

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, February 24, 1994** 1:30 p.m.
 Date: 94/02/24
 [Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have yet another education petition to table today. This petition is signed by 169 parents of the students that attend Mother Mary Greene school. That is located in the Calgary-Foothills constituency. The reason I have been asked to table this is that they have for the last three and a half weeks been unsuccessful in their attempt to contact their own MLA.

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

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a petition. It's signed by 312 citizens of Bowness, Greenwood, and other communities in north Calgary. This petition asks that the Legislative Assembly maintain the current funding – that is, full funding for kindergarten – and especially ensure that those students who do need special services in preschool do actually receive those.

Thank you.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition signed by upwards of 5,000 people concerned with the appeal process of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I should note that both the college and the Alberta Medical Association are aware of this petition.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a petition on behalf of residents of Edmonton-Avonmore and surrounding districts urging the government to please maintain the Grey Nuns hospital as an active, fully open, full-care hospital for them and others.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege of presenting petitions with another 2,221 names from people throughout Alberta supporting maintaining the Grey Nuns hospital as an active care hospital.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 1,600 constituents of Edmonton-Avonmore, Edmonton-Mill Woods, and Edmonton-Ellerslie asking that the Grey Nuns hospital remain an active treatment hospital.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a petition signed by over 900 Albertans from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Strathcona county, and various other communities asking the government to maintain the Grey Nuns hospital in Mill Woods as a full-service, active facility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the two petitions I tabled in this House on the 14th of this month be read and received.

CLERK: We the undersigned

petition our present legislative assembly to pass an act ensuring that Education is an essential service, and receives fiscal respectability as such.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to:

Maintain the current Early Childhood Services program and continue providing the necessary assistance to children with special needs.

Further, the undersigned also request the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to recognize the vital importance of these programs by amending the School Act to guarantee Early Childhood Services for all children and early intervention and inclusion (integration) with the appropriate support services for all children with special needs.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Energy.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 52 of the Legislative Assembly Act I am pleased to table four copies of the 1992-93 annual report of the Department of Energy.

Pursuant to section 8(2) of the Electric Energy Marketing Act I'm pleased to table four copies of the 1992-93 annual report of the Alberta Electric Energy Marketing Agency.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to again section 18(2) of the Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority Act I'm pleased to table four copies of the 1993 annual report of the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority.

I'm also pleased, Mr. Speaker, to table four copies of the 1992-1993 annual report of the Alberta Oil Sands Equity.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a response to Motion for a Return 196.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of the annual reports for each of the following institutions: the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, the Banff

Centre, and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. All of these are for the fiscal year 1992-93.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first here is four copies of a news release dated February 22, and the release was issued by Bishop Paul O'Byrne of the diocese of Calgary, the Roman Catholic church. The press release calls upon all Catholics in his diocese to phone the Premier and to contact the Minister of Education to express support for the bishop's view that Catholics should have the right – indeed, constitutionally they have the right – to levy their own taxes and to hire their own school superintendents.

My second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of a letter dated February 22 addressed to the Premier signed by the Save Our Students committee cordially inviting the Premier to be a guest speaker for five minutes at the rally that will be held at this Legislature at 4 o'clock today.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a constituent Mrs. Diane Jaffray, whose son was killed in a single-car accident about a year ago. She is accompanied by a friend Mr. John Roberts, editor of the *Rimbey Record*, who was at the scene of the accident. I would ask that they both stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 56 students from St. Theresa school in Sherwood Park who today are accompanied by teachers Mr. John Detka and Ms. Connie Poschman and parents Louanne Keenan and Delilah Choney. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure today to introduce 38 students from Mundare high school. They are here accompanied by principal, Mrs. Sylvia Zacharkiw, who happens to be the daughter of a long-time serving MLA in this House, Mr. John Batiuk from Vegreville, by teachers Darrel Curry and Mr. Allen Dubyk and also bus drivers Mr. Harold Zacharkiw and Mr. Roman Warawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature five people who are here today in support of the petition which I presented earlier. They are Lori Dobson, Carl Dobson, Lea Evans, Vicky Huet, and Maureen Brown. I would ask that they rise and be welcomed by the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

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

1:40

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I introduce three individuals today. They are Cynthia Joines, Rhonda Ouimet, and Cathy Staring Parrish. These are three parents who are very concerned about the future of public education in our province, and they are the organizers of the Save Our Students movement in Edmonton and area. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

Teacher Layoffs

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has imposed huge education cuts on school boards without any advanced planning. Four hundred teachers have been chopped out of a system in Calgary that provides high-calibre education for students in the Calgary system. Unbelievably, the Premier continues to insist that education will be better after these kinds of cuts. Mr. Premier, tell us how education in Calgary's public school system is going to be better now that 400 teachers have been chopped out of the system.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, that was a decision of the Calgary board of education. [interjections] I'll repeat it again so they can shout louder, because it is a fact: that was a decision of the Calgary board of education. It was not a decision of this government. This is a decision that has a lot to do with the bargaining process and a request to take a 5 percent rollback in salary. I would suggest that that question should more appropriately be put to the Calgary board of education.

MR. DECORE: That's it: no plan; pass the buck.

Mr. Premier, tell Calgaryans how it's going to be better now that English as a Second Language, special education, and specialized resource teachers are, in the words of the superintendent of the system, gone out of the system. How is that going to be better for Calgary students?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the minister does indeed have a plan, and when the budget comes forward this afternoon, the road map to the future will indeed be laid out for all Albertans and the opposition to see, although we can rest assured that the opposition is not going to like it, because what it's going to lead to is more dollars going into the classroom, less administration in the system. It's going to lead to getting back to the basics in education. Moreover, it's going to lead to a balanced budget by fiscal year 1996-1997. We're going to do it not the way the Liberals would do it by raising taxes and introducing sales taxes but by avoiding increases in taxes and at all costs avoiding the introduction of a sales tax. That really bothers them, because if we do this, they're toast.

MR. DECORE: It's the teachers that are toast, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, 400,000 hours of teaching time have been taken out of the Calgary public school system. Does the Premier expect parents to make up the difference and put in the time for these lost hours?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate, and maybe the Minister of Education could supplement: this was not the decision of government; this was a decision of the Calgary board of education. We did not direct the Calgary board of education to do this. If they have any evidence that we directed the Calgary

board of education to lay off 400 teachers, put it on the table. Either put up or shut up.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education wishes to augment.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in response to the member opposite's question I think it is very important to emphasize that the directions we are undertaking in education in the business plan that the hon. Premier has referred to are designed to direct resources to the classroom, to spend money in education as efficiently as possible. It seems that at this moment in time the position of the members opposite is that the only answer in education is to spend more money. But I have to draw their attention to *Hansard* of October 20, 1993, when the hon. Member for Sherwood Park indicated what I thought was a very responsible approach, and that is that he indicated that spending more money in education is not necessarily the answer. We need to find better ways of applying that money. He used the term "we," which I assume means some of the we's over there, maybe not the Leader of the Opposition, but at least there are some solid thinkers over there.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, second main question.

Freedom of Information Legislation

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier's response to questions about the rift in his caucus on freedom of information legislation was curious. It was curious, to say the least. My question to the Premier is: will the Premier commit now, commit today to bring in the freedom of information Bill this session that is based accurately and precisely on what the review committee unanimously recommended to him?

MR. KLEIN: I'd be glad to, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. HEWES: I'd like to know when too, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier guarantee that the Bill will without fail ensure that information will be freely and fully available regarding past government business, that it will be fully retroactive? Mr. Premier, will you guarantee that?

MR. KLEIN: Well, you know, I think that this is something that needs to be debated. The whole question . . . [interjections] Well, Mr. Speaker, if the opposition don't want to debate this Bill, then I would suggest they stay away, and we'll all get along much better.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that when the Bill comes forward, the question on retroactivity will be: how far back do you go? I mean, how far back do you go? I think that these are all questions that should be debated. But, yes, relative to the principles of the Bill as recommended by the task force that included both opposition and government members, the Bill will reflect those recommendations.

As to when the Bill will come forward, this is a question of when we can get the Bill down to its proper form and content. [interjections] Well, listen . . . [interjection] Well, there's a lawyer right over there, and he knows that any Bill has to be put in proper legal form.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the committee unanimously told the Premier what to do. There's no reason for this holdup. Obviously, Mr. Premier, your caucus is divided, no question. They're

divided. How on earth can the Premier even contemplate not allowing retroactive information? Not one other jurisdiction that has freedom of information legislation anywhere has ever tried to seal off past business.

1:50

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would simply ask the hon. member to be patient. The Bill will come forward. It will reflect the views of the joint committee that went throughout the province and conducted the public hearings and brought forward recommendations. What we have to do is to make sure that the Bill comes to this Legislature in proper form and that the contents are in a form suitable for debate and for amendments. I mean, that's what the legislative process is all about, is to look at the principles of the Bill, to offer amendments to make the Bill better. That's what I would invite members of the opposition to do when the Bill comes forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice wishes to augment the reply.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, if I might supplement the answer and clarify the obvious allegations by the opposition that our caucus is split. When Bill 1 was put forward, there were 24 members of our caucus that were not in this Assembly. Although three of those 24 sat on the all-party committee, there is a process in our caucus that when we bring any piece of legislation forward, we want everybody to know all aspects, understand all aspects, and have their complete and full understanding and input.

The Premier has stood up many, many times and given his personal commitment that that Bill will be in this Assembly and passed in this session. That in fact will happen. In view of all of the initiatives we have and the fact that you have to jam something very, very quickly to bring in maybe a Bill that not everybody in our caucus understands, although they allege that they do, that process is being undertaken. It's an educative process. I think the opposition will even be delighted with the Bill when it arrives in the Assembly.

Government Appointments

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, on October 28 last year, just three days before Halloween, this government announced that it was going to revamp the appointment policy. The Premier said: we want "an unbiased view of candidates' qualifications" and a fair and open process to appoint them. Now two more patronage appointments have been made to a government committee: one a president of a Conservative constituency, the other a Tory supporter. He says that he doesn't really know what the committee's about, but he'll learn. My question to the Premier is: was the Premier's Halloween announcement to revamp the appointment process a trick or an \$8,000-a-year treat?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I guess I would have to go back and ask the former Prime Minister of this country Mr. Trudeau: was the appointment of Bettie Hewes as chairman of the CNR a trick, or was it a treat worth hundreds of thousands of dollars?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta will be flattered to know, anyhow, that the Premier has learned to read.

The second question, then, is: why would the Premier make such a promise to us here and then turn around and appoint Gordon Miller, a defeated Tory – and there are a lot of them in Canada, I know – as a member of the Public Utilities Board?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are Conservatives just as qualified, perhaps more qualified to become involved in these committees and commissions than perhaps some Liberals. That's not to say that we wouldn't appoint Liberals. We have appointed Liberals. As a matter of fact, the person who received the largest contract ever in this province to head an independent commission was a well-known Liberal. His name was Mr. Code. He received lots and lots of money.

Relative to Mr. Miller, notwithstanding the fact that indeed he was a candidate, as the hon. member points out, Mr. Miller was also held in tremendously high regard as the president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, for a man of his girth he can sure dance.

The last question to the Premier. He mentioned on that great Halloween escapade last year that the government is committed to a fair and open process in appointing members and would have a review committee. Who is on this secret review committee?

MR. KLEIN: It's not secret. We committed to a review process, Mr. Speaker, and that process indeed takes place. Very basically, we receive various applications from individuals throughout this province. The applications are accompanied by résumés. The applicants then are referred to the personnel administration office, and their opinions are offered back to the minister in charge. The minister in charge again has within his department a review committee, and a decision is ultimately made by cabinet.

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

Vacation Alberta Corporation

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A recent report by the Natural Resources Conservation Board approving an application to construct a recreation and tourism facility in the West Castle Valley near Pincher Creek was released on December 20, 1993. Now that the appeal period has expired and that report has been circulated, can the minister of the environment please advise the present status of that report and the process that will be forthcoming by his department?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report indeed was tabled on December 20. It's a very extensive report. The NRCB gave conditional approval to the proposal from Vacation Alberta. That was conditional upon a number of various items. One very important item was a designation of a wild land protective area. What my department is doing is looking at the entire report, analyzing the recommendations and what the impacts are. Once we are comfortable with those impacts, I'll be bringing that forward to my colleagues in cabinet and caucus for review and a final decision.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister then assure that public concerns regarding this area will be considered in his department's assessment of the report?

MR. EVANS: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker. The public input into the report and its recommendations is extremely important. I have received a number of recommendations and comments from

Albertans who are concerned about this project and have some very valuable comments about the report itself.

Certainly with respect to the wild land recreation area this is a planning issue, and we have a couple of planning processes in place in that area right now: the Eastern Slopes policy and the integrated resource plan. If the wild land recreation area were to be implemented, that would require a very thorough and transparent public input process.

The short answer again, Mr. Speaker, is: yes, indeed, any final decisions will involve public input.

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

Private Adoption

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are Alberta couples anxious to adopt. There are young mothers who want to place a child for adoption. These Albertans are often vulnerable to exploitation, yet there is a pipeline bringing children from California to this province for private adoption. This pipeline involves unlicensed operators. It involves fees and costs of as much as \$40,000 per child. Last year a Court of Queen's Bench judge called for government action. In his 1993 report the Children's Advocate urged that the government act immediately. My question to the Premier: what will the Premier do to ensure that this kind of exploitation no longer continues in Alberta?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will provide me with all his documentation relative to this particular situation, I would be most happy to review it and take it up with the Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully the Minister of Family and Social Services has got to page 178 in the Children's Advocate report. My question to that minister: will the Minister of Family and Social Services undertake now in this House that every person involved in a private adoption, professional or otherwise, has to meet the same kinds of qualifications and the same kinds of standards that every licensed agency must currently meet?

MR. CARDINAL: Recently in this House I announced the appointment of a commissioner for children's services in Reshaping Child Welfare in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. This particular individual has a short time line of 18 months to develop a process of dealing with the whole issue of child welfare and children's services in Alberta. Part of the review will include processes like this, and you can be assured that when the report is completed, we will have short time lines for an action plan and an implementation plan along with that report.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by St. Albert.

Human Rights Review Panel

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Recently the chairman of the review panel and the chief commissioner of the Human Rights Commission is quoted as saying that it is likely that Alberta will join other provinces in including sexual orientation in

its Individual's Rights Protection Act. Could the minister indicate if this is the agenda of the present review?

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

MR. MAR: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To clarify, the agenda of the Human Rights Review Commission is to review the legislation, which was brought into this province in 1972, to make sure that it is relevant and fair and effective and that the process by which human rights are dealt with in this province is fair and effective.

I want to clarify with respect to what comments have been attributed to the chief commissioner and what he has and has not said. He has not said that he is going to recommend the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Individual's Rights Protection Act. However, he has reported that a number of people who have made submissions to the review panel have in fact made that recommendation.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The quote actually is:

It's inevitable. Alberta's one of only three provinces that doesn't protect sexual orientation already, and it's going to come.

If the chairman and chief commissioner already has his mind made up, why is the government spending this kind of money on a review?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed the chairman has been scrupulously endeavouring not to prejudge the process and not to intervene with his personal opinions in these matters. The members of the review panel have not made up their minds, but they have been listening to Albertans throughout the province. The review to date has received approximately 1,100 submissions, and approximately 500 individuals have participated on the subject of human rights throughout the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many individuals and groups have spent many hours preparing reports for these hearings. Will Albertans be listened to and their views represented in the final report, or will it represent a particular interest group's viewpoint?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the review panel has gone to great pains and great lengths to ensure that the opinions of everyone who wishes to make a submission are in fact heard. The panel has in fact added additional days onto their sittings in the cities of both Calgary and Edmonton and has often accepted submissions late into the hours of the day. Many Albertans have come forward and expressed their appreciation for the fact that the review panel is doing such a good job of listening to Albertans.

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

Liquor Sales to Minors

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The booze fiasco continues. Privatization increases the risk of underage drinking. The government promised enforcement, but in a recent media

exposé buying booze was no problem for minors. To the Premier: what is your plan to get young people out of liquor stores?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe the Justice minister would like to comment further. There is a responsibility and a very, very strong responsibility on the part of those who have the authority to sell liquor to make sure that those who are buying the liquor are of legal age. That is the responsibility. It is the responsibility of those who are authorized to sell liquor to make sure that it is sold in a legal form, and if they don't, then they will be subject to prosecution. It's as simple as that.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Municipal Affairs wishes to augment.

DR. WEST: This issue has come to the forefront, but it's nothing new, Mr. Speaker. We have had an ongoing inspection service that has looked at some 6,000 licences, enforcing them for breaches of selling to minors. The reason this came to the forefront is because one of the media used some of their own children to go into these liquor stores. We are looking at it to verify the ages of those children, and if there has been a breach, we will certainly look at it. I don't know what the word entrapment means. I would like a definition of that from the Minister of Justice. I do know that this same issue came forward in the utilization of the law that sold cigarettes to minors. I just say that if anybody in this arena or out in the public has evidence that somebody is consistently selling to minors intentionally, bring it to my attention and to the inspectors of the ALCB, and the severest penalties will be brought down on that licence.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious the media is more efficient than your government. To the minister: what percentage of liquor stores do your inspectors catch selling liquor to minors, given that TV crews caught three out of four? Tell the truth.

DR. WEST: Again, Mr. Speaker, I said that I don't know the situation yet. I'm having a full report on how these three out of four were produced and came forward. Let me just put it this way. We have 44 inspectors at the present time. We just hired four more. In relation to population that is three times the inspectors on a per capita basis that Ontario has. We have just met at length with the RCMP and other police agencies in the province, putting together a plan which we'll be bringing forth. I'll table that plan in the Assembly on how we will take forward in the future with ALCB and other agencies a good inspection service.

We have been on an ongoing basis enforcing breaches of the liquor Act with some 38 or 40 inspectors for the last many years. Those inspectors make the routine of going around and checking on it, but the people of Alberta – the families, the parents, these members – have a responsibility also. You can't put an inspector on each corner every day of the week. There must be some moral direction by society in ensuring that if we have a law that says that underage drinkers shouldn't be there, we look at that and make sure they don't get there.

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

2:10 School Board Amalgamation

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. With the upcoming changes to education – namely, the amalgamation of school boards and 100 percent provincial funding – there will be major implications for the five school boards and the residents of Bow Valley. As school jurisdictions amalgamate, are there minimum student enrollment numbers that will be used in their determination?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I have recently established guidelines with respect to the whole and very important effort in terms of amalgamation and regionalization of school boards with a goal of very significantly reducing the number of school boards in the province. I think the first thing that should be given priority is that set of guidelines. In addition to that, to provide a concept or a view to school boards in this province of how we might envision the overall reduction in school board numbers taking place, we have provided a number of alternative maps but only as suggestions. In fact, I think there will be many variations and creative solutions brought forth by school boards across the province.

With respect to that specific matter of a number, the number has to vary. The target has to vary across this province, depending upon the concentration of population, the communication system that's in place, and so forth, but I have said, Mr. Speaker, when asked this question, that we do have evidence that an effective, efficient number for a jurisdiction is somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 students.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cypress school division residents will see a 250 percent increase in their school taxes. How will these be phased in?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, for those jurisdictions which have been able to maintain a very low mill rate because of very high per pupil assessment, yes, there will be an increase in mill rates, and those mill rates will be phased in over a two- to three-year period.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the Minister of Labour. How will employee contracts be merged in the school board amalgamations when salaries vary for the same job description?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, there's a variety of mechanisms in place to address that. Overall, we'll continue to follow the basic approach that Labour takes in making our officials available on a local or regional basis to discuss and work out what's going to be best for the teachers and the employers.

Access to Budget Documents

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, eight of 10 provincial governments let their opposition members have an advance view of the budget on an embargo or lockup basis. The federal government provides an advance view of its budget for all opposition parties, including the two Tory members and their two research assistants. In this province the first the opposition sees of the budget is today at 4, yet the press has had it since 9 o'clock this morning. Mr. Premier, why is Alberta one of the few provinces that does not

provide advance access to the budget for the opposition while doing so for the press?

MR. KLEIN: Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, we can trust the press. [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has insulted the integrity of every member of the opposition, and I take offence to that.

Mr. Premier, since there's still time before 4 o'clock for an opposition member to have an advance look at the budget on an embargo basis, would you agree to do that?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I didn't know there was any integrity over there to insult. [interjections] I find it very, very strange that on one hand the hon. leader . . . [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Since February 14 there has been a number of comments passed back and forth from both sides of this Assembly that really don't bring much credit to the Assembly. All hon. members have to bear in mind where they are speaking and use language that's suitable for the surroundings. The Chair in this instance would ask the hon. Premier if he would reconsider some of the comments that he's made this afternoon.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw the last comment.

Access to Budget Documents (continued)

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I find it very strange that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition only yesterday would be making public statements about the confidentiality of budget documents. I guess the confidentiality of budget documents is sacred in his mind, unless they can have that information.

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

School Board Amalgamation (continued)

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question has to do with the issue of regionalization and is to the Minister of Education. Would the minister indicate whether the historical boundaries of existing school jurisdictions must be maintained if two or more school jurisdictions voluntarily want to regionalize?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, both the amalgamation provision that has been in the School Act for some time and the new section of Bill 8, which provides for regionalization, would allow an arrangement to be made whereby a school jurisdiction might be regionalized in part, and that, as I understand it, is the member's question. Certainly if that were mutually agreed upon by the parties involved, it would be very much considered by the minister.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Minister. That clarifies the issue of partial splits.

Would the minister also indicate to this Assembly whether or not a partner with a surplus fund remaining after their current debts are retired would be able to utilize that surplus fund locally, or would those funds become part of the regional board?

MR. JONSON: The matter of surplus funds, along with a number of other matters, Mr. Speaker, would be the subject of the overall regional agreement that would be arrived at among the school boards involved. The alternatives that the member referred to in his question might be considered and are possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. The final supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Since boards of education under the County Act are not allowed to own property, buildings, or land, if at the end of the regionalization process there was still a surplus fund available from the county board of education operation, would the county be able to recapture the surplus funds in their general revenue or will that revenue have to go to the regional board?

2:20

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my view that money that has been raised for the purpose of education should be maintained and spent on education. That is the view that I take with respect to that question.

Privatization of Tourism Division

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, we know that the Department of Economic Development and Tourism has had a private consulting firm in to look at privatizing the tourism division. Is the Premier going to privatize the tourism division of this department without consulting industry stakeholders?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely astounding. Where do they get this stuff? You know, if they've got this kind of evidence, send it over. I'd like to see the documentation. I know absolutely nothing of such a move, such a document. If they have a document, I challenge them to table the document, put it on the Table, present their proof, their evidence. They seem to be living and thriving and absolutely enjoying the concept of innuendo and rumours, and I suggest that these people are out there creating many of these rumours.

MS CARLSON: Another dip and dive.

Mr. Premier, do you intend to split this department and move its employees to Westlock, in the constituency of the Deputy Premier?

MR. DECORE: Let the Premier stand up, the real Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Well, you're looking at the real one, Laurence. [applause] Mr. Speaker, it is so nice to know that I have a hundred percent of my caucus behind me, not 68 percent. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Exhibits

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order please. Before the Premier proceeds to answer the supplemental question, the Chair must remind hon. members that the displaying of exhibits and signs is not in order.

Privatization of Tourism Division

(continued)

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Deputy Premier, whose constituency is in question, is also the minister responsible for tourism, and I think that I would ask him to supplement my answer.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, at midmorning today a newspaper reporter showed up at the Department of Economic Development and Tourism on the premise and asked my communications director if it's true that the department of tourism was being moved to Westlock. At noon today on a radio station in Edmonton an announcer said: the Liberals will be asking the \$64,000 question in the Legislature this afternoon. Then the newscaster went on to say that Debby Carlson, the MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie, will raise it in question period: well, I'm going to be putting a question to the Premier in the House about confirming whether or not he's intending to move his employees to Westlock from the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. End speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've had some work done since this news report came out of the blue at a few minutes after 12, and as best as we can understand, this radio station was running a story on rumours, about moves that might be confirmed in the budget. As best as we can understand, the only source of the rumours – and we can't confirm them – is an individual by the name of Debby Carlson. If this isn't a fabrication, I don't know what it is. Absolute nonsense.

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

Teacher Layoffs

(continued)

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Education. Phone calls that I have received from my constituents are concerned about the layoffs that were announced yesterday. Could the minister explain which percentage of these layoffs were teachers in the classroom versus administration cuts?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the superintendent of the Calgary public school district did announce a target or an approximate number of 400 teachers by way of layoff, and certainly that is a matter of concern. As I indicated earlier this afternoon during question period, the focus, the emphasis in terms of our restructuring of education is very much to place resources at the classroom level. Certainly it is our goal to make sure that administration is looked at first of all. Ancillary services to the system and a whole host of other things must be looked at, and we must spend our money better before the classroom teacher is affected.

It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the superintendent was referring to teachers. I do not know in what specific capacity they were serving.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That leads me into my second question then. I'd like to say: how can we as a government get the message out to the school boards that they should cut administration first instead of touching the classrooms?

MR. JONSON: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the government has been conveying that message. The hon. Premier, I as minister have been conveying that message in terms of the emphasis that should be placed on putting resources at the classroom and at the school level and in support of teachers and students in the classroom.

One of the items that I have referred to in terms of future directions for education by way of implementing our overall directions is that of a framework for accountability for the school system. In that regard, the Alberta School Boards Association will be working with us, and we will working on further emphasizing the need for that.

2:30

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is: what proportion of the Calgary board of education's budget is administration, and how much do we as taxpayers pay the superintendent?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I do not know right offhand the current level of remuneration of the superintendent, which I understand is being referred to.

Secondly, with respect to overall administrative costs, we are doing an audit of a sample of jurisdictions in the province, and we are finding that while some school boards in the province are very frugal in terms of their application of dollars to administration, some range quite high. With respect to major school boards, the figure that we're looking at might be in the 10 percent to 12 percent range, which is quite high.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair regrets to advise the hon. Member for Sherwood Park that the bell has rung, indicating that the time for question period has expired.

head:

Members' Statements

Utility Pole Installation

MR. BRASSARD: Not long ago, Stephen Jaffray was driving the family automobile along a country road to where his family was taking the hay off a nearby field. It is thought that the left front tire blew, causing his car to enter the ditch where it struck a discarded power pole. The car rolled over, killing the young man.

It could be that the results would have been the same even if he hadn't struck the pole, but it does raise the question of why the pole was lying there in the first place. The fact is, we know why the pole was there. It had been dropped off along that stretch of roadway as part of a replacement program, a very familiar routine, particularly to anyone living in a rural area. When a series of power poles are to be replaced, a work crew drops the poles off along the ditch. Another crew comes along and attaches the crossbars and other accessories. Then the installation crew is dispatched to install the new poles and remove the old ones, which are left discarded in the ditch until a fourth crew comes to collect them. Sometimes this process is accomplished in days. Other times the poles are there for months. This is a practice that must be challenged. They are a hazard not only for the hapless motorist but also for those who legitimately use the ditches to move cattle from one pasture to another or for purely recreational purposes.

Mr. Speaker, we spend millions of dollars contouring the ditches for safer entry and exit, and we have very strict littering laws in place for everything, it seems, but power poles. I don't think they should be there, but if they must be there, then they should be placed in line with the power line corridor itself, well

back from the road, and they need to be identified with stakes so that they can be avoided whenever possible. The entire process needs to be reduced to days, not weeks and months as is the current practice.

None of this, of course, will help the young man I referred to, but it just may prevent other families from going through the same tragedy.

Provincial Budget

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, today's budget has been touted as one of the most important in Alberta's history. The Provincial Treasurer will roll out numbers that I'm sure will give Albertans chain saw cuts. I suspect that we will see user fees and hidden tax increases. The Premier and the Treasurer will revel in their willingness to inflict pain, as though that is what governments are all about.

Albertans need to judge the budget using four criteria. First, do we see a focus on job creation so that Albertans can have some hope for the future? Will there be real opportunity to create wealth, or is the focus just on cutting jobs and hoping for the best?

Secondly, is it fair? When we look at the budget, can we tell that the costs of more than two decades of Conservative mismanagement of the economy have been spread fairly, or will we see more cases where those who have the least in terms of resources in our society bear a disproportionate burden?

Three, when we read the budget, can we tell how it affects the average Albertan? Will we see hidden costs? Will we see user fees? Will we see methods to reduce personal income?

Fourth, when we look at the budget and business plans, will we know what Alberta will look like three years from now, or will the road map be just a road map to a dead end?

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

Labour Unions

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unionized workers from my constituency feel that they're not being heard by the people who represent them, namely their unions. Nurses call me and express frustration that the only positions that seem to be affected in the restructuring process are union positions. Administration seems to escape most of the downsizing. Most teachers that I talk to want to make suggestions as to how administration could cut back on costs, but their representatives don't seem to be interested.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the problem falls squarely on the lack of appropriate evolution in the role of unions and how they represent their members. Why are these unions not voicing the suggestions of their membership instead of engaging government in philosophical debate? If I were a union worker, I would want my union to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Why aren't members telling their unions in no uncertain terms that they want to voice their positive suggestions for change and have those good ideas presented to administration? If administration fails to act and the public knows about it, who do you think the public will support? If unions want public support, it may be time that they get with the '90s and start forging appropriate partnerships and meaningful dialogue that will save the jobs of the people who do most of the work and provide most of the services. Failing to act now will likely perpetuate the loss of union jobs and could sadly result in the failure to rightsize administration. Time may be short for union members in this province to speak up for themselves and publicly challenge administration to allow the people who do the work to share their experience and good

counsel and to be heard in a partnership for mutual success in Alberta's 21st century.

MR. SPEAKER: Today's daily . . . Oh, sorry; there's one more.

head: **Projected Government Business**

MR. MITCHELL: I'd like to ask the Government House Leader what the projected government business is for next week, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on Monday the government proposes in the afternoon to deal with the budget debate, and in the evening we'll be in Committee of Supply with the Department of Energy. On Tuesday, again in the afternoon, under Government Motions we will be looking at the budget debate. In the evening will be Committee of Supply, as will be on Wednesday and Thursday afternoon. We'll be waiting on Monday afternoon to hear the designations from the Opposition House Leader so that we can then advise which departments would be in Committee of Supply for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

MR. SPEAKER: As the Chair telegraphed earlier, question period has resulted in requests to discuss a number of points of order. The Chair noticed the hon. Government House Leader and the hon. Member for Fort McMurray twice. [interjections] Four times? Well, a number of times.

We'll start with the hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Provocative Comments during Routine

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully request a ruling on a couple of citations.

The first one. Standing Order 82(2) very clearly points out the processes to be followed when a member presents a petition and what can or cannot be said. Standing Order 82(2) couldn't be clearer actually, but I'll leave the final judgment to you, Mr. Speaker.

Every member who presents a petition to the Assembly shall endorse his name on it and shall be confined to a statement of:

- (a) the number of signatures attached;
- (b) the geographic area or sector of the public represented by the signatures; and
- (c) the remedy it seeks.

It goes on to say that there shall be "no debate on petitions." That would lead us all to follow in *Beauchesne* where it says that comments that provoke debate should also be avoided at certain times, following Standing Orders. I think that's very clear. I'd ask for your ruling on that one in light of Calgary-North West's presentation of a petition today. He went beyond what is allowed here in the reference under petitions.

2:40

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a decision from you on Standing Order 7(3) in terms of Introduction of Guests. Standing Orders are clear. It says:

brief introductions may be made of groups of schoolchildren and, with the prior permission of the Speaker, of other visitors in the galleries.

First, I'd like to thank you on behalf of all members, I'd like to thank you haven't enforced the requirement that we get permission each time we introduce somebody. I gather that that is because you see us as relatively responsible adults who will not abuse such a privilege, nor would we go to the point of exploiting average citizens for the purpose of political gain or cheap political opportunism.

There have been a number of cases in recent days where, when guests were introduced, there was a considerable political polemic attached to that and an opportunity to come from a certain point of view in terms of voicing an opposition cause or concern. I can only gather that the abuse of these privileges is because in regular debate, where we are allowed to respond, the opposition continually find themselves absolutely without points, so they will use these other methods to try and make a point.

I'd ask for your ruling on those two areas, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I heard the Government House Leader speaking, it sounds like he's talking about two points of order. I'll deal with the first one, which was the point regarding the petition that I tabled this afternoon. The Government House Leader pointed out Presenting Petitions, 82(2), talked about the number of signatures. I mentioned that. The geographic area in fact is the constituency of Calgary-Foothills. The remedy it seeks, if you have had the opportunity – I'm sure you were quite busy; I don't know if you had a chance to see it – is that it asks for specific actions from their member. In particular, it talks about representation from their member, which, to me, includes certainly meeting with and discussing the issue with the people.

Also, *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th edition, talks in section 1042 about:

When presenting a petition a Member may make a brief statement of the content of the petition. In making such a statement, the Member should avoid going beyond the thrust of the petition and entering debate.

Mr. Speaker, there was no debate there. I simply pointed out the reason. Obviously, why else would a member from a different constituency be given petitions other than the fact that they could not be given to the appropriate member? So I was following through on a request from an individual who found in this case that they could not get the representation, and the petition in fact asked for the representation to be made on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Foothills. That's why I tabled the petition.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I must thank the hon. member for giving me a copy of the petition, to begin with. But as I've leafed through this as we sat through the House, the names that I've identified with yellow stickers so far I've personally talked to. The statement that was made by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West was that people had not been able "to contact" me. That is not true, and I would like that corrected, please.

MR. BRUSEKER: The point that I had made was not "contacted." I said: met with – we have been unsuccessful in our attempts to meet. In fact, the petitions were given to me by the president of the school council with a letter saying that the reason I was given the petitions is that they had been unsuccessful in their attempts on behalf of the school council to meet with their MLA. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. We are not having a debate on this matter. [interjection] Order please. The first point of order deals with the presentation of petitions, and it's quite clear that the hon. Member for Calgary-North West far exceeded what is contemplated or allowed by the Standing Orders. The hon. member really should be ashamed of himself for doing that. I know what the hon. member said in his presentation about the contents of the petition, but the hon.

member knows very well that the relief asked for can be stated at the next stage, Reading and Receiving Petitions. That just doesn't hold very much water.

That does lead to the second point raised by the hon. Government House Leader about the introduction of guests. Members need only refer to page 204 of *Hansard* where the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark made some unnecessary comments on the introduction of guests. These points have been raised before by the Chair, and hon. members should pay attention to what's allowed for a proper introduction of guests. This is one of the few jurisdictions in the country that allows this to happen. If it's going to be abused – it is abused, because these political comments are made in the introduction of guests, made in the presentation of petitions when there is no opportunity for rebuttal. That's why those kinds of comments are not to be made. This whole organization, the Assembly, is based on the tradition of fairness. During debate things can be said because there's an opportunity for reply, but when you're introducing people or presenting petitions, there is absolutely no opportunity for reply. They are cheap shots, absolutely cheap shots to be done by hon. members of this House to make comments of that kind. They certainly will not be tolerated.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will try to frame my points of order this afternoon in a way that will not unduly inflame some of the debate and the commentary from which they sprang.

The first point of order that I wish to raise occurred during an exchange between the hon. Premier and my friend and colleague the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. My citations, if it pleases you, on this particular point of order are our own rules of procedure, Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j) and also *Beauchesne* 485 and 491.

The exchange, Mr. Speaker, you will recall occurred when the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud asked the Premier a very short question that would have sufficed with a very short answer, and that is: why is the press allowed to be embargoed with the budget but not any member of the Official Opposition? The response from the hon. Premier, as I heard it, was that the Premier trusts the press. Implicit in that, then, can only be that the Premier does not trust the members of the Official Opposition. Now, I must say that later in that same exchange you did move with lightning speed to ask the Premier to retract his expression that there is no integrity to insult, if I heard it correctly over the din. But when the Premier stood up and then said he would remove and withdraw that last commentary, it was the traditional salt rubbed into a wound of the previous commentary being not retracted.

Pursuant to the citations that I have raised on this point of order, I would invite your ruling, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray I believe has quoted the Premier correctly, but when you look at the words on paper, as I am doing from the Blues, it says, "Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, we can trust the press." Now, of course, there are inferences. There's the way it is said. The Chair has made the comments about members from both sides considering where they're making comments and the words they use. The whole atmosphere becomes highly charged, and people can take offence at that. The Chair did point out that this has been going on now for almost two weeks from both sides of the Assembly, and the Chair regrets the atmosphere that is developing. All the Chair can

point out is that unless hon. members will take some time to reflect on the way they are behaving in this Assembly, this matter is going to get worse and worse and worse.

2:50

The Chair is only the servant of the Assembly. The Chair does not control any member of this Assembly. The Chair does plead with all hon. members to try to remember where they're at and try to act like hon. members. This applies to both sides. The Chair can only say that unless hon. members seriously consider the way they are behaving, the outlook isn't good for the continuing tradition of this Assembly, which is not being obeyed at all. It just is not. So the Chair will say again: please, hon. members, all of you, consider the way you appear to the population of this province. Quite frankly, this Assembly is not the Assembly it was a year ago. We started off in a much better way about six months ago than we were a year ago, in the Chair's humble opinion, but that is not continuing now. I think it's time to do some serious thinking about how we conduct our business.

The Chair will then deal with this matter, this point of order, on that basis, and we will not have any more discussion on that point of order.

The Chair understands the hon. member has two or three more.

Point of Order Provoking Debate

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since *Hansard* today will reflect some of your rulings and be a point of order day, let me then clear the plate on the other ones that I have. The citation for both my remaining points of order is going to be *Beauchesne* 417, and, as a result, by advising you now I will save some time later.

The first exchange for which I wish to ask the Speaker for a ruling occurred during the question delivered to the Premier from the hon. Member for Redwater. Now, the hon. Member for Redwater asked a fair and reasonable question concerning the appointments of individuals in this province to high-profile public boards of this province. The question was to the Premier to explain this particular situation. *Beauchesne* 417, Mr. Speaker, to refresh the Assembly's memory, requires that parties answering questions answer the question as briefly as possible, "deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." It is impossible to refer to the Premier's answer, which was a request that he seek the instruction I believe, if I understood it correctly, of Pierre Elliott Trudeau to determine why a member on this side of the House received an appointment many years longer ago than I'm sure that member would care to remember. To evoke that memory and that circumstance of a now long retired Prime Minister of this country when asked a relevant, cogent question about recent appointments, in my respectful estimation, violates *Beauchesne* 417, and I would ask for the Speaker's ruling.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in light of you only moments ago taking the high road and admonishing us all on how we conduct ourselves, I am hesitant to even dignify this point of order, so-called, with a response. However, I think I must say that we are somewhat accustomed to the Member for Fort McMurray on a regular basis staggering to his feet in feigned horror about responses. What we've heard is a very poor Howie Meeker type version of question period. I would suggest that members on this side do consider your admonishment to all of us today. It doesn't do service to this Assembly to have the kind of accusations that

fly around that do fly around. We stand admonished and ask you also to rule that this in fact is no point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, on the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray, I believe the hon. member referred to citation 417 of *Beauchesne*. I think the Chair has to point out 416, which really boils down to the fact that the Chair has no control over the answer that is given by anybody who is asked a question. There's no way of foreseeing what that answer is going to be, and that was the way in which the hon. Premier chose to answer the question from the hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. GERMAIN: Sir, that would seem to make 417 an unnecessary ruling. There is a manner in which the two rulings can be compatible: 416 deals with the manner in which the question is answered, and 417 is the style of the response.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. GERMAIN: I'm now on my third point of order, Mr. Speaker, and that's the only reason that I stood. I want to say that I've heard your rulings previously that you can't raise a point of order on a point of order debate, but I would strongly ask the minister opposite to retract any comment that I stagger to my feet. Anybody that knows me – I've spent 20 years on my feet in areas and arenas of advocacy, and if I have any physical impediment that prevents me from getting up in an appropriate way, I apologize to the Assembly. But for that individual to stand up and talk to me and suggest that I stagger to my feet after you have just admonished this House about unparliamentary language strikes me that not everybody heard you.

Point of Order Brevity

MR. GERMAIN: Now, on my point of order, Mr. Speaker. The third exchange arose when my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie, I believe it was, asked the Deputy Premier a question that was also legitimate. That question succinctly was: is a tourism facility going to move to Westlock? A very short question that could have been answered in a very short answer: yes or no or maybe "We're thinking about it." But no; what instead happened was that there was an extensive exchange about the manner of the question and about whether the press had been notified in advance.

It seems to me that although you have no control over how ministers opposite answer questions, you can certainly direct the Assembly to answer questions along the guidelines set out in rule 417 of *Beauchesne*, because you see, Mr. Speaker, today we only got to seven questions as well, despite the fact that we've cut back on secondary supplemental questions to allow more opportunity for members to address the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, on the purported point of order – which I really don't feel there is, but you will have to rule on that – there was a very serious allegation that was raised. I don't want to get into the blow-by-blow description of question period; that just prolongs this whole pain. It was a very serious allegation that was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and with no basis in fact. It's similar, in fact, to a question being asked, which any of us could do if we wanted to, to another member: is it true you're selling drugs to children? It's the same type of question, which you don't have to have any kind of backing for or information for, but the nature of the question itself, the very nature of the question casts a large cloud of suspicion

over the person to whom it's asked, even though, as in this case, there is absolutely not a shred, not the slightest shred of evidence to that. So that would go under I think your earlier admonishment about being careful about how we do address one another.

As far as the concern and the reference to staggering, I think the member doth protest too much. A quick look at the Blues will show that I referred to his feigned shock, continual feigned shock at things that happen in question period, and under the burden of that shock he then staggers to his feet. It had no reference to his demeanour, no insinuation of anything else that could possibly cause a member to stagger, and if it is a point of sensitivity to him, as it is, I am more than happy to totally withdraw that reference.

3:00

MR. SPEAKER: In response, the gist of the hon. member's point of order was that the response to the question by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was too long. The Chair certainly does agree that too much time was spent on the answers to questions today, but there were more than seven questions. I believe there were about 11 questions.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Not from this side.

MR. SPEAKER: Questions are questions, hon. members. It doesn't matter which side they come from.

The Chair recognizes that it does have the obligation to make sure the answers to questions correspond to the question, the length of time, because the Chair has on numerous occasions pointed out that if the question is put succinctly, the answer will be. Unfortunately, when there are people interrupting, making noise that is not required, it is very difficult for the Chair to enforce either the length of the question or the answer. The Chair does agree with the hon. member that that question should have been answered in less time than it took, but the Chair says that it's very difficult to do that when we have this constant haranguing going on in the Chamber that prevents anybody from being forced to answer in a short way. If there was some quiet, then it would be quite clear that the person should be answering the question more briefly than they are.

So the Chair regrets that that happened. The Chair will try to do better, but under this present atmosphere it is very difficult.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I trust we will all try and do better, and we appreciate your setting that example.

Given the time, I would now move the Assembly do adjourn and reconvene at 4 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:04 p.m. to 4 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I have messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

MR. SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required from the lottery fund under the Interprovincial Lottery Act for the 12 months ending March 31, 1995, for the purpose of making payments to support initiatives related to recreation or culture or for any other purpose in the public interest and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1995, and recommends the same to the Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1995, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required from the Alberta heritage savings trust fund for the 12 months ending March 31, 1995, for the purpose of making investments pursuant to section 6(1)(a) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act

in projects which will provide long term economic or social benefits to the people of Alberta but which may not necessarily by their nature yield a return to the Trust Fund

and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

5. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

6. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

Be it resolved that the Assembly do resolve into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Motion carried]

10. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1994-95 estimates of proposed investments of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, capital projects division, and all matters connected therewith be referred to the Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

11. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

Be it resolved that the Assembly do resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider the 1994-95 estimates of proposed investments of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, capital projects division.

[Motion carried]

12. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1994-95 lottery fund

estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to the Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

13. Moved by Mr. Kowalski:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6)(a) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1994-95 lottery fund estimates shall be one day.

[Motion carried]

head:

Budget Address

7. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, with Budget '94 Alberta has turned the corner on balancing the budget. We are more than halfway to the objective of living within our means. We're taking the steps required to becoming the first debt-free province in Canada, and we will do it without increased taxes and without a sales tax. With Budget '94 we are sticking to the tough course we set last May, a course that was endorsed by Albertans in the June 15 election, a course that will see us balance the budget by 1996-97, a course that will see us sticking to Albertans' priorities, maintaining essential programs in education and health, continuing our attack on waste and duplication, and building on the Alberta advantage to make our province the best place to live, work, and raise our families.

Albertans know that we have chosen a tough course. They know that these next few years will not be easy ones for any of us. There will be temptations to give in and take the easy way out, but that's not the Alberta way. The Alberta way is to do the right thing, live within our means, pay off our debts so that we don't pass them on to our children and our grandchildren. We make the changes now, and we don't put off the inevitable.

Albertans know that we must get on with the job, but they have also made it clear that they have some principles that they want us to stick to, principles that reflect their values and the things that they hold dear. First, they want government to get back to basics, to provide a good basic level of service with no frills. Second, they want government to balance the budget by cutting spending, not by increasing taxes or borrowing more money. As Premier Klein said on January 17, this government should be able to live on 11 and a half billion dollars a year. We can provide quality services and live within our means. Third, Albertans want to see government put its house in order and know where it's going. They've said, "Be clear about your plans, tell us what you're going to do, and get on with the job." Finally, Albertans said, "Be fair; don't hurt the little guy." They said: "We're all prepared to do our fair share. It's government's job to make sure that the sacrifices we make are shared fairly."

We've listened and now we have acted. Mr. Speaker, Budget '94 reduces Alberta's deficit by 37 percent over last year. It drops government spending on programs by over \$950 million. Budget '94 maintains our priority on education, on health, and on social services. It expands our attack on waste and duplication to the entire public sector, and Budget '94 includes no tax increases for Albertans.

In this past year, the first of our balanced budget plan, we focused on getting our own house in order. We reduced program

spending by \$830 million and cut the consolidated deficit by \$941 million. We saved over \$130 million by getting rid of waste and duplication. We reduced the size and the cost of government, reduced salaries for Members of the Legislative Assembly, for cabinet ministers, and for senior civil servants by 5 percent. We got rid of pensions for MLAs. We released quarterly financial reports to keep Albertans well informed and up to date about the state of the province's finances.

4:10

With Budget '94, Mr. Speaker, we're moving to the next stage, turning our attention to the future. Today, for the first time in Alberta's history, Ralph Klein's government is tabling a comprehensive business plan and individual business plans for departments and agencies. Since the June election we've reviewed every aspect of government's programs and services. We've asked the tough questions. What is the goal that we must achieve, and how do we get there? What are the essentials that government must do, and for those essentials how can we achieve better results and spend less money? In short, how can we become a low-cost provider of high-quality programs?

While much of the focus has been on cuts in spending, it's important to emphasize – and I want to say it over and over, Mr. Speaker; you'll hear me in the days ahead – that our goal is not simply to balance the budget. Balancing the budget is only a means to the end. The goal is a better future for Alberta. That's the prize at the end of this journey: a debt-free future for our children, education and health programs that meet our high standards, the strongest economy in Canada with low taxes, with jobs, and with prosperity for all Albertans.

The prize comes with a price tag. In other times and with other governments the price would have been higher taxes, but that's not going to happen in Alberta. We won't promise a better future and then hand taxpayers the bill. We will reach the goal, and we will do it without increasing taxes.

The price for securing Alberta's future is not taxes but fundamental change and renewal. In some ways it's more difficult than simply handing over the money and saying, "Keep doing things the same old way." Those days are over, Mr. Speaker. We cannot secure a better future for our children if we cling to a traditional education system that burdens us with administration rather than one that fills us with pride about the results our children achieve. We cannot secure a better future if we keep funding a sickness care system, putting more and more money into hospitals, rather than one that gives responsibility to communities and focuses on the health needs and well-being of Albertans. We cannot secure a better future if we simply keep handing out cheques to people rather than giving them the skills they need to look after themselves and their children.

Mr. Speaker, we can secure a better future for Alberta. There is a better way, a way to make the best use of the tremendous resources that we do have, building on Alberta's competitive advantage and creating an environment where people can live and prosper. Our plans lay out the better way. A better way means being clear about what government must do, focusing on doing it better, and making sure that everything government does contributes to the goal of securing a better future for Alberta.

The plan spells out the five core businesses for government. Firstly, investing in people and ideas. That means education for our children and adults. It means research and development. Secondly, building a strong, sustainable, prosperous province. That means building on the Alberta advantage to generate wealth and job growth. Thirdly, providing essential services for the health and well-being of Albertans. That's quality health care for

Albertans and basic family and social services support. Fourth is maintaining a quality system of roads and highways, telecommunications and utilities. That means maintaining our infrastructure and preparing for a high-tech future of information superhighways and fibre optics. Fifth and last is providing law, order, and good government. That means protecting the safety and the security of Albertans, providing a positive working environment, and open, accountable, government. Those are the essentials. All of government's efforts will be focused on those five core businesses.

A better way is the Klein government's plan for the future. It spells out our vision, our goals, and our objectives. It describes the actions and strategies to be taken and the results we expect to achieve. Individual department business plans back this up with detailed actions and performance measures all directed at doing a better job in our core businesses.

We're laying out our agenda for change and renewal, an agenda that's unique in Canada, an agenda that says to Albertans: this is what we're going to do for the next three years, this is how much money we're going to spend, and these are the results we expect to achieve and be accountable for. For those Albertans who so rightly say, "We want to know what you're going to do to reach the goal and balance the budget, and we want to be reassured that you're not going too far," this plan provides them with that road map. There will still be changes and adjustments as we go along. No plan should be written in stone, but overall this is the plan that we will follow.

Before I turn to the highlights of Budget '94, I want to set the context by looking at Alberta's economy. A strong and thriving economy is essential for the future security of this province. It provides jobs for Albertans. It creates opportunities for Alberta businesses. It provides resources to pay for priority programs and infrastructure. It provides hope for today and renewal for future generations. The backbone of Alberta's economy is our people, hardworking and productive Albertans with ideas, with determination and drive. Albertans and the Alberta advantage are the keys to economic growth and future prosperity.

There are positive signs that Alberta's economic strategy is producing solid results. The Alberta economy grew by an estimated 3.4 percent in 1993, stronger than the 3 percent forecast in the May budget. Alberta's economy has outperformed Canada's for the last four years, and in the words of the Conference Board of Canada: our economy is firing on all cylinders. Our growth was led by record natural gas sales to the United States and a dramatic recovery in energy industry activity. Over 7,200 wells were drilled in 1993, the highest level since 1986. Net farm income in 1993 was \$840 million, well above the previous 10-year average of \$500 million. The livestock industry had a banner year as well. Manufacturing shipments led by forest products and metals and machinery grew by nearly 10 percent to over \$21 billion. Consumer spending also improved. Alberta continues to lead Canada with the highest per capita retail sales in the country. Alberta was open for business in 1993. Over 21,000 new businesses were incorporated, the largest number since 1981. New jobs are being created. Alberta's unemployment rate in January was 9.3 percent, the second lowest among all of the provinces. But, Mr. Speaker, it's not yet low enough.

Alberta continues to have the highest investment per capita among all of the provinces, one-third more than the Canadian average. Over \$16.3 billion was invested in our province last year. Looking ahead to 1994, Alberta's economy is forecast to grow by 2.8 percent. Exports of oil and gas are again expected to lead economic activity in 1994, and the manufacturing sector will put in a strong performance. Net realized farm income is expected to reach a record \$1.1 billion.

On the other hand, slower investment growth and fiscal restraint are expected to dampen our growth this year. Let's be very clear. Yes, growth will be slower this year than it would have been if we had not acted to reduce spending. We estimate that spending cuts could reduce the rate of economic growth by up to one-half of 1 percent in 1994, but the Alberta economy will continue to grow, and there will be gains in employment. In the longer term, economic growth is projected to average 3 and a half percent from 1995 through to 1997.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, it comes down to a choice between two actions: cutting spending or raising taxes. Both actions have a negative impact on the economy in the short run, but raising taxes is much worse over the long term. Higher taxes slow economic growth by damaging incentives to work and to invest, and raising taxes hurts the future prosperity of Albertans. The people of Alberta know that, and they've made their choice very clear: don't raise taxes.

We are optimistic that Alberta's economy will respond positively, and we're not alone in that optimism. Economists across Canada, representatives of key financial institutions, and businessmen and women right here in Alberta are saying that this province is leading the way in responsible fiscal management. Alberta will become the best place in Canada to invest and do business, and that means more jobs and lasting jobs for Albertans.

Now for the details about this year's budget. With Budget '94 we are more than halfway to balancing the budget. Budget '94 contains no tax increases, no new taxes, and no sales tax. This year's consolidated deficit will be \$918 million lower than in '93-94, a reduction of 37 percent. At \$1.55 billion Alberta's consolidated deficit for this year will be \$250 million lower than the limits set out in the Deficit Elimination Act. Alberta's deficit for '94 will be \$1.86 billion less than the actual deficit just 24 months earlier, a reduction of 55 percent.

For Budget '94 this year's priority is the reform and restructuring of priority services and programs to better focus them on the customer, meeting Albertans' needs. Spending targets for each government department reflect the priorities of Albertans. Operating spending on health, education, and social services will total \$8.1 billion. Combined with debt servicing costs, spending on these essential programs consumes 83 percent – 83 percent – of the government's revenues this year. Spending on all other programs of the government will be reduced to \$2.9 billion. In 1994-95 the public service will be reduced by nearly 1,800 positions. Total program operating spending will be reduced by \$956 million. Total revenue is estimated at \$11.4 billion, \$91 million less than in '93-94.

Budget '94 continues the practice of using conservative resource revenue forecasts. The resource revenue number used for budget purposes is the five-year average of the actual revenues from '88-89 to 1992-93.

Targeting waste and duplication continues to be a priority in Budget '94. Within government, business plans step up our efforts to get rid of extras and concentrate on the basics. This year we're expanding our focus to the entire public sector, asking the tough, basic questions. Do we need 140 school boards in Alberta? Do we need hundreds of hospital and health unit boards? Do we need layers of administration in school systems, hospitals, colleges, and our universities? The answer is no. There is a better way. By getting rid of waste and duplication, we can focus our efforts where we need them the most: in the classroom, in the community, at the hospital bed, or in the home.

Total provincial capital spending is budgeted at \$683 million. Only essential maintenance projects and those projects already

under way will proceed. Funding for health care projects will be based on recommendations from an independent review conducted through the health planning process. In addition, Budget '94 includes \$179 million in operating grants for infrastructure to municipalities and other organizations. This includes funding for the provincial share of the national infrastructure program for this year. Total spending by all three levels of government will be \$515 million over the term of this program.

Together, Mr. Speaker, these highlights show that the Klein government is keeping to its promises. We said that we would stick to the plan, reduce spending and attack the deficit, and that's exactly what we've done. Our third quarter report for '93-94 shows that we will actually spend less than our budget for the first time in six years.

Nineteen ninety-four is going to be a year of change for Alberta, for Canada, and around the world. The January *Report on Business* calls 1994 the decade's year of transition. New governments have been granted an opportunity to embrace the new requirements of accountability, integrity, and a willingness to bravely experiment with untested and potentially valuable ideas. Nowhere could that be more the case than right here in Alberta. As one newspaper puts it, "We're going to see more change in the next three years than we've seen in the last three decades."

With that change comes uncertainty and some questioning. People ask us: "Do you have to move so quickly? Can't we take more time?" We've even heard suggestions that as a government we're overstating the seriousness of the deficit problem.

Let's be clear about this, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has one of the highest deficits per capita among all of the provinces. We must take action now so that Alberta's deficit does not become a tax that we pass on to our children and our grandchildren, an unbearable price they will have to pay for the overspending of their parents. Taking hard and fast action on the deficit as part of a deliberate four-year plan may be painful, but it pays off in straight dollars and good sense. Achieving a deficit \$250 million below the Deficit Elimination Act this year will save \$15 million in debt servicing costs every year forever, \$15 million that Albertans would much rather see us spend on educating their children and helping families in need or even reducing taxes. Now, isn't that a novel idea, colleagues? With a combination of low taxes, low interest rates, the low dollar, and low inflation, we're in a strong position to take tough action now to tackle the root cause of the deficit problem: spending more than we get in revenues.

Mr. Speaker, I have to comment here about the federal budget we saw just two days ago. The contrast is dramatic. The Liberal government in Ottawa is putting off the inevitable in the hopes that things will simply get better: going slow, making small changes, launching task forces and studies and in the meantime increasing spending by \$3 billion this year and increasing the horrendous debt burden for all of us, such that three years from now Canada will be \$100 billion more in debt. Going slow may be comforting to some, but it's a house of cards built on false hopes. There is no way of avoiding the tough decisions. Next year, when the studies are done and those tough decisions are still facing the federal government, we in Alberta will be only the smallest step away from the best announcement we're going to make: a balanced budget in '96-97.

Taking quick and decisive action has positioned us to see that the prize is within our grasp. Albertans now know that by staying the course, we'll balance the budget, we'll maintain our quality of life, and we'll continue to have the lowest taxes in Canada. That remarkably powerful combination makes us unique in Canada and gives Alberta and Albertans a real advantage.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, with the tabling of three-year business plans and spending targets, Budget '94 cannot be considered in isolation. Albertans said, "Don't just tell us what you're going to do a year at a time; look ahead and show us the road map." That's exactly what we're doing. The changes I'm outlining today will take place not just in '94-95 but over the course of the next three years.

As part of our plan, action will be taken in all five of the core businesses of government, but in order to support Albertans' top priorities of education, health, and social services, we've had to make much tougher decisions in other areas of government spending: areas such as agriculture, municipal affairs, transportation, and yes, the environment. Spending reductions to be made as part of our four-year plan on programs other than the top priorities will be as high as 47 percent and will average over 28 percent. That's close to double the savings in the priority programs. Actions to be taken in areas other than the big four priority areas are a balance between initiatives to help create the climate for continued growth and decisions which reduce spending and pare government down to the essentials.

In economic development a new global business plan, an Asia Pacific business strategy, a Mexico trade and tourism strategy, and a hot lead investor program are new initiatives to put Alberta businesses on the world stage, where they've proven they can compete and succeed. At the same time, direct financial assistance to business will be reduced. Overall spending on Economic Development and Tourism will be reduced by over 30 percent by '96-97.

In agriculture we will work with the industry to diversify and increase value-added products and to improve the industry's ability to access domestic and world markets. We will take advantage of new opportunities to expand our export markets in Japan, Mexico, Ukraine, and Russia. Farm income support will shift from commodity specific programs to a new whole farm income approach consistent with our GATT obligations.

Farm input cost subsidies will be reduced. Effective midnight tonight the 2 cent per litre Alberta farm fuel distribution allowance grant on gasoline will be eliminated, and the grant on diesel fuel will be reduced from 8 cents to 6 cents per litre. The full 9-cent tax exemption remains in place on both fuels. The resulting savings to the province will be over \$28 million. As previously announced, the Alberta Crow benefit offset program will be eliminated on March 31. With these and other changes, total government net spending on agriculture will go down by 23 and a half percent by '96-97.

Grants to municipalities will be reduced substantially, and our efforts will be directed at improving efficiency and providing more flexibility. Four provincial programs are being brought under the umbrella of a new unconditional grant program. The municipal assistance grant, the urban parks operating grant, the municipal transit operating assistance grant, and the municipal police assistance grant will all be combined. The focus of the family and community support services grants will continue to be on programs to foster and promote the well-being of Albertans. But administration of the grants will be changed to a single unconditional grant allowing municipalities and locally elected, accountable municipal politicians to set at-home priorities on how these funds can meet their communities' needs, Mr. Speaker. This government trusts municipal elected people.

Budget '94 includes the creation of a new environmental protection and enhancement fund to cover the costs of extraordinary environmental emergencies. Funding will come from increased royalties and user fees for the use of the province's

natural resources. At the same time, major changes in the Department of Environmental Protection will lead to a reduction of 30 percent in total spending by '96-97.

Further steps will be taken in Budget '94 to increase efficiency by reducing the number of government funds and agencies. Thirteen government funds will be abolished. As announced by the Minister of Energy, the Energy Resources Conservation Board and the Public Utilities Board will be amalgamated into a new Alberta energy and utilities board. Three other agencies will be merged within the Department of Energy.

The Alberta royalty tax credit will continue, but the program's benefits will be reduced as part of the government's restraint program. Effective January 1, 1995, the maximum benefit will be reduced by 20 percent.

In transportation our emphasis will shift away from new construction to the maintenance of existing roads and highways. By '96-97 we will be able to get the job done with almost 28 percent less money.

In areas that are considered internal to government, departments such as public works, Treasury, personnel, and public affairs, spending reductions will be substantial, ranging as high as 42 percent in the Treasury Department.

A significant impact of these spending reductions will be felt by Alberta's public servants. Nearly 1,800 positions will be eliminated across government this year. By the time the budget is balanced, we expect employment in the public service to be about 27,500 positions, a reduction of 20 percent from 1992-93. For permanent employees who lose their jobs because of restructuring, we will provide fair severance packages, counseling, and training programs. These are capable and talented people who will find new opportunities for work, for running their own businesses, or for going back to school for retraining.

For those public servants who will continue to serve Albertans, we offer clarity of purpose. The changes we are making will strip away the rules and regulations that stifle initiative and creativity. New ideas, innovation, and rewards for success are what the future offers to these hardworking Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, our focus in the so-called other areas of government spending during the four-year plan will be to reduce spending, improve efficiency, and pare down government services to the essentials. In health, education, and social services our objective is to reform and restructure programs and services, to focus them on getting the very best value for the money we're spending. Premier Klein talked about many of these changes in his January 17 talk with Albertans. With Budget '94 our essential people programs will receive 72 percent of all government program spending.

In basic education we will spend \$1.84 billion this year. Combined with property taxes to support education, Albertans will spend a total of \$3 billion on basic education in '94-95. That's \$5,600 for every child in school and \$168,000 for a classroom of 30 students. By '96-97 our reforms will allow us to deliver high standards of education for 12.4 percent less money.

Government will spend \$3.77 billion on health in '94-95. Major changes are in store for our health system over the next three years, changes that reflect the changing health needs of Albertans. By '96-97 spending on health will be reduced by 18 percent.

This year \$1.16 billion will be spent to support postsecondary education and training. Priority will be placed on improving accessibility and preparing young people for the demands of the work force. Over the four-year plan spending on postsecondary education will be reduced by 15.8 percent.

4:40

Finally, for social services we will spend \$1.43 billion in '94-95. Changes to the supports for independence program are shifting the focus to active re-employment. Spending on employment initiatives as part of this program will increase by 36 percent in '94-95. By '96-97 we will reduce overall spending in Family and Social Services by 19.3 percent and maintain our priority on providing services to those who need them the most.

This year we will spend over \$8 billion to operate those four essential areas of health, education, postsecondary education, and social services. By 1996-97 we will still be spending \$7.7 billion. If we spend those dollars right, if we cut administration and not the people who provide the direct services, if we change the way we deliver programs and not stick with tradition, there is absolutely no reason why we can't give Albertans exactly what they want and expect: excellent education, quality health care, and basic support for people and families in need.

Mr. Speaker, with Budget '94 we are making changes to programs for our senior citizens. In the past we have provided extensive programs for all seniors regardless of their ability to pay. About \$1.1 billion was spent on these programs dedicated to seniors in '92-93. The fact is that we simply can no longer afford to provide all these services free of charge to all seniors. We asked Alberta seniors: what should the priorities be for your benefit programs? They told us that seniors who can afford it are willing to pay their share. They also said, "Streamline the administration so we don't have to go from one office to another trying to sort out the benefits that we're eligible for," and most of all they said, "Protect the lower income seniors."

We're taking their advice. Today we are introducing a new coordinated grant program for seniors. It's based on six key principles. First, low-income seniors must be protected. Secondly, seniors' benefits and administration must be simplified and moved to a one-window approach to make it easier for seniors to access the support they need. Thirdly, those who can afford to pay for shelter and health care premiums should pay for them. Fourthly, benefit rates should be fair and based on a senior's income, not a means test. Fifthly, any changes and their impact on seniors must be carefully monitored. Last but not least, consultation with seniors must take place so that the program can be made more effective and responsive to their needs.

The new Alberta seniors benefit program will bring together five existing programs: the Alberta assured income program, the property tax reduction program, the senior citizens renter assistance program, the extended health benefit plan, and the exemption from health care premiums. The result will be a single program delivered by one department. Seniors will be able to go to one office, call one number, and talk to one person to get the assistance they need. Low-income seniors will see increased benefits, and those who can afford to pay will be asked to pay a fair share. Eligibility for benefits will be determined by seniors' income: how much they receive each year from old age security, from their pensions, and from income on their investments.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important change in seniors' programs, and we want to do it right. We've laid out the principles and the targets. Now we want to ensure that the program is effective and responds to seniors' concerns. An extensive consultation process will begin immediately. My colleague Gary Mar, the Minister of Community Development, will lead this process. A toll-free number is already in place for seniors who want information or want to express their opinions on this program. Information will be mailed directly to every senior in the province, and discussions will be held in seniors' centres, lodges, and community centres.

We'll ask seniors to participate in workshops to be held in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Speaker, seniors have made and continue to make a tremendous contribution to this province. Our goal is to make sure that they continue to get the benefits they need to lead secure and dignified lives. We'll do that by redirecting benefits to those who need them the most, ensuring that low-income seniors are protected, and most of all by listening to seniors and working with them to make this program work and work well.

I said earlier that the price of a secure future for Alberta was change and renewal. Renewal and restructuring is the major theme of Budget '94, and within the Alberta government that process of renewal is well under way. The objective is simple: to find a better way, a better way of delivering quality services at a cost we can all afford. To copy a Texas phrase: Albertans don't want bigger government; they don't necessarily want smaller government; what they want is better government. Better government is what Albertans will get.

Albertans are fortunate to have a public service of dedicated, thoughtful, and innovative people, people who know how to do the job better. As Ted Gaebler of *Reinventing Government* puts it: we have good people trapped in bad systems. Our objectives will be to get rid of those bad systems, to listen to the ideas of our own people, and reward those who have excellent ideas, ideas that get good results and make real improvements. We will put in place a new pay system, productivity plus, to recognize and reward public servants whose ideas lead to significant improvements in productivity.

Business plans highlight many of those new ideas. They spell out the specific actions planned by each department to deliver better service. Business plans also signal a new focus on results and performance measures. As one of my colleagues says: "It's not enough to say we're going to change the way we do business. We want proof that our strategies are working and producing the results we want."

Before I go on, Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to a man seated in your gallery. Donald Salmon is our Auditor General, and he's retiring next month after 35 years of public service to the people of Alberta. On your behalf and on behalf of all members of the Assembly and all Albertans I want to thank Mr. Salmon for his significant contribution to the province.

In his last report the Auditor General said that government departments and agencies are generally not assessing and reporting on their effectiveness. That means there's very little public information on what was intended and what was actually achieved as a result of spending public money. It reflects an old view about how governments work, a view that says, "As long as money is being spent, government is looking after the problem, and something good must be happening." Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's a view that some people still hold to be true. But as the Auditor General so correctly points out, spending money is no guarantee of results.

Albertans expect that government resources will be directed to programs that work, that achieve the results we set out to achieve. They deserve to know how we measure the performance of government programs and the progress we are making. They deserve to have information so they can judge our actions and hold us accountable for the results.

Business plans take the first step in outlining expected results and the measures we'll use to assess our progress. In some cases results and performance measures are well developed, clear, and easy to understand. In others work on performance measures is just beginning.

This is a new business for us. It's a new business for most of the public sector. We have a lot of work left to do before we have clear benchmarks and targets for government programs. But that's our goal, Mr. Speaker: specific and tangible performance measurement clearly spelled out and reported on regularly to Albertans. Future annual business plans will move us closer to that goal.

4:50

Those are the highlights of Budget '94 and our comprehensive plans for the next three years. Mr. Speaker, as a government we did not embark on this difficult course because we thought it would make us popular, nor did we underestimate how difficult it would be for all Albertans and for us as their government. We chose this course because we know Albertans. We know their pride. We know their strengths. We know their will and their determination. We know Albertans prefer to do the right thing rather than taking the easy way out. We know Albertans, and we've chosen the toughest course.

We've chosen to get rid of deficits once and for all, not slowly, not a little bit at a time but decisively and completely. We've chosen to renew and restructure education and health so that Albertans and their children get the programs they need at a price

we can all afford. We've chosen to keep our eyes firmly on the future. To quote one of my favourite philosophers, Yogi Berra, "The future ain't what it used to be." He's right. Alberta's future isn't going to be a replica of the past; it's going to be better.

We've set the course, we know the destination, and with Budget '94 we've turned the corner. We're more than halfway there. When we succeed, when we reach the destination, people across Alberta and across Canada, people around the world are going to say, "Albertans have done it, taken the tough course, stuck to it, and made their province not just a better place but the best."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[At 4:55 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

