

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 28, 1994**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 94/04/28

[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: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Johng-Won Kang, consul general for Korea in Vancouver, who is in Alberta on his first official visit since becoming appointed consul in October of 1993. Mr. Kong is accompanied by Mr. Chun, who is the consul. Korea is an important market for Alberta coal, petrochemicals, and agricultural products and is our third largest trading partner. Since 1974 Alberta has maintained a special relationship with the Korean province of Kangwon. During the Premier's mission to Asia last fall he met with Kangwon's governor. I would ask that Mr. Kang and Mr. Chun rise in the gallery and receive the warm recognition of this Assembly.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, also seated in your gallery today I'm pleased to introduce the hon. Jim Abbott, Reform MP for the constituency of Kootenay East. He is here from British Columbia watching democracy in Alberta. Joining him also are his son Dan, his daughter Darlene Day, who is married to his son-in-law, Matthew Day, who happens to be my brother coincidentally, and Mrs. Abbott is there also. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today signed by approximately 145 people from the Rocky Mountain House constituency and areas around including Edmonton and Calgary. They're very concerned about the Special Places 2000 initiative, and they're very worried that in fact large tracts of land are going to be put aside and access restricted.

MR. BRACKO: Mr. Speaker, I'm presenting a petition from the residents of St. Albert, Morinville, Legal, Onoway, Bon Accord, Edson, Smith, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, and Whitecourt who urge the Government to reconsider the inclusion of the Sturgeon General Hospital within the Edmonton Region and to allow the Sturgeon General Hospital to serve its customers from the city of St. Albert, the MD of Sturgeon, the Town of Morinville, the Village of Legal, the Alexander Reserve, and the Counties of Athabasca, Barrhead, Lac Ste. Anne, Parkland and Westlock.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would beg your leave to present a petition signed by residents of Bawlf, Alberta. It's a petition protesting the cuts in ECS funding.

Thank you.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of 48 concerned citizens from Edmonton-Avonmore and Edmonton-Gold Bar urging

the Government not to alter funding arrangements for Alberta's Seniors Lodges and Seniors Subsidized Apartments until Seniors have been [properly] consulted and have agreed to any revisions to funding arrangements.

Thank you.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 12 I introduced a petition with the names of 346 Edmontonians opposing the erosion of government support for health, education, and social services. I ask that that petition now be read and received.

CLERK:

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

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I tabled on April 11 now be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to continue funding kindergarten at the current level, allowing each and every child in Alberta the opportunity to receive 400 hours of kindergarten instruction, without placing undue financial stress on Alberta families by the imposition of user fees.

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

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now ask that the petition I tabled from Strathcona Place lodge on April 18 be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government not to alter the level of support for all benefits for Alberta's seniors until seniors have been consulted and have agreed to any revisions.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition I tabled on April 11 now be read.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government not to alter funding arrangements for Alberta's Seniors Lodges and Seniors Subsidized Apartments until Seniors have been consulted and have agreed to any revisions to funding arrangements.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table 500 coupons that support "Don't cut education, Ralph. Protect it!"

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a notice about a save kindergarten information night rally being held tonight at 6:30 at the Butterdome.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing two Calgarians: Mr. and Mrs. Perry and Muriel Hein. I worked with Mr. and Mrs. Hein for a number of years at the Calgary Bow Valley centre. They've recently retired and are here today to celebrate their 37th wedding anniversary. We're pleased they've chosen Edmonton for that celebration. I'd ask that the members help me give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 27 visitors from Consort school in Consort, Alberta, in the constituency of Chinook. The visitors are the grade 9 class. I'm sure the class is delighted to be in Edmonton to experience a number of learning opportunities, but also they are undergoing a massive renovation of their school, so I think it's probably useful for them to be out for a day or two. They are accompanied by a number of staff and supervisors, but they particularly wanted me to introduce Joelle Fawcett, their class president, as their class organized this trip. I would ask them all to stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and to other Members of the Legislative Assembly three individuals who are attending the Professional Council of Licensed Practical Nurses annual convention here in Edmonton. I would like to ask Tom Minhinnett, Eileen McRae, and Sharon Reimer to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, we all know how busy the Premier of Alberta is, and oftentimes he doesn't have the necessary minutes in a day or hours in a week to visit with all of his family. So today we're very pleased to introduce four members of his family who have come to visit him in the Legislature Building. With us today are Darren and Tammy Klein from Edmonton and Lynn and Sharon Klein from Victoria, British Columbia. They've come to see their favourite brother and brother-in-law.

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

1:40

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly a young woman who holds a very special place in my heart. Her name is Natasha Thapar. She is accompanied today by 29 of her classmates who are grade 6 students at Ellerslie elementary junior high school and also by their teacher Mrs.

Phyllis Olson and their counselor Ms Bev Gable. I ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I introduce to you 15 visitors from the community of Rosemary in my constituency. Rosemary is a very vibrant community, and they've certainly traveled a long way to be here today. There are 10 grade 8 students accompanied by Mr. David Blumell, their teacher, and parents Mrs. Merle Blumell, Mrs. Mirjam Janzen, Mr. Jorgen Lindved-Jensen, and Mrs. Donna Janzen. I'd ask you to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a friend of mine from Calgary: Mr. Sam Ameri. Sam just returned from a well-deserved holiday in Lebanon, where he celebrated his 94th birthday. He also happens to be the father of one of my colleagues. I wonder if he would stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you five individuals, parents and a child, who are concerned about the future of children's education and are here to watch the stimulating debate in this Legislative Assembly. They are Elsie Barry, Rhonda Ouimet, Marcelle Arnold, Elaine Brander and her three-year-old child, Quinn. If they would please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

Day of Mourning for Injured Workers

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker and fellow members of the Legislature, I'd like to take a few moments here this afternoon to bring an important item to your attention. Today, the 28th day of April, is the day on which the Canadian labour movement recognizes those workers who have been injured, killed, or had their health affected on the job or as a result of their work. I'd like to take this opportunity to express the government's support for this initiative.

Industry, labour, and government are the major partners in the goal to safe and healthy Alberta workplaces. There's no doubt we are seeing improvements in this area, and Alberta continues to have one of the best workplace health and safety records in the country. But incidents continue to occur, and Alberta workers continue to suffer injury or illness as a result.

The number of work-related injuries experienced by Alberta workers has declined from more than 43,000 lost-time injuries in 1990 to fewer than 32,000 in 1993. The rate of injury has also declined from 5 percent in 1990 to an anticipated rate of less than 4 percent in 1993. Nevertheless, provincial occupational health and safety investigators responded in 1993 to 25 workplace fatalities. This was a decrease from the 36 workplace fatalities investigated in 1992, but it does reflect the reality that even one death is one too many. In total the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board accepted claims for 77 work-related deaths, which would also include motor vehicle fatalities, in 1993, and this was a decrease again from the 1992 fatality claims, which were 99.

This government is committed to seeing a continued reduction in the number of work-related injuries and fatalities. The Alberta Labour business plan and its focus on increasing the extent of government partnerships with industry and labour will help to see this goal attained.

This year is of course also the International Year of the Family, and it's vital that we remember that work-related injury, illness, and death has a devastating effect on individuals and their families. These events also have a negative effect on Alberta's economy. Workplace accidents have been estimated to cost our economy more than \$1 billion per year.

There is much more work to be done. New prevention-focused initiatives, such as the growth of health and safety associations and increasing partnerships among labour, industry, and government, are leading the way.

Today is a day when we can all pause and take a moment to think about those Albertans who have been injured as a result of their work. Every day, however, is a day to think about preventing future incidents as well as to think about the health and safety of our families, our employees, and all of those around us. Much like any issue we can only continue to make positive strides by enhancing our focus on health and safety as an everyday part of what we do, not just today.

Today I will be joining a group of Red Deer and area injured workers to commemorate the National Day of Mourning for injured workers. Similar events are occurring across this province.

I'd like to conclude by commending the labour movement in this province for those commemorative, positive, and constructive events being organized for today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I first met this request for a commemoration day for injured workers and workers who have died when I was the mayor of Edmonton. I saw firsthand the feeling that workers had for their colleagues, for their fellow workers who had died or who had been affected in the workplace. This is a very genuine feeling that they have towards their colleagues, those fellow workers. So for that I congratulate labour organizations in what they've done to alert Canadians to the sad fact of injuries in the workplace, deaths in the workplace and congratulate them for sensitizing Canadians, Albertans to what happens in the workplace.

The hon. minister has talked about the fact that deaths in the workplace have reduced. That's true. Still in 1993 in Alberta there were some 77 deaths in the workplace. He talked about the number of injuries in the workplace having been reduced, and that is also good news, but even just short of 32,000 is still too many injured workers. It's interesting to note that there is an increase in the incidence of injury to women in the workplace. This is, I think, very troubling and must be something that legislators are very much aware of and monitoring.

The first thing this Assembly must do is to send their condolences to the families of the workers who have died in the workplace in Alberta, those 77 families. The second is to express the concern that members of the labour community have expressed to our caucus, and that is their belief that the government's move to privatize safety inspections is one that is fraught with danger. The government will be sending this work out to private-sector entrepreneurs, work that was previously done by government inspectors. The labour community sees that there is danger in the fact that there may not be a standard kind of process throughout the province. They see the danger that the bureaucracy in Alberta, what's left of it in this area, may not be properly monitoring and picking up the things that are happening in the

workplace to stop workplaces where there should be stoppage of work. They see, Mr. Speaker, the danger that with private inspections there is likely to be more negotiation and less stoppage of work where there is real danger to the workplace people.

Our plea therefore, Mr. Speaker, is that all legislators be sensitized to the fact that the best possible legislation must exist for Alberta people in the workplace.

The last thing I ask for, Mr. Speaker, is for you to ask this Assembly to have a moment's silence for those 77 individuals who died in the workplace this year and others.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with this request?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

Please be seated.

head:

1:50

Oral Question Period

Catholic School System

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Alberta has stood in this Assembly and has challenged the Catholic community of Alberta on many occasions – many occasions – to come forward with ideas on how to solve the crisis that faces Catholic education in Alberta. Well, Catholics did that, and they did it in good faith, and not very long ago, Friday in fact, the minister agreed with the Catholic boards and the lawyers representing both sides to an agreement to solve all the problems. We now know, Mr. Premier, that your government scuttled this plan. Mr. Premier, how can you shoot down, how can you scupper a deal that's a win/win for both sides, a deal that Catholics liked and your own minister accepted?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the hon. Minister of Education met again today with authorities from the Catholic school districts, and he may wish to supplement relative to that meeting.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The meeting was I think very civil, very constructive. We will be having further discussions. I've clarified our position as a government, and we will be having further discussions.

I would like to make a further comment which is very important, and that is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition should concentrate more on what's happening in his caucus rather than try and inaccurately portray what is happening in ours. This news release, Mr. Speaker, is inaccurate on a number of points, and I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to cease inciting and causing confusion in terms of a very serious debate on education.

MR. DECORE: Well, what this caucus knows is that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like the Premier of Alberta to give us the specifics of what wasn't acceptable to your government in the deal that was made between the Catholic boards and the minister. What were the specifics that you don't agree with?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of things that are considered through negotiations. Those negotiations are ongoing.

As I indicated, the minister met with the Catholic school jurisdictions today, and what we want to do . . .

MR. HENRY: Be specific, Ralph.

MR. KLEIN: Are you ready to listen now? Are you ready to listen? [interjection] Fine.

Mr. Speaker, we want to achieve three things that will be good for all Albertans and will be good for the Catholic school districts. We want to make sure that their constitutional rights are protected, and we are making sure that that is done. We want to make sure that students throughout this province are given the opportunity for equal education, so we want to create fiscal equity, and of course, we have the long-term objective through this whole program of restructuring and reorganization of reaching our financial target of a balanced budget by 1996-1997.

MR. DECORE: It was a pretty easy question to answer. I'd like to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, why is it that you intend to break the Catholics on this issue? Why do you keep beating them down?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, far be it for me to break down the Catholics on this issue. My wife is a Catholic, and I'm sure that within this caucus there are many, many Catholics and people who are married to Catholics. There is no intention whatsoever to attack Catholics. To attack Catholics: I think that is such an unfortunate use of words.

What we are trying to do is simply create a scenario, a scenario, by the way, which is supported by about 83 percent of the Catholic school districts in this province, that will achieve fiscal equity, that will provide the Catholics with their constitutional rights, and that will allow us to meet our financial targets.

I'll ask the hon. minister to supplement.

MR. JONSON: I would like to just supplement the answer of the hon. Premier, Mr. Speaker, and that is that there has been very strong leadership in providing fair and equitable funding to the students of this province, something that the members across the way do not seem to be very interested in. I think we should think about students here whether they be in the public or separate school system. That's what's important here. [interjection]

MR. DECORE: You're going to get your chance in a moment. Just . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question.

Kindergarten Programs

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, a few days ago the Minister of Education dumped a thousand studies in this Assembly to try to fool Albertans into believing that kindergarten cuts are harmless. Experts have now pored through those studies and say that not one – not one – supports the government's claim that children won't suffer, and, listen to this, Mr. Treasurer, they say that most of the studies are irrelevant. Tonight a rally will take place with parents in Alberta that say that the government's plan is wrong. Mr. Minister, how does the study into parental discipline that you tabled prove that cutting kindergarten in half is harmless?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I believe it was on March 22 that I tabled a very comprehensive list of studies in the area of early childhood factors and programs. I think it's important to point out to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in case he has not had any time, since he's been reading the newspapers quite a bit lately, to look into those articles – for instance, we have an article by Sergesketter and Gilman: "Results showed there was no significant difference in reading scores between full-day and half-day kindergarten students." I think this is necessary because they have not really looked into this. Then there is a very important study under the name of Kathleen Pinkett.

Results indicated that advantaged children who attended preschool and advantaged children who did not attend preschool were not different in social and cognitive competence by the third grade. I could go on at some length from the material that I tabled.

Speaker's Ruling Brevity

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair does believe the hon. minister could go on at length because of the nature of the question that was asked, but I think all hon. members should realize that time is limited in question period, and questions should be designed to elicit a brief answer.

MR. DECORE: And time is limited for the children of Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

2:00

Kindergarten Programs (continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Minister, here's one you tabled. Tell us how a study entitled Alternative Approaches to Thanksgiving proves your case.

MR. JONSON: The hon. member, I note, has taken one of the studies that is on the list of the pages that were copied. I admit that that has some diversionary value I suppose in question period. Mr. Speaker, I really would like to have the time to go through a number of other studies which are right on topic, which show that research has been done. People have worked hard at it. It is very inconclusive, and there's an important message there.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair believes that that information can be provided later this day when we are in second reading.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Minister, will you agree to go to the rally tonight and take one of those studies, one study that proves your case, and read it to the rally, and say, "Here's the proof for the action that we're taking"? Will you do that?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the point that has to be made here is that there is a considerable amount of research related to this topic. A great deal of effort and work has gone into it. It shows us a number of things. One is that there is no conclusive evidence that time factors and the overall long-term achievement of students are dramatically, positively affected by early childhood programs. What it does say is that the nature of the program itself, the way it's structured and delivered is important, and Alberta Education is working on revising and improving the program for early childhood services. Secondly, it does indicate that for high-needs students there is a benefit in sociological terms, and we have continued special-needs funding for very young children. We have introduced an enhanced opportunity grant to deal with high-needs areas of our large cities, and we are following through on that.

North West Trust Company

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, for the last two weeks the Liberal opposition has demanded that the government take action to roll back the obscene salary and severance package that Mr. Gary Campbell will get as the CEO of North West Trust, who also just happens to be a Conservative fund-raiser. The Treasurer wrote a tame little letter saying: Mr. Campbell, examine the issue if you would. Well, today at the annual general meeting of North West Trust the Treasurer gave the 99 percent controlling voting shares by proxy to none other than Gary Campbell, and there were no rollbacks. My first question to the Treasurer is this: why didn't the Treasurer attend this most important meeting, which affects Albertans, and as the spokesman for those 99 percent of the shares tell them, "Roll it back"?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I wrote to the chairman of the corporation on April 19 and filed the letter in the Assembly and advised the Assembly that we had asked that the North West Trust Company board of directors review the remuneration and termination arrangements for executives and senior officers. I have been advised by the corporation that this matter is going to be brought forward to a board meeting in the near future, and I expect them to take the necessary action.

I must remind members of the Assembly that it was this government that spelled out in the Financial Administration Act that this kind of disclosure is required not only for government departments and agencies but for provincially owned agencies such as North West Trust Company. We've done that in this case with North West Trust. We've done that with senior officials in government. But funnily enough, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party has not yet told Albertans how much he pays his staff.

MR. DECORE: I want to know, Mr. Treasurer, and Albertans want to know why you gave your proxy, the proxy of Albertans, 99 percent of the shares, to Gary Campbell so that he could go and vote his own severance package and his own salary. Why'd you do it?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we have asked the board of directors to take the necessary action with respect to salary, with respect to severance, and I expect that they will follow the direction of the government.

MR. DECORE: You're sounding pretty mousy today, Mr. Treasurer. You're sounding pretty mousy.

I'd like the Treasurer to tell Albertans why he's allowing taxpayers' moneys to be squandered in the way they are being squandered at North West Trust and he doesn't do anything.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the corporation was able to advise shareholders this morning that the company's net income for this past year was \$4.5 million, almost double what it was the previous year. So I believe that under those hands, the financial side, the business side of the operation has been in good hands.

Speaking of mousy, Mr. Speaker, I'm sitting beside a leader who got 100 percent votes from his party as opposed to 68 percent. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod. [interjections] Order.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: I guess there's not much desire to make much headway in question period today. The Chair has had an indication that there are about 18 people who would like to ask questions today.

MR. N. TAYLOR: We just ruined the Treasurer. What more do you want?

MR. SPEAKER: Beauty is always in the eye of the beholder, hon. member. [interjections] Order.

The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod.

Nationwide Achievement Testing

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that across Canada national testing is taking place with respect to reading and writing. This is a follow-up to the national testing that took place in mathematics last spring. Many of my constituents did not understand that those exams were national testing, and they didn't understand their purpose. My question today is to the Minister of Education. Could you, hon. minister, please indicate if all provinces are participating, and how many Alberta students are involved in this national testing?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, all of the provinces and territories with the exception of the province of Saskatchewan are participating in this nationwide test. Approximately 5,000 Alberta students are engaged as part of the Alberta sample for this overall testing activity.

MR. COUTTS: Why have you, Mr. Minister, chosen to have Alberta students involved in this national exam?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this is deemed by myself and by my department as a very important activity. It provides a comparison of achievement across our nation, which I think is important. We can learn in terms of the relationship of our achievement and test scores relative to other provinces. The comparisons are useful, but more importantly the preparation that goes on with provinces working together to come up with the best possible examination and, most importantly, the results that we analyze in terms of improving our curriculum and the overall delivery of education in this province are very important to ourselves and to other provinces in Canada.

2:10

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister, then, please indicate how we came to be involved in this national program of testing?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta has been a leader in the student achievement indicators project. It was identified some time ago at the council of ministers meeting that there would be a constructive purpose served by bringing provinces together in terms of developing a joint testing effort across Canada, and also we would benefit from the interprovincial discussion about making sure our objectives in education across the country were strong objectives, that high standards were set, and that all the knowledge that is there in this nation on education could be shared.

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

North West Trust Company
(continued)

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was at the North West Trust meeting. The Provincial Treasurer wasn't, but his proxy was. That proxy was there to preserve the status quo. My questions are to the Provincial Treasurer. Will the Provincial Treasurer confirm that of the \$4.5 million in net income earned by North West Trust, \$4.2 million comes from managing the NovAtel portfolio, which was given untendered, other administrative fees for managing government contracts, and also interest income on deposits held by North West Trust?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the investment income of North West Trust in 1993 as reported this morning was some \$78.2 million last year. Under that there were costs of funds of some \$58 million, so net investment income was \$19.5 million. In addition to the \$78.2 million of investment income, there was other income of mortgage and loan administration of \$4.3 million, most of which comes from the NFI contract. So when I count \$4.3 million and \$78.2 million, that comes to nearly \$82 million. That means that \$4.3 million of the \$82 million comes from the contract that North West Trust has with the provincial government.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, can the Provincial Treasurer justify the remuneration package of management? In particular, can he explain why board members receive an \$8,000 a year retainer, receive \$100 to \$250 per telephone meeting attended? Can he explain why the chairman of the investment committee receives \$2,000 a month for special assignments? Can he explain how that makes sense in light of the performance of the trust company?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, as for performance, the hon. member knows and acknowledges through briefings that the members of his research caucus have received that here's a company that started off with \$50 million in retained earnings and today has \$90 million in retained earnings. This year they had a net income of some \$4.5 million. So from a profitability point of view, when I think of other trust companies across this country, North West Trust has had a pretty successful year this past year and in fact in the past three or four years.

As for the remuneration and severance packages, I've referred to the letter that I tabled in this Assembly earlier this week and expect that the board will deal with this very soon.

DR. PERCY: Can the Provincial Treasurer explain why no steps were made to change the composition of the board in light of the Bancorp fiasco, in light of the golden handshakes to Bancorp workers, in light of the golden handshakes to the management of North West Trust? Why was the same board acclaimed without a peep?

MR. DINNING: For two reasons, Mr. Speaker. One is that here we have a corporation whose retained earnings have grown by \$40 million in the last seven years. As a result here is a company that has earned a profit overseen by a board of directors that were appointed, yes, by the provincial government. Secondly, that provincial government, over my signature this last week, has asked for a review of the remuneration and severance arrangements for executives and senior officers. Having been asked to do that, I know very well that this is a matter the board is going to address.

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

Helicopter Fleet

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. I understand that the government recently disposed of their helicopter fleet and that these helicopters played an important role in assisting in environmental disasters such as forest fires and floods as well as human life emergencies. Could the minister please comment on the rationale behind selling these helicopters?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between 1973 and 1979 the Alberta government purchased several Bell 206 helicopters. In 1983 we purchased a Bell 222 helicopter mainly because of its twin engine reliability and the safety design of it. The decision to dispose of the fleet was made for a couple of main reasons: usage has declined over the past years and the age of the machines. They were getting to the point where it was going to cost over \$5 million to replace and repair and bring them up to date.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister answer what moneys were realized from the sale of the same helicopters?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, during the last eight months two of the 206 helicopters were destroyed and written off as a result of accidents. Thank goodness, there were no lives lost in those. The remaining three helicopters that we had, the 206s, were recently sold for \$885,000, and a total of \$522,000 was realized from the insurance settlements. The Bell 222, the larger helicopter, was sold some weeks ago. It and the spare parts for it brought in over \$1.1 million.

MR. MAGNUS: To the minister, Mr. Speaker: would you please advise how helicopter services will be provided in the future?

MR. THURBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, in line with our mandate in this government to look at all services that we perform and find out if the private sector can do it better or if we should in fact be in that business, we believe that in the private sector in Alberta there's some number of helicopter operators that act on a competitive basis. We believe that it'll be provided adequately through the private sector within this province.

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

Timber Exports

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to Environmental Protection figures about 115 million board feet of private timber was sold into British Columbia, about 25 percent more than the minister responsible for forestry had originally predicted. The same minister has stated that the demand for Alberta's private timber in B.C. will be even higher this year than last. Private woodlot owners looking at tidy profits will be even keener to turn their trees into cash. My first question to the Minister of Environmental Protection: will profit-motivated private woodlot operators be asked to police themselves on

meeting environmental standards and meeting the goals of sustainable development?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The tone of the question seems to indicate that there's something wrong with an owner of property in the province wanting to make a profit from the sale of a renewable resource, and that I can't understand.

The next question that was asked was: will the owners of these properties regulate themselves? Well, of course, they won't. I've said in this House a number of times that we have a number of pieces of legislation in the province that are in place to ensure that we protect water courses, to ensure that we protect our agricultural land, our soils. We want to be sure that our soils are not degraded. We certainly have a number of agreements with our forest products industry in this province through their own Forest Care system. They are out in the woodlands operations in this province operating on Crown land and operating on private lands as well, keeping a wary eye out to ensure that sustainable woodland operations are what is going on in this province. Our department is also working with the Department of Transportation and Utilities to regulate and to watch what's going out of this province to ensure that sustainable practices are indeed being lived up to. [interjections]

2:20

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question will be just as fair as the first question.

Given that answer, how many inspectors does your department have out there that are going to make sure that these private woodlot operators know the goals?

MR. EVANS: We have in total, Mr. Speaker, some 4,000 staff in Environmental Protection. The Premier of this province, when he became the Premier, recognized the importance of having an integrated system to ensure the sustainability of our natural resources. [interjection] So what he did was amalgamate the departments of forestry, lands, and wildlife, the environment, and the parks division into one department. What we have, therefore, is not only our lands and forests officers out in the backwoods of Alberta; we have the entire complement of our 4,000 staff, many of whom are in regions in this province, who are wary, watching out for the unsustainable practices that the hon. member is referring to. [interjection]

Not only that, but again we have . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Does the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs have some sort of debate going on while the minister is answering this question? If so, I would ask him to stop it.

The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection to wind up fairly quickly, please.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I will. I just wanted to once again point out the relationship that we have with the Alberta Forest Products Association and their Forest Care program, which again has many, many members of private industry in this province out in the woodlands operation ensuring that sustainable forestry practices are indeed the norm in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environmental Protection: is the free flow of logs to British Columbia part of an economic development strategy in your department that promotes the export of our raw materials out of Alberta and the import of everyone else's waste into Alberta? [interjections]

MR. EVANS: Well, maybe we could spend 20 minutes on that, but I won't, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to promote value added in this province. Everything we do is trying to ensure that our natural resources are not only harvested in this province but are value added in this province, because that's where the jobs are. That's where the economic development is.

Now, what we are doing is recognizing that, of course, by refusing to allow any of our Crown resources, our Crown timber out of this province without special permit, and essentially it doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing as well is recognizing that we promote freedom in this province, the freedom to make a profit, the freedom to man your own business. We want free enterprise to thrive in this province. What we have is the ability in this province to do that by allowing our landowners to get the best deal that they can get.

Now, in terms of importation of waste . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. We've spent five minutes on this question.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Would the hon. opposition caucus be quiet?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

Gun Control

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year there were over 150 man with a gun complaints in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. This is fairly significant considering that each of these complaints has the potential to result in a homicide or multiple homicides. In fact, this past weekend in Calgary there was a drive-by shooting which involved the use of a weapon that resulted in a homicide. So my question today is for the hon. Minister of Justice. Because it has been said that Alberta is one of the provinces with the highest number of guns per capita in Canada, would the minister please supply some information on how many guns there are in Alberta?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, there are not accurate statistics because we can only keep track in Alberta by firearm acquisition certificates. An Angus Reid report in March of '91 stated that 39 percent of households in Alberta had a firearm and that the national average was 23 percent, so there's obviously quite a disparity. We also had the highest number of firearms in households for all provinces. It's estimated that there are 919,000 firearms in Alberta.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Speaker, of the firearms in Alberta how many are handguns or other restricted and prohibited weapons?

MR. ROSTAD: Well, as of December 31, '93, there were 136,728 restricted weapons registered to persons in Alberta, according to the RCMP registry in Ottawa. This is through your acquisition certificates and collectors' licences and that sort. As

of March 18, '94, there were 572 converted fully automatic firearms registered to persons in Alberta. These are prohibited weapons unless registered to a genuine gun collector for that type of firearm. They are fully automatic firearms that have been converted to semiautomatic fire and were registered on or before October 1, '92 to a genuine collector. A person not classified as a genuine gun collector on that noted date cannot possess or acquire any of these firearms at this date.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are almost a million firearms in Alberta, is the minister planning to make a submission to the federal Minister of Justice on the issue of firearms control, which has been the subject of recent statements in the press by the federal minister?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member alluded to, gun control is in the federal jurisdiction. We administer the program within the province. The reports have been in the news of late. I have not received any official or formal notice from the minister. At the time that any particular change to the gun control laws is brought forward, we will through our network as MLAs, government or opposition, bring our constituents' positions forward and definitely communicate with Ottawa in that regard.

Child Welfare

MS HANSON: Mr. Speaker, the government's recent fixation with young offenders overlooks a crucial element: the importance of prevention. While the debate rages about how we should get tougher on young offenders, little is being done to help children at risk from becoming habitual offenders. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services: what is the minister doing to reduce the three-month waiting list for children with severe behaviour and emotional problems needing placement and treatment in a long-term care facility?

MR. CARDINAL: As you are aware, as we moved forward with our welfare reforms in the past year, we always indicated that I would redirect dollars into the high-needs area. This is exactly what this ministry has done. We've redirected in this past year alone, '93-94, close to \$100 million into the high-needs area, Mr. Speaker, and a percentage of that, of course, is dealing with children. I'd like to advise the Assembly that just in the Edmonton area alone my departmental budget is over \$500 million, and a high percentage of that is in relation to support services for children in various forms.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps that \$500 million isn't well spent if the kids have to wait three months to get into a facility.

Will the minister address the concerns of professionals that children in secure treatment facilities are often just warehoused and are not getting the diagnostic and treatment services mandated under the Child Welfare Act?

MR. CARDINAL: As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, we do provide a good service in Alberta, as good as we can. We are spending, you know, over \$200 million on children's services alone in Alberta. We have over 8,000 children that we support in various areas, and it's a big project. We do have contracts

with over 150 agencies in Alberta alone that provide various forms of services. One thing I've always said and I'll say again: I'm not proud to say that close to 50 percent of the children in care are of aboriginal ancestry. We're working very hard with the aboriginal community to make sure that changes in the future.

2:30

I would ask the hon. members, if they do have any specific cases where children or families are not receiving services, to advise my ministry so we can deal with the issues. Some of the members from the opposite side in the past – I have to thank them – when there was a concern, they brought it to my attention. They can be assured that I never deny any help. I'm always assisting opposition members also in various areas.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People shouldn't have to bring them to the minister's attention if the system is working.

What is the minister doing to address the shortage of appropriate group home beds, which is also causing some children to be confined longer in secure treatment than they need?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, again if there is a specific problem in any specific area of Alberta that I'm not aware of and the opposition member is aware of, I would suggest that they contact my office so we can deal with that specific issue.

Presently we are reviewing the whole area of child welfare. A second phase in fact of the major welfare reforms in Alberta was to look at and completely review the child welfare area, Mr. Speaker. Over a year ago I asked the hon. members on the opposite side to assist us in this review, and I haven't yet to date received any information. I would like to get some information from them so they can assist us in designing a good system for Alberta.

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

Water Management

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent advertisement in a Calgary paper asked for applications for construction of the Carseland-Bow River headworks project. This project is to be implemented in phases over the next seven or eight years. My question is for the Minister of Environmental Protection. Are there other capital headworks projects to be funded by your department?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, the advertisement that the hon. member is referring to was an application notice under the Water Resources Act just indicating that there was going to be additional work done on the Carseland-Bow River headworks system.

Now, the hon. member has asked: are there any other projects? Well, indeed there have been some \$525 million or \$526 million worth of projects that have been funded in the province since 1980 when the program was set up. I think there are six that are being funded this year.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the funding for headworks projects coming from the environmental protection and enhancement fund?

MR. EVANS: Not currently, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member may be referring to some statements that I made about tabling some amendments to the environmental protection and enhancement fund so that we would expand the natural resources emergency fund or the environmental protection and enhancement fund mandate so that we could deal with natural resource emergencies. If the hon. members on both sides of the House are in favour of the amendments, which I do intend to table, then we will have some additional leeway to deal with these kinds of issues as the years go on.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the environmental protection and enhancement fund is to be used for irrigation projects, are we not simply diverting moneys such as stumpage fees for irrigation projects in southern Alberta?

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the intention of the environmental protection and enhancement fund is to ensure that new resources that come into the department through licence fees, through stumpage fees, et cetera, are put into a fund to deal with emergencies. Certainly the irrigation systems in the southern part of the province could fall into that category, whether that is a matter of a drought problem and therefore headworks and canals being built or whether it's a flooding problem if one of the older canals is in need of repair. So it certainly could see some money being put into it from the emergency fund. For example, the stumpage fee increases that we negotiated with the forest industry this year will be going into that emergency fund, and they're specifically earmarked for things such as fire protection, fire suppression, research into silviculture, and other forestry issues.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

Biprovincial Upgrader

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Husky Oil upgrader is turning into another Gainers. Although Gainers only cost us a little over a hundred million, with Husky we're already \$305 million in the glue, and I guess the forecast is for another \$24 million loss. Can the Minister of Energy confirm that one of the issues being discussed now is the management fees to be paid to Husky for managing this loser?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, all owners of the upgrader are reviewing the economics of the upgrader to come forward with plans. It's no secret that the oil prices have not been favourable to this project over the last few months as they have slumped, because this project is based on a price differential. It's no secret that we're trying to accomplish as many efficiencies within the project as possible, and it's no secret that this project has experienced some layoff of staff yesterday. There is no secret that all of the owners, the other two governments and Husky Oil and ourselves, are looking at the economics of the project. When we're through that review of the project, we'll come back to the House.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, supplemental. What we're after here is the management fees. Like, remember that Gainers went on for years just to keep the management alive. Would the minister table in the House the management agreement we have?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered that question earlier.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't think she did, but she has answered it by refusing, anyhow.

Mr. Speaker, why can Saskatchewan say no to this loser, hasn't put up any money in the last year and a half, and we still have to keep paying?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a partner and an owner in this project, and Alberta up to this point has honoured its obligations. But let me make it very clear that Alberta along with the other owners is reviewing this project, as we are all the projects we are involved in, to look at the future for them. So until such time as that review process is complete, I will not make comments on the review because all of the owners have been sitting together at the table.

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

Kindergarten Programs (continued)

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The school boards in Calgary have recently determined that in order to facilitate the ECS program, parents must register for the full 400 hours of ECS notwithstanding that 200 hours are supported by provincial funding. These parents must pay the fee assessed by the board for the other 200 hours. My question to the Minister of Education is: can a board refuse entrance to ECS students or demand payment for a program which is partially funded by Alberta taxpayers?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, unlike grade 1 to grade 12 education in the province where fees cannot be charged for the program itself, section 24(2) of the School Act does provide the ability for school boards to charge a fee for the program of early childhood services that is offered. On the other hand, when a program is offered, it is expected that all students would have access to that program. I understand that in Calgary, certainly in the public school system, they have made a provision for, on an appeal basis, allowing into the program students whose family situation is such that they cannot afford to pay the fee.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

2:40

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This intervention that the school boards have allowed for families who are unable to pay this tuition causes personal embarrassment to many of our Calgary residents. Can we intervene in any way as a government with this policy?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, when the early childhood services system was established in the province, the advocates of that system wanted it to be somewhat separate and different from the structure that is provided for grade 1 to grade 12 education. Part of this dealt with providing a considerable amount of flexibility in terms of time, in terms of charging fees, and in terms of the nature of the overall program. The school board, as I've referred to legislation, is able to charge a fee. I would hope that in deciding on their policy, they would make every effort to accommodate students if they wish to take 200 hours. Certainly the goals of early childhood services are so general and flexible

that an adequate program, a good program can be offered within the context of 200 hours.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What recourse then would parents have to review or revisit this policy?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a responsibility of the school board. Parents who wish to make a change in this should make representation to their locally elected school board representatives.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired, but because of the delay in the opening routine and the presence of a school class that has to leave, could there be unanimous consent to revert to introductions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

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

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of my colleague from Wainwright to introduce to you and through you 46 of Killam's finest public school grades 5 and 6 students. They are accompanied by nine supervisor/teacher/parent adults with them. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Health Services Restructuring

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of health care reform has focused on regions, boundaries, boards, and budgets, and with the recommendations of the Hyndman report the opportunity has developed to ship the debate to another critical point of the discussion; that is, on quality of care and community outreach. Three significant documents are currently at the centre of health care restructuring. I refer to the health goals document from Alberta Health, the three-year business plan of the department, and also included is the Starting Points document, the Oberg/Wagner report. The focus of these documents is on patient-centred care, co-ordination of services, community outreach, education components, outpatient counseling, and most importantly, a wellness model of health.

In addressing the specific recommendations of the Hyndman report with respect to the Children's hospital, I have met with the community action committee of the Children's hospital, which is a parent liaison group. I am very pleased to comment and compliment this committee on their assistance in dealing with this very emotional issue that was raised through the Hyndman report, and I think it's important to bring to the attention of this Assembly some of the positive actions that can develop from community action on a sensitive issue.

This organization has met with me and with their board and is now part of a working group with the Foothills hospital in order to deal with not only the recommendations of the Hyndman report

as it reflects the patient care and the transfer of services from the Children's stand-alone facility to the potential site of the Foothills but also deal with the strength of their patient care community outreach program. In addition to that, they have agreed to participate in a workshop, which will bring the focus of the type of care that their children receive at the Children's hospital into the focus of debate.

I would like at this time to compliment that group for the initiative they've taken in dealing with a sensitive issue and bringing that information to the community in a positive way.

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

Vietnam

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Saturday marks the anniversary of the 1975 communist takeover of South Vietnam. There was worldwide attention given to that unforgettable exodus. Miraculously many of those exiled survived and eventually found new homes in our province. Our province has been the beneficiary. We now have a vibrant and growing Vietnamese Canadian community.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must not forget what is happening today in Vietnam. Human rights are systematically violated, and women and men are persecuted, tortured, and even killed for their religious beliefs. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms to protect individuals from discrimination in our country, but for Vietnamese citizens religious persecution is the order of the day. Hundreds of pagodas and churches have been confiscated by the communist regime.

Last weekend I spoke at a conference on the persecution of religions and human rights violations in Vietnam. I was touched deeply by the conviction held by many Vietnamese Canadians and others in speaking out. We heard reports that the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, the supreme patriarch of the Unified Church, is now under house arrest. Buddhist scholars including the Venerable Thich Quang Do are under brutal imprisonment. The Venerable Thich Thien Minh was executed in prison in 1978. The pastor Reverend Dinh Thien Tu and 10 more pastors of the Alliance Church have been imprisoned. Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, head of the High Tide humanist movement, who, incidentally, was awarded the Raoul Wallenberg award for contributions to human rights by the international organization of parliamentarians, has also been imprisoned.

Canadians can influence their own government and the international community by saying that the current Vietnam government's wish to broaden trade must be accompanied by a recognition that religious persecution and human rights violations must end before economic partnerships can be realized. I urge all members of this Assembly and all Albertans to use whatever means they have to push for an end to the repressive actions of the current government of Vietnam.

Thank you.

South Africa

MR. SOHAL: Mr. Speaker, citizens throughout the world this week are witnesses to history. After centuries of waiting democracy has arrived in the republic of South Africa. While history tells us that democracy, particularly in its infancy, faces many uphill battles, citizens nevertheless will be the beneficiaries of peace, prosperity, and progress.

This week signifies a remarkable achievement. While it is something we often take for granted, democracy has and will continue to be a step forward for mankind. Democracy is

reaching corners of the world where only five years ago no one thought it would ever reach. While many nations in the last decade of this century, particularly in eastern Europe, have embraced democracy, South Africa's evolution has been slow. Thirty million blacks, ethnic Indians, and persons of mixed race leave behind an era of oppression for a new one of hope and the chance to become masters in their own houses.

While Canada should take pride in the role it played in the Commonwealth and the United Nations in bringing down the walls of apartheid, we should look to South Africa as another area of the world where we can promote the Alberta advantage. Even under tough economic sanctions South Africa has in recent years been Alberta's second largest trading partner on the world's second largest continent. As barriers to trade disappear, this gives tremendous potential for our entrepreneurs in a market which was closed to most Canadians. With our strengths in areas such as telecommunications; oil, gas, and petrochemicals; food processing; and forest products, Alberta producers can meet increased demand as South Africa modernizes its infrastructure and opens further the doors to prosperity.

Once again, I salute the people of South Africa for their many years of determination and for succeeding in their efforts to bring democracy to all citizens. Thank you.

head: **Projected Government Business**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, we'd like to have some idea of what's going to happen next week under Standing Order 7(5).

MR. EVANS: I'll try to give the hon. House leader for the Liberal Party and the other side of the House some information about next week. On Monday, May 2, we'll begin in the afternoon after question period with Royal Assent of those Bills that are on the Order Paper awaiting Royal Assent; moving from there to Government Bills and Orders for second reading, as per the Order Paper; then in the evening Government Bills and Orders for third reading, as per the Order Paper. Moving along, Tuesday at 4:30 in the afternoon, Government Bills and Orders for third reading, again as per the Order Paper; in the evening, Government Bills and Orders for second reading, as per the Order Paper. On Wednesday in the evening, Government Bills and Orders for second reading, as per the Order Paper, moving on then to third reading, as per the Order Paper. Completing the week, Mr. Speaker, on Thursday in the afternoon, Government Bills and Orders, Committee of the Whole; it's our intention to begin with Bill 18.

Speaker's Ruling Money Bills

MR. SPEAKER: Before the actual orders are called, the Chair has a ruling with respect to money Bills that arose out of a question by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood in February. The Chair undertook to try to assist members with their understanding of how money Bills should be treated. So if the hon. members would bear with me, the Chair would like to dispose of this matter.

In February the Chair ruled on a point of order on this matter raised by the Member for Edmonton-Norwood with respect to Bill 4. The Chair did undertake at that time to give the Assembly a more general statement on the matter. I'd hoped to do it with respect to Bill 4 before it got third reading, but that third reading was called when the Chair wasn't present.

2:50

Public finance is complex, and its applications are so varied that it is not an issue which lends itself to a concise rule. To some

extent every case has to be considered on its merits. Every jurisdiction in Canada has a somewhat different view of what constitutes a money Bill. In some, a money Bill is defined very broadly so that any Bill with spending implications is viewed as a money Bill. In Alberta a narrower view has been applied. The requirement for the royal recommendation arises from section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which states:

It shall not be lawful for the House of Commons to adopt or pass any Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill for the Appropriation of any Part of the Public Revenue, or of any Tax or Impost, to any Purpose that has not been first recommended to that House by Message of the Governor General in the Session in which such Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill is proposed.

This is repeated in our Standing Order 79. In Alberta this is read so that it is appropriations of either public revenue or appropriations of taxes or imposts which require the royal recommendation. The most obvious example is an appropriation Bill. A measure imposing or creating a tax or impost but not appropriating the money from the tax or impost does not require the royal recommendation. However, a measure imposing or creating a tax or impost must be brought in by a minister. This is because the means by which money is raised is part of the process which ultimately supplies money for the purposes requested by the Crown, and the Crown must take responsibility for such measures through its ministers in the Assembly.

In Alberta a money Bill is a Bill which is itself the authority to appropriate a sum of public money to carry out its objects. To put it another way, any provision which authorizes the spending of public money out of the general revenue fund or authorizes public money to be spent before it reaches the general revenue fund is a money Bill. Similarly, a Bill which expands the purposes for which public money from or destined for the general revenue fund is a money Bill.

Conversely, any Bill which contains a scheme which might cost public money to carry out but leaves it to other legislation to actually provide the money is not considered a money Bill. In other words, section 54 applies only to a Bill that effects an appropriation and not to one which would require an appropriation to be effected but does not itself make the appropriation. If a Bill requires money to operate and money is not appropriated to it, the resulting law will simply not operate. This is reflected in *Beauchesne* paragraphs 613 and 614 which state:

613. A bill, which does not involve a direct expenditure but merely confers upon the government a power for the exercise of which public money will have to be voted by Parliament, is not a money bill, and no Royal Recommendation is necessary as a condition precedent to its introduction.

614. A bill, designed to furnish machinery for the expenditure of a certain sum of public money, to be voted subsequently by Parliament, may be introduced in the House without the recommendation of the Crown.

As stated, Bills which impose, increase, or widen taxes must be introduced by a member of Executive Council, but do not require royal recommendation. A Bill to reduce, narrow, or do away with a tax may be introduced by any member.

The question arises as to what is a tax. The answer, while not entirely satisfactory, is that it depends on a number of things. The Chair will adopt the following from White, Lederman, and Bur in *Canadian Constitutional Law*:

Until recently, the courts had not gone far in defining taxation for the purposes of section 91(3) (of the Constitution); indeed their attempts to define the term under other constitutional provisions were none too helpful. Generally, they broadly described taxation for constitutional purposes as a compulsory levy imposed by law by a public body for a public purpose. But this does not distinguish it from other levies; it places no limits on the purpose for which taxation may be imposed.

It is the Chair's understanding that both Legislative Counsel and Parliamentary Counsel are very careful about scrutinizing Bills for the requirement of royal recommendation. This is not to say that members should not raise their concerns but merely to suggest that in this complex area members with concerns may wish to obtain further information from counsel.

Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Third Reading**

Bill 26
Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1994

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 26, the Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1994.

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

MR. WHITE: No, sir.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, true to the tradition of the House we shall be dealing with three Bills in fact. The first that I'd like to deal with is Bill 26, of course. Bill 26 is the Bill that disseminates the funds, an appropriation Bill for the lottery fund, specifically.

There are a number of questions that relate to appropriation of funds, disseminating public funds. First and foremost is the moral question. How these funds are set out is one question. The other moral question is: how are these moneys collected? With two-thirds of the income coming from gaming and gambling going directly into the general revenue fund, there's no question in my mind that it's a tax. Now, that money is taxed from those that participate in gaming and gambling, particularly lotteries and slot machine operations run by the government or run through an agency of the government.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury the other day raised the issue, and even though I have yet to speak to that particular matter, there is a question that has to be asked and answered: that simple question of whether in fact it is the responsibility of a government to propagate machines that take money from the poor, many times from the constitutionally weak, getting into influencing the young. Because we are in fact a gambling society or at least tending to be a government-supported gambling society, that certainly has to influence younger members, the examples they see of their elders.

Now, I have difficulty with that, personally. Not that I don't have to listen to those that say: it's the prerogative of each and every individual whether or not one should gamble. We heard the other day in this House that 4,700 some odd machines in fact are in place. They're slot machines, pure and simple. Thirty years ago there would be people running about with sledgehammers to do away with those machines because they were immoral. Today government is out pushing these things, not backbench members or private members of course but one particular minister through an agency which no member of this House has any control of. Absolutely none. Try and find the legislative authority and how it has to be chased. There is only one member of this House that has any kind of authority to make any kinds of recommendations to that agency. That I don't think is the right way to deal with a moral question in this province. It certainly isn't the way that I

know the members of any clergy would like to deal with it in this province.

3:00

There's no question in most of the minds of others how this is somehow justified. The one-third of the moneys that are gathered and the damage that that does to individuals in society – it steals from some children and the less fortunate, that actually have the funds taken away from them through a compulsive gambler or through a problem gambler. Those moneys are justified on this supposed charitable work. Well, charitable work is a very, very, very tiny piece of these funds. It's some \$36 million of the whole intake. The gross revenue is almost 10 times that, nine times that actually. This is the area that is justified as being the one that deserves the collection of these funds. These are things like the Elks hall in Crownsnest or the local community hall in Kitscoty or some place like that.

Now, into and unto themselves those are in fact very good projects. The difficulty I have is the way the money is raised and then directly put. That is not the way to do it. If you go to those people and say, "This is how this money was collected," and graphically show them the difficulties that these raised dollars can present to society and the broken homes that it creates, I'm sure they would have second thoughts.

If in fact these elements of expenditure stacked up on a very, very large, the largest of all priority lists, that being the whole government spending in these estimates, then I and all would say: yes, it is definitely worth while making those expenditures and making those expenditures as promptly as possible and through consultation with particularly the Member of the Legislative Assembly that represents that area as to what the priorities could and should be in that area, not through the one minister, certainly not through one sole minister. It matters little which side of the House one is on; he's proud of the fact that one must write a letter. In fact, his office instructs one to do that, to write a letter or to speak directly to the minister, because they certainly do not have the authority to issue any funds other than through that one final signature of the minister.

There are certainly other reasons for having difficulty with expenditure of funds in the lottery appropriations. Other members on this side shall have some more things to say about that, I'm sure. There certainly is no reason to limit debate on that particular item, but I should like to move on to an area which is the general area of expenditure and how that comes about.

This particular budget approved through appropriation doesn't seem to have any priority other than one single priority, a political one. The costs of that are enormous. Headlong hurrying into a slash and burn; headlong into cut first, question later; priorities out the window: we'll deal with those later.

The members opposite should take the time to go and learn some of the other areas of expenditure that they're not very familiar with, but they're so very busy on so many other boards, authorities, tribunals, and such. If they took the time to understand the effects on health care and how one can just cut these expenditures holus-bolus and say to those supposed lesser souls that work in the deliverance of health care, "Cut as you will; this is what the bottom line is," not where our priorities are in that vast array of expenditures in public health, whether it be in long-term care or extended care or through home care and delivering it to them. No, there isn't any priority. This government has said nothing about that. "Oh, let somebody else. We're just here to disseminate the largess as we see it," and "We have a revenue problem, not an income problem." Well, that is so much hogwash.

When you look at the revenue stream over the past X number of years in this province, you see that energy has lost a lot of its value internationally, and there's nothing one can do about that. To say by extension when we lose money, we don't have enough money, and we're in a deficit position, it's because we spend too much. Maybe so, but don't just take this platitudinal deliverance of saying that it's an expense problem and not a revenue problem and then go along slashing and burning and closing your eyes and walking away from those that are hurt and hurt badly.

The area that is hurt perhaps the worst here, overall in the province, is an area that's not any specific one little element. It's each and everyone of us that has lost confidence. There are those that are saying: "Well, how does the small entrepreneur, the one that has some funds to disseminate and invest – how does one do that?" Does one say, "Look; I'm going to invest in my brother-in-law's small business or start my own small business"? No, no, no, not in this province now. We have no idea what is going to happen. This slash and burn, we can't tell what the next place is that's going to be hurt. We don't know what the future holds. We're losing confidence rapidly. Consequently, what if it goes in debt financing to mutual funds? The sales of mutual funds in this province have absolutely soared, and that money is not invested in Alberta, certainly not invested in large measure in western Canada these days. Some of it's offshore, a lot in the United States, and certainly it's in eastern Canada and central Canada.

Well, that is not the way to run a government. You don't scare people. You don't say: "You have a job. You should be proud to have a job, and you're lucky to have a job because next week all those other people are going to lose theirs." That is not the way to run. You do it through – and the government said it time and time and time again – consultation. Well, consultation in this particular budget meant nothing. It was a political opportunity. It was a window to say, "Yes, in four years time we can win by simply doing one thing, keeping one promise: we slashed, we burned, we cut." In this great social experiment it doesn't matter how psychologically we damage each and every individual out there; we've slashed so greatly that, yes, we made the end. See, we balanced the budget.

You've closed your eyes on all those that you've destroyed. You've closed your eyes on the ones that have been pushed, not taken, pushed off welfare. You just said: look, you just don't deserve it; we're just cutting you off, justifiably or not. Nobody tells us anything. All for this one end: we think we can win four years from now. That is it totally and completely. I mean, it would take just one more year to gather and say: "Maybe we can. We can do some cutting and some trimming in many, many areas of government service." It's agreed. It had to be done, and it will have to be done. But legislators, the ones who have the time and the interest and the ear of the people out there, should be bringing those concerns, should be saying those things.

We heard concerns today from Calgary-Currie on education. We heard concerns today from this side and that side on many items of business. We do daily. Those things should be listened to. They should be compiled and put on a large priority list, and this Legislature should spend endless hours debating and questioning and understanding precisely where these expenditures go. Set priorities, not do a line by line; understand when a hospital should be built in a particular area. Whether it be Westlock, Sherwood Park, Red Deer, or Didsbury, it doesn't matter. What we should know: are those people being treated in the same manner as the people in the other areas of the province?

3:10

You cannot just say: "Look; that's the way it is. Because I'm a minister and because it's my particular riding, it should go

ahead," and then have other ministers pop up in their places and say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." That's not the way to run a government. That's not the way to do it. It's not the way, I know, some of the members opposite would like their government to run. They would like to have that hands-on and be able to make those judgments on behalf of all Albertans and their particular region.

The cuts that are occurring in education. Having been married for some 24 years now to a former teacher, I can tell you that it hurts her no end to see what is happening in the education business, to see that there are children that are simply not receiving the attention they so desperately require. There are children that are coming into the system that in fact are starved for attention. You find a child in grade 3 or grade 4 that is as bright as any other but doesn't have attention at home and is trying desperately to have some kind of attention from the biggest hero in their life at that time: the teacher. She can deliver all she can in the hours. Yet we've gone from a classroom of 24 students, where she could actually get around and deal with them, to 34. The difference is not, in engineering terms, simply linear. It doesn't increase with one single child. It is what's called exponential. It goes up astronomically. You just cannot possibly deal with it. Every teacher knows that at a certain level, varying between 18 and 24, depending on the class, the discipline breaks down, and you end up spending more time disciplining children and trying to get them to head in one direction and to keep control in the classroom than actually teaching.

Now, every time you do an expenditure cut – and this government says: oh, we only chopped a few dollars out of the budget; we only chopped 14. It depends on what day you listened what percentage is cut. And then they say: well, it's got to be cut out of administration. The facts are: administration over the entire province, including, some would say, the bloated department, is 7 percent. All the rest goes into replacement of capital – this is operating – teacher's salaries, janitorial salaries, and the like. Now, if you chop 14 percent, and you're trying to get it all out of 7 percent, something's not going to work. The only thing that can be affected – any educator, period, will tell you that it has to affect the classroom in the negative. The student/teacher ratio has to be affected. It cannot be any other way. No matter how much talk, you cannot cut out of administrative services or capital services or any of those. You can't do it, cut enough out. You have to affect the student/teacher ratio even if you do lower the salaries. So we've affected the fundamental component of our future in this province by cutting education. Personally I'll be affected in the manner that I have two children in school, but they're certainly not going to be affected like the children that are coming into the system.

This is not something like: oh, we can get around later to fix up the roads; we took the money out of the road system this year, and we'll perhaps put it in next year; minor repairs will have to be made, and it will be right as rain in the third year. You cannot do that. You've entered this wonderful social experiment you've delivered here in the deliverance of education. Once you've taken it away, once you have limited that child's ability to attain an education, you can't gain it back. You don't sort of say, "Add a little more next year or the year after that and bump it back up." Once you have starved that child or diverted their attention from that bit of learning that they may have got in those early years, you've done it totally and completely forever and ever. It cannot be returned.

In this great social experiment that this government seems to be doing just by slashing and burning – I mean, it's beyond me how one can justify it, looking at oneself in the mirror in the evenings

and saying: "Look; this is what I'm doing with my time. I'm sitting in the Legislature allowing my colleagues to do this." To what end? That one single purpose is election next time. Now, that is a pretty narrow view and the worst of all possible views of what a politician is and what a politician does.

Thank you, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Shaw.

**Point of Order
Imputing Motives**

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, 23(i), imputing false or unavowed motives. I think the member has made some statements which quite frankly are totally inappropriate. I think the members on this side of the House should have an apology.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. This is a debate, hon. members. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Debate Continued

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against the appropriation Bills. Let me explain in some detail why I do so rise. First, let me make it clear that I support the elimination of the deficit. Had I been elected in May of '93, I would have supported the Deficit Elimination Act.

DR. WEST: You're not elected yet?

DR. PERCY: "Had I been," I said, hon. member. Had I been here in May 1993 when the Deficit Elimination Act had come forward, I would have voted in favour of it.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that when many of the members here were sitting passively spending, spending, spending, a number of us were saying that we were on the road to ruin. We were writing and talking and speaking on it. In fact, I can give the hon. members a publication dated 1984 from the Fraser Institute where we set out in pretty clear detail that we were going down a road that had a lot of potholes in it, and it was going to cause us serious problems. Throughout that period a number of us were pointing out that we had a structural deficit. That structural deficit had arisen because they did not have the wherewithal to reduce expenditures. So where we are today, Mr. Speaker, is a direct consequence of a lack of action by many members of that side of the House from 1986 on.

I am in support of deficit elimination, but I am not in support of the way it is being undertaken in this budget. I am against eliminating half the funding for early childhood schooling. I am against that, and I could not support the budget because of that. I am against eliminating funding for bus passes for children whose parents are on social welfare. I'm against cutting off the allowances for children whose parents are on social welfare so they can't buy what they need at the schools. I'm against that. This budget forces it. There is no planning; there's no process in this budget. They cut, but they don't think about who they're hurting. This is what's wrong with this budget. They don't target; they don't focus. For them it's across-the-board cuts, and by gosh, we'll cut even more than we have to under the Deficit Elimination Act because it's a good thing to do. It's a politically good thing to do three years down the road when they run on balancing the budget on the backs of Albertans.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me review in some detail. You might have now guessed that I will vote against this budget, not because I'm against eliminating the deficit, not because I'm against a

consolidated deficit of \$1.8 billion, though the target in this budget is \$1.55 billion. I'm against and will vote against this budget because of who it impacts on. It impacts on those in our society who have the least. It does not promote the notion of a level playing field. It tends to pick on and hurt those who have the least in our society and those who are the most vulnerable.

I think there are a number of very serious problems with the budget. I look at the business plans which are to set out a three-year record, Mr. Speaker, of how we're going to plan, how we're going to target, how we're going to focus resources. You don't see a plan in those. What you see is a series of platitudes, performance measures . . .

**Point of Order
Questioning a Member**

MR. SPEAKER: Is the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs rising on a point of order?

DR. WEST: Would the hon. member entertain a question in debate?

DR. PERCY: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I would look forward to it.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's gone on with a lot of the things that he is against in our cuts. That's a matter of opinion, and he's welcome to it. But I happen to know that he worked for a time at the University of Alberta, and I know that they've just recently cut the Faculty of Dentistry in a proposal to save money at the university. Does he support that, number one? And if he doesn't support the cutting of the Faculty of Dentistry, would he support taking the moneys equally out of the other departments, including the department of economics, in order to save the dentistry faculty?

3:20

DR. PERCY: I welcome the question from the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, and let me be very clear. The department that I am on long-term leave from has taken a significant hit. In fact, let me explain the process for those members who don't understand how it works when across-the-board cuts are imposed. You have, Mr. Speaker – and this is something that they're unaware of, given their high incomes as ministers. The bottom line is that as in the civil service, as at universities, my reckoning is 82 percent of the expenditures of the university are tied up through salary expenditures to faculty and to staff. Now, because the board of governors, which I believe, if I'm not incorrect, was a Tory appointed board – is it true? Was it a Tory appointed board? I believe it was. If the hon. minister of advanced education were here, he'd confirm for me that it was a Tory appointed board that in fact did not negotiate any type of financial exigency clause. In fact, what they did, I think they took it out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

DR. PERCY: Yes, it's true. Their appointees really didn't know what they were doing. They did not know the proverbial bottom from a hole in the ground.

Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs seeks to ask questions about his board of governors appointed through order in council, I would be very curious then, whomever he has asked, those board members that he helped appoint, what they were doing and how they'd be doing it. Because I know that at the university those that are dealing with the cuts have tried to

do so in a way that ensures the resources are at the front end, at the teaching end of the university. Classes are full. There are classes there where students are standing – standing room only. There are classes there where instructors are voluntarily teaching extra classes.

So, Mr. Speaker, the university is trying to adjust. It's trying to ensure that it maintains its focus as a teaching and research institution, that it is part of this community, an important, vital part of this community, and that access is maintained despite the cutbacks that they have imposed.

As to the specific question that he asked me with regards to the Faculty of Dentistry, that in fact is a proposal by the president that then goes through the administrative framework of the university ultimately for a decision.

The issue that they've raised – and I'm glad that they have. What they're concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is how they're going to eliminate the provision of dental services in the rural sector, because they know and they're very concerned that the rural sector has written and lobbied extensively that they're concerned they will not get the dental services they need. They already know that they can't get the medical services they require because many doctors do not want to go there. So what the hon. member is asking, I believe, is: what are the consequences of a cut that we've imposed, and how does it impinge on the rural sector that heretofore has provided us with so much support? I empathize with him, but there's very little I can do other than suggest that he in fact pick up the telephone, call the president of the university or talk to people in the medical faculty. It would do him good, actually, to talk to somebody who's experiencing the consequences of the cuts that he has imposed.

Debate Continued

DR. PERCY: Now, to get on with my reasons, then, why I am for – I am for deficit elimination but against the particular cuts . . .

Point of Order

Questioning a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw is rising on a point of order.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the hon. member was so magnanimous to accept one question, I'm wondering if he'd be prepared to accept another?

DR. PERCY: I would like to, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately my time is just being eaten up, eaten up, eaten up, and they know that the more they can eat up our time, the less we can get on record what the consequences are of the cuts that they're imposing on Albertans.

Debate Continued

DR. PERCY: So, Mr. Speaker, let me continue. I am against – and I'll just repeat it for them – eliminating the financing and funding of bus passes for children whose parents are on social assistance. I think it's mean spirited. I am against the elimination of school allowances for children who then can't participate in the wide range of extracurricular activities. Those for me are sort of examples of the mean-spirited nature of this budget, because I think in a society such as ours we have to look after those who have the least. We want to ensure that their children have access to opportunity. That access, then, is ensured through an educational system where they're treated no differently than anyone else.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the array of cuts, I see extensive road construction still going on, and we're cutting back in social

assistance. You know, a question came up in terms of an emergency shelter for youths. We've seen significant cutbacks in policing. At the very time that all of us are concerned about crime, violent crime in particular, we're eliminating both mechanisms of enforcement, but perhaps more importantly we're eliminating mechanisms of prevention. That's where you want to put your money: at the front end.

So I look at this budget, and what I see is a budget that is in a sense myopic in terms of how it's constructed. They're going to eliminate an array of programs and projects whose payoff lies five years, 10 years down the road, whose payoff is in terms of higher retention rates for students. But, heck, that's five, 10 years down the road, and that's not related to our budget cycle. It's related to the fact that many children will go through this system, and they'd have a higher level of self-esteem had the funding not been cut in some of these programs, but now they enter the system as second-class citizens because they don't have access to what other kids have.

I'm against – and I cannot emphasize this too strongly – the emergence of two-tiered education systems. I'm against the emergence of two-tiered health care systems. I'm against the Americanization of the Alberta society. I'm against those, and I believe they are embodied in this budget. For me, I look at the budget and I see the consequences of this, and I see the natural incremental steps towards two-tiered health and two-tiered education. I think we have to avoid that. We want those two systems in particular to be open, accessible, and a level playing field. That's why, for example, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the student loan program for advanced education, I'm concerned. I don't think it is in fact the role of the state to say: the default rate here is 35 percent; therefore, you, because you're poor, cannot get a loan to enter that program. On the other hand, if your parents were rich, you could go in and take that program. For me that's a two-tiered system that discriminates against you because you don't have money.

I look at the revision to the student loan program. On the one hand, I can understand why the government would attempt to do this. It would try in a sense to ensure that some of the costs of defaults are borne elsewhere and try and ensure that the default rate falls. But I look at this program and I say: does it work? Does it ensure targeting of funds at those that really require the funds? I don't see it, Mr. Speaker. I see in fact a program where the rate is 5 percent plus prime, whereas in other provinces it's prime plus 1 percent. Is that fair? Do I see other provinces moving down this route? No. Do I see with this program the fact that we still have the 10 percent high-risk rates, and we'll be responsible for them? Yes, I do. Do I see the bank in question getting 5 percent for managing the other 90 percent? Yes, I do. Do I see that this bank then gets 65,000 additional customers and all the payoffs that are associated with that plus the 5 percent premium? Yes, I do. Do I see the students in question getting anything out of this? No, I don't.

So there are a number of issues in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that we have to address, that we've tried to address as an opposition. One is a philosophical issue. Do we want the emergence of two-tiered systems in this province? Will we turn our back on a heritage where we have tried to ensure a level playing field, where the state is involved to try and ensure that every individual, regardless of how much money their parents have, has equal access to the system? I think we're moving away from that, and that's why I'm against this budget. I do believe that we could have stayed on track in the deficit elimination without in fact engaging in basically a budgeting process that builds in regressivity, that builds in screening and discrimination

solely on the basis of whether you've got money or not. That for me is not the Alberta I want to see three or four years down the road, and it's certainly an Alberta that I will work to see does not emerge.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude.

3:30

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to speak today to the third reading of the appropriation Bills, and in particular I want to touch on Bill 26, which is before us now. I do want to of course get into the other appropriation Bills just to recap what I spoke about earlier, in the days that preceded today.

Mr. Speaker, the lottery fund. The lottery fund is one that's been quite peculiar, in my mind, for such a long time. We wonder so often how much it is, in fact, that we have been generating in terms of gross revenues. That is a question that hasn't been answered yet in this House. I know I looked at a document that is titled Lottery Fund, 1994-95 Estimates. It was passed around in the House a number of days ago. In those 1994-95 estimates it is quite clear that a large portion of those lottery funds do indeed go to the general revenue fund: 62.6 percent of them, totaling \$211 million. So almost two-thirds goes to the general revenue fund, and the balance goes to programs that are provided for by the minister responsible for the lotteries. I believe it's the Minister for Economic Development and Tourism and trade. Amongst other duties that the minister has, this is another one. Those programs that are in there, like I mentioned, that go to the general revenue fund, \$211 million, include things like health and education. So that funding goes towards health and education.

Funding to the tune of 3.7 percent of the \$337 million – it amounts to \$12.5 million, Mr. Speaker – goes to education initiatives, it says. It goes on to say that health and wellness initiatives, science and environmental initiatives, CFEP – the community facility enhancement program is one that is in here, and it's a good program. They're all good programs. I submitted this session, just the other day, the very first application under CFEP for my constituency. You know, when I sat in on the community leagues in my riding, the presidents' meeting, it was discussed around the room that night how much money each and every one has. Each community league got up, and for the most part they're quite healthy. They're doing very well. Perhaps maybe we can all learn from watching what they do, because what they're doing is right if they've got money in the bank. I mean, they're in the black. For the first time a grant application has been talked about. There's a specific project in mind, and they've asked me if I would assist, and indeed I did. I've taken it to the minister's office. That's the very first one, and I hope that one gets approved for my constituents.

We go on. It says tourism initiatives, recreation/sport initiatives, cultural initiatives, and agricultural initiatives take up the total amount of \$337 million in this lottery fund. The \$337 million and all the different expenditures that I've described in these estimates have no indication whatsoever as to administration. We talk about the lottery fund and how much it brings in, \$337 million, where it goes, but what about administration of this fund? How much is it? How much is in fact the amount of money that we bring each year into this fund? I don't particularly care to look at the net amounts, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know the gross amounts and be able to critique this thing. I'd like to be able to know how much we're spending on administration. I want to know how much we're spending in other areas that I don't know are being expended. So those are the kinds of things that need to be detailed much greater in the future.

I'm not in third reading asking for anything more at this stage, Mr. Speaker. I'm merely highlighting and asking that we as legislators ought to provide that detail not only to our constituents but to ourselves, because this certainly does not provide it all. It certainly would not pass in the private sector; let me tell you that. If I were sitting as a director on the board of some company and I saw that, I wouldn't agree with it. I'd have to have more detail, and I know that I'd get more detail.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has often said, time and time again, that all lottery funds ought to go to the general revenue fund. It shouldn't be separated and segregated. There shouldn't be a whole different bureaucracy that takes charge and takes control of the lotteries and expends those funds as it sees fit. Absolutely not. What we ought to have is that those funds that do come in as another revenue towards the province of Alberta and for the province go into the general revenue fund. That is the main fund. That's the fund that we pay everything out of. Lord knows we're paying out of the general revenue fund, that pays to the Alberta heritage savings fund, that comes back to the general revenue fund. We heard all about that the other day, and we continue to hear all about it, the circular accounting. But the lottery fund is one area. I think those \$337 million, including those but all of them, all the funds – the gross amount of funds must come to the general revenue fund, and that's how we ought to administer it.

Quite clearly, when we look at all the different areas that are being supported by the lottery fund: the education initiatives, the health and wellness initiatives, science and the environment, tourism initiatives . . . What about CFEP? Couldn't it be handled? Couldn't it be handled nicely in the Department of Community Development? Why do we have another bureaucracy handling it out of here? Couldn't tourism initiatives be handled out of the Economic Development and Tourism department? Recreation and sports initiatives coming out in the lottery fund?

You know, the same holds true for the heritage savings trust fund. We've got little bureaucracies all over the place that are costing us all kinds of money. In this Legislature we continue to say that we want to get rid of overlap and duplication. That is one area that we have to look at. We have to get rid of it because it's costing us. That's what's costing us dearly, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the deficit that we're now trying to eliminate. Why couldn't cultural initiatives here as well go in with the Community Development portfolio? And 6.7 percent in agricultural initiatives: we've got an Agriculture, Food and Rural Development department. Why aren't we utilizing that department to expend these funds if – if – these funds actually need to be expended? Perhaps there's some overlap and duplication within this that each individual department is already doing. That is why we can no longer create all of these little bureaucracies: because we lose control far too easily. That's what's hurting this government. In the future I would hope that we would solve that problem by providing more detail and by bringing the lottery funds into the general revenue fund.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak briefly on the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, the liquidation of such fund. What we've got there is this huge fund that has given Albertans a false sense of security for some time. It is now time that we liquidate those assets that we know we can cash in on, the ones that we know are not generating revenues that surpass or even meet or match the expenditure side. I'm talking about certain investments that we have that are under the interest rates that we are currently paying for some of the loans and debentures that we have from the GRF, general revenue fund. Those are the ones that we have to consider eliminating. Those are the ones that we have to cash

in. Those are the ones that we have to bring back into this government, and we have to pay down that debt, probably a gross debt somewhere in the range of \$30 billion.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, this is a staggering debt. This is one that's costing us \$1.5 billion every year to service. It's one that we can no longer continue to pay because it's costing our children, our children in our education system, our children in our health care system. It's costing us no matter where we go. Our municipalities. People fear for their lives nowadays when the policing grants are going to be cut. Chiefs of police across the province are saying that it's going to hurt them. They've got to cut down on staff. Reaction times are going to be slower. There are going to be problems perhaps. These are areas that I don't think we have to cut back on just yet. I think we have to look at where it is we can cut back and eliminate that overlap and duplication that I talk about. Let's get rid of it. We haven't looked at it yet. I know we haven't looked at it in great detail simply because in 1991 we did that study whereby we identified \$4.3 billion – \$4.3 billion – of overlap and duplication between us and the federal government. Now, where is it that we're attempting to eliminate some of this duplication?

I know one area that I can think of is the corporate income tax side. The province decided to give it back to the feds. I guess it wasn't a good idea in the first place. I don't know why we created it if it wasn't a good idea. So here we are giving it back to the feds and asking them to take care of it, to collect our tax for us. If that is one area, where are the other areas? We've identified \$4.3 billion, and I can only think of a small portion of that. Our total tax revenues on the corporate side for the province of Alberta are, I think, \$550 million. I can't imagine where the administration to collect that could be any more than, say, \$50 million, if that. I doubt it, but let's assume 10 percent. That would put it at \$50 million. Well, we're still a far cry – a far cry, Mr. Speaker – from \$4.3 billion. Where is that overlap? Where is that duplication? Let's get some answers. Let's identify where they are, and let's act on it.

If we did that, I suspect that we probably wouldn't have to make some very profound changes just yet to our education system and to our health care system, a health care system that we heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud saying is going to lead to a two-tiered system. A two-tiered system, one for the rich and one for the poor: that is what is going to happen. In education it scares me to think that it could create a two-tiered system, that what is being proposed now is going to be a system whereby the poor people, people that are disadvantaged, people that don't have sufficient funds to send their kids to school – I've seen it all around the world in those poorer countries whereby certain children are given the benefit of schooling and health care and whatever else for the good life, and those that can't afford it because their parents can't afford it are sitting back, can't go to school, or they can't go to the schools that have a teaching system that is one that would make a child excel.

I know, growing up in this province, that we had one fantastic education system. It's one that I want my children to continue to go to, and it's one that I know my children's children would want to go to. Not only would I consider that being something that we would want them to do, but I would want to take it a step further. Rather than finding ways to dismantle some of the system that we have come to accept and to love, what we have to do is consider how we are going to make it better, not how to dismantle it. There is an ever-changing world, Mr. Speaker. The world is changing dramatically. As we speak there are technologies going

on that are mind boggling. Why is it that we're thinking of dismantling some of the systems that we have in place without even looking at how we could make it better, adaptable to the ever-changing world that we have to continue to live in?

These are the areas that I know we have to consider. We have to consider them when we consider balancing our budget. Balancing our budget by downloading just doesn't solve the problem, Mr. Speaker, because the root of the problem still exists. It reminds me of quack grass. You can pull out the grass all you want, but, by golly, in just a few short days you'll start to see it sprout up again. I guess we can call this the quack theory of balancing the budget that exists today. I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs, quite a farmer himself, just smiling away because he knows I'm right. He knows I'm absolutely right, because when you pull that grass out, in a couple of days, why, it starts to grow back again.

MR. SEVERTSON: No, we use Roundup now. [interjections]

MR. CHADI: He's talking about nuclear energy now, I think, or nuclear bombs. I'm not sure. He's calling it Roundup.

You see, the root of the problem still exists, Mr. Speaker. We have to get to the root. We've got to get to the fundamental problem at hand. Just suggesting that a flat across-the-board cut or something close to it in each department is just not the answer. It isn't. We have to understand that it's going to go down all the way through the system and work its way down, whether it's municipalities or whether it's our education system, whether it's our counties, whether it's our IDs. No matter where it is, it's going to have to stop somewhere, and something is going to happen. Something has got to be given up. We're starting to see it in health, and we're starting to see it in education. We haven't yet begun to see it in the municipalities. When I say we've only begun to see it, I don't mean that we've begun to feel it, because feeling it is quite different from seeing it. I know that Albertans are going to be really put out when the time comes that they start to feel the full effects of these budget cuts. Policing is an area that scares me, an area that we have to really consider whenever we're downloading onto municipalities. Fire departments: that scares me as well. We have to consider that, because it's going to hurt. It truly is.

Mr. Speaker, now I want to go into another area that we discussed earlier in different estimates debates. It's quite appropriate today to bring it into appropriation, because this is the final time that I'll have to speak on appropriation and on the budget. It wasn't so long ago that we were in estimates. All across the different departments that I spoke about, I suggested and I continue to insist that what we have to do is sell off the surpluses that we've got and utilize those funds to pay down debt. Take whatever it is that we can sell off, whatever is salable, whether it's real estate, whether it's equipment of any kind. Use those moneys to pay down the debt.

We heard today that there was a sale of certain assets. I question: where are those funds? Once you sell those assets, what do you do with those assets if you sold them? I know that each department would sit there and say, "Well, you know, that helicopter was in my department; therefore, those funds ought to stay in my department." Or, for example, the sale of a piece of equipment that was in the Department of Municipal Affairs: "Well, you know, that should stay in my department." I disagree, Mr. Speaker, because the way I see it is that when you've expended funds, you've requisitioned funds first of all from the GRF. You got those moneys from the general revenue fund. It came into your department, you purchased that equipment, and

now you've sold that equipment. But in order to requisition those funds from the general revenue fund in the first place, you created a deficit situation in the whole budget system. All across the different departments, right across them, everyone is to blame. No matter whether we bought a \$2 pen or a \$50,000 computer; it all was part of the problem of creating the deficit in the first place in that particular year. So when we sell off a piece of equipment, take those funds, put them not in the general revenue. Apply them to debt. Get rid of the debt that is the problem today that's causing us the most grief. Let us do that. Let's get rid of it.

3:50

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To use the Minister of Energy's phrase, it's no secret. It's no secret that I am opposed to these appropriation Bills and have been opposed to this budget. I've in fact been opposed to the budgets that have led us over eight years into the mess we're in. Incredible to me that the government and the cabinet want us to believe that they aren't accountable, that the mess we're in isn't their fault. As I look at the front bench, 16 out of 17 were all here when the decisions were made, many of them a part of the inner circle. They were part of those decisions that got us into the trouble we're in now.

This year we've got yet another flawed budget. This year it's accompanied by something called business plans. Now, I've said before, Mr. Speaker, that I think a Junior Achievement would be embarrassed to present a business plan of this nature. The business plans are full of high-sounding phrases and buzzwords like "visions" and "goals" and "outcomes," but they're absolutely incomprehensible to anyone who has ever written a business plan or who knows what they are supposed to contain.

MRS. BLACK: When did you last write one, Bettie?

MRS. HEWES: Six months ago maybe. Want to see it?

The deficits. Well, where did they come from? Did they come from the kindergarten children who are now going to have to . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes, yes.

MRS. HEWES: The deficits came from the children. Okay.

Did they come from unemployed people looking for work, Mr. Speaker? Did they come from single folks on assistance? Did they come from sick people, disabled people? Did the deficits come from seniors who overspent? Where did they come from? Well, the deficits came from a profligate government, big spenders. Big spenders taking risks with taxpayers' money. Big, high-toned spenders.

Now these big spenders, who are still, many of them, sitting up here making the decisions, are saying to us: "Oh, we're now the good guys. Now we've got the white hats on. We're the good guys, and you innocent souls who have been paying the freight for eight years are now going to have to pay to cover up our mistakes." That's what they're saying to us: "Now we're good guys. We made the mistakes, and you are going to get to pay for them."

No secret - no secret - that I and other members of my caucus have urged this government over eight years - Mr. Speaker, over eight years we have begged, pleaded, and urged the government to get responsible, to be reasonable stewards of taxpayers' money. No secret that we've asked for reform in how the budget is dealt with; we've asked for reform in the pensions. We've begged for it. We've asked for this government to compress government. No way; nothing to do it. Now this same bunch of folks, who

presumably were never accountable for anything although they were all there making the decisions, are saying: "Oops, you're going to have to pay, folks. Not our fault."

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising on a point of order.

DR. WEST: Would the hon. member entertain a question in debate?

MRS. HEWES: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Too scared, too scared.

MRS. HEWES: You're so silly, Mr. Minister.

Debate Continued

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the question that gets asked of me over and over is: where did the money go? Where did it go? Well, let me tell you; it's still going. We heard about some more of it today. It's still going down the tube, and they still don't seem to be able to stop the drain. It went into unplanned, unnecessary activities. It went into high-risk failures. It went into purchased friendships.

Mr. Speaker, now this not-accountable team wants us to suffer the anguish. They want to take tough measures, and everybody suffers. Well, I say that this government in this budget is trying to save money on the backs of people. They've hit the large budgets with no understanding of the consequences.

MR. EVANS: All the rest of the money went too, Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: The money went, Mr. Minister, and you were here when the decisions were made, and you incurred the losses. No way of dodging that responsibility. I didn't vote for the budget. [interjection] You didn't either; you were sitting over here. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, do I have the floor, sir?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, please.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the budget is being worked, the savings are being attempted on the backs of frightened, helpless people who have very little political clout. Eighty new taxes - 80 of them - new fees, off-loading to municipalities with the inevitable results of increased costs in utilities and property taxes, off-loading to private nonprofit and commercial agencies and organizations.

Let me give you an example that I've spoken about before that I think is the essence of what is wrong here and the essence of what these unaccountable, unconscionable budgeters are trying to do. Let me talk a little bit about what I think is a story of bad faith, and that is the story of what's happening to the seniors. Mr. Speaker, three years ago the government made an arbitrary cut in seniors' extended health benefits and other benefits. The seniors complained. The government got nervous because seniors do vote, and it was clear that this was an unfair kind of cut. There was a series of consultations, as we all know. Last year there was finally a roundtable to look at it. Last year the consultation reports were really shredded, and we were treated to a very sanitized version of what had happened. Then a roundtable was held, and some other recommendations were made.

Then finally, not related really in any in-depth way to what had been said at any of those events, we had the plan that emerged in the business plans and in the budget. This is the plan that's called the Alberta seniors' benefit. It takes into consideration in a package five programs that had been available to seniors before: the Alberta assured income, the renters' assistance, property tax benefits, extended health benefits, and health care insurance. These five were rolled into one with a one-stop, presumably one-window application, and there was some thought that that would have merit in making it easier for seniors. Mr. Speaker, the seniors took another look at this, and they said: "Hold on. First of all, that's an unfair program, because being income tested, you've set the thresholds at the wrong place, so we want to have some input into that." Then they said further: "These aren't the only programs that you've tinkered with for seniors. These aren't the only things that affect seniors' lives." And the minister, on answering questions in this House, has said and the Treasurer has said: no, the total amount won't change; we'll fool around a bit with those thresholds maybe, in response to seniors' concerns, but the whole amount won't change. A hundred and eleven million dollars in Community Development is presumably going to stay the same, or if the thresholds increase, maybe they'll juggle money from some other seniors' program.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, what didn't they take into account? Well, they didn't take into account the potential deregulation of all senior subsidized housing, which is inevitable with the increased rental costs. They didn't take into account the consequences of the extended fees for seniors in extended health care. They didn't take into account the discussion that is going on as we speak about home care, about what is essential and what is nonessential medical service, about the increased costs of home care. They didn't take into account that seniors, as others, will be discharged early from hospital and have to pay for care that they can ill afford. They didn't take into account the effects of the changes to Blue Cross drug benefits.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

They didn't take into account the inevitable increase in property taxes, which hit seniors very hard last year and will continue to increase. They didn't talk about the increased utility rates or the effects that their cuts are having on municipal governments and the downloading further to individual taxpayers and seniors. They didn't talk about the effects, Mr. Speaker, of one of your favourite programs, FCSS. What does that do to seniors and to their benefits? They didn't take into account the federal government changes.

This has hit seniors very hard. Now the minister has appointed yet another committee. He's appointed a committee, but he said: okay, committee, you can only talk about these things; you can't talk about all of the rest of them; you can't talk about the whole effect of this budget on seniors in this province. We all know and we talk about the fact that seniors have worked hard and saved for and planned their retirement, and then suddenly someone pulled the rug out, someone changed the rules in the middle of the road. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be cynical, but I believe this change has been very punitive to people who are frightened and lonely and often very isolated.

What's the object? What's the object of it? Well, the object is to get money out of people on fixed incomes. The object is to save money, get money out of people who don't have it. That's the object: get money out of people who are frightened and often

helpless. Will it save money? Well, probably not over time. It may, in fact, cost more. At what human cost? Well, the costs are going to be immense. Where are seniors going to be by the time the next election rolls around? Some of them won't even be here, and maybe that's, in my most cynical moments, what I think. Seniors don't have clout. They don't have a lot of political power. Those who are poor, thank goodness – and I congratulate the seniors' organizations who are advocates for those who cannot or are too frightened to speak out.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is an example. This whole issue around seniors is the essence of what's wrong with how this government is budgeting. I think this is the perfect illustration of why they are on the wrong track, why they are trying to make themselves look good. They are not accountable for what happened in the past, trying to look good on the backs of people who cannot do anything about it. I believe it's unconscionable. It is not a budget that I can support, nor should they.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to speak against these Bills on third reading. I find almost no reasonable justification for supporting these Bills, not because the objective that they embody isn't a laudable objective; it is. It is fundamentally important that this Legislature work to correct the profound fiscal problems that this government has brought this province to by balancing the budget as soon as is reasonably possible to do.

To that extent, I suppose, at one level this budget at least addresses a very, very serious problem. The problem is that the Conservative government in this province has brought in eight consecutive deficit budgets, and it's not as though that will be the end of it. We're promised at least two and maybe three more deficit budgets. That will be 11 consecutive deficit budgets. Over one-third of the time that this government has governed – I use that word loosely – and has been the government of this province, they have brought in deficit budgets.

The first deficit budget of \$3.5 billion in 1986 was, to quote the Treasurer at that time, a shock, and it was a level of deficit that we all hoped and expected we would never see again. It was surpassed just over a year ago with a \$3.7 billion deficit. In seven years, eight years, just on eight years now, this government has brought us from no debt to over \$30 billion in debt. Quite an achievement. Quite an achievement, Mr. Speaker. This government that calls themselves Conservatives – and almost every member of this front bench were there to vote on those eight consecutive deficit budgets. These hard-nosed, right-wing, management kind of people voted for deficit after deficit after deficit.

You know how they've handled that problem, Mr. Speaker? With something they've lifted from a Hollywood movie: that was then; this is now. Not only does it fundamentally fly in the face of the things that the Municipal Affairs minister was saying about accountability and consequences, but of course it trivializes their accountability and their lack of consequence for having created this horrible fiscal problem.

There are those out there who might say, in fact will phone – I'm sure they've phoned some of these Conservatives – and say, "Well, why don't you just raise the taxes?" Fundamentally we cannot solve this problem by raising taxes. Let me give you an example of how deep the fiscal mire that this government has created truly is, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUND: Tell us about Principal.

MR. MITCHELL: Read the Code enquiry. You spent \$25 million to get all that stuff.

If this Conservative government had doubled personal income taxes last year, just the year before this most recent fiscal year, and if they had doubled corporate taxes, do you know what they would have achieved, Mr. Speaker? They still would have had a \$300 million deficit. Now, that is quality budgeting. That is quality budgeting. That's matching your expenses to your income.

My point is that we cannot solve this problem with tax increases. That is one of the great ironies that we see in this particular budget. The Premier said to everybody the other night somewhere where he was speaking: we're not going to hurt you; we promise. The Premier doesn't break his promises. He said no new taxes. That was encouraging, but in fact there have been 80 new taxes. One of them raises one hundred million new dollars. That is the health care premium tax. There are only two provinces in the country that have a health care premium tax. They have just raised that tax 20 percent over the next three years, Mr. Speaker. That is a tax. Eighty new taxes. Yeah.

When Vegreville-Viking votes, he's voting for 80 new taxes. This is the Conservative who stood up in his riding and said: no new taxes. When Little Bow votes, he's voting for 80 new taxes; \$325 million in new revenue. How many times did we hear the Premier say: this is not a revenue problem, Mr. Speaker; this is an expenditure problem. Well, you know what? The Premier may be listening, but his backbench isn't, because you can go through each one of those private members, and they're all voting for \$325 million in new taxes, and those are the ones that we are capable of adding up. We don't know how many are hidden, where there are others that we simply can't tabulate.

4:10

So that is the legacy of yet another Conservative government: eight consecutive deficit budgets, unprecedented. Now they're claiming that they're the first province to balance the budget, when in fact it's the Liberal government in New Brunswick who has done that, when in fact it's the Liberal government in New Brunswick that has one-third . . . [interjection] We get transfer payments. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Hon. members from both sides who are shooting back and forth, please let the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung continue his speech, hopefully less provocatively, as you've sometimes stirred.

Hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. MITCHELL: Sometimes the truth hurts, Mr. Speaker, and if it's provocative, they have to assess that in their own minds. I know it must hurt.

Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: The fact of the matter is that they have one-third per capita the debt that we have, Mr. Speaker. One-third. This government of hard-nosed, right-wing, conservative kind of management people have brought this province to the brink of financial disaster.

Yes, maybe they have accomplished something in setting an objective, but how have they done it? No off-loading, the Premier said. This isn't a revenue problem. The Premier said no off-loading, and I'll just bet everyone – Medicine Hat probably voted for no off-loading, probably campaigned on it. But when he votes for this budget, you know what he's voting for? Thirty

cases of off-loading. Thirty cases of off-loading. So it's not as though that single taxpayer is going to be protected by this Conservative government. No. They're going to find some other way to let somebody else take the responsibility, take the accountability for raising those taxes, because they won't do it.

The Premier said: less government. Well, isn't that the next big promise that hasn't been met? How could there be – well, there may be less government for every school district in this province, but there certainly isn't less government for this government. They have just grabbed \$1.3 billion from those school districts, increased their revenues by about 15 percent, as though creating a \$33 billion deficit wasn't reason enough for anybody not to want to give them more revenue. They've grabbed that, and they have created less government for other people but more government and more power in fact for themselves. The irony in that grab is that a \$1.3 billion solution, Mr. Speaker, has been imposed upon a \$30 million problem.

So I ask the Member for Calgary-Currie. When she votes for this budget, which she surely will, she is voting for the evisceration of Catholic school boards and other school boards across this province. She is voting against literally decades and decades of local government tradition in this province and scooping away that funding from Catholic school boards, which have a constitutional right to raise that money and to spend it as they see fit. That's what she's voting against, and I'm sure that her constituents are fully aware of it.

You know, Mr. Klein said: well, you know, this is the kind of budget we'd lose an election on. Well, this may well be the kind of budget that they lose an election on, but that's not exactly what he had in mind. He was trying to spin the public relations side of this exercise by saying: I'm a tough guy; I'm doing what's right. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? That isn't true. There is a fundamental political agenda – a fundamental political agenda – behind these cuts, and these cuts aren't designed in their minds to hurt themselves politically. They think, if you assess exactly how they have gone about doing it, they are very carefully protecting certain areas of their constituency at the expense of other areas in this province.

One other area of expense is, of course, Calgary. They've determined they can cut 30 percent of Calgary hospitals. They only have to average 17 percent cuts, they say, in health care. So if you take 30 percent out of Calgary and Edmonton, you have to add expenditure to rural areas to average 17 percent. I know they just can't see it, Mr. Speaker, but the great irony in this is that at the one level they're going to say to rural people, "We are protecting and defending your health care," but what they neglect to realize is that 50 percent of the people that go to the U of A hospital and 50 percent of the people that go to the Foothills hospital and 45 percent of the people that go to the Royal Alex – and I can go on – are from rural areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary. So they're going to try and convince people that really they're helping rural health care, although the minister will admit that it takes 65 minutes to get to a rural hospital some places. Why doesn't she do something about the ambulance system? Why would she stand in the House and brag about that? The fact of the matter is that they are damaging health care for everybody across this province out of politically cynical motivation.

What they are trying to convey to Albertans is this idea that because they're cutting, they must be cutting right. There is a very important distinction to be drawn here that just because they're cutting, it doesn't mean for a minute that they're cutting right. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you analyze what they are doing, you'll see many cases where they are cutting in a way that will create greater expense in the longer term. Short-term savings

maybe, but in the longer term profoundly greater expense. You will see that they are trying to raise money through the promotion of gambling, for example, in a way that won't be a net gain financially for this province. It will cost money in the longer term because of the social problems that it creates.

Let's look at the health care process. They have imposed decisions – because they have to be made – by Edmonton and Calgary regional councils which are not structured properly to make those decisions, one, because they don't represent each of the members other than their own hospitals. They're decent people, and that's what they're hired to represent. They don't have the resources to assess community needs. They haven't done any studies to find out what is required. They haven't got the resources to assess what's going to be left at the end and whether that will meet the needs finally. The minister doesn't want to impose decisions. She doesn't want to take part in the decision-making process. They want to push that off, although the Premier said he's going to have to go into Calgary and do it, and then two days later in the House he said, no, he would never do it.

The fact of the matter is that that process is absolutely in disarray, being driven by arbitrary cuts. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, the president of IBM saying, "I want to close 15 offices," so he puts the 15 office managers together and says, "Here, you decide which ones to close"? Well, you know what would happen? Absolutely, fundamentally fail. They haven't consulted the communities about what they want. We have to have 15,000 people in the streets demanding to be consulted. Can you imagine the president of IBM closing offices without ever consulting the clients that deal with those offices? I asked the minister here: could she tell me how many nurses she's going to need in this system in five years, in 10 years? No idea. I asked her: could you tell me what you think will be the single greatest intervention that a hospital will do in this province in five years, in 10 years? No idea. You know, the president of Imperial Oil, if you asked him what product he thought was going to be selling where and by how much and for what reason in five years, in 10 years, do you know what he'd do? He'd tell you.

This is the most abysmal process. If you had to cut costs in this province, Mr. Speaker, and you wanted to find out how to do it as badly as you could possibly do it, pick up this budget, pick up the so-called business plans. Look the Premier in the whites of his eyes, and you'll see that there is no sense of a plan. This is not being done properly, and it will cost this province money in the long run, jobs. They are obsessed with one side of the ledger. Yes, we have to cut, but there is a right way and there is a wrong way. If you cut without any sense of what is happening to your economy, without any sense of the jobs that need to be created to create the futures for the people of this province that jobs directly create, then you'd think there'd be something beyond lip service to that in this government's budget and plan.

What's happened? Growth is down in this budget over last year's projections. It's down from 3 percent to 2.8 percent. That's a great achievement, Red Deer. When Red Deer votes for this budget, he's voting for a reduction in growth which is directly related to the nature of this particular budget and the lack of a proper economic plan for this province. They said 27,000 jobs. Now they are predicting 17,000 jobs. When Lacombe-Stettler votes for this budget, she's not voting for 27,000 jobs each year. She's voting for 17,000 jobs. That's a great accomplishment. That's a great accomplishment, isn't it, Mr. Speaker?

4:20

Taxes and fees are going up. You know, one of the most insidious taxes is the property tax, insidious because it is so hard

on small business. Well, now that they're dumping, off-loading to the municipalities – in fact, health care costs are being off-loaded as well, Mr. Speaker, if you can believe that, to create yet another regime of taxation – you know what will happen? That will be levied through a property tax. You know who's going to pay that property tax? Well, a lot of it's going to be paid by small business. And you know what? They have to pay that tax before they even make a cent. So when the Member for Calgary-Montrose votes for this budget . . .

Point of Order Questioning a Member

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose is rising on a point of order.

MR. PHAM: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. member entertain a question from me?

MR. MITCHELL: No. No. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members are reminded that although you are entitled to ask if the speaker is willing to entertain a question, the speaker is only obliged to say yes or no and is not obliged in any way to give reasons.

Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: When he votes for this budget, he is voting for increased property taxes on small business. He wants to hurt small business. But you know what? Small business is the engine of economic growth for this province.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose rising on a point of order.

MR. PHAM: Point of order again, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(i). The hon. member is trying to impute motives on the way I vote, and that is obviously not the right way to do it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, Calgary-Montrose does have an apparent point of order in that if I heard you correctly, you said that Calgary-Montrose wants to hurt some people. That, I think, is the first case I've seen in a long, long time with many people getting up on both sides imputing motives. Then it would seem to me to be a motive. Did you mean that?

MR. MITCHELL: I apologize, Mr. Speaker, that I would say he would want to, and if he doesn't want to, then he must be doing it by mistake, which I would argue is just about as bad.

Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: The fact of the matter is that he should assess what's in this budget, and he should understand what the consequences are. You know, they talk about consequences when it comes to young kids.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

MR. PHAM: There he goes again, Mr. Speaker, because . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, no. Let's have a citation, please.

MR. PHAM: Standing Order 23(i), Mr. Speaker. He's trying to impute motives again and again and again. Obviously, he doesn't know what he is talking about. He thinks that if someone votes differently than he does, then of course that person is wrong when he is on the other side. His leader supported \$1.1 billion in cuts in the first year, and he turns around and he says . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. A point of order is not an occasion to make a speech. I think if hon. members suggest that someone is mistaken, that's hardly an indication of motive.

Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that when they vote for this budget, they will be grievously hurting small business, the engine of the economy in this province that builds upon the entrepreneurial spirit in this province, which is like any other entrepreneurial spirit across this country. They have completely disregarded how it is the future for this province. It's the future for jobs; it's the future for our children. The one cut they should have done, which they didn't do, was to cut small business tax from 6 percent to 4 percent. So when they vote for this budget, when Calgary-Varsity votes for this budget, you know what's going to happen? He's voting not to help small business with a cut in taxes from 6 percent to 4 percent.

You know, what is most disconcerting is that this cutting, this balancing of the budget is a smoke screen to an ideological obsession with fundamentally restructuring the nature of this province. We see what it really means when it pokes up its ugly head. We see what it means because they want to do away with the Charter of Rights. We see what it means when the Premier stands up and says: there's a mighty fine woman in my caucus. We see what it means when they begin to say that they want to execute children, Mr. Speaker. There is a meanness that is hidden by this budget, and this budget is restructuring the nature of this province in such a way that many of us will wake up one day four or five years from now and say, "I don't very much like what this government has brought this province to be."

There was a generosity in this province. There was a sense of other people. There was a spirit. There was a kindness, not giving people things for the sake of giving them and not being patronizing to them. Those were elements that have made Alberta a very special place and a very special people, but you know what? That's gone. And when I saw the Premier laughing about being the captain of Klein's Slashers at Banff, when I saw the Deputy Premier having such a good time about being the captain of the Kowalski Deficit Devils at Banff, you know what I said to myself? I said . . .

Point of Order Relevance

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader rising on a point of order.

MR. EVANS: Indeed; 489 *Beauchesne*. What on earth does what happened in Banff at a social function, at the largest convention of the Progressive Conservative Party in Alberta's history, have to do with Bills 24, 25, and 26? I would submit to

you, Mr. Speaker, it has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do. However, if the hon. member opposite wants to talk about that convention, which occurred in my constituency and which attracted so many people to our party, I agree it's a good idea for him to continue.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, we have had occasion to reflect on the auditory powers of the Chair, and your citation of 489 – was that your citation, sir?

MR. EVANS: Yes, indeed it was.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It reads as follows: "Since 1958, it has been ruled unparliamentary to use the following expressions," and then we get about two pages of them after that. So on the basis . . .

MR. EVANS: A slip of the tongue. It's 459.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The good old one on relevance. I'm sure that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung will make it relevant.

Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: All I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that reflected in this budget is a meanness that I have never seen in Alberta in the way they are expressing it through that budget. And if ever you needed to see it illustrated, you could see it in the cocky arrogance of a group of people who would laugh at the people whom they are cutting, at people who are truly suffering from these cuts, by saying: "Klein Slashers; ha, ha, ha. Kowalski's Deficit Devils; ha, ha, ha." I think it would behoove this party to be careful how they treat the people, whom they are not treating very well, and how they diminish and disregard the suffering and the pain that they have created in this province.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MRS. BURGNER: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, hon. member. I think this is about the half-dozen point.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie rising on a point of order.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you. Citation 459. I would like to just clarify the interpretation of the hon. member of the attendees at the convention who were a hundred percent supporting policies of this government, notwithstanding some of the difficulties. Mr. Speaker, it's totally inappropriate to go on record saying that they were laughing and hollering and not recognizing the difficulties we were in.

4:30

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Sit down.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, if someone is caught in the process of moving from one spot to another when the Speaker stands, they are obliged to sit there. The telling of sitting down can be left to the Chair.

The point that the Chair was trying to make is that although what you say may be right, that's a debating point, rather than 459, although he was trying to make it relevant to the government's . . . Ascribing other characteristics to the people, then, unless it's specifically related to an individual, is not chargeable under 23(i) when you apply it to a group. That's what the Chair

was hearing. If it was applied to an individual, then appropriately there might be a question under (i) or (j).

Hon. member, would you continue your speech.

MRS. FORSYTH: No. The bell rang. Time's up.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oh, the bell has gone.

Hon. Opposition House Leader, on the point of order?

MR. MITCHELL: No, I'm done. Thanks.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Debate Continued

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Originally I didn't intend to speak, but after listening to a long and totally irrelevant speech from the Member for Edmonton-McClung, then I have to join in the debate. I have been hearing for the last 20 minutes how he's going to come up with a balanced budget without cutting any spending at all. He kept pointing out: you cannot cut in education, cannot cut in health care, and cannot cut in social services. That is very, very funny, because if he knows that 70 percent of the provincial budget is being spent on those areas, then it's almost impossible for him to make that kind of reasoning without affecting the budget being spent on those programs.

Also, the Liberal government has a perfect solution, which the leader pointed out last February when he spoke to the students at the U of C. He said that his solution is to increase personal tax, increase corporate tax, and also impose a sales tax on the province. Of course, that is the reason why we are the government and not them. Somehow they don't get that straight. They keep going around the province and telling that to the entire province. If they keep doing that, four years from now, Mr. Speaker, you know what will happen? We'll have 83 Conservative MLAs, and none of them will sit over there.

There are intelligent members on the other side. The problem with them is that they don't have a clear philosophy, they don't have a clear action plan. Today they speak one thing; tomorrow they speak another. They're not consistent at all. It's very difficult for the public to trust them, and that is why even though . . .

MR. MAGNUS: It's impossible.

MR. PHAM: Yeah.

As you can see, they keep saying that for the last eight years we've come up with a deficit budget. Their plan is that somehow they can turn around tomorrow, not do any cutting at all, and come up with a totally balanced budget. That is totally illogical to me.

I will stop right here. I will listen to other people and see how they carry on with the debate.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. WHITE: A point of order, Mr. Speaker; 459. I need say no more.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield rising on a point of order of relevance.

MR. WHITE: Yes, sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would admonish the member that to make it as relevant as possible, money Bills by themselves tend to be wide-ranging, and we've let a fairly wide range go on, in spite of the various attempts to bring them to relevance.

Inasmuch as Calgary-Montrose has concluded his talk, I think we will move on to the next speaker.

Debate Continued

MR. CHADI: No. He's not finished.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oh. You wish to speak to the point of order?

MR. PHAM: No. I just want to speak.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-Montrose.

MR. PHAM: At first I wanted to stop at that point, but because the other member would like to hear more, I have to stand up and continue my speech then.

The reason that is irrelevant is because we as the government are responsible to tell the public our action plan, how we have come up with a balanced budget and how this budget will affect the lives of the people in this province. That is the essence of Bill 26. We have to see where we were and how we can get to the balanced budget four years from now, and we also have to see where we are today. That is why it is so important to get all these facts on the table.

With that, I will leave room for other speakers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak against the appropriation Bill that we have in third reading right now.

MRS. FORSYTH: What a surprise.

MS LEIBOVICI: Well, yeah. It shouldn't be a surprise, and I'm actually surprised that you're not getting up to speak against it too.

We've heard some comments from the government members that seemed to indicate – or they'd like for us to believe – that they have an understanding of what's in front of them. But when I look back at the budget and when I look back at some other items that went into making the budget, it appears clear to me that the research the government members have engaged in has not perhaps been as thorough as that of the members on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

What I'd like to talk to is the past, is the present, and is the future, specifically, as the Member for Calgary-Montrose indicated, in terms of philosophy, action plans, et cetera, and to begin with, in terms of the fact that this budget is supposedly a budget that is based on sound fiscal planning. I would beg to differ; what we see in this budget is very unsound fiscal management. Of course we would have looked at how to cut the deficit had we become the government, and I know there are many individuals in the public who approach me and say, "If only I had marked the X differently on my ballot, perhaps we would not be seeing the destruction of this province that we are seeing now."

When we talk about what happened in the past – and we've heard various speakers on this side of the Legislative Assembly eloquently address the mismanagement that has occurred over

eight consecutive deficit budgets – the government members sit back and say: "That was the past. That was then. Let's forget about it. Let's not talk about it, and let's move forward and look at the present." So because I am, I believe, a reasonable individual and one that likes to engage in the exchange of ideas, I say: "Sure, let's look at the present, and let's see what has happened in terms of the decision-making that's occurred. Let's see on what basis those decisions have occurred, and let's see if there's any rationale for those decisions."

4:40

So I look at some of the decisions that we see daily. I look at things like chopping kindergarten, and then I wonder: well, there's a Department of Education; there must be reasons for that. And sure enough, the minister eventually came forward with a thousand supposed documents that don't talk at all about chopping kindergarten. So again, maybe I'll step back and say: well, maybe there was a slight oversight within the Department of Education and the minister with regards to that decision; let's see if there's another decision. Then I look at the decision of selling liquor stores, and I think: well, was that a decision that was made on any sound principles? I see that no, because those rules change all the time. One day you can have small business involved. The next day you can have Safeway and Superstore involved. The next day you're back to small business. So again there doesn't seem to be a plan, a philosophy, to quote Calgary-Montrose, in terms of where is this government heading for with the budget.

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

I see that when I look at Gaebler, who was one of the so-called prophets for this government, he says that government is the mechanism we use to make communal decisions: where to build a highway, what to do about homeless people, what kind of education to provide our children. That's the way we solve collective problems. So I look at the behaviour and the attitude of this government to debate within this Legislative Assembly . . .

**Point of Order
Questioning a Member**

MR. ACTING SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt, but we have a point of order from the Member for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the member opposite entertain a question?

MS LEIBOVICI: No.

MR. MAGNUS: Rats.

MS LEIBOVICI: No. Perhaps at the end, if there's time. At that time it would be okay.

Debate Continued

MS LEIBOVICI: So when we look at what Gaebler has said, again this philosophy, this budget doesn't seem to quite fit into what this government is doing. Then I look at benchmarking, and that is what the three-year plans are based on. I look at what Oregon has done with regards to benchmarking. One of the first things that they talk about is what role does vision – vision, that's the future – play in setting benchmarks. I see that in Oregon the process started many years ago to have dialogue, meaningful dialogue, before they came to what kinds of priorities, where there were going to be cuts, what kinds of things were important

to the people of Oregon. I see that they talk about setting priorities amongst those benchmarks, that they talk about how to translate the benchmarks into actions.

I look at the three-year plans and I look at the budget, and I don't see any of that reflected within those plans. Then I try – and I am; I am trying to be reasonable in terms of what we have in front of us. Because to be so drastic, to have the kinds of cuts and the change in our society that we're going to have, needs to be based on reason. It needs to be based on a principle. I agree with you on that, Member for Calgary-Montrose, but it's a principle that I can't find when I look at those documents. It's a principle that I can't find in the answers that we get from the ministers in question period, so I am searching.

I look at how can we make the process better, because we're dealing in the present and I'm starting to look towards the future. I look at what – we all get these: parliamentary government 45. I'm sure you've all read it; right? What they talk about are ways to make estimates better, and they talk about pre-review of estimates. It's a novel idea perhaps, if you haven't had a chance to read it, that would allow for full debate, would allow for full understanding. I know the Provincial Treasurer says that we've spent 25 days. Well, 25 days means \$100,000 per hour, and that . . .

MR. MITCHELL: A hundred million.

MS LEIBOVICI: A hundred million. That's right; \$100 million per hour, and that is not enough. That is not enough, so maybe we need to look at a way to change that system. Maybe a pre-review of the estimates is one way of doing that. And why do we need to do that? Because we do have a future in this province, a future that we should all be working towards, a future that we can all develop perhaps a common vision around.

Then I look again at what some of the ministers have said, and I look at some of the attitudes. What I hear is: "Well, we've had enough talk about this. We've spent an hour. We've spent 15 minutes. We've spent two hours. Whether it's on estimates or on some other Bill of importance, why are we wasting our time?" Well, this is not a waste of time. We are living in a democracy, and a democracy means that there are checks and balances within the system. What that means is that there needs to be scrutiny. There need to be questions asked. There needs to be exploration. There need to be options that are looked at on both sides to try and make the future better for people in Alberta.

That's why you need the time, and if you need that time, then what goes hand in hand with that is an understanding, a trying to understand what people perhaps want and need. What people want and need are safety, security, health, jobs, education. When I look at this budget, those are the exact areas that this government is hitting on. They are taking away education. They are taking away security. They are taking away the environment for the creation of jobs. They are taking away health, and what they're putting in place is a two-tiered system.

If I can paraphrase Rev. Niemoeller. In Alberta they came for the women, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a woman. Then they came for the children, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a child. Then they came for the seniors, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a senior. Then they came for the sick and disabled, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't sick or disabled. Then they came for the workers, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a worker. And then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up.

Twenty-five days is not a long time to have full debate in this Legislative Assembly. We will be moving from here into some

major Bills that will require our time, our patience, our ability to rationally look at what the options are, and I would hope that we will do that.

To finalize my statements with regards to the appropriation Bills, this government is cutting dollars, but they're not making much sense, and the way I'd like to spell sense is s-e-n-s-e.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. ACTING SPEAKER: The question has been called. Are we ready for the question?

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a third time]

[It was moved by the members indicated that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

No.	Title	Moved by
24	Appropriation Act	Evans (for Dinning)
25	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Act, 1994	Evans (for Dinning)

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

Bill 19
School Amendment Act, 1994

[Adjourned debate April 26: Mr. Dinning]

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. I'm pleased to lead off the debate this afternoon on Bill 19, although I'm not as pleased to say that I can embrace it, because in fact I find several deficiencies in the Bill. I'd like to take a few minutes to address those, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

What bothers me about Bill 19 is the ideology that seems to support the text of this Bill, the ideology of control, what we might otherwise refer to as a power grab on the part of the government. Now, I think what we're hearing across Alberta right now is that power can easily be abused, and there are countless examples of how that has already taken place with the fledgling government opposite but, more particularly, with the large number of members who are here from the previous government who seem to be just continuing much of the same action.

I know that there's a definite move here to centralize power with regard to the minister's request, if not demand, to take over all aspects related to taxation. I would caution the government here, because I don't think that what the people are really wanting out there calls for the doling out of more power to government or acquiescing to government wanting to take over more power. I think what the people in Alberta really want to see is government not abusing that power, and therefore they are taking to the streets and marching on the Leg. and sending in petitions and calling talk shows and whatever have you in an attempt to demonstrate their displeasure with this fundamentally incorrect move.

Everything in our daily lives seems to be controlled one way or another or at least impacted by the actions of government. Bill 19

tries to somehow enforce that even one step further. What we see here is a power hungry government that wants to in fact bring MLAs on to certain boards, as we've seen in the example of Bill 2, and now here we see a government wanting to take even more power with Bill 19 by trying to somehow take over and/or remove taxation, or at least they want to remove the taxation authority from local school boards and have the provincial government start collecting all property taxes. So we see a tax grab here of magnanimous proportions.

Local jurisdictions, I would submit, want local autonomy with local responsibility with local accountability. Why shouldn't they be allowed it? Yet this Bill if brought in the way it is would significantly alter that fact. There is nothing in this part of the Bill that I have found meeting with approval at the local level. Whether people be from Lethbridge or be they from Red Deer or be they from Edmonton or be they from Sangudo, I have yet to hear anything really positive from these people with regard to this aspect of the Bill. What in fact may be happening here, as previous speakers have pointed out, is that we might be forced into doing a plebiscite every three years, and I would shudder to think what that would do to gum up the motors of expediency and also what it would do to affect costs in this province. I think people are looking for something much more streamlined than that.

Now, what I want to also raise here is that the minister would have direct control over things that have been legislated in the case of separate school boards going back to about 1901, as I understand it, and with amendments all the way along. To bring in this Bill 19 the way it is would certainly suggest that everything that has been gained so far by separate school boards is suddenly being thrown out the window without any proper and thorough consultation. We know that we've seen some consultation on the part of the government, and I commend them for doing some of that, but frequently what we see is that consultation taking place somehow after the fact. We see some trial balloons being floated, and we see this management by rumour technique, and I would caution them to perhaps at last stop that.

I think what underscores this whole Bill, Mr. Speaker, is the fundamental question of how important education really is to us. How important is it? I would submit that education is that which distinguishes us as a progressive society from regressive ones, where they are indeed moving backwards and moving away from the importance of education. It's a terrible price to pay, and the travesty of it all is that once it's done - it may only take 10 days or 10 weeks or 10 hours to usher in, but it takes forever to correct. That's why on this side of the House we are asking the government on behalf of thousands of Albertans to just slow down and take a little more sensible look at this. I think a much greater accolade would accrue to the government if they were in fact able to do that.

The greatest gift that we can pass on to any of our young people is a proper, sound, well-rounded, well-balanced education. It starts by having the necessary dollars available at the local community level. That's this part of the Bill which I am challenging, and that is the reason I'm challenging it.

What guarantee can the government in fact give to separate school boards that these school boards will in fact continue to receive the same amount or at least the same level of funding as they currently do? That is a question, Mr. Speaker, that I am asked frequently in the community as I travel throughout the province and throughout my own riding. What we're looking for here is to ensure that the proper amount of dollars are allocated, as has been in the past, so that we can indeed educate better, so that we can provide our students with those sound fundamentals that underscore a proper education, things that will prepare them

to be able to make the difficult choices they have to, things that empower them with good reasoning skills, good thinking skills. These, after all, are going to be our future leaders. These are going to be the young minds that shape the kind of Alberta that we're going to see in the near future. It's going to be the kind of Alberta that we will be asked to live in, and therefore we should take some time as we create new systems that will impact on it.

As I look at the amount of ministerial discretion that this Bill would bring in, I find that that goes against every grain that I have ever been taught to believe in. I think that the minister is gaining much too much power through this part. The overall effect of Bill 19 and specifically the restructuring that it brings in tends to centralize education so much that he rather becomes the most dominant player of all. I don't think that those decisions should be made only here. I think some of that authority should be left where it currently is doing the most good and is having the greater impact, and that is at the local level. Yet I see that this Bill completely erodes the traditional role that school boards have had as a semiautonomous or an arm's-length group that has the interests of the community first and foremost at heart.

The other point I want to make quickly, Mr. Speaker, is with regard to superintendents. Now, I recognize that the government made a bold statement when it said that it would take on the responsibility of appointing superintendents regardless of what anyone thought. I'm thankful, as is the greater Alberta community, that the government has since stepped back or blinked or whatever that term might be and said that they will perhaps reconsider that and not appoint them. However, there is still a concern that the degree of control that the minister wishes to maintain through this Act is still very, very prevalent. It's nothing more than an attempt to muzzle any real feedback, and it's definitely a real detriment towards superintendents, who might otherwise like to think of themselves as being good facilitators and good managers independent of government at the local level.

What role does the minister expect these superintendents to now play if he is going to exercise such direct, rather total dominating control over all of their actions? I would submit that this is quite stifling and that there is an air of not only arrogance about this aspect of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, but there's an air of much greater magnitude, and that's the possible error of intimidation. Superintendents in order to do the job that they are elected to do or up until now at least have been elected to do must feel that they are able to perform and able to move about their job with the greatest of freedom to get the maximum amount of input from the community that they serve, from the parents, from the teachers, and from others concerned about education such that they can make the best decision for their area. It comes as no surprise to anyone in this House that the best decisions come about in a community when you work there, when you live there, and when you yourself are able to freely move about and collect the opinions and then act on the decisions of the majority.

Under this Bill the amount of control that is being directly taken, directly grabbed by the government in respect to the actions of the superintendents goes against that basic philosophy. So again I get back to the argument about the ideology of control. We see the ideology being totally to dominate and control the taxation, where the money is, and we also see a request by the government, a demand by the government to control where the power is. You've got money, and you've got power. It doesn't get any better than that, I suppose. Yet that's the part that the government seems to be hanging both their hats on here, and that's the part that's got the public riled up. Why else are people taking to the streets and marching the way they are? Why else is there such a huge rally being planned tonight in the Butterdome

concerning early childhood schooling? It's because there is this perception out there that there is this grab. Well, that perception could quickly translate into reality if this Bill is allowed to go through the way that it's currently worded.

5:00

I don't stand here to chastise the government because they haven't yet enacted it. There's still a chance to stop it. There's still a chance to look at some amendments and some changes, and there's a chance to save face here. More importantly, there's a chance for this government to really stand up for what it said it was going to do, to care and to listen, and to pay attention as it's caring and listening and to listen to what the Alberta public is really saying.

We can't be misled by a group of self-serving individuals who are listening to other self-serving individuals across the province who happen to cotton to their particular beliefs politically speaking and say that that's representative of the whole province. The philosophy is all wrong. The philosophical positioning of this is wrong, and the intimidation if it's not direct is indirect, subtle, and whatever else, but it's there. It is as initially planned perhaps by certain individuals within the department, but I can't with all my heart believe, Mr. Speaker, that it conveys the general feeling of the majority of government members. Tell me it's not true, please. I have to go and respond to constituents just like they do, and I'm sure it's not any easier for them to stand up to some of the heat than it is for us in trying to defend or deflect some of the accusations. Yet everywhere I turn I see more substantiation for it, and I see even further recurrence of it.

On this point, Mr. Speaker, superintendents must be allowed to make the decisions based on the priorities of the people who put them there and to accurately reflect those regardless of any political consequences. How can you have that, however, if the degree of control exercised by Bill 19 is allowed to in fact go through?

The final point in this regard is that if there is such strong opinion from the government, such strong feeling, such strong compulsion to in fact usher in these changes, I would like somebody from the other side to explain to me what it is that's wrong with the present system insofar as superintendents are concerned, their appointment, that whole process, also the way in which they go about doing their work and the way in which they are elected to their positions. What's wrong with that? I don't usually go about fixing something, and I don't think the majority of Albertans do either until they determine what's wrong. If there is something wrong, I'd certainly like to hear that argument, and then perhaps I could reassess some of what I've said. For the moment, I stand pretty firm on that.

With regard to the open boundaries issue that also is enshrined in this Bill, I find it quite scary that some of the open boundary issues, particularly as they relate to the rural school boards, might well in fact result in a two- or a three-tiered education system. This certainly is partly what I see going on in early childhood schooling. In the kindergarten example I think what we're going to wind up here with, Mr. Speaker, is three tiers. We're going to have those school boards who deem kindergarten so valuable that they will allocate full time, the full 400 hours to it, and they will find the money necessary to pay for it. Then we will also have other school boards who will say, "Well it's only important 50 percent of the time, because dollars after all are dictating." So they're only going to come forward with 200 hours. Then we're going to find those who just can't afford it at all. It could result in three different levels, three different tiers of education in this particular instance. So I'd be very cautious. I'd be very sugges-

tive to the government in asking them to be fair and to not penalize those students from an early childhood start.

We see the problems that are arising now, Mr. Speaker, already with regard to young immigrant families who will have been deprived of that extra year of English learning if they are not allowed full access to a full kindergarten program. I'll speak more on that another time.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The other points I want to make quickly are with regard to school board amalgamation and regionalization. I respect the fact that there are some school boards out there who have been allowed to operate without any real reason for them to have been in operation. Specifically, I'm referring to some that perhaps hadn't had any students for some years, and there was no reason for them to exist. So I understand and support the need to look at amalgamating some of these school boards, but I don't support some of these so-called shotgun marriages which we've heard from some of the school board associations. Members opposite were at some of these meetings with us, so they know that this is not just a Liberal member's opinion; this is in fact very well substantiated by everybody. We don't want those forced marriages taking place.

Now, trimming the number of school boards I understand is something that has to be done to balance the budget. Again I say, as I've said many times, as all of us on this side of the House have said, that we're not opposed to cuts, but we are opposed to the method that is being used here: one that is ill thought out, one that is extremely flawed, and one that will result in a great amount of disparity across Alberta and fuel even greater speculation of chaos here. That's where we're heading to.

We're heading to something not unlike what happened in Saskatchewan. I think it was during the '60s or the '70s. Perhaps members opposite who have a few years on me might be able to speak to this from personal experience. I know that what happened during that approximate period in Saskatchewan is that as changes of major consequence took place throughout Saskatchewan, we saw actual school boards not only being amalgamated, but we saw some schools actually closing down, Mr. Speaker. As these schools closed down, obviously no new blood, no new life was attracted to the community, and we saw rather total devastation of much of the rural life in Saskatchewan. That is something we should try to avoid here. I think it's unfair to penalize those communities that have fewer students. Having grown up in one myself, I know where I'm coming from on this from personal experience. We were grateful for the schools that we had in our small community of Sangudo, and I'm grateful to stand up now and say that I was a product of that system, such as it was. It gave me a real sense of belief that I should pass on to others what was given to me. [some applause] I appreciate the applause for Sangudo. Thank you, and I'll pass that on to friends and neighbours.

So I want to be careful that we don't set in motion, through this Bill and through some of the actions of the government which I appreciate are too hasty, something that causes rather total ruination of our rural fabric. That would be a travesty of the highest accord, and I will not stand by and permit it to happen without a good fight.

The final points here that I just want to conclude with – and I realize there's much more, and I'd like to speak to this again at

another time. I want to talk a little bit about the most important part of all that is missing in this legislation, and that's the classroom and the kids in it. There hasn't been enough attention placed there, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, as a former school teacher who was in that system for nearly 10 years, that I believe in the greatest amount of education being made available to our young people. I don't see that happening, I don't see that protection here, and I certainly don't see the kind of freedoms that I experienced with the teachers and the superintendents and the associate superintendents that I worked with and worked under happening here. I see a Big Brother kind of movement taking place here. We left Big Brother behind in 1984, and he should not be allowed to return through this Bill.

So I have to speak up in favour of the students, because quite frankly I don't hear enough of that happening on the other side. There are some over there that I have heard speak out on behalf of students in the classroom, but I've heard time and time again that everything is so darned well focused on the almighty dollar here, and we sometimes tend to forget that there are humans out there too. The education system has to be protected from that standpoint.

I would challenge the government opposite to please step back, take a good, careful look at this, and assess much more carefully what the impact of this Bill is going to be before they proceed with it. It's like going ahead with blinders on. No wonder sometimes it's difficult to blink. What I'm going to ask one more time in my final appeal here is to step back from this heavy-handed approach, just step back a little ways. Nobody's going to penalize you at all for taking a second sober look at it. In fact, I myself will lead the charge to applaud you if you do that. Step back, take a look at this Bill and the consequences of it, and try and correct the many flaws that it brings forward.

Thank you.

5:10

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

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 19. Before I do proceed further, I listened to the very impassioned speech from Edmonton-Avonmore as to how grateful he was for small schools in very small communities. I just wonder if he was so grateful as to maybe give up some of the salary increases as a teacher during that time and permit these small schools to be open and provide service in those small communities.

Hearing some threats about someone breaking my kneecaps, I move that we adjourn the debate. It will be a pleasure to continue this debate in the future.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking has moved that the Assembly do now adjourn debate on Bill 19. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

[At 5:12 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

