing all this under one giant umbrella, but there would be no cost saving. The only cost saving you might see would be a little bit of economies of scale, in perhaps being able to buy in a little bit bigger quantities, but you'd have two purchasing directors responsible for purchasing instead of one. You'd have two superintendents instead of one. The whole purpose for the bringing together and amalgamation of school boards is to amalgamate the administration. That's where the cost savings can take place.

What the members opposite are proposing – and the Member for West Yellowhead in this amendment is very specific. He says “all employees of a board which is dissolved shall become employees of the board of the regional division.” Well, “all employees” doesn't stop at the teachers and the janitors and the paraprofessionals. It includes the superintendents and the assistant superintendents and all that huge bureaucracy that's involved in a school board, and that is the area the public is so concerned about. The public is saying: you as government people at all levels are getting bogged down in administration, and you're over-administrating us, and we think there's room to have some economies of scale on the administrative level. Well, whether someone is working as a teacher or as a superintendent, they're still an employee of the board. To restrict that, to say that all employees of the board shall become employees of the regional board, would entirely tie the hands of the new elected officials to bring about some efficiencies.

I just say again that the only efficiencies would be at the administrative level. You're not going to close down schools by amalgamating boards. You're not going to clean schools less often by amalgamating boards. There are not going to be any fewer students by amalgamating boards, but you are going to have the possibility of having some duplication of effort at the administrative level carried through in an amalgamation.

Don't let my words get confused by the other side now too. When I'm saying that you're going to amalgamate administration, Mr. Chairman, now they'll probably start to say, “Well, then, if you're in administration, you'd better be careful because your job's on the line.” That's not the case either, because by doubling the size of the school division, it doesn't necessarily equate that half of the administrators can look after all of it.

There certainly is going to have to be an amalgamation of the two administrations, and you're not simply going to get rid of half of the administrators. But let's be very frank and very honest: you probably won't need as many administrators as you currently have. By putting an amendment like this in, you tie the hands of the authorities who are elected as school trustees in this new regional board to bring about education in the most cost-efficient manner. We want our children in this province educated in the

best possible way that we can. We want to cut down as much as possible at the administrative level so that we can have the best qualified teachers in Canada, we can have funds available for assistance for teachers, and so we're not paying exorbitant fees for what may or may not be necessary administration.

So for that reason, Mr. Chairman, I will have to vote against this amendment. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment. While I do that, I want to clarify something for the Member for Medicine Hat. When you're talking amalgamating boards and amalgamating administration, they're not all employees. They have yearly contracts. They're not the employees of the school board, so they're their own separate contracts. They are. Just qualifying that for you. Speaking as an educator and a mother of children in the system, I've looked at these things. What this is really doing is securing jobs for teachers so you can't jump to 45 kids in a classroom.

I want to deal specifically with this amendment. I'm concerned about what it doesn't say. It's just missing – it has to be more specific. I don't know if you've walked around the university hospital lately – and I know you're wondering: how does this tie to education? – but the atmosphere is tense. People are worried about their jobs. I know friends who go home and say, “I don't know if I'll have a job next week.” They're worried about house payments. They're worried about what's happened to them. If we leave something like this in, the same pressure and the same unease and the same worry about “What are they doing to us?” is going to fall into the education realm as well.

The specific that these lack – we're talking about interested parties; I don't think they've been made aware of the repercussions of this. The ATA must be concerned with this, other unions involved within the school must be concerned about it, and I don't know if they've had the chance or the opportunity to address it. With the present record of how takeovers and privatization have occurred, they have every reason to be concerned.

My fear is that sometimes when we amalgamate boards – which I agree with, and I commend the minister on this move – we start talking dollars and cents. Education doesn't have an end product that shows the money at the end. What we have is children who learn, and we gain by that, don't we? But we can't put a price tag on what our kids cost us. You can't do that to education. So when we amalgamate these boards, if we say, “Let's save money; we don't have to keep these employees,” then someone with eight years' experience could be bumped for someone with one. Now, I'm not saying that one or eight is better, but people with experience have to be given that credit, also for what they can share with new people, and I speak from an educator's viewpoint. I think by putting this amendment in, we protect our children. We secure jobs for people who deserve to be given consideration when forced with the instability of changing boards, working for new administrators. Their jobs should be secured.

Finally, what I find most interesting about this is that this same government put in Bill 41, which had this clause. So my fear is: why are you taking it out in this one? I don't want to see a hidden agenda here. I'm like my hon. friend there from Edmonton-Centre. I hope it's just a sleight of hand, because it looks like a very deliberate attempt to avoid addressing this issue. I'm wondering why the change. Why didn't we keep this clause from Bill 41? Why did it suddenly disappear? I guess I'm asking

for job security for educators and the support staff that make our education system the good system it is.

Thank you.

4:40

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to speak in favour of the amendment. It's an important amendment, I think, for a number of reasons. Some of those have already been mentioned, but I would like to go back to the whole notion of employees and how employees are so vulnerable at this particular time in our history. You don't have to go very far before you hear people talk about fears for their jobs, fears for the positions they hold. If you read any of the surveys, their confidence in their future has been badly shaken by actions of the government and the private sector in terms of job creation and job reduction in the past few years.

If you look at the employee groups that are involved, the teachers and the support staff and the maintenance and caretaking staff, they are extremely vulnerable if the Bill were to be passed without the proposed amendment. For many of those groups the position they arrived at today has been as a result of some very hard bargaining. They have made some legitimate gains, and those gains could very quickly be wiped out in a move such as the one proposed in the Bill. That's why, again, we need that amendment. I fail to understand, when this is a Bill that would do what the government wants in terms of bringing jurisdictions together, why we wouldn't do everything possible to encourage boards to make that move. It seems to me that one of the things that would make the move easier, that would encourage boards to join together would be to take out and to place people first in any of those joinings. So I really find it rather curious that the whole notion of job security hasn't been foremost in the government's mind and that an amendment like this was necessary for us to bring forward.

I think you can imagine that the joining of counties or divisions or districts is going to be stressful under the very best of conditions. If you start off with all the employee groups at odds with the whole notion of amalgamation or the forming of a large division, I think the chances of it actually happening are going to be rather remote. It leads to a further question I have about the whole Bill and this part of the Bill: what is the incentive for boards to join together, for municipalities and counties to join together? There doesn't seem to be any obvious benefit to those boards in making such a move, and I hope the minister will address that.

I find it rather curious that the Member for Medicine Hat sees all this legislation as necessary to attack the administration, and I can't quite believe that, that it takes all of this to get rid of excess administrators. I find that quite a wondrous position being put forward by that member.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

I think one of the things that gives us some guidance in this matter and also points out the need for such an amendment has been our past experience with annexation. If we look at annexation by the large cities in the province of surrounding school boards, you can have some idea of the kinds of problems that are going to be involved. There was great debate and very, very great opposition, I know, in Edmonton on the part of some of the smaller boards that were going to be swallowed up in annexation. I'm sure the same kind of reservation and the same kind of protest

is going to occur under the proposed legislation. So I think again we need an amendment that helps people allay some of their fears and makes that decision to join with other boards easier for them.

I think if we look again at the annexation experience, we have some precedents for what happens to administrators when school districts join. At that time, whether it was legislated or not, there was an agreement with, I know, the boards in the Edmonton area that on amalgamation the jobs would be protected. Even with that protection many employees will have to take lesser positions and will have to take home less money in terms of paycheques, because there obviously will be duplication. Those people will have to fit other positions in the organization. So even under the best of conditions and were this amendment in the Bill, there's still going to be some stress for some of those employees. I think if you look at the history of annexation as a bit of a guide, years after, employees were still very uncomfortable with what happened. The clauses in this Bill that allow districts or counties or divisions to reconsider their decision: I think everything should be done to make sure they don't exercise that option and then withdraw from the newly formed amalgamated regional board.

I think it's important that the amendment be in the Bill and be part of the law rather than leaving the whole business of employees to regulations. I think we have to publicly declare the intent, and I think it has to be up front. I don't think we can depend on rules made behind closed doors to do that and to assure employees. Departmental regulations are not a major part of the life of most employees.

I guess with that, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to close. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just speaking to the amendment to Bill 8, as indicated by the Member for Medicine Hat, I have also been listening intently to the debate about this particular amendment. Quite frankly, I had some sympathy with the concerns that the Member for Medicine Hat raised, because at first blush you look at that amendment and you say: Well, does that really accomplish what it is we're attempting to accomplish when we go to an amalgamation, when we go to a regional board? I had originally in my mind asked those same questions. But I think if we want to look at the benefit we'll get from the amendment to the School Act with Bill 8, it's imperative that this amendment must be included.

The reason I say that, Mr. Chairman, is because this situation, unlike any other situation we've seen so far, allows for boards to voluntarily amalgamate. We've got a situation where there can be an agreement reached for a regional agreement, where boards come together voluntarily to form the regional or amalgamated board. Now, my concern is that if you have the uncertainty, the anxiety that exists within individual boards now, you're going to find resistance to the amalgamation process because of the uncertainty and because of the anxiety. I think we have to decide whether or not what we want in this Bill is to simply facilitate amalgamation or if in fact we want to promote amalgamation. If in fact we want to promote amalgamation, we have to remove that barrier; we have to remove that hurdle. I think, practically speaking, that individual school boards will resist and in fact will do everything they can to prevent the amalgamation if jobs are on the line. What we've seen in terms of health care workers, what we've seen in terms of ALCB workers is that these people stand there and watch their jobs being lost. There's nothing they can do about it. In this situation, with the Bill as it presently stands, the

amalgamation of the boards is voluntary, but if it's a detriment to amalgamate, you're not going to get amalgamation. None of the boards is going to participate in what the Bill is attempting to do. They'll simply resist it.

4:50

Now, I'm also not convinced that if this amendment is included in the Bill, thereafter the newly elected regional board won't have the same autonomy that any school board has right now. If the size of the labour force of the newly formed regional board, the amalgamated board, is too high, they have the autonomy, they have the ability to make those decisions and to be accountable for them. So I think the concern being expressed by the Member for Medicine Hat is that we want to make sure we're not creating an amalgamated board or a regional board without the benefits that go with that. The benefits may go with that when the decision-making is left to the local autonomy, to that board, about the number of teachers, the number of administrators, the staff involved in administration, the janitors, all those things that we've been debating.

I think what we have to do is to facilitate and allow the process to take place, to protect for purposes of amalgamation that "all employees of a board which is dissolved shall become employees of the board of the regional division." Let that happen, take away the fear, take away the anxiety, promote amalgamation, and allow the boards to determine in their own area the appropriate numbers of people who should be employed, because we all know it's dynamic, we all know it's changing, we all know some areas of Alberta experience growth and other areas of Alberta experience declines in population.

The decision about the size of the board can be left at the local level, but without this amendment, Mr. Chairman, what I see is that boards will not want to participate. They'll not want to get involved in a voluntary process without having some assurances that these kinds of concerns have been expressed, have been dealt with, and that there's at least a commitment for purposes of amalgamation that the new regional division board will not attempt to wipe out any particular positions through that process. That can all be done later on.

As I say, I'm not convinced that anybody is going to be caught in this provision so that they can't make decisions at the local level once the new regional board has been formed. I think the autonomy continues to exist there as it has all along. So I think all we're attempting to do here is to facilitate the process, establish some assurances for those employees of those two boards, and let them then get on with the other issues they'd like to debate about the pros and cons, the benefits or not of amalgamation of any particular boards.

Having thought about the concerns raised – as I say, I did have some sympathies for those concerns, but practically, Mr. Chairman, I think the amendment should go in, and then those concerns can be dealt with at the local level after the fact.

Those are my comments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment. If the intent of amalgamation is not centralization or closure or adjustments of school populations, then why the term "amalgamation of two school boards"? The minute you start amalgamating two school boards, centralization takes place, student busing takes place, and you have a massive chain reaction throughout the whole area. I trust – at least I hope –

that the hon. Minister of Education did consult with the Minister of Labour on the impact on the labour front. If there are contracts, they would have to be honoured. If there is severance pay, it would have to be honoured. Would the minister be assuming the liability of that, or would it be the school boards? If it's the school boards, is it the one that ceases to exist, or is it the one that's being formed as a regional school board? If it's the one that ceases to exist, what are the legal implications, which brings in the Attorney General. If you have contracts with one entity and the provincial government passes a law enabling entities to cease to exist by being amalgamated, what happens to the work force?

There is a fundamental problem that arises when one looks historically at government policies and also corporate policies. In government there has been a tendency to provide funding for a physical plant, so when school boards are amalgamated, the focus will be on the new plant, the new school, if centralization takes place. There has never been a focus on individuals working. What happens to the work force? We make sure that companies survive, we ensure that school boards survive, but the work force, whether it is the professional work force or the nonprofessional work force, is usually forgotten. They enter the unemployment rolls. What happens here then? Does the Minister of Family and Social Services step in? The bottom line is: has the Minister of Education taken into account the chain reaction that will flow to the work force there now?

I would be very interested to know if he also has any idea of what the costs will be in the readjustments that will flow from amalgamations of school boards. Exactly how many school boards does he anticipate will start to amalgamate? How many people would end up being laid off because of this process? How many people would be required to move from one community to another due to this process that he is setting in motion? Who bears the cost of all these adjustments?

I see the hon. member opposite telling me that I should keep talking for 30 minutes, but I must tell him that I believe after 20 minutes I'm required to sit, then rise again. So I apologize to the member opposite; the rules don't permit me to speak for 30 minutes. However, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to tell him that tomorrow evening there's Labour estimates, and I'll have the great pleasure of speaking a number of times then to keep him happy.

The fundamental problem we are going to be facing if the Bill goes through without this amendment is what to do with people that are being affected through job layoffs. As I was saying, before the hon. member asked me to speak for a longer period of time, has the minister done any surveys, any studies, as to how many school boards are going to be affected; the work force that might end up being laid off, professional and nonprofessional; the communities that will be affected and the impact on those communities? If centralization intensifies, who is going to pay for the extra busing? Is it part of the minister's budget this year, or is it perceived to be next year that this takes place, or is it going to be carried out by people at the local level through property tax assessments?

I must say that the encouragement from the opposite side is most encouraging, and I will continue to try to keep them occupied.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member, but we've got to have some quietness in committee here. If there are any notes, just get the page to send notes back and forth rather than putting up signs. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

5:00

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to also point out that as the various members were speaking, I noticed that the minister of advanced education was and is paying very close attention. He is very concerned about the issue judging by the intense concentration on the various comments that were being made. I am sure that if he has not considered the implication, he will consider it and support this motion. If he has already considered this, he will bring about the required support of this amendment.

As I indicated, I hope he has consulted with the Minister of Labour, because there is, as I mentioned, a fundamental principle that seems not to be implemented in a majority of cases, not only by this government but by all governments, and that is the focus on the individuals working whether it's for government, whether it's for agencies of government, institutions, or private corporations. They are ignored when adjustments take place. Funds go into the physical plant but not to ensure that the individuals, their families are not adversely affected by radical change. How radical will this change be? I'm sure the minister has a better idea as to how many school boards will be affected by this.

With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I will apologize to my friends opposite. I will not continue speaking for the 30 minutes; they keep pleading with me to speak. I shall sit down and allow my associate to carry on.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to acknowledge from the Deep Six that I thought the sign that said "good job" was for me, and I'm afraid, Mr. Chairman, it probably was for you and not for me. However, I am somewhat crushed but not totally devastated that I didn't receive the wave during my comments. We have some pros among us, believe me.

In seriousness, though, I would like to address a couple of comments that the Member for Medicine Hat raised. I don't want to get into a bantering back and forth, but I am concerned that he would question the motivation in terms of why we would bring such an amendment forward. I want to assure the member that there's been no running up and down the streets trying to create panic or havoc with regard to Bill 8 and with regard to the provisions of the amalgamation. Frankly, that isn't my style. Number one, I don't believe that accomplishes anything in the long run from either side of the House. The amendments in terms of Bill 8 that certainly our side have put forward are, I believe, responsible amendments. They're there because we think we can make things better. They're there based on input that I've received as education spokesperson for our party and others have received in our party from people involved in the education system. This is not a matter of trying to get a cheap political trick. Frankly, there are a heck of a lot of easier ways to get cheap political tricks, if that's my objective here.

I recall when Bill 5 happened, the amendments to Bill 5 that we presented were first looked at by the other side as trying to create disharmony, trying to create panic out in the streets. The amendments we made to try to clarify the intent of Bill 5 with regard to the government's accountability measures on postsecondary institutions and other government funded bodies came from discussions that were initiated by leaders in those postsecondary institutions. In fact, in the end when the hon. Treasurer came forward with his version of that amendment, I think frankly we got a better piece of legislation. What that speaks to is part of the process here.

It's unfortunate that we are working in a system – and I think we can change it in the next four years, whereby if on this side of the House we make an amendment, it's immediately seen as self-serving and the other side of the House votes against it, and conversely, to be fair, when the government tables a piece of legislation, we automatically vote against it and try to create political hay. I believe those days have started to leave us, the days in this Legislature when there were different members than there are now, when there was that sense that no matter what the government initiated, the opposition had to scream and shout about how awful it was.

When we were a smaller opposition, frankly, we tried to act fairly responsibly, and I will say very clearly that we paid a political price for that. There were times when we voted with the government and were put at risk politically in terms of vulnerability from the other third party. I point out the AGT privatization Bill as one key example where we did make amendments and say that we think there are ways to do this better. We supported that Bill because we are free enterprisers.

I know it's not easy and institutions are difficult to change. With all due respect for those returning members – I know there are 49 of us new here – on both sides of the House I would hope that over time returning members could break the mold that has been created over the last number of years. We should be working in a situation whereby if the minister proposes a piece of legislation – there are times where there will be an ideological or philosophical difference. The way the world works is that part of what we require is an opportunity to be able to state that and to be able to outline that. I believe there are lots of times when we're just trying to make a better piece of legislation, and honestly that's what this amendment is doing.

With respect to the comments on amalgamation. When boards amalgamate, there are efficiencies to be gained, and we know that. Efficiencies include staffing and that kind of thing. But if you look at the private sector and look at what they did during the recession in '82, '83, '84, and beyond, not all but a lot of the downsizing that had to happen, especially in the oil patch, was done through negotiation with the collective bargaining unit. Now, obviously not every employee is in a collective bargaining unit, but there are ways to be able to say, "Now, listen; perhaps when we amalgamate, we're going to need less employees in a particular area," and to finish that there may be a way of saying to employee groups, "Let's talk about the least painful way of allowing that to happen," through attrition, through early retirement, et cetera.

I was around in this province, living in fact halfway between here and Calgary, when our Premier was the mayor of Calgary and our Leader of the Opposition was the mayor of Edmonton, through that recession, and that's exactly how they did it. You know, there were times that because of the size of the layoffs, they had to happen unilaterally, but it was all done through negotiation with the collective bargaining unit. I mean, nobody likes to have to downsize, but it was a positive process. So to simply suggest that what we're trying to do is block any sort of downsizing – that's not the intent here.

5:10

The intent here is really clearly to ensure that those employees who are there have some protection, and that the collective bargaining process, which I believe in – I believe it works, and I believe it has served our province well. There are flaws in it, and we'll have to look at those when we get to labour legislation certainly. Generally the collective bargaining process has worked in our province. I think we need to use that to negotiate things like amalgamation and downsizing both with the Alberta Teachers' Association, who represent of course the teachers, and also with

the Canadian Union of Public Employees or other employee groups like that. We have to be able to negotiate those.

I want to give full credit not only to the Alberta Teachers' Association but certainly also to the school boards. The minister has already reported in the House that of the 35 collective bargaining agreements that have been signed for the current school year, 29 of the 35 were signed at zero, and most of those were negotiated before the provincial election. So this is not a reaction to what we've seen in terms of the current year's budget and roundtables and the deficit reduction plan of the government. This was a recognition that there are no more dollars around and we need to do something, and that was all through collective bargaining, and it's worked. The ones that have had increases have not been major increases, and they have been in the minority.

So I'm asking the hon. Member for Medicine Hat to reconsider his support for the amendment because I think the intent of the amendment is clear. If the government has a better way of addressing this, I'm open to that, and I said that earlier in my comments. Very clearly let's ensure that there are no loopholes for the one in a million negative employer or abusive employer who drives a truck through the loophole and makes it an unfair situation.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I'll end and turn the floor over to anybody else who would like – or are we ready for the question?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All in favour of the amendment to Bill 8 proposed by the Member for West Yellowhead, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:12 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Hewes	Soetaert
Beniuk	Kirkland	Taylor, L.
Bracko	Leibovici	Van Binsbergen
Carlson	Massey	Vasseur
Collingwood	Nicol	White
Decore	Percy	Yankowsky
Henry	Sekulic	Zwozdesky

Against the motion:

Ady	Fritz	McFarland
Amery	Gordon	Mirosh
Black	Haley	Oberg
Brassard	Havelock	Paszkowski
Burgener	Herard	Renner
Calahasen	Hierath	Rostad
Cardinal	Hlady	Severtson
Coutts	Jacques	Smith

Day	Jonson	Sohal
Doerksen	Kowalski	Stelmach
Dunford	Laing	Tannas
Evans	Lund	Thurber
Fischer	Magnus	Trynchy
Forsyth	Mar	Woloshyn
Friedel	McClellan	

Total: For – 21 Against – 44

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On the Bill itself, Bill 8, the hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak on Bill 8, but I'm not going to get even halfway through my presentation. So in view of the hour, I'd like to move that we adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All in favour of the motion by the hon. Member for Peace River?

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed if any? Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report by the hon. member, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn and when we reconvene at 8 o'clock, we do so as Committee of Supply to consider the estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that the Assembly adjourn until the Committee of Supply rises and reports later this day. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]