

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 10, 1994**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 94/03/10

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting a petition signed by 24 seniors I met with two nights ago, and it urges

the Government not to alter funding arrangements for Alberta's Seniors Lodges and Seniors Subsidized Apartments until Seniors have been consulted and agreed to those kinds of revisions.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would beg your leave to present three petitions today. All petitions deal with the government's restructuring of seniors' programs and specifically ask that a moratorium be put on any changes to funding of seniors' lodges and subsidized apartments until seniors have had an opportunity to be properly consulted and have a say. The first petition is signed by 98 residents of Ansgar Villa, a senior citizens' residence in my constituency, the second is signed by 102 residents of the Kiwanis Place lodge and Kiwanis Place apartments in my constituency, and the final one is 133 signatures from Manoir St. Joachim, which is also in my constituency.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petitions I presented protesting the government's restructuring of education and cutbacks on March 1 and February 28 now be read and received by the Assembly.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to implement the plan to restructure the educational system in Alberta, as proposed by the Minister of Education.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that every Albertan will have the opportunity for input and involvement in future plans to restructure the educational system in Alberta.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to implement the plan to restructure the educational system in Alberta, as proposed by the Minister of Education.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that every Albertan will have the opportunity for input and involvement in future plans to restructure the educational system in Alberta.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two petitions I ask be read and received this afternoon. The first one was introduced on March 1 and dealt with education cutbacks, the second one on February 28 and dealt with protesting the elimination of community schools.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to implement the plan to restructure the educational system in Alberta, as proposed by the Minister of Education.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that every Albertan will have the opportunity for input and involvement in future plans to restructure the educational system in Alberta.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to reconsider the proposal to eliminate Community Schools in the Province of Alberta, as proposed by the Minister of Education.

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

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the petitions for Private Bills that I presented to the Assembly yesterday now be deemed to have been read and received.

[Motion carried]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery this afternoon are three visitors from Ukraine. They are part of a group of 18 Ukrainians in Canada at this time and are here to learn about our political and economic systems. They will apply their learnings to the reforms which are taking place in their homeland. They are Petro Martynenko, professor of comparative law, Kiev University and parliamentary general legal counsel in Ukraine, and Halyna Polozova, director, and Tatiana Ivanenko of the law library at the Ukrainian Legal Foundation in Kiev. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged this afternoon to introduce eight visitors. They are the Keenagers – isn't that a great name? – of Victory Christian Center from Edmonton-Gold Bar. This afternoon they have two guests with them from the Government House Leader's constituency of Red Deer-North. They're in the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a very special student that is in Alberta from Brazil. Miss Tatianne Berti, who's seated in the members' gallery, is accompanied today by Margaret Wong. Tatianne arrived in Edmonton on January 21 through the Rotary youth exchange program and will be attending school for one year at St. Francis Xavier high school here in Edmonton. I understand that the day she left Brazil, it was warm and she'd been sunbathing and arrived to a warm welcome in

Edmonton at minus 30 degrees Celsius. I'd ask our guests to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and to the Assembly some very distinguished guests that are seated in the members' gallery: the leaders of our university education system. We are privileged to have with us today the board chairmen and the presidents of those institutions. I'd like to introduce them: Mr. Sandy Mactaggart, who is chair of the University of Alberta; Mr. Richard Haskayne, chair of the University of Calgary; Mr. David Hughes, chair of the University of Lethbridge; and Mr. Richard Aberg, chair of Athabasca University. These gentlemen serve as chairmen of these boards on a volunteer basis and serve up to six years and devote a great deal of their time. In addition to that, we have with us in the gallery the president of the University of Alberta, Dr. Paul Davenport, and Dr. Murray Fraser of the University of Calgary. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure and honour that I would like introduce some of my constituents. They are residents of the Kiwanis Place apartments in my constituency as well as Ansgar Villa and Manoir St. Joachim. They're seated in the members' gallery and the public gallery. I won't introduce them all by name, but I would ask that they rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 50 students from Tipaskan school in Mill Woods. They're accompanied by Mr. Wilcox and Mrs. Fiege. They're in the public gallery, and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that they stand and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to members of the Assembly 21 students from the Pine Street school in Sherwood Park. The students are accompanied today by teachers Mr. David Harvey and Mrs. Glossi Lee and parents Mr. Rick Liniger and Mrs. Silvia Tkachuk. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

### Oral Question Period

1:40

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, last night the Premier said that he'll consider a detour from the destructive path this government has launched itself upon, and it's about time. One area that the Premier might look at is his personal decision to go faster and deeper with cuts than the Deficit Elimination Act requires. Over the life of the Act the Premier has decided to make hundreds of millions of dollars more in cuts than are needed to achieve the balanced budget. My question to the Premier. With all of the pain and the anxiety that you're causing to families on assistance

and to seniors . . . [interjections] Not humorous and I hope the Premier understands that. Perhaps his colleagues don't, but I hope he understands the pain. Why are you cutting deeper and faster than you need to?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think that suggestion is very subjective. I really don't feel that we are. We are basically on track, and we are totally committed to the program. If there is a surplus at the end of the day, I would think that would be a good thing for Alberta because that surplus, then, would be applied to the ongoing problem of paying down the debt.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, is it possible there is another agenda at work here? Will the Premier admit that perhaps a great big part of this strategy is to create a give-away fund for election year? You're the one with the four fingers, Mr. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that suggestion is absolutely absurd. It is. When we go into a new election, we will go into that election with two things. We will go into that election with a balanced budget, and that's something the Liberals don't want us to achieve for obvious reasons because I think it will hurt their election chances. And we will go into an election having the most competitive province in the dominion, a province with a very reasonable tax structure, a province with no sales tax, and a province that will be in a position to attract new dollars, new investment to contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of this province.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, what you're doing is very destructive in this province. To the Premier. You have control. This is your call, your decision. Why would you hurt so many people just to become the macho master of debt control?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Super stud.

MR. KLEIN: I like that better, Nick.

MR. HENRY: It's not funny.

MR. KLEIN: My goodness. They're a humourless bunch over there.

Mr. Speaker, the program is not designed to hurt people. The program is designed to cut down on overadministration of government. The program is designed to find new and more efficient and more effective ways to do things. The program is also designed to get more decision-making down to the community levels, especially in health and education. Yes, the system is designed also for Albertans to make some small sacrifices.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, we're not humourless, and we don't laugh at despair.

### Senior Citizens' Programs

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, yesterday our caucus received a call from a woman who lives in the Premier's home city in a large seniors' complex. She said . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Preamble. Preamble.

MRS. HEWES: I get a preamble, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: This is the second main question.

MRS. HEWES: She said that not just a few people, Mr. Speaker, but many, many people are crying in the hallways after receiving notices of the cuts, and they don't even know the half of it yet. The minister has admitted that the information is deficient. Seniors are now trapped. They're trapped by the Premier in the kind of panic that only can be felt by someone with no one left to trust and nowhere to turn. Mr. Premier, you're showing compassion for the people of Newfoundland. Why aren't you showing the same compassion to seniors in Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there are some key principles that the seniors themselves have said that they want this government to adhere to when dealing with seniors' programs. I repeat this. One is that they want low-income seniors to be protected, and we are doing that. They want the system to be streamlined, and they want the duplication cut. In other words, they want a one-window approach to seniors' programs. They have indicated that they would be willing to abide by an income test but not to use a means test. We have said that we will consult with them. We will enter into meaningful consultations with seniors to find out from the seniors what is right for them. Those consultations are ongoing, and they have been meaningful. They have been meaningful, a far cry from the kinds of meetings that the Liberals try to get going with the seniors to whip up fear. Of course, the seniors want us to carefully watch the impact of any changes, and we're willing to do that.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the Premier doesn't know what's going on out there. Seniors shouldn't have to live with fear. Why does the Premier refuse to stop the whole thing right now and go back to square one? Why are you refusing?

MR. KLEIN: The Liberals would like nothing more. Absolutely. I find it very strange that the Liberals would be asking us to pull back on our program when they were out there during the election campaign advocating \$1.1 billion in cuts in the first year and brutal cuts, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WICKMAN: There's no shame in . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Rutherford, order. Order.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, you're hitting the seniors who really can't afford it. Will the Premier now commit to this House that he'll extend the deadline for input from seniors from April to June 1? Do it now. Tell us now.

1:50

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't aware that there was a deadline. I have said before publicly that we'll take as much time as we need and we will have meaningful and ongoing consultations with seniors to find out from the seniors, certainly not the Liberals and not even from the senior Liberals but the seniors, what is right for them.

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

### Wage Rollbacks

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour have both been unable to get public-sector employers to keep wage rollbacks to 5 percent. Yesterday the Premier said that wage rollbacks of more than 5 percent are reprehensible, yet in the real world employees are

being told to take more than 5 percent or to get laid off. It seems that the Premier's solution is to write letters and speak vocally about this issue. The Premier can't have it both ways. My question is to the Premier. What concrete action will you take to ensure that rollbacks do not exceed 5 percent?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we have put out there publicly on many, many occasions that we want to achieve a 5 percent reduction in salaries and benefits throughout the system. That includes government itself and those agencies that of course depend on government for funding. It has been put to me that in some cases some employees are being asked to take 20 and 30 percent. I find that to be unreasonable in light of what we are asking of our own employees, what we have asked of ourselves, and what we are asking of municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: are you aware that wages and benefits make up three-quarters of the health care budget and that it's your cuts that are forcing hospitals to demand more than 5 percent?

MR. KLEIN: We asked for 5 percent. As a matter of fact, we have restricted the amount of funding that we provide for salaries and benefits to 5 percent, Mr. Speaker. We aren't asking for anything more.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS LEIBOVICI: No answer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier tell the Assembly how he can at the same time be solidly onside with AUPE regarding the 5 percent rollbacks yet fail to take action which prevents massive cuts and layoffs?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding our desire to achieve a 5 percent rollback, there still is the collective bargaining process. There are many work units and many, many, many unions involved in the various agencies of government, and we have to let that process take place as well.

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

### Tire Disposal

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Tire Recycling Management Board has in the last while announced a number of initiatives that we thought would see tires moving out of the landfills and storage areas all across the province. Well, that is all well and good. In the Rocky Mountain House constituency I haven't seen any activity, and for that matter even south of Edmonton I haven't seen much. To the Minister of Environmental Protection: when do you think we will be seeing any activity in the southern part of the province?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, we have an environmental problem, and that is that our landfills are filling up with used tires. We have two initiatives that are ongoing in the city of Edmonton, one at Inland Cement and one with Environmental Rubber Products. The issue that the hon. member has

brought up about the lack of contracts to deal with this problem in southern Alberta is an issue that I'm trying to deal with as quickly as possible. We have really three initiatives ongoing in southern Alberta at this point in time: number one, the tire board that the member has referred to is working on a tender for proposals to deal with tires from landfills in southern Alberta; number two, we've already gone through a screening report on the application by LaFarge in Exshaw to use tires as derived fuel; and thirdly, we are continuing our negotiations with the city of Calgary to use their Shepard landfill site east of the city as a regional landfill facility, a regional area for bringing in the tires so that we can use them then for various recycling purposes and other purposes in southern Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LUND: Thank you. To the same minister: what happens to the difference between the fee paid to the processors under contract and the \$4 that the consumer pays?

MR. EVANS: The \$4 was a fee that the tire board recommended to government as a way to kick-start some industrial activity, some creative activity in the marketplace to get companies like Alberta Environmental Rubber Products involved in a crumbing process. Now, to use their example, they're using about \$2.50 of that \$4 for their marshaling and handling and transportation. The rest of the money stays in the fund to be used to deal with the backlog of tires that we have in the province, some 6 million or 7 million tires that are in landfills. I can assure the hon. member that in the audit process we've reviewed recently, we've come to the conclusion that at least 85 percent of the fees that are brought in through that \$4 fee are being used for the actual recycling and processing of these tires.

MR. LUND: To the same minister: how does the fee paid to Inland Cement compare to the fee paid to Alberta Environmental Rubber Products to recycle tires?

MR. EVANS: The contract that we have, Mr. Speaker, with Inland Cement would see about \$2.15 of that \$4 going to the transportation, handling, and marshaling of the tires to Inland. That's for passenger tires. The figure that we're looking at with Alberta Environmental Rubber Products is about \$250 a tonne, which equates to about \$2.50 per passenger tire or equivalent. That's because their costs of handling are a little bit more expensive than the costs of Inland, but we're trying to move them, of course, into a range that's very close. In fact, I think over time we'll be reducing that figure below that \$2.15 or \$2.50, and we can put more of that money into dealing with the tires that are backlogged in the landfills of Alberta.

### Alberta Resources Railway

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Speaker, this week the government took a ride on the Alberta railroad. Who says we have no sense of humour here? The government sold their railroad for \$33 million paid over nine years thereby capping losses of \$277 million in the process. The shocker in all this is that the buyer is the same buyer who wanted 18 months ago to have an option to pay five times as much. My first question to the Premier is this: is the financed part of this transaction going to be interest free to the purchaser?

MR. KLEIN: No, of course not.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much. Well, then, my second question again to the Premier: is the Daishowa spur line on this project, which was completed in 1989 at a cost of nearly \$30 million, included in the \$33 million sale?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's rather interesting that a press release was dated March 8. This is March 9. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray is asking questions out of a press release that the Minister of Transportation and Utilities pointed out. If the hon. member would have read the press release, it said:

Included in the sale is ARR's 323.9 mile right-of-way from Swan Landing, west of Hinton, to Grande Prairie, and all track structures, bridges, signals, communication equipment and repair and maintenance facilities.

End quote. Nothing that the hon. member has asked about is included in the statement that was put out by the Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

On that point, Mr. Speaker, perhaps one day we really should have a ruling with respect to what are emergent questions. A press release has got all of the answers. Now they want to ask questions about a press release.

2:00

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order please. If the hon. minister would like to raise a point of order at the appropriate time.

Final supplemental.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you. Well, since the Auditor General's report and the financial statements of the province separate the Daishowa spur from the spur length referred to in the press release, I ask again: is the Daishowa spur at \$30 million included in the \$33 million sale?

MR. KOWALSKI: The answer to that question as I understand it is no. Mr. Speaker, one should remember that the Alberta Resources Railway was built in the 1960s by a government other than a Progressive Conservative government. It has been the objective of this government going back to 1971 to try and find, number one, a value for the annual operations side of that particular railroad, which we finally arrived at in the last couple years. Now this asset, which has been a negative asset to the people of Alberta going back to the 1960s, has been sold. There will now no longer be an ongoing debt on an annual basis to the taxpayers of the province of Alberta.

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

### Regulating Professions

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I received a very interesting fax yesterday from a constituent of mine who is a dentist. He stated . . .

MR. CHADI: Did he send a cheque?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, he didn't send a cheque, nor did he wear toilet paper around his arm.

He stated, and I quote:

In these times of cutbacks and seniors issues I thought it only appropriate to give seniors a break by holding a "free clinic."

He received a letter from his association stating that he would be violating legislation if he did this. To the member responsible for professions and occupations: why is he violating legislation?

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

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, in response to: did the constituent send a cheque? To show a volunteer initiative like that, he probably is in fact a Conservative.

The dental profession actually has also held a free dental care day at the University of Alberta, so dentists are certainly the type of profession that demonstrates volunteer initiative. We have published, Mr. Speaker, a paper on the guidelines for the development of regulations respecting advertising by professionals in Alberta. There are four policies that we recommend professions follow: that the public interest in professional advertising be truthful, clear, complete, and in good taste.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary is simply this: are not proposals such as this free enterprise?

MR. SPEAKER: The question is asking for an opinion.  
Final supplemental.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How can an association or legislation prevent publication of fees if they can unilaterally increase fees that are paid directly by the consumer?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of advertising is not to prevent it but to act in the public interest and ensure that advertising meets that criterion. We're seeking the balance between reasonable professional standards and encouraging competition and consumers' choice. In fact, we are in the process of establishing a committee to look at all concepts of professional legislation as it applies to the health care professions in the province of Alberta.

### Private Hospitals

MR. MITCHELL: You know, Mr. Speaker, if you don't like this government's policy, then all you have to do is wait about 15 minutes and it usually changes for the worse. Here in the throne speech the Premier says that he believes in the Canada Health Act, yet before the print is barely dry, the Premier's out there suggesting that somehow he wants to commercialize hospitals, something that is clearly in contravention of the Canada Health Act. Why would the Premier of this province want to establish a U.S. type health care system when the Americans themselves want the one that we already have?

MR. KLEIN: I wonder: where do you get your research? I mean, we darn near doubled your budget or tripled your budget. Two million to do proper research and the best you can do is read the newspapers.

Mr. Speaker, three doctors some time ago in a very, very informal discussion asked me about the possibility of establishing or building a private hospital, and I said: I don't know at this time what the rules and the regulations are and whatever is done would have to be done in accordance with the Canada Health Act,

but if you're interested in pursuing this, send me a proposal, send me your ideas, and we'll check it out. That's all.

MR. MITCHELL: The president of the Alberta Hospital Association makes it very clear that a commercial hospital could not work without government money. Will the Premier please confirm whether or not he agrees with the president of the Alberta Hospital Association when he says that these cannot work without government investment?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is taking this thing a lot further than I'm certainly taking it. What he is saying is that people out there cannot have ideas, that people out there cannot ask for information, that people out there can't seek new and better and more efficient ways of doing things, that everything has to be done the same old way. Now, someone says to me: "Lookit; we think we have a better way of doing something. We don't want to violate any laws. Can you check it out for us?" I said: yes, you get me the information, and we'll check it out. Thus far I have received absolutely no information.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, given that the Premier is answering in this way, he will have no problem – will he, Mr. Speaker . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question. Question.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm asking the question. The Premier will have no problem – will he, Mr. Speaker? – confirming here and now that under no circumstances will he allow government funding to go into commercial hospitals in this province.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again I have to reiterate: we don't have a proposal. There was an informal discussion some months ago relative to this particular issue. I want to see what the proponents have in mind. If it violates the Canada Health Act, then it will not occur. It's as simple as that.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members should recall that one of the criterion for questions is that they should not be hypothetical questions. It's very difficult to reply to a hypothetical question.  
The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

### Charles Camsell Hospital

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Camsell hospital has historically provided emergency service for the natives of northern Canada. Referrals were routinely made from Northwest Territories and northern Alberta for treatment of tuberculosis, asthma, and other chronic diseases. The closure of their emergency services therefore signals the end of an era. To the Minister of Health: since the remainder of the hospital is to remain open, could she please explain why this emergency ward was closed rather than upgraded?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Royal Alex and the Camsell hospitals merged last year, and members may or may not be aware that a significant number of dollars were put into the Royal Alex to upgrade the emergency. I know that some of the members are aware of that because some were present at the opening of what is a state-of-the-art emergency. This was designed to be able to accommodate all of the needs of particularly the northeast part of the city but other emergencies that come into the city. It is probably one of the finest emergency and trauma centres in the country, not just in Alberta, and there is

absolute confidence that the people will be served far better in that upgraded state-of-the-art emergency clinic.

**2:10**

MR. BRASSARD: Could the minister advise this Assembly just how much money is being saved by this closure?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I could not give exact figures on that. I would expect that the management at the Royal Alex might have a better idea of that. I think that probably bottom line their concern was improved service. It is my understanding that a number of the employees from the Camsell emergency will be transferred to the Royal Alex emergency so, in that way, probably not dollars in that area. However, I might say that operating a highly technical and specialized emergency is costly, and there will be less duplication of equipment and space. So there would be savings, I am sure, there, but I think the bottom line is improved service for emergency and trauma.

MR. BRASSARD: In that I represent three rural hospitals all providing emergency services, does this closure signal a trend that is developing here in the rationalization of services?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we will certainly be looking to enhancing emergency services in the rural areas as we have looked to enhancing them in the urban areas. I think there will be an increased need for improved emergency services. We have done some of those things already where we have improved the ambulance system. We have put in place an ambulance Act that ensures similar ambulance service across this province, but indeed I would say that we would be looking to enhance emergency services in our rural areas where transportation and distance are a concern.

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

### **Krever Inquiry**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the one hand, Albertans infected with tainted blood are facing a life-and-death choice on March 15. By that date, they must choose to either accept or reject a hopelessly inadequate compensation package. On the other hand, this government has refused for five months to turn over documents to the Krever inquiry, an inquiry designed to get to the bottom of the tainted blood scandal. My question to the minister is this: why has this government delayed more than five months in making available the required documents to this important inquiry?

MRS. McCLELLAN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me clarify that eight provinces in Canada joined together, and I'm proud to say that Alberta was a leader in offering an assistance package to people who were affected by the blood supply.

Secondly, the Krever inquiry has requested documents from Alberta, and they are being prepared, and they will be sent to the Krever inquiry. We are a full supporter of the Krever inquiry. This government has agreed to be a participant. We are assisting in funding that inquiry, and we fully intend to be in full compliance with providing those documents to the Krever inquiry.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, those Alberta victims want action, not rhetoric.

My supplementary question to the minister is this: is it this government's intention to bully those victims into accepting the

compensation package by delaying the surrender of these documents to the Krever commission?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that is an absolutely outrageous comment. The assistance package that was put together by eight provinces in Canada was on humanitarian grounds, recognizing a concern, and it was put in as promptly as possible – it was announced in September, last fall – to offer people assistance through this. As I said earlier, we have completely agreed to the Krever inquiry. We are full participants. We are funding it in part along with the other provinces in Canada. We are working very extensively to provide all documentation to ensure that we have a safe blood supply in this country for all citizens in the future. That is why the Krever inquiry is in place.

MR. DICKSON: Well, if indeed this government is so committed to the humanitarian objective, will this minister, then, commit to work with the province of Ontario to extend the March 15 deadline, give these people additional time?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we put a package of assistance together in September of last year for persons affected. We did put in place a March 15 deadline. That was agreed to by eight provinces, and eight provinces have deemed that that is an appropriate date.

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

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a little information because I think the hon. member has left an allegation out there that hasn't been answered. In Ontario there were media reports that they have in fact not been able to meet their deadline in providing their documents, but that is not the case in Alberta. In fact, the counsel for the inquiry has asked for the documents to be ready if possible by March 21. That still gives us at least 11 days. Justice is working with Health sifting through those, and we expect to live up to that deadline.

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

### **Adult Education Upgrading**

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The area of extension grants is receiving a tremendous amount of change in the budgets of Education and Advanced Education and Career Development. Many people in my constituency are concerned that when the dust settles, adults who are trying to get their high school diplomas will be unable to access an institution. My question is to the Minister of Education. Why have you eliminated extension grants from your '94-95 budget?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Education – Mr. Speaker. Sorry. [interjections] On a serious note, it's an important topic. We have found as government two things, and we've heard this from the public of the province. First of all, the overlap and duplication in terms of programs of government should be eliminated. In terms of the move that the government has made, we have directed the efforts of education to K to 12 education, and education beyond, in the adult realm, is now with Advanced Education and Career Development.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, in the whole field of adult education we have a host of programs that are operating right now, and those need to be refined and reorganized. That is what we've done in terms of the reorganization of government. Adult education is

with Advanced Education and Career Development, and I would ask my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development to elaborate in terms of what is actually being done, which shows our priority for adult education.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development: with the transfer of responsibility of extension grants to your department, does this mean tuition fees for high school credit programs will go up?

MR. ADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about something. What the hon. Minister of Education said was in fact true. That has been turned over to our department to deal with. But I certainly want to make it clear that needy students who are trying to get academic upgrading will receive funding. In fact, in order to accommodate that, we have increased our adult development program funding by \$5 million in this year's budget, but that's not to say that the program won't look different. It's going to be focused on academic upgrading in order to give those students what they need to move forward in the education system.

Certainly there will be a tuition program for those students that can afford tuition and have a job and should be paying tuition and paying for part of their education. They will be treated like any other student in the adult system. They can apply to the Students Finance Board in order to receive funding to offset that tuition if they require it. So, Mr. Speaker, yes, there will be some tuition in place.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

2:20

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, Viscount Bennett is a major player in our system of academic . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is trying to ask a question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we can get rid of the chatter for a minute.

Finally, Viscount Bennett is a major player in our system in the academic upgrading in Calgary. My question is to the minister of advanced education. Will Viscount Bennett continue this fall?

MR. CHADI: Frank asked that two weeks ago.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, from across the way the hon. members are talking about having asked that question earlier. It's a surprise to me why they would still be down in Calgary going on about there being no program at Viscount Bennett. It seems to me that their mission in life is to deal with innuendos perhaps that are not exactly true.

Mr. Speaker, certainly there is a great deal of support for the program to continue at Viscount Bennett school. My understanding is that my department has entered into an agreement with Viscount Bennett school and that there will be a program there ongoing next fall for students to continue with their academic upgrading. It will be funded in the manner that I outlined in my earlier response.

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

### Heritage Savings Trust Fund

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier keeps telling Albertans that we have a spending problem, not a revenue problem, but now the Premier wants to create a revenue problem all by himself by deferring interest payments on Newfoundland bonds presently held by the heritage savings trust fund. To the Premier: how can the Premier go around the country offering interest breaks on provincial bonds held by the heritage savings trust fund when on January 19 he assured the heritage savings trust fund committee that in fact the status quo would be held until the review was completed?

MR. KLEIN: I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker: has the hon. member been involved in some discussions that I haven't been involved in? I had a discussion with the Premier of Newfoundland at the First Ministers' Conference, and I indicated that Albertans feel for the people of Newfoundland and the great suffering they are going through. It would be like all our oil wells drying up and suffering a severe drought at the same time and having absolutely no hope at all. I simply said to the Premier: if there's any way that we can help, let us know. He gave me some indication that he would like to come out to Alberta and discuss a few things. Nothing specific in any way, shape, or form has been discussed thus far.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, then why is the Premier of Newfoundland reported as saying that the Premier brought up the issue of interest deferrals?

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. The Premier cannot be expected to answer on behalf of the Premier of Newfoundland. Final supplemental.

DR. PERCY: Can the Premier explain to Albertans, then, what impact deferring interest on these bonds would have on interest income accruing to the province of Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is purely hypothetical. I said to the Premier of Newfoundland that we would explore a number of things. I know they have absolutely no compassion over on that side of the House, no compassion at all, no compassion whatsoever, not even for their fellow Liberals in Newfoundland. I find that to be absolutely outrageous. There is tremendous suffering there. The economy of that province has gone away, and it probably won't recover for years and years and years to come. And they don't care.

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

### Kananaskis Country Golf Course

MR. SMITH: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a question that a constituent raised at my town hall meeting on Tuesday in regard to the fact that the operation of the Kananaskis Country Golf Course has increased the usage and enjoyment of a great Alberta provincial park. To the Minister of Environmental Protection: will the minister advise this House on revenues that have accrued to the province from the operation of this golf course since its initial opening?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have at hand all of the money that has accrued to the province from the opening of the Kananaskis golf course in - what was that? - 1978, 1979,

1980. However, I keep track of the money that is going to the province under the current contract. Right now, the contract with the Kan-Alta people, who operate the golf course, provides for 8 percent of gross revenues from that operation to go back into the provincial coffers. In 1992 there were in excess of \$400,000 from that contract that went back into our provincial coffers. The unaudited statement for 1993 indicates about that same amount.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister consider directly allocating golf course contract revenues to a revolving provincial park fund so as to minimize the possibility of introducing full park user fees?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can indicate to the hon. member and to members of this Assembly that, number one, we are looking at the cost benefit of user fees in our provincial parks, including Kananaskis Country, and certainly we're looking at revolving funds. It is something that I am currently reviewing. I would bring a suggestion forward to my colleagues in cabinet and caucus before anything of that nature would be implemented, but it's a good suggestion.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

#### **Interprovincial Trade Barriers**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the government hired former minister Jim Horsman without an open competition as a consultant on the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers. Yesterday we had tabled in the House a document that tells us that this contract is worth \$86,000 for 84 days. My first question to the Premier, who is also the minister responsible for Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs is simply this: why is he hiring a consultant to do his job?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, when I leave the House and if I had to spend the time away, they would be complaining that I'm not in the House doing what I'm supposed to do or I'm not in the province, that I'm out negotiating internal trade barriers. You know, I was of the understanding that the Liberals thought the appointment of Mr. Horsman - it seems to me that I heard the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar say at one time that this was a good appointment, that Mr. Horsman was a fine gentleman and certainly a person with a tremendous amount of expertise relative to these situations having been the former Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. He has tremendous knowledge.

If you talk to the chairman of this particular commission, he has nothing but the highest praise for Mr. Horsman and his ability to negotiate. By July we should have some resolve to this issue, and hopefully we'll be on our way to removing those terrible internal barriers to trade.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I never said he wasn't a good guy.

My supplementary question to the Premier is: why would the government hire a consultant for 84 days who, during a 10-year career as minister, failed to accomplish what he's now being asked to do?

MR. KLEIN: He hasn't failed. Mr. Horsman is a well-respected negotiator and has represented the interests of Alberta with the utmost dedication and commitment. He is doing an exceptional job for us and, as a matter of fact, has been recognized as somewhat of a leader in breaking down these internal trade barriers.

2:30

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary to the Premier is: since it's unlikely Mr. Horsman will achieve in 84 days what he couldn't do in 10 years, is the government going to renew this \$1,000-a-day contract, the way they did with Juan Oldring?

MR. KLEIN: Hopefully there will be a resolve to this issue by July of this year; that is the deadline that has been established. I have to reiterate that as far as I'm concerned, the minister responsible for the activities of Mr. Horsman as it relates to these negotiations, I can only say once again that he is doing a very good job for the people of Alberta.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

#### **Petitions**

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address one of the deficiencies I believe exists in the format of petitions being introduced in this Assembly. Recently a petition was filed by a member from the Liberal opposition. The petitioners were reported to be from Bowness, Greenwood, and northern Calgary. As two of the communities cited were in my constituency, I asked for and received a copy of the petition. I had planned to contact my constituents to discuss their concerns; however, I was unable to do so. There were five pages of names listed without addresses. Further, I recognized some of these names, and the names that I know are those of schoolchildren who do not live in Calgary-Bow. Included in this petition also were names of petitioners who gave Linden and Banff as their address. I was not aware that these two communities have been annexed by the city of Calgary. The inclusion of these names does seem inappropriate and misleading as they are included in the total number of signatures on the petition.

Mr. Speaker, our Standing Orders do not require the addresses of petitioners. *Beauchesne* 1024 clearly states that a petitioner's address be included on the petition. The inclusion of addresses allows the signatures to be verified and the petitioners contacted for a follow-up. Greater care should be taken by all members to ensure that only the petitioners from the area specified on the petition are included to prevent a misunderstanding as to the identity of the petitioners. I urge this Assembly to amend the Standing Orders to include the petitioner's address on all petitions accepted by this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

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

#### **Senior Citizens' Housing**

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year the Minister of Municipal Affairs spoke on provincial television and indicated that in his opinion there are many seniors living in provincially subsidized housing that didn't need the subsidy because either they have a high income or substantial



assets. The minister referred to this excess baggage, to use his words, and said that the government wished to look at a privatized model of providing seniors' accommodation. Since then I have visited a number of senior citizens' residences in my constituency to become educated about seniors' housing. I thought perhaps the minister knew something I didn't. I asked the residents if they knew any individuals who had the high incomes or millions in assets that the minister spoke about. I found out that all seniors who live in lodges and seniors' apartments must complete income statements on an annual basis and that of the literally hundreds of seniors in my constituency who are living in subsidized accommodation that I met with, not one – not one – has the kind of income or assets that the minister implied in his statement.

These pioneers of our province also told me that they know we must do something about the deficit. Some even said that they could contribute by paying a bit more for their housing. Mr. Speaker, these seniors told me that they did not want their homes privatized. As one so eloquently said, and I quote: what makes this different from just any apartment building is that we feel safe and we feel we belong here; this is our home. End quote. The senior citizens of my constituency and the province worked long and hard to build a province that we can be proud of. People of my generation know that the fact that we can raise our children in our communities, the communities that we are proud to live in, is due to the hard work of those who have already raised their families.

On behalf of the seniors in my constituency and across the province who live in geared-to-income housing, I plead with this government not to take away their homes by turning seniors' residences into just another place to live, into just another apartment building. We owe these seniors not just a place to live but a place to live where they can feel safe, where they can belong, and where they can live with dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Choice of Reading Materials in Schools**

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, last week a petition I presented in this Legislature caused quite a reaction. I welcome this opportunity to present my perspective.

The petition I presented was organized by an individual in Wetaskiwin, Alberta. His daughter had come home from school with the book *Of Mice and Men*, and it offended his religious stance. He apparently then made several attempts to have alternative books used in its place but was unsuccessful. That led to the petition.

As citizens of Alberta each of us has an opportunity to sign petitions. Their purpose is to make a variety of statements or ask for a variety of actions. Petitions represent citizen initiative and are an opportunity for citizens to make their views known. The only access into the Legislature is through an MLA, and many petitions are presented in this manner. Petitions are not debated and do not become law, nor are they presented with the intention of becoming law. They are merely a statement encouraging the government to look into the concerns of citizen groups.

Outside of the Legislature I outlined the concerns of the gentleman who originated the petition. I indicated that the number of profanities in this book seemed excessive and questioned the appropriateness of the book in a school curriculum.

During my campaign to be nominated and elected last June, I ran on two essential themes. The first was that as a province we needed to get our fiscal house in order. My background is in finance, and most of my energy and time since June 15 has been spent on that task. The second theme I ran on was my commit-

ment to the preservation of the family unit and the responsibilities of parents to and for their children. This is where this issue comes into play. I have been chastised over and over on the issue of censorship. In my opinion, however, censorship is not the issue. The issue is whether or not we respect the rights or the wishes of parents in the choice of material their children are exposed to. Mr. Speaker, for the record I believe in the rights of parents to have a say in the lives of their children.

#### **Projected Government Business**

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 7(5) I'd like to ask the Government House Leader what is projected for next week's business.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in the ongoing spirit of open government I'm happy to report that on Monday, March 14, we will find ourselves in the afternoon in Committee of Supply considering the estimates of the Executive Council and Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. In the evening we will be in Committee of the Whole considering Bills 2 and 4 and possibly 6. In second reading we will look at Bills 11, 12, and 13.

On Tuesday, March 14, at 4:30 we'll be looking at government Bill 8. In the evening we will find ourselves in Committee of Supply considering the estimates of Public Works, Supply and Services and if there's time Government Bills and Orders, including Bill 8.

Wednesday, March 16, in the evening: Committee of Supply considering the estimates of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

On Thursday, March 17, we are happy to comply with the designation in Committee of Supply of the Provincial Treasurer's estimates.

MR. SPEAKER: Before calling Orders of the Day, I would like on behalf of all members of the Assembly to hope that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a very pleasant Saturday, which is her birthday, and hope to see her back in her usual cheerful and attractive mode on Monday.

#### **Orders of the Day**

#### **Committee of Supply**

**2:40**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I call the committee to order. For the benefit of those in the gallery we would say that this is the informal part of the Legislature. Members are allowed to move around and to whisper very quietly to one another and even to have coffee and juice in here.

#### **Main Estimates 1994-95**

#### **Community Development**

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call on the minister for his comments, and then we'll open it to the floor for comments, questions, and amendments. The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present to the Legislature the 1994-95 budget estimates for the Department of Community Development. I would like to refer to the

1994-95 government estimates book on pages 55 through 67 and supplementary information element details book, pages 13 and 14.

Mr. Chairman, every decision we have made conforms to the Klein government's policy on fiscal responsibility, which, as you are aware, aims at eliminating the deficit without restricting important public programs and services. People of Alberta support this policy, and they support our strategy of giving more responsibility for local community programs and services to communities, to the leaders who are in the best position to identify community needs and allocate community resources according to community priorities.

Strategy is the essence of community development. It is a way of encouraging and supporting community initiative and resourcefulness. It is also the essence of Alberta Community Development as a department of this government and one of the best ways we have of meeting our fiscal goals and maintaining public programs and services at acceptable levels. This strategy encourages levels of personal and community pride in self-reliance that are only possible when policies and decisions move from the bottom up rather than from the top down. The strategy is also efficient. It helps us reduce administrative costs overall by eliminating duplication and improving communication and interaction between the people who plan programs and the people who deliver them. The result is a 50 percent reduction over 1992-93 expenditures in the department's budget and a 25 percent reduction over 1992-93 allocations in staffing by the end of the three-year business plan.

There have been costs associated with these savings, Mr. Chairman: human costs and financial costs. The human costs are reflected in my department's 1994-95 budget and its three-year plan. A total of 22.5 positions will be eliminated in the next fiscal year. Another 62 positions will be eliminated in the remaining two years. In total 169 positions will have been abolished by the end of our three-year business plan starting with 1992-93 as a base year. We are aware of the impact of these reductions on the individuals involved. We have made and will continue to make every effort to make these reductions compassionately. Wherever possible reductions have been through separation allowance programs and by attrition, redeployment, eliminating existing vacancies, and not renewing temporary positions. These are jobs which we can no longer afford to justify because there is no more work to be done due to the elimination of programs and services that I referred to earlier. We believe that in the long run new work and new jobs will be created at the community level when the benefits of eliminating the deficit begin to take hold in the economy.

Similar reasoning applies to the reductions in funding allocations which affect programs. We cannot afford programs anymore, but we believe the communities affected will be able to respond to the changes through innovation or a realignment of community priorities. These may be viewed as financial costs in the short term, but we must not forget the money does not disappear because the provincial government does not spend it. It stays in the community and is put to work in the community. Respect for community priorities also lies behind our decision to end the conditional urban parks operating grants program and transfer its budget to the Department of Municipal Affairs for inclusion in the unconditional municipal grants program. When grants to municipalities are being reduced overall, we believe it makes sense to give the municipalities maximum discretion over the use of the money that they do receive.

This is all part of a new way of doing business that meets the basic needs of Alberta's communities and supports the Klein government's goals of fiscal responsibility and restructuring

government. Essentially we are a catalyst; we help communities help themselves using a variety of community development strategies. Leadership: we try to play a leadership role in all the communities that we serve, and we try to identify individuals and organizations that can share or take over some or all of our leadership functions. Another strategy, Mr. Chairman, partnership: we support and develop community leadership and initiative by forming strategic partnerships with other levels of government, the private sector, and volunteer organizations, and we encourage those same parties to pursue their own strategic partnerships. Participation: we seek and encourage broad community participation in programs and services, such as historic sites, which we continue to operate, and we encourage all the communities we serve to do the same with the programs they operate. Protection: we are responsible for making sure that all Albertans have fair and equal access to all government and community programs and services, and we work to ensure that all of Alberta's communities do the same.

These strategies, Mr. Chairman, help us shift from a centralized model of government to a decentralized model in which most programs and services are provided by community-based and community-driven sources. Our primary job, as I've said, is to be a catalyst: to stimulate, inspire, encourage community initiative. We also provide some specialized technical and consulting services when we can be cost-effective, and we prime the pump with specialized programs and services, primarily our historic sites and services, which are beyond the means of individual communities but which can serve as magnets or anchors for developing tourism, recreational and cultural activities. We use the full range of leadership, partnership, participation, and protection strategies in our community development tool kit to help communities develop these activities, but the goal in the short and long terms is to have the communities take more and more responsibility for them.

Mr. Chairman, I've talked a lot about ideas, about concepts, and about philosophy. I thank you and your colleagues for your kind attention and interest. The point I want to make is this: community development and my Department of Community Development are not just programs thrown together because there is nowhere else to put them. There is a vision. There are clear and achievable goals. They aim at building strong communities and a stronger province. There are still programs and services. They have been or are being refocused to support the vision and the goals. But principles, policies, and programs are not ends in themselves; they are a means to an end to capitalize on what the Premier of this province calls the Alberta advantage, that special combination of natural, financial, corporate, community, and human resources that is uniquely Albertan, to build a better future for us all. So how can we do that? By allowing Albertans to be themselves – creative, energetic, entrepreneurial, resourceful, self-reliant, pioneering in spirit and in action – without too much interference from government. The challenge is to strike a productive balance between the provincial government support which is necessary in a highly competitive, global, knowledge-based market and government initiative which can all too easily overwhelm where it initially might only want to help. My department's special role is to help find that productive balance.

## 2:50

The government's decision to consolidate five existing seniors' income security programs into one easily accessible Alberta seniors' benefit program, Mr. Chairman, is a logical response to the goals of fiscal responsibility and restructuring of government that I referred to earlier. Its objective is more efficient and effective delivery of important income support to seniors. I

believe the Alberta seniors' benefit can and will operate effectively and efficiently.

The Alberta seniors' benefit program grew out of extensive consultations with seniors and seniors' organizations covering two years. Those consultations produced six principles, which are reflected in what seniors told us and served as guidelines for the Alberta seniors' benefit program. We are committed to the principles. They came directly from seniors themselves. The principles are as follows: one, protect low-income seniors; two, streamline administration and cut duplication; three, use an income test, not a means test, to determine eligibility for the program; four, allow those who can afford to pay to do so; five, consult with seniors on proposed changes; and finally, six, carefully monitor the impact of any changes.

The first three principles have, I believe, been respected and acted upon in this new program. The fourth principle, allow those who can afford to pay to do so, while it found general agreement as a guideline has led to some problems in implementation. Many seniors do not agree with the income thresholds that we used to define lower income seniors, who do not have to pay for any services, moderate-income seniors, who will pay part of the costs of some services, and high-income seniors, who will pay the full cost of some services. That is why the fifth principle, consult with seniors on proposed changes, is so appropriate and so important and so timely. That is why implementation of the Alberta seniors' benefit will allow time for consultations to take place and action to be taken if appropriate. The consultation process is already under way. It is free, it is open, it is fair.

My department's strategic principles – leadership, partnership, participation, and protection – will guide our involvement in the process and, I hope, the involvement of Alberta seniors and their organizations. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Chairman; we have made some tough decisions. We have more tough decisions to make. With the good faith and goodwill that I know exist, we will make good decisions.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

The government of the province of Alberta is committed to meeting the needs of seniors with programs that are fair and effective. A key element in the provincial budget is a complete reworking of seniors' benefits that concentrates on helping those who are in greatest need. In 1994 the government will spend close to \$1 billion to meet its commitment to seniors, just over 11 percent of which will be administered through my department through the Alberta seniors' benefit program. It is a one-window approach, which means seniors will only have to deal with one provincial government department and one application process. It is more efficient for government to administer, and it is easier for seniors to access. The new program targets benefits where they are needed the most, with a sliding scale based on income to determine the level of benefits a senior receives.

Mr. Chairman, now I would like to touch briefly upon some of the highlights of the financial portion of the estimates of my department. I would draw your attention, first of all, to page 14 of the element details booklet. On the total ministry line I would ask you to subtract the funding for the Alberta seniors' benefit of \$111 million from the total column. The remainder, which is \$48.536 million, is the portion of our total GRF estimates which should be compared with the total ministry amount in the total column under the comparable 1993-94 GRF estimates, \$57.405 million.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member.

MRS. HEWES: Could I ask the minister to repeat that? I'm sorry; I didn't quite get to the page in time to follow your instructions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Hon. minister.

MRS. HEWES: Sorry about that.

MR. MAR: Not a problem. Page 14 of the element details booklet.

MRS. HEWES: Okay. Yes, sir. I've got it.

MR. MAR: Very good.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, are you sure it isn't because you're getting older today that you're slower at catching on?

MRS. HEWES: Cut that out.

Yes, sir. I have it now.

MR. MAR: Very good.

Alberta seniors' benefit funding aside, the 1994-95 estimates project a savings.

MRS. BURGNER: She wants the numbers again, Gary.

MR. MAR: Oh, I'm sorry. To repeat the numbers, on the total ministry line subtract the funding for the Alberta seniors' benefit, which is \$111 million, from the total column. The remainder, which is \$48.536 million, is the portion of our total GRF estimates which should be compared with the total ministry amount in the total column under the comparable '93-94 GRF estimates of \$57.405 million.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, sir.

MR. MAR: Very good.

As I was saying, Mr. Chairman, the Alberta seniors' benefit funding aside, the 1994-95 estimates project a saving of \$8.869 million, or 15.45 percent, over the 1993-94 estimates. This follows a reduction of \$26.456 million, or 31.5 percent, from 1992-93 and continues our progress towards an overall 50 percent reduction by the end of our three-year business plan in 1996-97.

The biggest impact of current cost reductions is felt under financial assistance, and I refer you to subsection 2.2 on page 13 of the element details booklet. The subprogram total for 1994-95 at \$15.549 million represents a reduction of \$6.826 million, which is 30.5 percent over 1993-94. The bulk of the 1994-95 total remaining in this subcategory is in library operating grants, which remains the same.

Library grants have been maintained at current levels so we can look at outstanding funding issues and improve the equity between and among the individual libraries and library systems that we fund. This will have an impact; however, it will be relatively modest compared to other changes at about 6 percent. I am sure that you and your colleagues will appreciate, Mr. Chairman, that libraries are the focal point of many Alberta communities and as such play a role that goes beyond their contributions through the circulation of books. Libraries are important in a knowledge-based economy where information is a valuable asset, but they

also play important social and community development roles, especially in smaller centres.

Smaller reductions are included in the estimates for program 3, cultural facilities and historical resources, and program 4, individual rights and citizenship services. Program 3, cultural facilities and historical resources, goes down by \$878,000, 5.1 percent, due to salary reductions and in some cases reductions of staff positions. A few typical examples: program support drops from \$461,000 in 1993-94 to \$447,000; the Royal Tyrrell Museum goes from \$2.214 million to \$2.1 million; archives and historic sites, from \$5.238 million to \$5.051 million; and the Jubilee auditoria, from \$1.656 million to \$1.51 million. You will note, Mr. Chairman, that the impact is fairly evenly distributed throughout this program area.

Program 4, individual rights and citizenship services, will be reduced by \$379,000, 8.3 percent, due again to the 5 percent salary reduction and some reductions of capital assets and supplies and service. Program support drops from \$164,000 to \$153,000; the Human Rights Commission, from \$1.576 million to \$1.517 million. The impact is somewhat greater in this program area on the Citizenship and Heritage Secretariat, which goes from \$1.070 million to \$965,000, and the sections responsible for advice on women's and seniors' issues, which go from \$1.772 million in 1993-94 to \$1.568 million as a group.

### 3:00

Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasize the fact that the impact of the Klein government's determination to reduce government spending and program initiatives has already fallen heavily upon my department and will continue to be felt in the next three years. When I talk about cuts, I'm talking about jobs; I'm talking about careers; I'm talking about plans and dreams and hopes of people in my department and of people in all parts of Alberta whose livelihoods have depended on Community Development programs, services, and funding. We can stay the course and we will stay the course, but we can also be compassionate. We can try not to be more disruptive than necessary; we can try to distribute the load as fairly as possible. We all shared the gain when the times were good; now we must all share some of the pain as we try to come to terms with a new economic environment. In making our budget and planning decisions, we have tried to cut activities which involved mainly consumption of funds while retaining those which involve significant investment of funds. That, too, is a Community Development way of looking at things. We have taken a good look and a hard look at all of the options.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I would ask my colleagues Yvonne Fritz and Jocelyn Burgener, who are responsible for the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission and the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, to speak briefly on behalf of their agencies. I would ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross to begin.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the hon. Minister of Community Development for the support that he and his department, who are here today, provide in assisting Alberta multiculturalism in carrying out its programs and services. We appreciate it and thank you.

The Citizenship and Heritage Secretariat, which provides the program and administrative support to the commission, has by no means, as you've heard, Mr. Chairman, been exempt from the downsizing and reduction that all aspects of government are undergoing. By 1996-97 the resources of the secretariat will be reduced by 20 percent. However, the programs of the commission will continue to be delivered efficiently and effectively. This will require some refocusing and possibly restructuring, but the staff and I are confident that we will be able to meet the needs of

Albertans. The commission is in the final year of a three-year action plan which was unveiled in 1991. We've continued our efforts to help all Albertans better understand, appreciate, and benefit from the cultural diversity of Alberta.

I'd like the people in the Legislature to actually hear what we did do this past year, because so many have asked these questions. This past year the commission held its fourth annual symposium for managing diversity entitled *The Leadership Challenge*, which was attended by over 75 senior executives from the public and private sectors interested in diversity management. Our cultural ambassadors program, which provides individuals with the skills they can use to communicate to others about their own cultures, has now trained 108 people. We've implemented a youth cultural ambassador program, which is now being piloted in a number of schools, and students are learning about how culture influences them and are gaining skills to help them deal with conflict that may arise from diversity issues.

A survey of diversity initiatives in Alberta businesses entitled *Moving Forward: Corporate Initiatives in Managing Diversity* was published and provides a growing data base of activities, incorporating diversity in the workplace. We are working in partnership with the city of Edmonton on a diversity project, which will assist the city to increase awareness and understanding of diversity issues and to develop knowledge and skills to incorporate diversity in the delivery and management of city services.

We've also worked with the Alberta Association for Young Children and the University of Calgary to develop a research project, *Culturally Sensitive Child Care: The Alberta Study*, which identifies the needs of early childhood professionals and day care owners and operators regarding diversity.

Our Multiculturalism Advisory Council has worked with Alberta Education this past year to produce a bibliography of teaching and learning resources. The resources are now being sent to schools across Alberta.

As I said, our action plan is coming to an end this fall. The commission initiated a public review of its plan. We asked Albertans to tell us how effective our plan has been, what issues and concerns still need to be addressed, and what strategies we should consider in our next action plan. Albertans from across the province told us that their objectives of increasing awareness, improving access, and encouraging full participation for all are still valid. However, they feel that despite the efforts of the commission to meet its objectives, a number of issues and concerns continue to influence our work.

The negative attitude of some Albertans toward people of different cultures, the continued belief by many Albertans that the commission's only role is to fund ethnocultural communities to retain their traditions – I've heard that in this very Legislature, and I know that it's a concern – the fear of heightened racism and discrimination, the increasing diversity of the people residing in Alberta, the need for strong leadership and commitment by government to the ideals and benefits of a culturally diverse society, the need for the programs of the commission to be community based and community driven, and lastly the changes in government that are redefining the way to do business: all these issues and concerns will need to be addressed, Mr. Chairman, to ensure that the government's multiculturalism policy can continue to assist in fostering economic growth and social stability.

The commission is now developing strategies to address the issues and concerns expressed by Albertans. I'll be tabling the commission's new action plan later this spring in the Legislature. Diversity in Alberta is a reality, and we need to learn to understand, accept, and benefit from this diversity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you once again to the hon. minister for the opportunity to present this in the House today.

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

Oh, sorry, hon. member.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to follow my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross and respond as chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council at this opportunity to discuss the 1994-95 estimates for Community Development. I, too, would like to thank on behalf of the Seniors Advisory Council the commitment of the minister, who has taken on a major challenge since the election of June 15 and his appointment to cabinet. It is with a great deal of respect and support that I bring this information before the Assembly.

I would like to thank the hon. minister and the staff of the department, both clerical and those who work in research and those who are manning the phones. They are there all the time, not just in this time that we are a little bit under siege, if you will.

I'd like to speak to you about the work that's being done by the advisory council. Some of it is a continuation of processes that were begun in 1993-94, and some of them obviously indicate the future direction that we are going to take the council over the next year. I would like to advise this Assembly that we will continue to play a leadership role in the Alberta seniors community by encouraging public discussion and consultation and by communicating the views and concerns of seniors to government and by making recommendations on programs and policies that affect Alberta's older citizens.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is a very critical role. An advisory committee by nature and by design has a responsibility to be in touch with the community and assist in developing public policy. We take that role very seriously. On behalf of my council members - I know they work tirelessly not only on behalf of the council but within their communities so they can bring that voice and that perspective to the table.

Mr. Mar has already spoken about the Alberta seniors' benefits. The seniors council is undertaking the critically important task with respect to this proposed program. Council members will attend many of the consultation sessions being organized by the seniors' groups across the province. We will listen, and we will understand, and we will ensure that the seniors' voices are heard by government. We are confident that a fair program that meets seniors' needs will come out of these consultations. Fortunately, our role in that consultation process is one of reviewing the many recommendations that will be coming forward and assisting in tabling the report to the minister. That is why I'm very confident that because of our advisory nature and our work within the community we will be able to hear and listen and respond.

We will be taking other initiatives as well, Mr. Chairman. It is important to realize that in the time of this fiscal change and the impact of the budget of February 24, there is ongoing work being done on behalf of the council.

### 3:10

I would like to identify to you that we will be completing the major survey of older native persons this year. The council funded this survey of native people aged 50 and over and will be distributing its final report and hold workshops on presenting its findings. This is a key, significant item, and I believe it will have importance in the province of Alberta. As you know, federally there's major restructuring going on with respect to native affairs, and we have to recognize that with the decline in some of the

communities of our native Canadians, the respect and care for the elders has been lost. We are very pleased to have been able to work with our own native groups in support of seniors and find out what areas we would have to assist in developing policy to assist these important members of our community.

We are also preparing a position paper on abuse, neglect, and the exploitation of older adults and want to raise public awareness on this critically important issue through this paper. Again, Mr. Chairman, we are concerned that the seniors of the community have a voice. Quite often by working with the various facilities and the caregivers, we get a perspective of what is happening within seniors' homes and in the institutions and have a responsibility to bring that forward.

In addition, we will be following up on the Tax Reform Commission's submissions, which were presented by the Seniors Advisory Council, which dealt with some concerns with respect to how municipalities would deal with seniors as they move to fair market value assessment. I believe this is a critical issue in order to assist seniors in staying in their homes and one that we will be actively working on on behalf of them at the municipal level.

We have also been asked to respond to the National Advisory Council on Aging and follow up on issues involving health care reforms as they reflect the health concerns of seniors. We have, as you know, a very expensive health care system in Canada. Seniors are entitled to and responsible for an awful lot of those costs, and we want to contribute on that. Seniors want us to be concerned with the private and family care homes, a new innovation in maintaining seniors in their homes, and the community supports that are vital to maintaining those unassisted situations. That will follow up on the health care reforms and the home care supports that come out of the new regional health care.

In addition to these projects we will be available to provide a concern for the attitudes of seniors, how they respond and how they are responded to within the community, and we're committed to making these goals a reality. The Seniors Advisory Council will also be putting together their three-year plan. We would like to also thank the minister for the initiative of working with the Women's and Seniors' Secretariat policy and program to give us that support, as many of our seniors are women, and we have that connection. We rely on that.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank the minister for the confidence he's placed in the council and for the role that he has asked us to play as we go through this very interesting time with respect to changes in seniors' programs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I want to make some comments with regard to the estimates that affect the Department of Community Development. I appreciate the minister having tossed into his preamble some apologies for what's going on in this area. This department seems to in fact have become an eclectic arena, into which so many vital programs have been placed at the risk of becoming obscured, I should say. Now, while these things used to be important to government and still are to most Albertans, it's quite evident from this budget what the ideological bent and actions of the current Conservative government are all about.

Community issues are something which members opposite are rapidly moving away from. All that matters is money. Mr. Chairman, there are also people out there. In fact, from what I've seen in the so-called business plans, I think that this depart-

ment looks like it's on the chopping block rather entirely and doesn't have a very long life span at all. In that regard I would ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Creek to become a much stronger advocate for his Department of Community Development or risk becoming the minister of community `demisement.' Taxpayers are already footing the bill for one minister without purpose; we don't want to be footing the bill for another. There may be some for whom this may not be such a grave concern, but when I see the kind of treatment that seniors have been subjected to by this government, the kind of anxiety and insecurity that has been caused by the purposeful misrepresentation by this government and the kind of manipulation then backpedaling that seniors have had to put up with recently, I believe that my concerns along with those of thousands of seniors are very, very justified.

Mr. Minister, next time you bring in a new program and a new budget for it, tell seniors all the facts up front, and don't try to dupe them or con them with confusing half-truths. There's enough difficulty out there that people have with elected and public officials, especially government officials, that you don't have to do any of this further fueling. We all appreciated the apologies that you and the Premier made over the last several days, but you could have avoided this mess simply by telling the entire truth, something that the legal profession has supposedly prepared you to do. Confusing our Alberta seniors with misleading budget information in relation to income thresholds is simply not acceptable.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, to have spent \$91,000 on the production of a brochure plus several thousand dollars more on mailing costs and even thousands of dollars more on print advertising in the newspapers to get the misleading message out to seniors is absolutely reprehensible. That's about one-quarter of a million dollars. The minister through this budget has lost almost all his credibility with seniors and also the credibility from the many other groups who comprise this portfolio. This minister has also caused great embarrassment to the Premier, to his colleague from Calgary-Currie, who is responsible for seniors' issues, and to the entire caucus through an ill-prepared budget that he's brought in, which is dividing that caucus.

He's only sowing the seeds for even further division among seniors in Alberta, and I mean that in a very literal sense. Older couples are now realizing that it's financially beneficial for them to perhaps separate. Can you imagine? Who brings in this kind of a budget and programs like this? The extended health care benefit of \$116 doesn't even cover the cost of a pair of eyeglasses. Single-senior couples – that is to say, where one of them is over 65 and the other is not – will lose their \$1,200 renters' assistance and the assured income supplement if their collective income is over \$10,631. What kind of a threshold level is that? Who on earth advised this government that it would be acceptable to seniors in Alberta? We've seen clearly this week that it is not acceptable. We have hundreds of seniors meeting in town halls, appearing in the media, and getting ready to march on the Legislature on Saturday, March 19, at 1:30 p.m. from the Grant MacEwan campus here downtown, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to bring a message to this government: stop this nonsense; go back to square one; start over; and do it the right way.

It's disgraceful, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to penalize our mothers and fathers, our grandparents this way. These are the very people who worked and paid taxes and sweated every day of their lives to provide us with all the good that we have. Now in their retirement years all they ask is to live out their dreams in peace, with dignity, and in some comfort and security, not having to worry about silly government programs that are set to destroy the quality of life these pioneers have earned and deserve. My

colleague the most hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont will elaborate further and present some specific questions in that regard.

Another important area contained in these estimates is that of women's issues. I note that last year this minister said in this very House that he was a strong supporter of the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and he gave a commitment to the continuance of that council. Today it's a different story. This budget and its accompanying business plan call for that same minister to cancel the council on women's issues in a couple of years. So what does this minister plan to do to stay informed on issues that are most important to women in Alberta? We have seen just this week the all-important announcement surrounding midwifery in the province come forward. This was an initiative brought forward through that advisory council, and I'm sure it is only one of several others which my colleague the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert will speak more about shortly.

As I look at program 1, operating expenditures, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I note some reductions in the budget regarding the minister's office and the deputy minister's office, which on the surface appear to be quite reasonable. They total something like \$108,000, and taxpayers will no doubt appreciate that. However, a little lower I see that there's an increase of \$37,000 for finance and administration. Perhaps the minister could just briefly explain why, with less to do in his area, he's asking for a \$37,000 increase in administration expenses.

### 3:20

The outstanding feature here, Mr. Chairman, is the dramatic cut to this minister's communications expenses from \$331,000 down to \$187,000. I would urge him to just review communications, given the horrendous example of the poor communication we've seen this week between him, his department, and the seniors. He may want to consider shifting some dollars around to improve communications, because I think he has really worried all the other groups that are to be hit in years to come from this community support level.

With regard to the capital asset expenditures of \$28,000, I will only ask that the minister provide me with a detailed picture of what he's buying for that amount and what the basis of the need is to substantiate those capital purchases.

Looking at program 2 expenditures for what is called community services, there exists a drop of \$24 million in line 2.2 for financial assistance. I'd like the minister to explain what he's taking away from Albertans and what the justification is for its removal. Given his forthcoming explanation, I would hope to better understand the \$2.4 million cut to management and operations. The presumption I have is that through the programs contained under program 2, there are opportunities for the government to in fact stimulate Alberta economically as well as socially and culturally. However, with a total reduction of \$26.4 million, it's clear that the stimulation if any will be vastly reduced. I'd like the minister to explain what the economic impact of these cuts will be to the arts and cultural industries, the public libraries, recreation, and so on. Who's going to suffer what, Mr. Deputy Chairman, when this chain sawing is done?

As I reviewed program 3, which is cultural facilities and historical resources, I noted the reduction of about \$1 million from last year prefaced by a reduction of about \$5 million from the year before that. It's apparent that the pattern here is to very steadily reduce funds for the operation of our provincial museums, historic sites, cultural facilities, and interpretive centres. I find this a bit puzzling and also troubling, because we have a substantial investment in having created these world-class facilities such

as the Royal Tyrrell Museum, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and others. These facilities attract thousands of visitors and tourists and tourist dollars each year, and they're a tremendous source of pride to Albertans. Not only that, but they stand as a marvelous testament to our unique cultural and historical past. My concern here, Mr. Deputy Chairman, is that having spent the millions of dollars to develop these facilities into world-class venues, through this minister and his lack of commitment to this area are we going to see a drastic reduction to the extent that there will not be any operating dollars left for these sites to be managed properly, to be maintained, kept up such that they will remain as international attractions?

These facilities also provide wonderful educational opportunities for visitors but, more importantly, also for our own Alberta students. We've seen the lack of understanding and commitment this government has for things educational, so it doesn't surprise me that here again members opposite are missing the boat. The neglect of these areas is imminent if this government doesn't refocus its course. Once again I say for the benefit of those on the other side, you can't use a financial bottom line only as the exclusive measuring stick for governance. There are some things that are of great value to our society and of great importance to what we call our quality of life, and it should be the government's concern to recognize that and begin demonstrating it.

Without your support, Mr. Minister, who in that caucus is going to speak up for historical resources and cultural facilities under this vote? Albertans are looking to you, Mr. Minister, to be an advocate for cultural and community facilities, but we have yet to see any concrete action in that regard. Flowery words and glowing speeches that don't result in action become known as broken promises. No wonder Albertans are losing faith in this government.

MR. HENRY: They've lost the faith.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: I think they've pretty much lost it, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre has added. It's gone.

With regard to program 4, Mr. Deputy Chairman, we see a cut of about \$1.1 million.

#### **Point of Order Abusive Language**

DR. WEST: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Sorry, hon. member. A point of order.

DR. WEST: Well, I've sat here long enough to listen to this incessant abuse. Under 23(i) he's using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." Any direct attack not only on the rest of the members of this government or the hon. minister I find out of order, and I'd like a ruling on it.

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

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, you can't have a point of order on a point of order.

MR. HENRY: Can I speak to the point of order?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, you can.

MR. HENRY: I believe the hon. minister meant 23(j) and not 23(i).

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you want to speak to the point of order?

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay; go ahead, hon. member.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Deputy Chairman, to the point of order. I'm disturbed that he's disturbed, because the things in the budget are disturbing, and that's a fact. I'm only pointing out those parts of the budget which I hope they will take up as a charge to correct. The minister has said and the Premier has said that if there is a detour he wants us to take, that if there's a new pass through the mountains, we should bring it forward. I'm urging the minister to become an advocate for his department, not the conveyor of its demise. This budget is an instrument of demise for that department. The minister knows that I'm trying to help him through this . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. I think I've heard enough on the point of order.

The ruling is that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs could be right. However, this has been going on in the House since I've been here in 1986, and it seems to always continue. It happens on both sides. I mean, we do not like in a lot of cases what one side of the House or the other says. Not saying that this side of the House has to agree with that or vice versa. In my mind, what the hon. member is saying would not lead to a point of order that would be severe enough to ask for any retraction.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I will continue to be constructively, positively critical in my comments.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. ZWOZDESKY: With regard to program 4, Mr. Chairman, we see a cut, as I was saying, of about \$1.1 million to the area of individual rights and citizenship services; in other words, a cut of over 20 percent to the only taxpayer-supported department in government whose job is to ensure equal, fair treatment and respect for and among Albertans, including women's and seniors' issues and multiculturalism.

Now let's take a closer look at this. We've seen the devastating hit to seniors in this bad budget, and we know that the women's advisory council is on the chopping block because the minister has been forced by his caucus to break his commitment to Alberta women. I assume he was forced, because surely he didn't break his commitment to Alberta women voluntarily. Now, here we have some additional smoke screens, Mr. Chairman, because the government has more reviews going on with potentially hidden agendas – we don't know for sure yet; we'll see – for both the Multiculturalism Commission and the Human Rights Commission. I'd like the minister to explain why he's backing away from the support he promised earlier to this area. I'd also like him to provide me with an explanation of the activities of the Human Rights Commission over the past several months, including how many rights cases it has heard and at what cost.

**3:30**

Finally, I'd like this minister to reaffirm his commitment to individual rights and so-called citizenship services by stating clearly his support for the continuance of the secretariats and commissions under his command. Will you do that, Mr. Minis-

ter? Will you give us a commitment, one that we can count on, for the continuance of these vital organs of government?

Also, he should explain the \$32,000 estimated expenditure for the purchase of capital assets here under vote 4. What is he buying? Why? Where is it going? And how is the purchase going to bolster program 4? My colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo will address additional specifics later on in this debate.

I know that the minister made a couple of comments with regard to some job losses in his department, and I look forward to checking the Blues on that or *Hansard* tomorrow to see exactly what the notes were. I didn't have a chance to write down all the figures as quickly as I had hoped. My concern is that the job losses again are indicative of the demise of this department. We have three things happening. We have programs such as urban parks, which I'll come back to later to talk about, being shifted over to the unconditional grants program for municipalities. We have other areas of the community development portfolio being eliminated totally, such as the women's council and others. So there are many job losses there.

Then we also see a rather consistent rollback in the total budget amount for this department. In 1992-93 I think the actual expenditures were of the nature of almost \$81 million in this area. In 1993-94 they were down to \$57 million, and in '94-95, as the minister clarified for us, they will be down to \$48 million. So again, I say, we see a shift in three short years from \$81 million down to \$48 million, and I'm pretty sure that by the time they're finished, Mr. Deputy Chairman, they're looking at getting community development likely down to something much, much lower than that, perhaps even getting rid of it completely, and that is why I'm urging the hon. member responsible for community development, the minister, to please become a stronger advocate for this area.

This is where we have things that are extremely important to us as individuals. The arts and the humanities and cultural matters are all embodied in this area, along with recreation, immigration matters, and so on. I think we need a strong supporter for this, and who better than the minister to lead the charge on that? I know it's not an easy job on that side of the House to do that because of the ideological bent, as has been presented through some of the debates in this House, but I would urge him along with the hon. members for Calgary-Currie and Calgary-Cross to do what is necessary to bring these points of view forward in a much stronger way to their friends and to the members opposite.

I have some additional concerns with regard to recreation, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and other parts of this budget, but to allow some of my colleagues a chance to address some of their matters, I am now going to relinquish my spot and pass on to the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. We've looked at the budget, and I have a few things specifically with the women's issues that I'd like to address to the hon. minister. The most noticeable fact in this budget is that the women's advisory council and the Women's Secretariat have now been combined with the seniors' budget, hidden in the program individual rights and citizenship services. Now, last year and years before that the Women's Secretariat and the women's advisory council had their own subelement with a clearly defined allocation of dollars. This year, as a result of that lumping, program 4.0.4, advice on women's and seniors' issues, comes in at \$1.568 million, which

is a cut of \$204,000. In this new global budget what is not clear in this combination of the seniors, secretariat, and advisory council is: how much of this year's budget is being allocated for each of the three areas? In last year's budget the Women's Secretariat had a budget of almost \$700,000, which is twice that of the advisory council on women's issues, which last year was \$338,000.

Now, when you look at the two price differences, I'm interested to know why the council would be killed when it costs considerably less than the secretariat. I asked this last session, and I would certainly appreciate an answer this session. I want to know the role that you envision for the secretariat now that it's combined with the seniors. Would you mind indicating exactly what the issues are that the Women's Secretariat is working on and what their budget is this year? How many staff are employed? I guess I'd just like to have a general update as to what the secretariat does.

With respect to the advisory council, I would like to say that I am very pleased with the appointment of the chair. We know the work of Marilyn Fleger very well. She's well respected in the community, and we welcome her placement. Well done. However, what is ironic is that the day we hear the position is filled, we find out that the minister is pulling the plug on the council. A bit ironic. What chance – is there any chance that there may be an extension of the life of the council? Look at the good work that it's done on midwifery – and I support the council – as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore mentioned, and now that is legislated and now that will be in place. That was one of the very important studies that council did. It's an example of the fine work it does.

The other thing about the council is that it will be moving soon, and perhaps the minister can describe the reason for the move. I saw you there the other evening at the open house, and I think you can appreciate how conducive that building is to the work they do. So I would perhaps ask the benefit of the move. If possible, could it stay there? And will it fit into the physical space with the Women's Secretariat and the seniors, et cetera, if you see that as a plus or a minus or possibly keeping the present space they're in?

I'd like to ask about the vacancies on the board and how quickly they'll be filled. How many women have applied? That would be interesting to know. How was it advertised? I know of people in Medicine Hat who saw the ad and were quite interested in it. I'd like to know the process of that and who will be doing the final selection, just general information that I would certainly appreciate.

One of the most frustrating aspects that we've experienced with the council while doing extremely important work, especially in terms of their studies and analysis and recommendations on issues affecting women, is the complete lack of any definitive action from the provincial government. A study is all well and good, but what's the action taken as a result of it? So if they submit a study like they have on maintenance enforcement, I'd like to see some action on your behalf.

I guess I'm asking you, being the minister of women's issues, to be more vocal in support of some of the difficulties that they are going through. Research and analysis has been done, in fact by the council, on the social assistance cuts and how they're affecting women, particularly single mothers with children. If we looked at the long-term goals of maintenance enforcement, we would see long-term savings. Instead of short-term cuts, I'd rather see long-term savings. I would be interested if you could do this within your role as women's issues minister. Could you compile information on the layoffs in the private and public sectors and how many of those are women, any studies on the impact of the budget cuts in terms of layoffs in education and



health care, public sector, and how many of those are women? Because we've got to find a strategy for those people to be back in the work force. Recently I was speaking to a woman in charge of one of the food banks. She said: "It is just devastating what has happened. The people coming in have tripled, many women with children." I would ask you to even go to the women's shelter. When we look at women and their choice of leaving a violent situation, their choice is to go to poverty. To leave violence, you have to go to poverty in many cases, and I would like you as the minister of that to try to address that. I realize it's a phenomenal problem, but we've got to get some programs in place that address these issues. Poverty is a devastating cycle. I realize that. But we have to take steps, and I believe that through education and work programs we can help break that cycle, and I would like to see your input on that.

### 3:40

Another point – and you sent me a note about it the other day – the widows' pension. I would sure appreciate that being clarified publicly. What's happened to it, where is it going, and the money, et cetera?

I mentioned that the advisory council did a study on maintenance enforcement, and I would like you to be more vocal in this area. My motion was defeated, and one of my colleagues said, "Don't take it as a vote against the motion, Colleen; it was a personal vote against you." That I can handle, rather than a vote against enforcing maintenance enforcement. I would like you to be more vocal on that issue. I realize that even though it falls under Justice and social services, it directly affects a large percentage of women. I would have appreciated your input on that debate. Please look at the new Bill coming up on maintenance enforcement and really weigh whether that is the effective way to address the situation. I really don't.

Women's health care is definitely under seige. The Grace hospital in Calgary, the only one of its kind providing comprehensive health services for women, is under serious threat. Rising incidences of breast cancer and other female cancers call for serious leadership. I'm asking you to be an advocate on behalf of improving women's health care services. I realize it's a time of restraint, but short-term solutions aren't always the answer. I'm sure that women across this province would appreciate it if you would speak out.

With regard to violence and safety, I would like your views on the funding for shelters and your position with respect to offering counseling support for women and children who are victims of abuse and ask you to stop by some women's shelters. I was in Calgary in between sessions, and they actually have a cement berm in front of the building to protect them, because a man actually drove through the building with his car. So we have a lot of women living in fear and in very violent situations. These cuts aren't making things better. I realize we have to make some cuts, but we have to be discretionary as to where we do that.

Fifty-six percent of Canadian women are afraid to walk the streets in their neighbourhood alone at night. I don't mean to pack all the burdens of the entire world on your shoulders, but there's a big problem right now with safety with regards to women and all of our population. So I would like you to look at the safer cities initiatives. Maybe we can look at implementing some of those.

Immigrant women and new Canadians continue to feel the added stress adjusting to Canadian culture. They often need additional supports, especially in the areas of family violence, poverty, and English as a second language. I would ask what you are doing in regard to the English as a Second Language course for all our immigrant people.

Employment. Women continue to make only 65 percent of every dollar earned by the man in the same job, and this is a disgraceful figure. As we approach the 21st century, again I would ask you to address this gap.

Overall I guess I would urge you to take women's issues very seriously. In our caucus we certainly do. We strongly support the work done by the council and will continue to support them. We believe any minister that is responsible for women's issues should be well versed on all the above areas that we have talked about.

As his Premier constantly complains that the ministers need to get out from under the dome and start talking, I would urge you to start talking with women who are struggling to survive in a province that is more concerned about the bottom line rather than the pain they are inflicting on women and children. Mr. Minister, I ask you to be serious in your duties. Get out and meet the women. Hear their stories. Please don't ignore their concerns, and be sensitive to the needs of Alberta women.

Before I close, I'd just like to make a few comments about the budget for seniors. It has wreaked havoc in this province. Rather than studies on abuse, let's do something. Let's spend our money wisely. Brochures and pamphlets aren't very consoling. I'm sure that money could have been much better spent. I would urge you as a minister to consider what your department is doing to seniors. I know that couples have come to my office distressed. My own parents are a couple where my father's a senior but my mother is not. They've been very directly hit by this and are quite concerned. I know that you're in a difficult role, but I don't want you to be the fall guy for a bad decision by this government. I urge you to be a strong minister. I realize this is a new job, but I ask you to be an advocate.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I would have a couple of very short comments for the minister, and they have to do with vote 3.0.6, the Remington-Alberta museum located in

Cardston. I recall last year asking a question about utilizing the Remington museum and having the people down there bringing the carriages out to the local communities for the fairs. At the time I recall a response that they had a limitation on the mileage that they had to travel, and I can understand that, more so now in times of restraint, but I do have to wonder, Mr. Minister, why the Remington-Alberta centre in their budget has only been cut \$25,000 this year, from the \$741,000 to the \$716,000. I wouldn't mind a comment on that.

That was going to be the extent of the comments, Mr. Minister, but because of some of the comments the previous speaker just made, I think it's fairly important to pass along a few points of view from our constituency to you. No doubt there are concerns with the seniors' program, but I know, as in many of the cases, that there seems to be misinformation put across to some of the seniors courtesy of various groups. I think it's very imperative for the seniors to get the clear picture, and if it's my understanding, I would like some clarification that in fact the benefits accruing to the seniors start at, as you've indicated before, 10,400 and some odd dollars. The benefits that follow that have declined in the past, and that's the process, but I think it's a very important message to get out to the seniors that this isn't a brand-new reduction strategy that's been put in place. It's in fact something that's happened in the past, that as the seniors' incomes did increase from the \$10,400 up to whatever level, in fact their cash

benefits did reduce over the years, and I would like a clarification on that.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

The other thing that I think is most important for your benefit in making decisions as far as your department goes, Mr. Minister, is the Human Rights Commission. Although some people may take it in the wrong context, the vast, in fact a huge majority of constituents in Little Bow are not in favour of moneys being spent in the area of the Human Rights Commission. They represent a huge cross-section of cultural backgrounds. They are pioneers from many, many different countries, and they also have many new people coming from countries outside of Canada and across the ocean. I have the pleasure of knowing some of them very personally, and I think it's with a lot of pride that I reflect to you that these same people who came to Canada years ago or as recently as 10 years ago have conveyed to me the impression that they're very proud of their heritage. They in fact appreciate the fact that they as families and through their own churches tend to want to support their own cultural/religious differences. It seems nowadays that the very existence of a Human Rights Commission tends to create more intolerance, at least in our part of the province, than it does to solve the problem that it's supposedly set up to prevent.

So with that, Mr. Minister, I would look forward to your response.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, do you wish to reply to the questions as they come every so often?

3:50

MR. MAR: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to be able to respond to the last three members who have spoken. I'd like to thank all the hon. members for their comments and for taking the effort and the time to go through my estimates.

Ordinarily, I've always found the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore to be persuasive and sharp in his observations and his opinions. However, on this day, Mr. Chairman, I had great fear for his personal safety. I thought he would disappear in a puff of righteous indignation. Listening to his comments, I think that I have discerned a number of points that he's tried to make, and I'd like to be able to respond to them.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore asked a question about an increase of I believe \$32,000 under finance and administration in the department. I'm not certain where he found that increase. Can the hon. member refer me to the particular line that he was referring to? In fact, there was a reduction of \$212,000 in the budget of finance and administration under 1.0.3, and that reduction represented a combination of a governmentwide 5 percent reduction in salaries and staff reductions.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore also asked, if I can paraphrase his question, I guess, how the government intended to ensure that voices of Alberta women are heard, and this is also a comment, I think, that was raised by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. As the minister responsible for women's issues I will continue to listen to what women have to say about issues of concern to them and ensure that government continues to hear their message as well. I recently had the pleasure on International Women's Day, as the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert is aware, of appointing the council's new chair, Ms Marilyn Fleger of the city of Edmonton. The new chair will sit on the selection panel to choose the new members of council, and the final decisions will be made by

cabinet. The Advisory Council on Women's Issues will be very busy for the remainder of its mandate. The council and the Women's and Seniors' Secretariat will work with women of Alberta to identify the ways of continuing to bring their concerns and ideas to government.

Going back again to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, I believe he asked a question about explaining the reduction of \$13,000 in the communications budget under line 1.0.4. Those reductions represent the impact, again, of the governmentwide 5 percent salary reduction and also a reduction in fixed assets, and I'm not persuaded that there is a need for any increase in this area, as the hon. member has suggested.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore also asked about library grants, and again if I can perhaps paraphrase his question: how are library operating grants affected by this budget? The library grants budget of my ministry has been maintained at the '93-94 level of \$12.299 million. This was done because libraries represent one of the most important core programs in my department. The review of the library grants is necessary for several reasons. First of all, because the empowering Act and the legislations are very old and require updating and streamlining, and frankly, the library regulations are very complex and are frequently inconsistent with our own desire to simplify legislation. Secondly, Mr. Chairman, the library network in Alberta is currently reaching a maturity, and we need to explore future direction for it. The information age is upon us, and government wants to be assured that the approach to the deliver of library services in the province is up to the challenge of society and the economy of the next decade.

With respect to the completion of the Chinook Arch library system, operational funding which will be found in this year's budget marks the end point in library system development. Consequently, we must review the situation in order to determine whether the efficiencies and economies promised by advocates of library systems development are being realized.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, on the subject of libraries there is no more money available for library granting, and we must therefore explore the full range of options available to libraries in order that they can remain in operation and achieve lasting and broad community and local financial support necessary for their continued success.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore also asked about the changes to program 3 on cultural facilities and historical resources. The changes to program 3 include the 5 percent salary reduction and program downsizing and further reorganization related to my three-year plan targets. Capital investment spending has been reduced, and steps to increase self-generated revenues which will offset GRF expenditures will be implemented.

I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore asked me to justify a reduction of about \$1 million to museums and historic sites. Given that the province has a major investment in these facilities and that the facilities play a major role in the tourist economy and education of Albertans, I would agree with the observations made by the hon. member about the importance of the investment made in those facilities and the importance of the role that those facilities play in both the tourist economy and the education of Albertans. Currently the province operates the most comprehensive system of museums and historic sites in the country. The 18 facilities, from the Royal Tyrrell Museum to Stephansson House, attract nearly 1 and a half million visitors per year and contribute millions of dollars to the provincial economy. Increasingly as well in recent years these facilities have been generating revenues themselves to help offset their operating

costs. Accordingly, we need fewer public dollars to continue to operate the facilities as major tourist, educational, and cultural facilities.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore did ask about individual rights and citizenship services. The program changes in program 4 include the 5 percent salary reduction and administrative downsizing due to the consolidation of support services within the branch.

Furthermore, the hon. member asked about the economic impact of the decrease to program 2.1.2. That program is part of an ongoing federal/provincial agreement, and the reduction reflects a 5 percent reduction in salaries. This decrease does not affect the program dollars being distributed to cultural industries.

With respect to the hon. member's question of cost of the human rights investigations, I will be pleased to respond in writing and take his question as notice.

The hon. member also asked about the \$32,000 in capital investment that is to be used in program 4. That \$32,000 is to be used for the purchase of electronic data processing equipment necessary to integrate various areas of the program. Five thousand dollars is for EDP equipment for the Citizenship and Heritage Secretariat, and the balance of \$27,000 is for EDP equipment for the Human Rights Commission.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert was very persuasive in her comments, and I find them most useful in looking at my own business plan. Again, she asked the question regarding the termination of the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and simply put, the Advisory Council on Women's Issues will terminate on December 31, 1996, as stated in its enacting legislation. Accordingly, that legislation and that council will be sunsetted in accordance with the legislation itself. In addition, the government has committed to undertake a review of all of its agencies, boards, and commissions. The Advisory Council on Women's Issues is included within the ambit of that policy, and therefore I cannot and I will not commit to re-enacting the council prior to any consultation with Albertans. Frankly, I feel that more government legislation should be sunsetted in order that the people and their government have periodic opportunity to debate the relative merits of continuing policies, programs, and agencies, although I am in agreement with the hon. member with respect to the very good work that the advisory council has done in the past.

4:00

With respect to the hon. Member for Little Bow, who asked the question about the Remington carriage museum. His question related to why the Remington-Alberta centre had only been cut \$25,000, from \$741,000 to \$716,000. In the three-year business plan the Remington-Alberta Carriage Centre will be reduced by 16.5 percent. This reduction can be offset by revenues generated by the elimination of free Tuesdays during visitor season and by increased gate charges in the 1996-97 year of \$1. The Remington carriage centre is certainly an important element in the province's tourism and job creation strategy. With energetic marketing in the United States and especially in the state of Montana we expect to draw significant numbers of tourists northwards into Canada. This will be, of course, their first experience across the border, and we intend to make it a good one.

With respect to the hon. Member for Little Bow's questions about the clarification required on seniors' programs, there is no doubt that there is some confusion that exists out there, and I have acted as quickly and effectively as I can to correct it. The fact is, Mr. Chairman, that these programs were very complicated as they existed before. As I have said in this House on numerous occasions, there are 230,000-some seniors, each of whom would have something very important to say about the Alberta seniors'

benefit program and also about the former programs that this program will replace.

Mr. Chairman, the confusion is created by virtue of the fact that it is very much an individual program. It is a program that depends on a number of different factors to establish your eligibility for a certain level of benefits. But I would point out that the programs that this Alberta seniors' benefit replaces also worked on a sliding income scale, and, accordingly, as you had more income, you received a lesser benefit, which only makes sense on the theory that you want to give the greatest benefit to those who are in the greatest amount of need.

With respect to the hon. Member for Little Bow's question on the area of multiculturalism, I'm in agreement with him that if groups wish to retain their own cultural elements, then such groups can do it without the use of public money and should be encouraged to do so. However, Mr. Chairman, I would go further. There is a role, in my opinion, for government to assist in the management of the diversity of the cultural groups which make up the province of Alberta and the nation of Canada we live in, and there remains a role for government ensuring that there is harmony among those groups. That, in fact, can be one of the great strengths of being in the province of Alberta and is recognized as a fact that we live in a multicultural state.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to review the comments made in the Blues, and if you require further clarification on any of these issues, I'm pleased to do so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to suggest that in the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo this Department of Community Development probably is more important or at least as important as in any one of the other 82 constituencies in this province. The reason I say that is that it simply reflects much of the characteristics of Calgary-Buffalo. We have in that constituency the largest concentration of low-income seniors of the 83 constituencies. I have over 10,000 senior constituents who have an income of less than \$18,000 a year, so I want to spend a moment talking about the concerns of seniors.

I have to tell the minister that there is misinformation out there, that there is confusion out there. I've been inundated with telephone calls over the last two weeks dealing with the changes in terms of seniors' benefit programs. Contrary to the Member for Little Bow and his suggestion, this isn't misinformation that's in some fashion created or spread by critics of the government. Rather, I think the responsibility has to be seated where it belongs; in fact, at the feet of government. I can tell you that we're talking concentrations of – a place like Murdock Manor in Calgary has approximately 400 seniors, many of those seniors on extremely modest fixed incomes. I can assure the minister that these people were enormously confused over the information they're getting, not from me as their MLA but from the offices of the government. I think it's understandable that these people are concerned. They have such modest means. They have so little flexibility to adjust their expenses on a day-to-day basis. They are uniquely vulnerable in a way that almost no other sector of our province is, no other sector of our community.

I think it's incumbent for all of us, whether government or opposition, to find ways of giving these seniors not only some degree of comfort that they're not going to be deprived of programs and services that they need but also a sense of respect and a sense of dignity. That doesn't translate very well to a budget document. You know, Mr. Minister, though the Chair, what you provide in your budget, what you provide in your three-

year plan directly impacts on those intangibles, the sense of confidence seniors have in this province, the sense of dignity they have.

Right now the response I get from seniors and the feedback I get is that you may have provided for the lowest income seniors, but, Mr. Minister, what you've missed, and I say this with respect, is that there are a very large number of seniors – they certainly are living in downtown Calgary, and I'm confident they live in other constituencies as well – who may not be in the absolute lowest income category but they certainly consider themselves unable to afford the loss of the programs that you're proposing to bring in. These are seniors that have husbanded their resources carefully and wisely. They have projected what they require for the next number of years. They suddenly find that plan is out the window, and now they're in a position where they have to scramble to rearrange their futures. [interjections] I hear some members disagree with my observation, and all I can tell you is that I invite any member in this Assembly to come and spend a Saturday or a Sunday morning with me and the seniors in Murdock Manor or one of these other seniors' complexes. I'll introduce you to plenty of seniors who feel that their interests are going to be severely compromised with this budget announcement.

I want to move on. I also want to speak about another aspect of my constituency that makes this minister and his department so vitally important, and that is the fact that Calgary-Buffalo also has the largest concentration of new Canadians of the 83 constituencies. There are an enormous number of immigrant families that come to Calgary, and they often live in the downtown area in apartments for a period of time until they're able to find some other place to reside. So for those people – and I say this partly in response to the comments from the Member for Little Bow – when we talk about human rights, this isn't some kind of an academic exercise; this isn't something that we debate in some kind of an abstract fashion here. Human rights to these people means nothing less than simply fair treatment. It means the opportunity to look for an apartment to live in, it means the opportunity to look for a job without being discriminated against on the basis of where they come from or how recently they came to Canada.

I think, you know, all members in this Assembly have to do a job in terms of understanding the concerns of those Albertans. It's not good enough to say, "Well, you know, I don't talk to a lot of people who feel they're discriminated against." There are many new Canadians who feel that kind of discrimination and recognize that the Human Rights Commission is an absolutely essential kind of service that this government can provide and must provide. I just have to say to all members that this business of a Human Rights Commission to me isn't negotiable. I'm happy to talk about how we make the commission stronger. I'm happy to talk about how we make the work of the commission more effective and more useful to Calgarians and Albertans. To me, to suggest that we can do without the Alberta Human Rights Commission just shows that all of us don't understand and don't have a good enough recognition of the kinds of challenges that particularly new Canadians face.

#### 4:10

I want to invite the minister to attend a meeting of the Connaught community school. Members have heard me speak in the past about community schools. Well, the 1992 community school of the year was the Connaught community school in downtown Calgary. What you see if you go to that community school is that once a month representatives from perhaps 30 or 40 agencies in the inner city come together to talk about the issues of

families and children in that part of the community. There's a clear recognition when you talk to people like that of how important the promotion of tolerance and understanding is.

In any event, Mr. Chairman, I've spoken about some of the reasons why this department is so essential and the work of the Human Rights Commission is important in Calgary-Buffalo. I want to talk about some specific concerns I've got.

You know, when I look through the government's three-year business plan, when I look through the bullets – and I think it's the 11th bullet on page 4 of the plan – it's interesting to me that tucked in there is: we have to increase the understanding of and compliance with the Individual's Rights Protection Act. It gives me some measure of concern, Mr. Chairman. I think when I look at page 24 of the plan, I see a reference that the cost of the ongoing review and investigation, estimated to be \$190,000 to \$240,000, is coming out of the budget of the commission. My concern, or at least one of my concerns, is that there's been no additional money set aside for this fairly major undertaking in terms of a review of both the commission and the Act. The concern is that there aren't sufficient people to be able to do the number of investigations that are required, to do those investigations in a timely way. So I have a concern that despite the advocacy that I believe this minister does within his caucus and within his cabinet, the government in a corporate sense still isn't prepared to embrace the Human Rights Commission in the fashion that I hope they would.

You know, when there was an assessment done in 1988 by now Senator Ghitter, a former MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, he made a number of observations and his panel made a number of observations. One of the ones that I've always found as most instructive was his finding and his comment in this report, the assessment by Senator Ghitter, that in effect the real issue here when we deal with human rights is not simply in the enforcement machinery and it's not simply in the legal framework and the offences created; it's a question of leadership. It's a question of leadership that comes from the Premier. It's a question of leadership that comes from the cabinet. That's really what human rights and a vital and well-protected human rights regime is all about. I have to tell you, Mr. Chairman, that I'm concerned that we still seem to see little support in a corporate sense from this government and lack of support from the Premier for the important work of the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

I think in terms of dealing with the review process, Mr. Chairman, I'm proud that the 32 members of my caucus accepted a report, which I had the privilege of presenting to the review panel, dealing with the commission. What I want to do now in this Chamber is highlight some of the recommendations that I made on behalf of the opposition caucus.

I think one of the things we recognize in our recommendations is that we still have not addressed that question of creating an arm's-length relationship between the Human Rights Commission and the government and whichever minister is responsible for it. So we're still in the position where we urge that the Human Rights Commission and the chief commissioner be treated as a legislative office in the same way that the Auditor General and the Ombudsman are, that the person is hired not by the Lieutenant Governor in Council but in fact by the Legislature through the Legislative Offices Committee. We think that's overdue. We think that has to happen.

We think it's important for the commission to be able to respond to concerns that not just complainants but also employers and landlords have communicated to the commission. A common complaint now is that the investigative process is too lengthy; it takes too long for complaints to be investigated. In some cases

we have two-, three-year delays. There are a couple of reasons for that, but I'm going to suggest that we have to do better.

I think one of the ways we can do better in terms of approving the efficacy of the commission itself is to get away from this business of appointing ad hoc boards of inquiry. I think what we should do is start building some body of jurisprudence in terms of human rights cases, and the way we do that is to create a standing board of inquiry. Either we modify the commission itself to do that or in fact we look at creating that kind of a standing board, because one of the biggest delays now and one of the reasons we don't have a good control over costs of this department when it comes to boards of inquiry is the delay in waiting for the minister after getting a recommendation from the commission, the delay in waiting for the appointment of somebody to run the board of inquiry.

The other problem we have is that the costs get away on us. The costs get away because we don't really have control once we appoint one of these boards of inquiry. So I think it would be important, and I hope that the government will look at creating that kind of a standing, ongoing board of inquiry.

Complainants need more time to register a complaint. The six months that exists now is simply too tight; it's not adequate. I made the submission to the review panel. I make it again now to the minister that in fact there should be a one-year period within which to be able to advance complaints. I think that's important.

I think we have to get to a point where we've got a fixed number of commissioners. One of the things that's frustrating to me and I think to other Albertans who have a particular interest in the work of the commission is that we've seen vacancies on the commission that go for more than a year sometimes without somebody being appointed. Not only does it indicate a lack of interest on the part of the government in the work of the commission and a lack of commitment to it, but it also creates some hardship on those commissioners who are left, who have to carry a bigger workload. So one of the things I'm going to encourage the minister to look at is fixing a number of commissioners, whether it's five to seven or something in that order, so we know who are exercising that responsibility.

If in fact we're trying to build up a body of expertise in terms of a Human Rights Commission, I think it's time we got away from this business of a full appeal. My suggestion is that we limit appeal and recourse to the courts to a judicial review power only, and what we then say is: this commission has the power to make these kinds of determinations, and it's only if the commission has exceeded its jurisdiction that we would then allow the complainant the right to go to court and challenge that excess of jurisdiction.

I think what we have to do is reshape the Act. What we've got now is one of the most difficult statutes to read that I've ever seen. The tax Act, I guess, is worse, Mr. Minister. But the Individual's Rights Protection Act in Alberta is not a model of clarity. It's certainly not plain writing, and conceptually it's confused. I'm going to suggest we do what's happened in other jurisdictions. You look at Manitoba and some other places like that. You have a definition of discrimination, and we don't sort of break out rental situations and accommodation situations from employment situations but try and make it simpler. It's important, I think, that we retain the two caveats, the limitations, the bona fide occupational requirement. I think that's legitimate. I think the reasonable excuse for discrimination should be retained, but I think we can reshape this.

I'm much impressed with a submission that's being made, I know, to the review panel – and I hope to you, Mr. Minister – from the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, which has some very excellent ideas. I also want to commend to the minister a

paper done by a lawyer in Calgary named David Corry, who wrote a paper on improving the Human Rights Commission. I'm not incorporating by reference and accepting all of the recommendations from either of those two draft submitters, but certainly there was much of merit. I think there were plenty of useful ideas, means that we can make this commission respond better to the needs of employers and landlords as well as complainants, and I think that's important.

4:20

I'm still discouraged when I hear comments like that from the Member for Little Bow, who still seems to suggest that with human rights what we're talking about are special rights or preferential rights. Mr. Chairman, members of this caucus – and I think I can say I speak for all 32 members when I say this – we don't support preferential treatment; we do support equal treatment. What's at issue when we talk about the Individual's Rights Protection Act? It is simply a question of equal treatment and equal access. I think that point has to be made time and time again, because it's not a question of somehow giving somebody an advantage. We know empirically that there are groups that are the victim of substantial discrimination, and it's simply a question of trying to address that and ensuring that if you discriminate against a tenant, you should do so on the basis of because he's a lousy tenant or she doesn't pay her rent or because she has a record of trashing past apartments, not on the basis of this person's colour or religion and so on.

I think there also ought to be a provision in the Human Rights Act, Mr. Chairman, to deal with discrimination on the basis of a pardoned criminal offence. One of the problems – and it doesn't affect a huge number of people, but there are certainly Albertans that go through the process of obtaining a criminal pardon. There are all kinds of tests you have to go through and a period of time, five to seven years, after you've been convicted of a criminal offence, and at the end of that time, people go through a pardon process, an investigation to get a pardon, but in fact it turns out that the pardon is virtually worthless.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of other things I wanted to say, and I think I'm going to run out of time before I get to that point. I wanted to say one thing. When I was on the freedom of information panel, we had a number of representations from libraries, and I wanted to tell the minister how enormously impressed I was with the regional library system we have. It seems to me, Mr. Minister, that when we're looking for a way of bringing freedom of information down to a point where it's accessible to people, we could do no better than look at libraries as one of the vehicles through which people would be able to access government information and so on.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My thanks to the minister and the chairmen of the commissions for their opening comments.

Mr. Chairman, this department has had a very interesting and different kind of history. When I first knew it, it was the department of youth, and there were great expectations of the department. Eventually it became youth and recreation or recreation and youth. Then it became recreation, youth, and culture, and then we dropped off the youth and we added on culture and multiculturalism, and now we've gotten to Community Development. I acknowledge that the minister has an interesting conglomerate of activities in the department that he must manage.

It seems to me – I thought at one point that it's a kind of catchall. I'm not sure how well some of them hang together.

In any event, I wanted to ask, Mr. Chairman, about the name, Community Development, because my thoughts from my own history of being professionally involved in community development were that I'm not sure at this point in our evolution how much community development the Community Development department does, and I'd like to ask the minister about that. I think there are very, very few people in this province that really know and understand that process. I've searched the budget, and I don't see an awful lot in here that speaks to that. I see an item – let me see. I did find something that I thought might relate to kind of the developmental aspects, a sort of backup, the initiation, not just responding to community needs but initiating and mobilizing people in communities around certain issues and certain requirements. I don't see any budget item that really would tell me about that. I see the community services field offices, and if that's what they do, then perhaps the minister can describe to us how they do that, whether they simply respond or if they in fact initiate as the case arises.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to comment about a couple of programs in the budget. I know that the minister did make some clarifying remarks about 2.1.2. I'm not sure that I have a good understanding of what that is. I understood that support for arts industries is a federal/provincial partnership. Perhaps the minister would give us a bit more information.

I do want to thank the minister for maintaining the library grants. My own opinion is that when we are in a recession and headed for even more unemployment, it's incumbent on government to maintain certain kinds of programs and in fact increase them. I hope he and his department are thinking along those lines. I know it's unfortunate that the library in the city of Edmonton has found it necessary to charge a fee. I'm disappointed in that, because I believe that library services, that books should be free to those who need them and who wish to use them.

Perhaps the minister could comment a bit more about new technology and relationships of our libraries in our province to other provinces and also to the distance learning programs, with the demise of the University of Alberta extension department and Athabasca University's cutbacks, whether or not his programs will be expected to pick up some of the slack that will inevitably occur as a result of that.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to comment about the business plans. Just in general I find the business plans inconsistent. I had hoped that when we saw them, there would be consistency from one plan to another. While there's some terminology that appears to run through them, they are not, so it makes them more difficult to comprehend. He tells us in his introduction that "the Department provides a particular focus for developing culture, recreation, heritage and the human condition," and I want to know from the minister just what that means. What is that particular focus of that department? I read on to the vision and the mission and so on, but I don't really get the essence of the department, Mr. Minister. Perhaps you could help me with that.

Back on page 5 of the business plan we hear that the Cultural Facilities and Historical Services Division will focus on the economic contribution of its facilities . . . emphasizing quality, aggressive . . . marketing.

I want to ask the minister if this means that the intention is that those cultural facilities and part of the historical services division that do not produce increased income will lapse or that in fact they will close. It appears that the only measure in regard to that is whether or not they are increasing their revenue source, and I think that would be a very narrow focus to take.

4:30

Mr. Chairman, the section that describes actions and strategies tells us what is going to be phased out and terminated. It says, "terminate, phase out or consolidate," and I'm not sure which is which in all of those. The first one is the CRC grants. These have been virtually replaced by CFEP at this point in time. Is the minister giving any consideration to reinstating the original intent, if not from where the revenue comes? The CRC grants I think, Mr. Minister, were very, very well received. They gave the opportunity for municipalities to be heavily involved in the development of the project and to determine whether or not the ongoing tax burden would be sustained in the municipality. CFEP grants are quite different in their concept and can occur and provide a resource to the community but can in fact then create a tax burden that was unwarranted and unwanted by the municipality. So perhaps the minister could tell us the basis for one type of program over the other and if he is giving some consideration to returning to the concept of CRC, even being funded by lottery.

Mr. Chairman, I want to speak about the women's advisory council, but I'll come back to that.

On page 11 of the business plan, Implications of Change, item 9 says, "reduction and elimination of regulations." Well, I want to know what regulations are going to be eliminated or reduced. The plan tells us that we will have "less costly government" and "more efficient administration," and there is absolutely no explanation of that.

Now, in the Expected Results and Performance Measures, no place, Mr. Chairman, does it say how we're going to cost these. There are many implications in this, Mr. Minister, of how you are going to test whether or not you're meeting your performance measurements, but how are you going to pay for that? I don't see that anywhere in the budget. Some of these mechanisms to find out whether or not – for instance, for "increased level of community leadership," you say, "50% increase." How are you going to find that out? And what does that word "assisted" mean in that item, "increased level of community leadership, self-reliance and local problem solving"? Fine. That's the expected result. Then you say that we measure it by a "50% increase in the number of assisted community development projects." In brackets there are 300 now, so you want a 50 percent increase in that. What does "assisted" mean? Does that mean you're going to fund that? I think when we put things like this in our business plan, we have a responsibility to tell people exactly what we mean by it. If I read that, I'd think I can come to you hat in hand and there'd be funds for it because you want a 50 percent increase in what I'm doing. So I have every right to expect that you're going to fund me. I don't think that's what you mean by that, but I hope that I'm wrong and that you do mean you're going to put more money into some of those.

Mr. Chairman, "increased self-generated revenue at cultural and historical facilities" – this is back to the other one I mentioned before – a 23 percent increase in the Jubilee auditoria. How did we arrive at that? What evidence have we got? These are quite remarkable targets, Mr. Minister. They're quite specific, and I'd like you to help me there.

On the top of page 14: "sustained or increased volunteer involvement across related sectors." You tell us that we're going to have an "increase to 50% the number of volunteers associated with related sectors." Well, Mr. Minister, maybe that comes about because you've created so much unemployment. People who are unemployed, I'm assuming, are now going to be volunteering to run your programs. I can't think of any other way that we could predict that kind of – I see you smile, and perhaps

there is some humour in it, but I need some evidence from you that this is based on something, that this is not just a nice idle thought that's out there which makes me feel good that we're going to have a great increase in the number of volunteers. Because my understanding is that apart from that great mass of unemployed who are helping out in many ways in our communities, people are very busy. All of our agencies are having difficulty gaining more volunteers. That isn't an easy thing to do, particularly when their funds and resources have dried up. So perhaps you can help me with that.

Mr. Chairman, I said I wanted to come back to women and seniors. My colleague from Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has spoken very eloquently on it. The minister has told us, to be sure, that there's going to be a review, but without equivocation the advisory council on women it appears will close, according to the sunset clause. I want to know what the rationale is, because when that council was initiated, I had some grave doubts about the legislation. I believed then and I believe now that it should report directly to this Legislature, that it should have an opportunity to report in public to help nonprofit and private institutions as well as simply advise the minister. I think that would have been a better way to set it up, but having said that, Mr. Minister, I think it has served not just the women of this province but all of the citizens of this province very, very well, including the government. It has certainly served better than it has been served itself.

Mr. Chairman, there's no question we've needed a council to advise on women's affairs. There have been very dramatic changes in the lives of women and in family life in our province. That council has done remarkable work, and I think to lose it would be an immense loss and a tragedy to this province. I think it is a regressive step, and I hope the minister will reconsider.

Mr. Chairman, the council has done remarkable work and given us good advice on how to deal with circumstances such as the poverty that women face in our province. More recently they did an excellent report on the effects of the Minister of Family and Social Services' new moves on supports for independence and the effect that had on women. I have not yet seen that we've had much action from government in that regard, but they certainly gave us good recommendations, Mr. Minister, and they should have been carefully looked at.

MR. WICKMAN: Don't forget their role in midwifery.

MRS. HEWES: Midwifery? Yes, indeed. They made some good recommendations, and I'm pleased to see that you've acted on them.

Violence in families. We have a section in Family and Social Services that presumably deals with violence, but it's the women's advisory council that is putting in the real information, that is doing the real work, Mr. Minister, and I would hate to see that discontinued. They have given us excellent ideas about seniors, and I – well, you know how I feel about what's happening with seniors in our province currently. We simply have ignored some of their recommendations.

That council's been very helpful in the notion of women's health care, reproductive health care. I see the Grace hospital in Calgary, one of the primary promoters and there for the use of women for the special needs of women's health care, now under threat. Mr. Chairman, the council has done legion work in working with immigrant women, with their particular needs whether in health care or in making use in Canada of their training from the land of their birth. It's done excellent work with aboriginal women. I think it would be regressive to see this particular council in any way downgraded. I'm pleased to see the new chair, Marilyn Fleger. I know Ms Fleger; I think she will be

an excellent chair. But, Mr. Minister, when are you going to replace the other vacancies? When are you going to fill those? [interjection] Yeah, I'll help you. Because I think it would be a disservice if we just let the thing drift away. I think the women of Alberta deserve much better than that from you, sir, and I hope that you'll take that as positive advice. I think they would be badly served if we simply cut it off or let it drift.

4:40

Mr. Chairman, let me get to the seniors. I've asked a number of questions in this House over the last week or so about the seniors. The minister has himself said, to his credit, that there is confusion. Yes, there is a great deal of confusion. It's still happening. It's happening even when people call your hot line number, the 800 number, or your office or the various offices where they try to get information. The answers are unclear. The answers are equivocal. The answers are from one person and another on another day from another person. Seniors are not only confused, Mr. Minister; they're frightened and they are angry. In spite of what you have said in this House, I don't think there's any question that they are very angry. Seniors are intelligent folk. Just because we get old doesn't mean we lose our thinking capacity, and I don't think we should be condescending or patronizing with them.

I don't believe, Mr. Minister, that what we're doing here is what seniors told us to do. The history of the cuts – you know, the government, looking to reduce expenditures, did a review in December a couple of years ago, very quietly did a review: what could we cut from seniors without getting into trouble? They – smuggled is I guess too strong a word – slid that into the budget without telling anybody. No consultation with seniors. Not even any consultation, Mr. Minister, with your own advisory council for seniors. No discussion whatsoever; just slid it into the budget. Seniors were cut back on all kinds of supplies – most unfortunate – and of course when they found out, they were furious, with good reason. Not only were they hurt in their pocketbooks, but they were very psychologically hurt, because they believed they had an advisory council and a government they could trust and they found out otherwise.

Mr. Chairman, the result of that was that when seniors found out and started writing and marching and complaining and telephoning, the government said: "Oops. We've made a little mistake here, a little political mistake. Now we'll start to consult." But, Mr. Minister, the government didn't ever put back what they'd taken away. So seniors were hit then, and the government never did put it back. They put together a series of meetings under the chairmanship of the current Member for Olds-Didsbury, who carefully went about the province meeting with seniors. They had meetings over many months and gave a lot of good information. That information was compiled in a report a year ago December. That report went to cabinet, and cabinet said: "Oh, my goodness; that's a big report. There's a lot of stuff in there." So that report never saw the light of day, Mr. Minister. That report vanished. We had a public document that came out, a much sanitized, much edited version, 37 out of – I don't know – 140 pages.

Mr. Minister, that's the kind of thing that seniors find reprehensible and want to see changed, and I hope you'll do something about it.

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

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to express a thank you to both the minister and his staff for the dedication, the help, and the efficiency in responding to

various issues over the last few months. I'd also like to say that regardless of what the critics on the other side of the House say, we do have confidence in the ability of our minister.

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

I do agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore when he mentioned that a lot of seniors have put in sweat and worked hard to build this country. They did put in sweat, a lot of sacrifice of health, sacrifice of family time in building the province, and they do deserve some help in their later years of life. However, all the seniors that I have talked to are also aware of the ever increasing problem of increasing deficits, and they do care about the future generations and want to work together with government to protect their grandchildren.

Mr. Chairman, I've been reviewing the supplementary estimates, and on page 14, line 3.0.7, the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, the budget has been reduced from \$786,000 in 1993-94 to \$763,000 in 1994-95. The reductions look rather modest. Would you be able to tell me what the budget will be for the village in the year 1996-97, please?

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont, please.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to add my comments to the Community Development estimates.

Seniors were hit very, very hard in this budget of February 24. They are confused, they are concerned, and they are worried. Just when they were recovering from the budget, they were hit with yet another bombshell, and that was the bombshell of misinformation regarding benefit thresholds. In short, Mr. Chairman, they were hoodwinked. Seniors are angry, and they are voicing their anger.

I attended two large seniors' meetings this week, and I would just like to share some comments with you. Here's a comment from a gentleman: I'm ashamed to live in Alberta, seeing what has happened in the past weeks; seniors' security is gone. Another one: quality of life is being gutted, savaged, and destroyed. And another: as a citizen of Alberta I'm sickened by what's going on. Another one: scrap the whole document, or at least change the threshold levels. Then one elderly lady summed it all up by saying: we shall overcome.

The government said that they calculated the cumulative effect of the cuts to seniors, but have they? Seniors think not, Mr. Chairman. Seniors are afraid of the future, and what they are asking is: is this the end of the cuts, or are there more, especially in the area of seniors' housing? You have worked out a cash subsidy that is supposed to follow the seniors wherever they go, but have you taken into account that the rent increases and per diem charges for seniors' housing have not yet been announced? What effect will this have on seniors' cash payments? The increases are rumoured to be – not only rumoured but some have already happened – in seniors' apartments, lodges, nursing homes, and auxiliary hospitals. Seniors' apartments are going up from 25 percent of income to 30 percent. Lodges: I have been hearing that there are some increases being put on people who are living in certain lodges which maybe shouldn't have been, because the government apparently sets a per diem rate.

4:50

Nursing homes, auxiliary hospitals: hit again tremendously this year. Last year per diem rates went up by something like 17 percent. This year they're again going up all of that. People

living in those auxiliary hospitals – and I have a dad who's in one – if they are only collecting OAS, GIS, and the Alberta assured income, it's getting very, very close now to where all those pensions and supplements will not cover their monthly rent. So they're going to have to subsidize it in some way, either through their family or, if they have any savings, they're going to have to start using up the savings and so on. Not a good situation.

The seniors population is growing. What is the government's plan for future seniors' housing? It's not clear, and seniors want it clarified. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has said that all new lodges will be built by private investment. The question is: can the private sector supply enough affordable housing? Nonprofit organizations are saying that demand is so great that they may have a problem raising enough capital for all the facilities that will be required.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak regarding the \$110 million that has been allocated for the new Alberta seniors' benefit program. This is a new program scheduled to commence July 1, 1994, and rolls the following five programs into one program to be known as the ASB program, or the Alberta seniors' benefit program. These programs are the Alberta assured income plan, the senior citizens renter assistance program, the property tax reduction program, the extended health benefit plan, and the Alberta health care insurance plan premium waiver. I have some questions regarding that \$110 million.

The first question is: how much of the \$110 million is going towards administrative costs? How much of this is already spent on advertising the program? I'm hearing that \$275,000 has been spent on printing, mailing, and TV advertising of the brochure that went out to seniors, the information package. How much will be spent in the future on further advertising? In light of the new thresholds of phaseout, are you going to have to reprint that brochure? Are you going to have to reprint it and readvertise it and so on? Will there be more money spent there? How much will it cost to implement income testing measures? Will you have to develop a whole new bureaucracy just to look after income testing? How were the threshold levels determined? Why was the decision made to treat low-income couples with only one senior over the age of 65 the same as an individual senior? That is, full benefits are available to single seniors at income levels of \$10,432, while full benefits are available to single-senior couples at incomes of \$10,632. Why have extended health benefits been converted to a maximum cash benefit of \$116, which will not cover even one pair of eyeglasses, let alone dental work? Will seniors have access to some form of assistance when either misfortune or medical conditions dictate the need for both eyeglasses and dental work in the same year? [interjections] I have an audience here.

I'd like to give you some examples of various situations that seniors can find themselves in. These are documented from telephone calls that we have received. I'll just give you a couple of very short ones. A telephone call received from a lady named Ann: "Seniors will be paying more for less. Last year services were cut, and now there are more cuts. Seniors are no longer covered for semi-private or private hospital rooms. Property taxes are increasing, especially in older areas."

One from John. He is a recent senior, just turned 65. He says: "This is totally unfair. Seniors are willing to pay their share, but they are being asked to give up more than 5 percent." He will be about \$2,000 worse off. Many people who are working at high-income jobs are barely affected by this budget.

Now, I'd like to turn our attention to the three-year business plan. Expected Results and Performance Measures, page 12, talks about "ongoing consultations with seniors" and the "development of a consensus on a new program appropriate to the needs of



seniors." I have some questions here. How will this be developed? Why did the department wait until after the budget documents were released to initiate this process? Is the new program referred to the Alberta seniors' benefit, or is there another new program to be developed? What about monitoring the cumulative impact of changes, measuring the number of low-income seniors who are able to preserve their ability to live independently with dignity and security? How will the department attempt to measure this? What level of income is considered low for this measurement?

Also, I have some questions regarding the new extended health benefits, which cover eyeglasses and dental work. Before this budget seniors received the following: part of the cost of new eyeglasses once every three years – the benefit would be about \$125 toward the cost, depending on the actual cost of the eyeglasses – and part of the cost of dental work or dentures up to a maximum dental benefit of \$960 per person for any two consecutive calendar years.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Now, under the ASB the maximum benefit for those with an income of \$10,432 or less is the cash amount of \$116 on a yearly basis. This also brings up some questions. What studies were done to determine that low-income seniors will be better off with \$116 per year instead of financial help with eyeglasses and dentures when they need them? Also, how will any seniors be better off because of this change in budgeting? Under ASB seniors will receive a cash payment on a monthly or yearly or, I'm also hearing, maybe on a quarterly basis, depending on the size of the payment. Seniors are then supposed to take this cash and use it for eyeglasses, for dental work, rent reduction, and tax reduction. But what if they are not responsible and spend that money for whatever purpose and then don't have the money for what it was intended? Will they be able to come to their government and ask for more, or is that it? It seems to me that there will be some problems with this, and seniors are going to end up not looking after their teeth and their eyes and maybe even losing their homes if they are not able to pay the taxes, if they have spent the money on something other than what it was intended for. This method of payment I think should be reviewed.

5:00

Also, the widows' pension seems to have vanished somewhere or is in jeopardy of vanishing. Page 5 of the Family and Social Services' business plan states that the widows' pension is to be replaced by the proposed Alberta seniors' benefit at some time. Now, this leaves some questions here also. This is not possible, since recipients of the ASB must be 65 years of age and older, and recipients of the widows' pension are aged 55 to 64. What is happening to the widows' pension? Will the program be maintained as it was? What about concerns that this is discriminatory as it is only available to widows and not to those who are divorced or who have never married?

Mr. Chairman, this new seniors' package looks like a Swiss cheese. Seniors are not happy, and justifiably so, and I don't think we've even begun to feel the wrath of this segment of our society. Fasten your seat belts; it's going to be a rough ride.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; the Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to take the opportunity to address a few of the further comments that have been made by colleagues on both sides of the House. I'd first like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo for making his good comments. He has taken the time to go through this information very carefully, and I thank him for doing so.

The questions respecting the Human Rights Commission: it'll be very difficult for me to address the specific ones that he asked, but in general terms I would ask that the member would note that various operational parts of my department have taken different reductions, and that is the reason why the Human Rights Commission has not had as great a reduction as other programs. I did not impose across-the-board cuts but rather subjected each program to an analysis to determine whether or not it was a core program. Our analysis determined that the Human Rights Commission was a core program, and thus it was given a high priority when ranked against other programs and services of my department. I then related the deficit elimination objective of government to the relative priority of each program to determine the extent to which it could contribute to reaching my expenditure target. Using this approach, we determined which program and which parts of programs would be retained and which could be reduced and by how much.

In addition, the Human Rights Commission is in the process of completing their review of the Individual's Rights Protection Act and the manner in which it is administered. My expectation is that the commission will be making recommendations for changes to the Act that will improve the manner in which the rights of Albertans are protected and make recommendations directed at improving the administration and efficiency of program delivery, which will allow me to further reduce costs in subsequent budgets. In fairness to the review process it would be very difficult to make changes to the budget of the Human Rights Commission at this time in the absence of such recommendations.

Now, with respect to the three-year business plan and the Human Rights Commission, if I might paraphrase some of the questions or comments that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo made, perhaps he was asking me what plans I had to reduce, reschedule, or reconfigure the Human Rights Commission. As members of this House are aware, this government has asked the commission to undertake the review of the Individual's Rights Protection Act and its administration by the commission. The commission currently costs taxpayers approximately \$1.5 million to operate annually. One of the objectives of this review is to determine whether the commission can do business in a new and more efficient way. Additionally, I'm anticipating that the review, as I said before, will identify areas in the Act that require consideration by government in order that it be kept up to date in terms of national and international development of human rights protection.

No prior decisions have been made by the government regarding the results of the review. The future configuration of the commission and the Individual's Rights Protection Act will be determined after we have received the report of the chief commissioner and in consultation between the government and the commission board.

[Mr. Sohal in the Chair]

Now, I would like to first of all take the opportunity to wish the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar a happy birthday. One of the questions she sought clarification on was with respect to the administration of the western economic development partnership agreement – that is 2.1.2 – and what the role of the department is

in the western economic partnership agreement and what the nature and impacts of the changes were under that line.

My department is responsible for administering the Alberta/Canada cultural industries agreement. That agreement was established in 1992 to provide assistance for the development of the publishing, film, video, and sound recording industries in the province of Alberta. Working in partnership with federal government counterparts, this program attempts to develop and stabilize this sector, which plays an important role in the diversification of our provincial economy. This section of my department also provides assistance to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts in the provision of its granting program for cultural industries. The changes to this element, 2.1.2, reflect the impact of the governmentwide 5 percent reduction in salaries. The reduction will have no impact on cultural industries.

At the outset of the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, she asked what we do as community development and what the objectives of the department are. The department products and services have been assessed against the goals of the Alberta government in order to contribute to the overall objectives of a balanced budget, a competitive and prosperous economy, and the delivery of quality core services at an affordable cost. Accordingly, the Community Development objectives have been focused and are as follows:

- To increase the level of leadership, self-sufficiency and local problem solving in Alberta communities.
- To work through partnerships to sustain community-based cultural and recreation development and participation opportunities for all Albertans.
- To support access to information through regional and local public library services.
- To preserve Alberta's diverse natural, historic and cultural resources.
- To increase the number of communities which manage their own heritage resources.
- To increase the economic returns of recreational, cultural and heritage activities and facilities to local, regional and provincial economies.
- To protect Albertans from discrimination.
- To broaden the understanding of and appreciation for the benefits of a culturally diverse society.
- To support the needs of Alberta seniors in order to preserve their ability to live independently with dignity and security.
- To contribute to the development of appropriate government policies, programs and legislation affecting women and seniors and those requiring protection.
- To focus on ensuring that all Albertans have the opportunity to participate fully and actively in the economic, social and cultural life of the province [of Alberta] and in the decision making processes that affect their well-being.

I don't recall if it was the question of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar or the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, but I believe there was a question asked about why the women's and the seniors' portfolios were combined. The combination of the women's and seniors' issues was undertaken to achieve administrative efficiencies. We clearly want to provide excellent services at a lower cost. I've been assured by the staff of the women's and seniors' policy units that they see some very powerful reasons for combining those two areas. For example, violence and abuse within the family is of concern to both areas. Both areas are concerned about the economic position of women and older women in particular. Both councils, the Advisory Council on Women's Issues and the Seniors Advisory Council are still separate entities. They merely receive administrative and research support from the Women's and Seniors' Secretariat staff.

5:10

I do know that this question was asked by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, and it was in respect of the breakdown of funding to the various parts of the individual rights and citizenship area. The breakdown is as follows: the total is \$4,203,442; program support in 1994-95 was \$153,488; citizenship and heritage, \$965,250; the Human Rights Commission, \$1,517,254; women's policy and programs, \$625,000; the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, \$271,000; seniors' policy and programs, \$443,250; and the Seniors Advisory Council, \$228,250. The reduction in the women's council budget includes a 5 percent staffing reduction, a reduction in capital assets, and a reduction in supplies and services. Overall, the council's budget has been reduced \$67,000. A big plus for the council is that the chair is a resident of the city of Edmonton and will spend much less money traveling back and forth from the Edmonton office.

With respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's question about CRC grants, the program was terminated in December of 1992, and it will not be replaced.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did ask about what the functions of the community services field offices were. There are 10 community development field service offices throughout the province, located in the following places: Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Cochrane, Red Deer, Wainwright, St. Paul, Stony Plain, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, and Peace River. These offices are staffed by community development officers, who support and facilitate the community-building activities of communities throughout the province. These staff provide support to activities and processes that are conceived and owned by local communities in order for them to strengthen and build their futures.

The question was also asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar respecting, I believe, page 5 of the business plan. I believe she asked a question about the reference to the intention of cultural facilities and historic resources to increase their economic impact: would that mean that other areas would be eliminated? The answer to that question is no. The operation of the various facilities depends heavily upon the full range of activities currently undertaken in this program. The exciting public programs of the Tyrrell museum, for example, are based entirely upon the behind-the-scenes work of scientists, artists, designers, and other people who are at the core of its operations. The same is true in our other kinds of facilities, and the growing economic importance of these operations simply underscores the need to maintain the kinds of other historical, cultural, and related activities that we currently pursue.

The question was further asked about increasing the number of community development projects. The community services division staff will be working in partnership with municipalities, agencies, nonprofit organizations to increase community leadership, self-reliance, and local problem solving. The level of support for the community recreation development grants has been maintained. That is line 2.2.3. With increased partnerships we will be able to increase the number of projects with the same amount of dollars.

With respect to the questions asked by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the Jubilee auditoria, the question was asked about the target of a 23 percent increase from 1993-94 to 1996-97 for self-generated revenues of the Jubilee auditoria. If you refer to the plan, what you will find is that the Jubilee auditoria currently generate an average of \$1.3 million per year. We have reviewed various options for raising more funds from associated enterprises, such as the feasibility of developing gift

stores, food services, and other concessions in the facilities. We estimate that we can raise an additional \$300,000 from such measures by 1996-97, and the difference from the current \$1.3 million in revenues to the 1996-97 target of \$1.6 million is a rise of \$300,000, or 23 percent.

With respect to the question asked by the hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking regarding the Ukrainian Cultural Village – first of all, I want to thank him for his kind comments and endorsement for the work being done by the Department of Community Development – about what appears to be a modest reduction in the budget for the village. In 1987-88 the budget of the Ukrainian Cultural Village was approximately \$1.9 million. By 1996-97 it will be \$762,626. These economies have been managed by gate charges, which bring in \$130,000 annually, and program reductions. While the village used to be opened to the public all year round, it is now open to tourists from May 15 through Thanksgiving. I recognize, however, that the village is an important cultural facility, and it has been and will remain open for school and group visits throughout the winter season.

With respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont, he has raised some good questions about the Alberta seniors' benefit and also about the widows' pension. I'm happy to review the *Hansard* transcript and provide him with answers to the good questions he asked on the Alberta seniors' benefit. With respect to the widows' pension, to clarify, he is correct that the

business plan of social services indicated that it was being replaced by the Alberta seniors' benefit. That is not, in fact, correct. The program, while presently in social services, will be moved to the Department of Community Development on July 1, 1994.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks at this time, and I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SOHAL: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Community Development, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

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

