

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, February 16, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/02/16

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition from 156 Albertans from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, and Beaumont urging the government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition today signed by 276 residents from the Edmonton-Fort Saskatchewan-Sherwood Park area urging the government to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to present a petition on behalf of people in the Stony Plain and Spruce Grove areas that are urging the government to allow Alberta School Boards to use money from the Alberta School Foundation Fund to fund 400 hours or more of Early Childhood Services.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition urging the Alberta Legislative Assembly to ensure that early childhood education receives a minimum of 400 hours of instruction. This petition was signed by over 240 citizens of the city of Calgary.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition from 35 residents of greater St. Albert urging the government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year without a user fee to ensure that our greatest resource, our young people, has the Alberta advantage.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave this afternoon pursuant to Standing Order 82 to present a petition signed by 131 Albertans from the communities of Nanton, Stavely, Claresholm, and Granum. These petitioners urge the government to ensure that no hospital beds are closed in South Western Alberta by an unelected Regional Health Authority without adequate consultation with residents.

Thank you.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented on Tuesday, February 14, regarding funding for 400 hours or more of early childhood services be now read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned Residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to allow Alberta School Boards to use money from the Alberta School Foundation Fund to fund 400 hours or more of Early Childhood Services, as determined by the local community, so that there are no ECS user fees for 400 hour programs and so that all Alberta children have an equal opportunity or "level playing field" to succeed and compete in life by having equal access to basic educational resources.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday from 149 Albertans regarding the lack of funding and definition for mild to moderate children in special education programs be read and received.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to address our concerns pertaining to the lack of funding and definition for the mild to moderate children in the special education programs.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 40 I rise to give notice that after question period I will seek unanimous consent to place the following motion before the House:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the people of Grande Prairie and the people of Jasper for their tremendous effort in organizing the Canada Winter Games 1995. They are to be commended for their community spirit. Further, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly extend its best wishes for a successful completion.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

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

Bill 12 Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act, 1995

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 12, being the Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act, 1995.

The purpose of this Bill is to clarify section 24(1)(a) of the Act. Section 24(1)(a)(i) is only to apply to marketing boards, and section 24(1)(a)(ii) is only to apply to commissions. This is a technical amendment to make these sections clear as to when they apply.

[Leave granted; Bill 12 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

**Bill 13
Bee Act**

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 13, being the Bee Act.

The purpose of this Act is to replace the Bee Act of 1972 to remove unnecessary government intrusions into beekeepers' commercial operations.

[Leave granted; Bill 13 read a first time]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 13, being the Bee Act, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

**Bill 14
Irrigation District Rehabilitation Endowment Fund
Amendment Act, 1995**

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 14, being the Irrigation District Rehabilitation Endowment Fund Amendment Act, 1995. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend existing legislation to pay out all of the fund to irrigation districts within the next three years.

[Leave granted; Bill 14 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

1:40

MR. DICKSON: I have two items to table, Mr. Speaker. The first one is a list of 20 different groups that the Calgary Liberal MLAs met with yesterday to hear submissions with respect to lotteries and gambling in Alberta.

The second item I wish to table, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of my letter to the Member for Lacombe-Stettler, dated January 16, 1995, requesting additional hearing time in the city of Calgary. No response received.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table six copies of the government's response to Motion 214 accepted during last fall's session.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the schedule to the amendments to the Standing Orders which were approved on Tuesday, February 14. The copies of that are on members' desks right now.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today four copies of the third annual report of the Alberta Metis Settlements Transition Commission for the period April 1, 1992, to March 31, 1993.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for Economic Development and Tourism.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to file with the Assembly today the response to Written Question 201, and I am pleased to file with the Assembly today the response to Motion for a Return 207 as amended.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 14 visitors from the West Meadows Baptist seniors' group. They are accompanied today by Pastor Rubin Herrmann, and I would ask that they rise in the gallery and receive the welcome of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the members' gallery today are 16 young students from Busby elementary school, and they're accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Doris Gorgichuk and two parent helpers Mrs. Colleen Bohn and Mrs. Corrine Jespersen. Busby is about 40 miles north of Edmonton, and interestingly enough it's the birthplace of two former members of this Legislative Assembly. The first, Herbert Greenfield, served as Premier of the province of Alberta from 1921 to 1925. The second, Dr. Bob Elliott, served the constituency of Grande Prairie from 1982 through to 1993. These young people and their teacher and helpers are in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise, and you can see the wonderful smiles that they have.

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

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two constituents of Calgary-Bow, Mr. Barry Noble and his daughter Rachel, who've chosen to visit the Legislature today during the teachers' convention in Calgary. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Health Care System

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in what can only be described as an unbelievable move, this Conservative government actually voted against the Canada Health Act. The one thing that is clear is that the people of this province can't depend upon the Premier to defend their medicare system. If the Premier had his way, we'd have a two-tier health care system: one for the rich and one for everybody else. To the Premier: how can the Premier say in his throne speech, on the one hand, that he and his government support the Canada Health Act and then turn around, on the other hand, and have his caucus vote unanimously against the principles of that Act?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we didn't vote against the Canada Health Act; we voted against the Liberal Bill. There was good reason for voting against the Liberal Bill, because the Bill was redundant. It was nothing but a cheap political trick to get some publicity for the publicity-starved Liberals. So concerned were the Liberals about their own Bill that only 19 of their members showed up to vote for their flagship Bill. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Hon. members, order.

MR. MITCHELL: I will grant him that if he knows anything, Mr. Speaker, he knows a lot about cheap political tricks.

Why won't the Premier simply eliminate user fees at private clinics in this province for all medically necessary services?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition in his supplementary question to stand up and say to this Legislative Assembly and say to the people of Alberta that he would like to right now get rid of the Gimbel eye clinic. Stand up and say that.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, we would like to make the Gimbel eye clinic available to all Albertans, not just those who have extra money.

Is this Premier willing to lose federal health care transfer payments because he really plans to make them up by increasing health care premiums, one of his favourite taxes, Mr. Speaker, yet again?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no. We plan to abide by the conventions of the Canada Health Act and to do what is proper to provide adequate and good health care for all Albertans.

MR. MITCHELL: I guess abiding by them might mean voting for them.

Gambling

MR. MITCHELL: Video slot machines, Mr. Speaker, are an insidious and a highly addictive form of gambling. There are 130,000 problem gamblers in this province, and that problem is destroying families and eroding communities. Under this Premier's direction, believe it or not, the money spent on gambling in this province will have increased four times to \$2.6 billion by the end of this year. How does the Premier justify a fourfold increase in gambling while families, communities, and charitable groups in this province are being sacrificed?

MR. KLEIN: Well, the last time I looked, charitable groups and community groups were being funded quite heavily through gambling: throughingos, through casinos, through lotteries, including VLTs. The amount of money that goes back to communities is quite significant, Mr. Speaker. But the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition raises a very good point: what are we going to do about it? That's what the review committee is all about: to review how the proceeds from gambling can be better distributed for the good of the community, the impact that gambling is having on the community, and to look at virtually all these questions. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo conducted his own hearing. We'd be glad to have the results of that hearing forwarded to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, and we would welcome their input.

MR. MITCHELL: How many families have to be destroyed in this province, how much damage has to be done to communities while the Premier's Tory-only task force dithers about what to do with gambling revenues in this province and doesn't even consider whether we should have video slot machines at all?

1:50

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is very selective in pointing out one form of gambling. We're looking at all forms of gambling. Is the hon. member saying that casino gambling, full-blown casino gambling with blackjack and with craps and with roulette is okay, that's all right, that kind of gambling is okay? Is he saying that bingo is okay? Is he saying that Lotto 6/49s and all the pull tickets are okay, those things are all okay? Will he stand up and clarify the kind of gambling that he approves of? Is horse racing part of it too? Stand up and tell us what kind of gambling he likes.

MR. MITCHELL: I just got my first question from the next Leader of the Opposition in this province, Mr. Speaker.

What would it take for the Premier to demonstrate his so-called commitment to the people of this province, to show the moral courage to do away with video slot machines altogether?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we're looking at gambling in a global sense. The hon. member is picking out one component of gambling. I would still like to hear what he has to say. Is blackjack okay? I mean, people don't lose money at blackjack? Is roulette okay? Are crap games okay? Is horse racing okay? Areingos okay? Stand up and tell us that these things are all okay, that every other form of gambling is okay. I would like to hear from him.

THE SPEAKER: Unfortunately, it can't be at this particular juncture in the proceedings of the House.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The soul of this province is found in our communities, either large or small. In Alberta when there are gaps in government services, it's always been communities and community agencies that Albertans have counted on. Yesterday the Calgary Liberal MLAs heard eloquent and passionate presentations from some 20 groups and individuals in that city, some of which the government panel refused to listen to. This included the Calgary Aquabelles, a club that produced some of our finest youth athletes and two Olympic gold medals. Since the advent of VLTs the Aquabelles' fund-raising revenue has dropped dramatically. To the Premier: how can he expect volunteers to do more and more at the very same time that his slot machines cripple the ability of those groups to raise revenue?

MR. KLEIN: Well, again, since the hon. Leader of the Opposition wouldn't clearly define for us what kind of gambling he thinks is okay, perhaps the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo would. Is it all right for the Aquabelles to get their money from casino gambling, from blackjack, from roulette? Is that okay? Is it all right for the Aquabelles to get their money fromingos? Mr. Speaker, this is what we're trying to straighten out, and if you'll give me just a moment, I'll explain how this all came about.

Basically, I had a meeting in Calgary with representatives from the Edmonton community league association and the Calgary association of communities. They expressed some concern that indeed VLTs were cutting into bingo, and they also expressed

some concern that perhaps we should look at a better way to sort out the kinds of community associations and charities that should benefit from gambling. I further met with about 80 mayors and reeves in Bonnyville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Speech. Speech.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, they wanted to hear.

These people expressed the same concern. The reeves and the mayors said that they didn't want to get rid of VLTs. Their presentation to me was that they wanted more money out of VLT gambling to go to communities, plus they wanted more money dedicated to programs for habitual gamblers. It was as a result of those two meetings that I gave a promise that I would set up a review committee at their request to look at all these problems and perhaps some problems that might occur and be developing on the horizon.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't talking to mayors yesterday; I was talking to ordinary Albertans, a process I commend to the hon. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question: given the overwhelming opposition of Albertans to VLTs, will the Premier announce today that he will put a freeze on these machines at 5,653 units and do it now?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we have a freeze in place today at 6,000. The 5,600 and some that were just mentioned here was the ongoing number. We had to make the commitment to the final applications. There are applications in for another close to 700, and we've frozen those and said: no, we're not doing anything on any of these until the committee rises and reports. In due course of time we will address this. We had originally targeted to put out 8,500 machines. We have frozen at 6,000. I repeat: frozen at 6,000. We have a lot of people who invested a lot of money out there in upgrading their various lounges and that, and we have frozen them, and they sit with no idea of whether they're going to get machines or not. So I say to Albertans that we have cut back some 25 percent at this point in time from the original intent of putting out machines, and nothing will be done until a full policy review is done.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, for those that think we represent all Albertans, not just hotel owners, I want to go back to the hon. Premier and ask: what immediate measures will this Premier take to compensate communities and community agencies for the revenue that's being bled out of Alberta communities by VLTs now?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, it absolutely amazes me why they would single out VLTs. You know, again, I would ask the hon. member: does he think roulette is okay? Does he think blackjack is okay? I mean, people don't lose money at blackjack? They don't lose money at roulette? But that's okay? People lose a lot of money, I understand, at bingo, but it's all right to lose money at bingo? The only thing that is sinful, according to the hon. member, is to lose money through VLTs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for lotteries.

DR. WEST: Yes. Mr. Speaker, supplementary to that, he asked what is being done to look at the problem of the bingos and raffles

and pull tickets and other areas that say they're suffering from it. The gaming control branch has been instructed recently and before the policy came out to look at all the rules as they relate to raffles under \$10,000 as well as the rules of bingos, how we address pull tickets, and what we're doing in other lottery revenues. I've instructed them to and they are at the present time bringing forth, commensurate with the end results of this policy review, a set of recommendations to address the needs as put out by the community leagues and municipalities as they relate to bingos, to their casino revenues that are coming in, as well as raffle tickets and pull tickets.

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

Farm Income Program

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking to my constituents, there is certainly strong support out there for balancing the budget, and the farming community has certainly contributed its fair share towards that. However, there is one concern, and that is over the issue of the gross revenue insurance plan. My question is to the minister of agriculture. Can the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development advise the Assembly today what he intends to do with the program?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly a very timely question because today we've made a very major announcement regarding the future of this program. As you know, this is a tripartite program that was established through three partnerships: the federal government, the provincial government, and the actual producer himself. This is a voluntary program, one that a producer indeed chose whether he wanted to participate or not. The program was originally designed to look after the needs of falling prices. The world was in a very competitive mode with all kinds of subsidies, government competition was acute, and the producers were caught in the middle of this. At that time the program fulfilled the needs very well. Today the program no longer is required. It no longer fulfills the needs of today. So as of today we have allowed the farmers to make the decision that they will be allowed an early exit from the program. They will be receiving a letter very shortly that will indicate a process that will be available to them.

2:00

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, because the GRIP program was not GATT green, what is this minister's intent when it comes to developing a program that will help farmers in a time of a wreck, and that's declining farm commodity prices?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Obviously, with the signing of GATT – and this is the first time that agriculture has ever been included in GATT – there have to be changes made to some of the programs that are in place, and GRIP is certainly one of those that was identified very, very quickly as a red program. So what we have to do – and we're in the process of developing – is to try and develop an all-encompassing safety net program that will be voluntary again, that will be whole farm but one that will allow for potential wrecks that may come by as far as the agricultural community is concerned.

We are in the process, through the consultative process with our agricultural community, of developing what we call a GATT 70. Now that we're able to exit from GRIP, we're going to engage in further consultation with the agricultural community to develop a program that all producers will be comfortable with.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Provincial Tax Regime

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After having been driven into debt by big-spending Conservative governments, this month New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Alberta are all expected to announce balanced budgets. Although Tory financial mismanagement is not exclusive to Alberta, the Alberta Tories have spent the most taxpayers' money advertising the claim that their achievement did not and will not involve any new taxes. My questions are to the Premier. Can the Premier tell Albertans how much new revenue he has collected from hardworking Albertans through his new user fees, new charges, and increased health care premiums?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's not a secret. This is the 1993 budget. Right? It was tabled in May, and it was debated. It's right there. Do you want the page number? The page number is 48. I'm sure that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning and the hon. Member for Calgary-West can read, especially the Member for Calgary-West; he's a chartered accountant. Now, it's right there. It's right there. I'll hold it up for all the people to see.

Mr. Speaker, when we tabled this budget, we debated this budget, and we put this budget out to the electorate of Alberta. And guess what? They voted for us.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, I don't blame the Premier; I'd be embarrassed to give Albertans that number. But for the benefit of those Albertans, it's well over \$150 million in new fees. How can this Premier continue to claim that Albertans are not paying any new taxes when his government is taking in more money and hardworking Albertans are being forced to pay more out?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to share the report of the Fraser Institute with the hon. member. The Fraser Institute, a very reputable organization, and their like organization in the United States did a complete assessment of our budget books over the last two budgets. A complete assessment. They took all these things into account, and they came to the conclusion that Alberta is the most fiscally responsibly managed political jurisdiction on the North American continent.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, the Fraser Institute is an Alberta advantage found in B.C.

Mr. Speaker, the forecast budget indicates that there is going to be \$83 million in new revenues or new taxes in the upcoming year. My question is: can the Premier tell Albertans what new taxes, which his government will of course call user fees or adjustments, Albertans will be paying in 1995 to amount to that \$83 million?

MR. KLEIN: I would ask the hon. member to wait until Tuesday. At that time the Provincial Treasurer will be tabling his budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning that without doubt we have the lowest

corporate income tax, by 15 percent. We have the lowest personal income tax. We have no sales tax – no sales tax – unlike every other jurisdiction in this country. We have no sales tax. We have no payroll tax. We have no luxury tax. And it's for precisely those reasons that this without doubt is the best province in which to invest and to do business.

I want to add one more thing. We aren't spending money on advertising. It's free. We couldn't buy the kind of advertising we're getting in the *New York Times*, in the *London Financial Times*, in the *Wall Street Journal*. In international publications throughout the world people are saying: this is the best province.

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

Gun Control Legislation

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Justice. The federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada introduced into the House of Commons amendments to the Criminal Code that create a separate statute including registration for all firearms. Mr. Minister, many of my constituents have voiced their opposition to this federal legislation, and I have received many calls commending your stand on that enforcement, which is the responsibility that this province assumes. If this federal legislation is passed, what impact will it have on Alberta gun owners, and is there any responsibility or possibility of negating the effects of those impacts?

THE SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I'd like to thank the hon. member for his comments. Secondly, if this legislative package goes through, law-abiding gun owners in the province of Alberta will be asked, effective 1996, to fill out a form that indicates that, yes, they do own a firearm. Then in 1998 they'll be asked to fill out yet another form that will indicate particulars of each firearm that they have in their possession.

The hon. member went on to ask what we would be doing in this province with respect to that legislation. Well, I'm trying to get the message out now, but certainly if the legislation were to pass the way that it is proposed, it is legislation of the Canadian government, it is Criminal Code legislation, and we would be bound by it, as would all law-abiding Canadians.

MR. COUTTS: Then, Mr. Minister, is there any portion of the new legislation that we could support that could be of benefit to Albertans?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker . . . [interjections] Sounds like the Liberals do support this legislation.

There are, Mr. Speaker, two very important and I believe relevant sections in this legislative package. The first is a commitment to eliminate the importation of illegal weapons and to stop trafficking in illegal weapons. That's really a border patrol, and it is something very beneficial. The second is a minimum four-year sentence for those convicted of serious offences while in possession of a firearm. Both of those, hon. member, I very much support. I believe that they are addressing serious and violent crime and are directed at creating safer communities in Canada.

MR. COUTTS: How will the minister, then, handle the threat of noncompliance with registry of firearms in Alberta?

MR. EVANS: Well, I believe that Albertans are law-abiding citizens. Albertans will continue to debate this legislative package. They will continue to protest what they do not believe to be effective, efficient, and a good use of taxpayers' money and not directed at what it should be directed at. But I believe that Albertans are law-abiding citizens, and they'll continue to abide by the laws of this province and Canada.

2:10

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

Access to Budget Documents

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday the government will table yet another in its string of deficit budgets for the next fiscal year. Now, despite a commitment to freedom of information from the Premier, Alberta is one of only three provinces where members of the opposition are denied access to the prebudget lockup to view the budget. The federal Liberal government, by contrast, allows the entire Conservative caucus, both of them, into that same kind of lockup. Now, my question is to the Premier. Why does the government deny representatives of the Official Opposition, elected representatives, the opportunity to participate in such an advance budget lockup?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess it's a lot easier for two people to keep a secret. Relative to the procedure, I'll defer to the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate the offer I made to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that in the interests of full freedom of information and access to information, to make debate informative, when the Liberal opposition is willing to provide to government members and to the Government House Leader all the questions for question period two hours in advance, then we will allow them to come into our lockup.

MR. BRUSEKER: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we'd be happy to give them the questions, but they can't answer them anyway.

My supplementary question: how can the government justify – and I'm not sure whether it's the Premier or the Treasurer – allowing some members of the press selected bits of the budget, other members of the press are allowed in, yet elected representatives, representatives of the people, are denied the same opportunity into that lockup?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I trust the members of the media.

MR. BRUSEKER: Apparently it's only some members of the media though.

Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the Treasurer. Since there are still five days before the budget – he's got a long weekend to think about it – will he reconsider and allow opposition members to participate in the budget lockup on Tuesday, February 21?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker.

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

Federal Social Policy Review

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal Liberal government has started a process of reform of our national

safety net, and in that reform process the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy has a green paper in circulation, but there is a concern that that process has fallen off the rails. My constituents are very concerned, and the area that they want to focus on is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. As lead minister for this review, can you provide us, sir, with any update on the status of this very important initiative?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the green paper that was brought forward by the Minister of Human Resources Development in Ottawa I understand was brought forward to review the social programs of Canada in an effort to reduce the deficit. In reviewing that, we're not exactly sure where that process is now. We get conflicting reports that it's going to be delayed, and we hear other reports that it perhaps never will see the light of day again. We have some concerns whether the goals that are outlined in that green paper have much to do with cost-cutting for budget reduction purposes. I guess the only thing we can do at this point is wait and see what the federal budget might bring forward that will help us to get some understanding of the direction of that green paper.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the impact of this green paper on postsecondary funding and the impact on the students in postsecondary institutions in Alberta is very serious. Could you please let us know what the response and the concern is with respect to the impact on our postsecondary students?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, we do have some opposition to the proposals in the green paper inasmuch as they impact on the students of our province, but we don't really believe that postsecondary education should be part of the review of social programs. We really believe that postsecondary education should be reviewed separately. It should have its own review. Let's keep in mind that education is a provincial responsibility. We don't have a minister of advanced education federally, and I hope they remember that. We don't support the cost-cutting of transfer payments solely to increase the loans that students will take and the debts that they will be asked to incur. There's a great deal of it that doesn't make sense.

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Speaker, my final question, then, to the minister is: where do we go from here? How can we assure Albertans that we are being heard?

Speaker's Ruling Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair was quite lax with the hon. member in her main question, which really did not question the administrative responsibility of a member of the government of this province. This supplemental question really relates back to that opening question, and therefore the Chair will not ask the hon. minister to respond to it.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Farm Income Program (continued)

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'd just like to follow up on some of the questions that were asked earlier

on the minister's announcement today that the department of agriculture is going to ask that Alberta be pulled out of the gross revenue insurance program. To the minister of agriculture. I'd like to ask: what provision has the minister made to ensure that dollars are available to satisfy the settlement of outstanding appeals, especially the large number that were issued in the '92-'93 crop season?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I alluded to today is that we are informing farmers that they will have the opportunity to exit GRIP as it existed. One of the other items that will be included in the letter: the farmers will be brought up to full speed as to what the rules will be as to exiting the program. Each farmer will receive a letter, and they will be requested to respond by April 30 of this year.

As far as dealing with the controversy, whatever you may call it, that's out there, some of these actions are indeed in court. We are not in a position to discuss those actions; I think you're well aware of that. That's where that will ultimately be resolved if that's the way the farmers choose to do it.

DR. NICOL: Is it not true that the elimination of GRIP would have been an integral part of any negotiations for the new safety net program?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: In essence that's really what it is. We communicated with the producers a year ago at the roundtables, and what the producers asked for was an early exit from GRIP. We have taken that to the next step. We took it to the federal government, who is our tripartite partner, and said that this is what the farmers are asking. We're simply fulfilling the requests of the producers.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think they also asked for another safety net program to be put in place to replace GRIP as well though.

I'd like to ask the minister: what assurances can the minister give to the farmers that by making this announcement now, he has in no way jeopardized the strength of the negotiations that Alberta has in developing the new safety net?

2:20

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, obviously, we've been in discussions on the development of a new safety net program for almost a year as well with the farmers, and we discussed that last year. When the farmers said that they really didn't want GRIP, we came back to the farmers and said, "Do you want a safety net program?" They said yes. So that's what we're in the process of developing.

We've spent almost a year developing the process of what we call the GATT 70, and to date there has been general agreement by the farm organizations that that is the type of program that really will look after the needs of agriculture. We do not plan on allowing the farmers to be out there unprotected. We understand the need for safety nets, and we are committed to the agricultural community that, indeed, they will have some form of protection. In our discussions we have indicated to the producers that it is our intention and our desire to have a safety net program in place that they agree to for the 1995 tax year.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

Community Nurse Practitioners

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. As I'm sure the minister is well aware, the whole subject of scope of practice is an extremely sensitive area, particularly with respect to physicians and registered nurses. Reference was made in the Speech from the Throne authorizing community nurse practitioners to provide primary health services. Could the minister clarify what the statement in the Speech from the Throne was referring to?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the mention of community nurse practitioners in the Speech from the Throne is a very important initiative. We heard through the roundtable process the importance of access to health services, the importance of choice in providers, and the community nurse practitioner program that will be introduced will be a matter of choice. I should say that it will be a regional health authority that makes a decision or a provincial health authority that makes a decision as to whether a community nurse practitioner is appropriate for delivery of services in their communities. Communities that wish to use those services will require ministerial permission. I do intend to introduce legislation this session, and I have made the commitment that at the time of introduction of legislation, the regulations will be in place at the same time.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. RENNER: Thank you. My first supplemental is to the same minister. This issue among many others is currently under discussion between health professionals and the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee. Why is this scope of practice decision made prior to the final report of this committee?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, this change is not a scope of practice change. There is no proposed change to the Medical Profession Act or to the Nursing Profession Act which would require a change in the scope of practice. Under the Public Health Act there is currently authority for community nurses to deliver services, and what we would do is identify a care provider to be a community nurse practitioner. As I indicated, the regulations that would regulate the activities of that person, the training required for that person will be ready at the same time.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental question is to the Minister of Labour. Will the minister explain how the discussion paper regarding restructuring professions and occupations relates to the work of the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it all ties in together, and the member who is the chair of that particular work force rebalancing committee needs to know that discussions have already been had, good discussions around the province with health care providers. Those comments will definitely be tied in to comments that will be asked for from health care providers relating to whether they would like to have a one-window approach to professions and occupations. So there'll be definitely a clear tie-in and a link between those two discussions.

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

Women's Shelters

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is more concerned with buildings than people. The Minister of Family and Social Services talks about paying off the mortgage of women's shelters while he fails to support the very women who need help to get out of abusive relationships. The minister has not even talked to individual shelters to find out what they need. My questions are to the minister. Why don't you really help women and children in shelters by speeding up the approval process for social assistance and damage deposits so that they can get out of shelters sooner?

MR. CARDINAL: I think this minister has done very well in ensuring that all high-needs areas in Alberta are well looked after, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the women's shelters, we have a sufficient amount at this time of women's shelters. The reason we managed to have extra dollars is because of good management by this government as to how dollars should be spent for people in need. This past year alone we've managed to transfer a hundred million dollars.

MRS. BLACK: How much?

MR. CARDINAL: A hundred million dollars to the high-needs area in addition to what was budgeted, Mr. Speaker.

In relation to that specific question, we were looking at ways of saving additional dollars while we were redirecting the hundred million dollars, and we found that we were funding a number of agencies that had taken out mortgages that we were paying interest on. We found also that if we paid off those mortgages, Mr. Speaker, it would allow us to spend an extra \$700,000 in programming for those people. I believe that that's good management of dollars.

MRS. SOETAERT: My supplemental, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: are you saying, then, Mr. Minister, that if your children are starving, you'd pay off your mortgage before you'd feed them? That's what you're doing. That's what you're doing, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: I don't believe that this minister or this government would ever allow anybody to starve, Mr. Speaker. All we've done in this department is what the clients and the taxpayers out there want, and that's better utilization of tax dollars than what we have had in the past. Clients out there want employment. Clients out there want to get off welfare. Clients want training. And that is exactly what this government is doing. Through good management, through getting people back into the work force and training, we've managed to put a hundred million dollars more into the high-needs areas.

MRS. SOETAERT: My supplementary to the same minister: rather than dedicating dollars solely for mortgages, will you commit to share the funding equally among all the shelters to spend according to their specific needs?

MR. CARDINAL: Again, we are only reviewing that particular process of paying off mortgages, Mr. Speaker. There is no commitment at this time as to what mortgages may be paid off. There is no commitment. In fact, we don't know exactly what

dollars will be left after paying off the mortgages. Once that is done, we will plan very, very carefully again, like we've done in the past, to make sure the dollars go where they are needed, instead of allocating the dollars before we know what the dollars are.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development wishes to supplement?

MR. MAR: I do, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few months I've taken the opportunity to visit a number of women's shelters throughout the province of Alberta. I've been to Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie and Edmonton and Calgary, also to Crownsnest Pass, and I'm planning on going to Red Deer. The chairperson of the Advisory Council on Women's Issues has also met with the Minister of Family and Social Services and has expressed some of the issues that have arisen with respect to women's shelters, and I believe that the minister is doing a very good job in responding to those issues.

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

2:30

Rehabilitation Services

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our health system becomes more community-based, it is essential that access to comprehensive rehab services such as audiology, occupational and physical therapy, respiratory services, and speech pathology in the community be maintained. These services assist Albertans to remain independent. Some of my constituents have heard that these services, particularly physical therapy, may no longer be publicly funded. To the Minister of Health: can the minister indicate what the plans are for community-based rehab services?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, let me assure the Member for Calgary-Cross that the government has every intention of continuing to fund these services which she so clearly has enunciated the need for. For months we've had an external stakeholder group working, involving all of the rehabilitation areas. What they have recommended is one program and that all of the rehabilitation services be brought together in that program and in that way facilitate the treatment of persons with complex needs. It has also been recommended that the funding for these programs be distributed to the regional health authorities in order that they can be managed on a regional basis.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Speaker, that's a very significant change, and I'm interested from the minister how access to rehab services will be determined.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that the external stakeholder group has worked very diligently on was to ensure access, and it is to ensure that clients get appropriate services when they need them and also that we remove barriers to receiving those services. I found it interesting when I listened to the debate on Bill 201 yesterday that physical therapy was discussed a great deal, which simply showed to me the lack of recognition and knowledge of what is under the Canada Health Act. Frankly, these services are not provided through the Canada Health Act. What the regional health authorities will be doing under the direction and policy changes will be to ensure that whole-health services are available to people in the communities, not just doctors and hospitals, as important as those may be.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental is: what will be the implication for current providers, such as physiotherapists working in private clinics, who are not chosen by the regional health authority for providing service?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the community rehabilitation program the regional health authorities will receive the funds for delivery of those programs within that area. How they interact with the rehabilitation specialists, be they physical therapy or audiology or speech therapy, will be their decision. We would expect it would be on a contract or that type of service basis. However, it is possible that not all physiotherapists, for example, will be included. They will have the opportunity to continue to operate under private practice.

The Assembly would know that last fall we granted direct access to physical therapy services in this province. That was a very important part of it. So I think the community rehab program definitely will serve a need that has been lacking for clients that have multidisciplinary needs.

I would encourage the members opposite to try to listen to some of the initiatives that are really there to help serve the needs of our people in our communities.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Canada Winter Games

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some four and a half years ago a small but vibrant northern community pursued a vision, and three days from now that vision will be captured. The torch will arrive on Sunday, February 19, to signify the start of the 1995 Canada Winter Games in Grande Prairie, Alberta. It is with pride that the smallest community ever, the most northern community ever will host the Canada Games. During those two full weeks of the games over 3,500 – 3,500 – athletes, trainers, and coaches will be participating from every province and territory. Quite simply, the games are a showcase of national unity. Young people ranging from nine to 25 years of age will participate in 21 sporting events. Visitors including the Prime Minister, the Premier of our province, and proud parents will number in the thousands.

Mr. Speaker, we know this is not a chance happening. It is the product of a few people who over six years ago started the roadwork to capture a vision. It is the product of a partnership involving three levels of government, the whole society, and the friends of the games. It is the product of over 7,000 volunteers from the community. It is the product of national pride, national unity, and the competitive spirit of our young people.

On behalf of my constituents, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and my honour to welcome all participants and visitors to the 15th Canada Games to be held in Grande Prairie, Alberta, from February 19 to March 4.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Highway 40

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to focus the attention of the members on the stretch of Highway 40 north leading from Grande Cache to Grande Prairie. In the fall of 1992 the Premier promised the people of Grande Cache that if elected leader of the PC Party and thus Premier he would make sure that the highway would be paved. Indeed, during 1993 and

1994 about two-thirds was paved, and the expectation was that the work would be finished in 1995. Well, when I saw the proposed transportation construction program for West Yellowhead for the next budget year, there was no mention of the completion of Highway 40 north.

Mr. Speaker, for several reasons I'm extremely disappointed that the work is not going to be completed this year. First of all, once paved this highway would be the shortest route from Jasper to Alaska, providing tourist dollars to Grande Cache and Grande Prairie, opening up the whole beautiful area. Perhaps even more important, the Premier promised that the road would be paved. The people of Grande Cache trusted him in 1992, and in fact most of them voted for his party in the 1993 election to a large extent because of this promise. What did he do in return on this promise? He was prepared to close down the Grande Cache Correctional Centre. Thank heavens, the federal government kept it open. Now it looks like he's not going to finish paving the highway.

I call on the Premier to carry out his promise to the people of Grande Cache and to make sure that funds will be allocated for the completion of this road construction in this year and thus prove that he not only cares and listens but also carries out his promises.

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

Changes in Alberta since 1993

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-two months ago in this province feelings of anger, hurt, betrayal, and a lack of confidence were expressed by almost every person. Many concerns and questions were raised about our future. Last weekend while driving home following a constituency function, I reflected, then I compared how the climate and the attitude in our province have changed.

I've talked to teachers who, by their own admission, have said that there is no change in the classroom. The Premier's staff have made investigations that have determined that there aren't any more health care delivery problems today than when we were throwing lots of money at the health care system. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in years. Businesses, as we heard yesterday in this House, are locating in Alberta. In this very city of Edmonton companies like Thermo King, whose official opening I attended last month, shared the vision of Alberta by expanding their newer facilities to service their growing clientele more effectively and efficiently. Economic development councils are out promoting themselves, Mr. Speaker, representing large and small communities. They're involving the private sector, and they're facilitated by government rather than being controlled by government. What's happened? Well, in the Premier's own words: we're building a climate of confidence.

2:40

The Premier has kept his promise to promote this positive environment not only nationally but internationally, and it's caught on, to the benefit and in the best interests of Albertans. People will be coming here to look for investment opportunities. People will be coming here to see the new Alberta, the land of opportunity, inquisitive people, Mr. Speaker, from all over the world. But you know what? That gives us another advantage. It's called economic development and it's called tourism. I say to Albertans: are you ready to seize the opportunity in this renewed Alberta?

Thank you, Mr. Premier, for your dedication in putting people first.

head: **Projected Government Business**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday – we will not be here Monday because we will be celebrating Family Day – following question period, with the unanimous agreement of the House leaders and the members of the Assembly, we will adjourn the normal business of the day and reconvene at 4 o'clock, at which time we will hear the Budget Address. There will be no sitting on Tuesday evening so that all members may have time to ingest the contents of that package and communicate it as they will. On Wednesday in the time allotted for government in the evening we will be doing the budget debate. On Thursday the 23rd in the afternoon in Committee of Supply we will be considering the supplementary supply estimates.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan indicated she wished to raise a point of order.

Point of Order
Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes, and I cite *Beauchesne* 409(3). Calgary-Currie's supplementary question and indeed the main question were not only hypothetical but, as the Speaker stated, outside the administrative competence of the minister, and as he stated, the review was to reduce expenditures when the facts are that the review is designed to improve the social safety net. Mr. Speaker, I believe that my point of order is possibly redundant because you did rule on the further supplementary question, and I thank you.

Point of Order
Allegations against Members

THE SPEAKER: While we're on the subject of points of order, yesterday, Wednesday, February 15, the Member for Edmonton-Mayfield rose on a point of order respecting the use of the phrase "misled the House" by the hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities. In reply, the Government House Leader stated that the Member for Edmonton-McClung had also used the word "misled" in reference to the Premier. The Chair undertook to review the Blues. Having done so, the Chair rules as follows.

The Minister of Transportation and Utilities did say that the whole essence of this conversation was made to mislead the House in some direction. From the context, the minister was saying that Edmonton-Mayfield's line of questioning was intended to mislead. Not to put too fine a point on it, but this is different than saying that the hon. member made a statement which was untrue. The Chair does not find an accusation of deception or deceit in the minister's remarks nor does the Chair find any deception or deceit in the member's line of questioning. Perhaps the line of questioning was intended to lead the listener to a certain conclusion, but there is nothing wrong with that.

With respect to the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, we have the same sort of situation. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Premier misled the Fraser Institute in a speech. If one were to ask the hon. leader if he meant to say that the

Premier had lied to the Fraser Institute, the Chair is certain that the Leader of the Opposition would have said no.

I will admonish both the minister and the Leader of the Opposition and caution all other members in this way. Since the word "mislead" is equated in many people's minds with lying, members should be very careful about the use of that word. The Chair is not saying that the word is prohibited, because in certain contexts it would be quite in order to use the word "mislead," but members should be careful about the use of the word when in some people's minds that might be the same as accusing them of telling a falsehood.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

THE SPEAKER: Notice was received from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead about an application under Standing Order 40.

Canada Winter Games

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, speaking to the urgency of my motion, today is the last time that this House will sit before the opening of the Canada Winter Games 1995 on Sunday, as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has so eloquently pointed out. By the way, I think he failed to mention that Jasper will be the scene of several of the sports. So it is for that reason that I thought it fitting that the House today would pass this motion, and I would hope that I would receive unanimous consent to congratulate them and wish them well.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree to the hon. Member for West Yellowhead proposing the motion as notified?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Moved by Mr. Van Binsbergen:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the people of Grande Prairie and the people of Jasper for their tremendous effort in organizing the Canada Winter Games 1995. They are to be commended for their community spirit. Further, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly extend its best wishes for a successful completion.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the members for the unanimous consent. Obviously, the House leader's prayers last night inspired us to great heights.

Mr. Speaker, the Canada Winter Games represent a very important sports event that is held every two years, alternating between summer and winter sports, and the city of Grande Prairie was awarded these games quite a few years ago, as was pointed out earlier. The organizing committee recognized the superior facilities of the town of Jasper for alpine skiing, freestyle skiing, and wheelchair basketball, which will be taking place in my riding. Obviously, if the highway had been paved, it would have encouraged more people to venture forth between the two cities.

These games enable young Canadians to gather, to compete, to communicate, to know one another better, and appreciate one another, and I think this is one of those occasions, Mr. Speaker, that fosters appreciation for our country as a whole among young Canadians. At the same time, it represents the opportunity for

many future champions to hone their skills on a national stage. For these reasons I ask the members to join me in voting for this particular motion in which we commend the organizers and wish them success.

Thank you.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the hon. Member for West Yellowhead in the offering of congratulations to both Grande Prairie and Jasper, the entire area, as well as the entire province. Indeed, we're proud as constituents of the region. We're proud of the work that's been done by these volunteers. As the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has mentioned, 7,000 volunteers have come together to put this outstanding event together. These are volunteers who are not paid for all their efforts. We have an excellent sign of co-operation here as well in that coming together the Grande Prairie area was able to recognize the strengths of the Jasper area, and it's shown in the co-operative spirit that's come together in the development of these games.

Together with that, our Premier showed his commitment. Recognizing the need of Highway 40, he committed that Highway 40 would be the number one priority as far as paving is concerned and has fulfilled that obligation to the greatest extent that the financial resources of this province allowed him to do.

Mr. Speaker, through the 7,000 volunteers thousands and thousands of hours of time have been dedicated to the development of this wonderful event, this event that brings Canada together. It brings all 10 provinces together in a competitive forum yet in a healthy forum where they meet and attract each other. Together with this, thousands of homes are being opened because, as the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has mentioned, Grande Prairie is the smallest community that has ever had the opportunity of hosting games such as this. So the community has opened its homes to visitors who will be coming in to accommodate this, and that in itself is quite outstanding.

The community has raised well over \$3 million for the development of this process, and many of these facilities will be left there as an inheritance to the future generations through the work of the community. Though indeed it may be the smallest community that's ever hosted the games, I'm confident that it will be the best community and the best games that have ever been hosted. Indeed, we will achieve it because of the resourcefulness of the people, because of the resourcefulness of the area, and because of the co-operative spirit of not only the city of Grande Prairie, that's really the key to this whole development, but to the surrounding communities like the county of Grande Prairie, the towns of Sexsmith, Wembley, Hythe, Beaverlodge, La Glace, and Clairmont, the MD of Greenview, and the hon. members' areas of Dunvegan, Peace River, as well as Lesser Slave Lake. All of those communities have come together to make this a truly successful occasion, one that we, as all Albertans, will be proud of.

Thank you.

2:50

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for West Yellowhead and I had the tremendous opportunity of visiting all the sites where the sports will take place in the Grande Prairie area. They've done a tremendous job. We were greatly im-

pressed by the co-operation, the leadership of one person in the beginning, Tom Thomson, who had a vision, a dream – he was the one who took that dream to reality – the tremendous amount of work by the many volunteers, 7,000 across the total area. It's exciting to see what a community can do when they put their resources together. The amount of money needed and then raised was tremendous, and they are even hoping to have a surplus. So we want to congratulate them – the town of Jasper, all the volunteers – and wish them the very best in their games coming up over the next couple of weeks.

MR. DAY: If I can add a 30-second congratulations, Mr. Speaker, from a point of view that should be noted, I believe. When a city is awarded these games, what has taken place before that is a bidding process. Cities that are interested in submitting a bid go to significant work to submit that bid. When it came down to the final analysis, our understanding at that time some years ago, as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has already indicated, was that there were two cities in the running: Grande Prairie and Red Deer. Naturally, in Red Deer we felt we were going to win, and spirits were high. When the envelope was opened, of course it went to Grande Prairie. I can tell you honestly that there were even tears in Red Deer because of what we perceived to be the loss, but I can honestly tell you, speaking on behalf of the city of Red Deer and central Alberta who worked hard on that proposal, that the tears have turned to joy. We are delighted that this is taking place in Alberta.

We honestly believe these are going to be the best games ever. We congratulate those people in Grande Prairie and area who have put together a wonderful, wonderful package indeed.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Let the record show unanimously.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Moved by Mr. Brassard:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate February 14: Mr. Smith]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for Economic Development and Tourism.

MR. SMITH: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to resume conversation on the Speech from the Throne,

specifically with reference to the work that both the Economic Development Authority and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism will be doing as a joint effort as part of an alliance, a partnership that starts to put business and in fact government together to forward the goals of economic development. In fact, the ability of the Economic Development Authority and the department to work together starts to indicate more and more that this government is an entrepreneurial government, certainly in this department, that divests itself from the rowing side, from steering. We will continue to steer but leave the rowing or the delivery of programs to those who can deliver the products effectively in the environment. Actually, it's best put forward by a gentleman from the Citizens League and Public Services Redesign Project in Minnesota. He speaks of

government operating basically as a skillful buyer, leveraging the various producers in ways that will accomplish its policy objectives.

I think that's much towards the direction of what we see happening in government administration in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

The business plan of Economic Development and Tourism that gets tabled with the budget on Tuesday speaks of the development of performance measurement indicators and targets and the importance of identifying that process in the system. Mr. Speaker, if you don't measure it, it won't get done, and in fact that's the direction that we're taking. We want to ensure that when we measure results, we can tell success from failure. If we can't see success, we can't reward it, and if in fact we can't reward success, we're probably rewarding failure. If we can't see success, then, we can't learn from it. It also leads to the fact that if you can't recognize failure, you can't then take corrective action.

What we want to do is demonstrate results and through the demonstration of those results win public support. In fact, you'll see more and more from the Department of Economic Development and Tourism an ability to put performance measurements to work as a way of measuring the efficiency and the productivity of our staff as well as being able to meet the overall goals of government as outlined in the throne speech.

One of the two cornerstones that are very important to the economic development strategy of the department and of the government is the ability to review and analyze taxation streams and strategies, as taxation has proved to be an effective lever for economic development. One can find where specific tax structures and tax strategies actually serve as disincentives for wealth creation and job development. The other side, the other pillar, Mr. Speaker, is in fact deregulation of regulations. Studies put forth through the comparison of Europe and the United States indicate that the amount of regulation that exists in the European markets and with the European countries actually act as an impediment again to job creation and to wealth creation. So in fact it's a nonfinancial lever that the government can use to lever more jobs, more wealth creation, and more development in both export sales and attracting investment into this province.

The ability to analyze through successful partnerships with the private sector just specifically what areas of taxation and what areas of regulation serve as impediments to economic development is something that's achieved through this dialogue with the Economic Development Authority as well as with ongoing consultation at all levels with members of the private sector. Sincerely, Mr. Speaker, the new strategy of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism will be to strategically focus its priorities on maximizing export trade. In fact, for every billion dollars worth of increased export trade the federal government has identified the creation of about 15,000 jobs associated

with that figure. Also, with priority being attached to attracting investment into Alberta, it is estimated that for every billion dollars worth of new investment into Alberta, there is in fact job creation, depending on the specific industrial sector, of anywhere from 5,000 to 7,000 jobs.

3:00

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the government wishes to put forward a very strong commitment to the business infrastructure of those in business in Alberta. There are partnerships and leverage opportunities and joint ventures which we look forward to playing major roles with the private sector over the next 12 months, and I believe it will end up creating areas of leverage where in fact government begins to get absolute maximum value for its investment. We look forward to extracting that maximum value and also being able to measure the performance of certainly the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Just looking around me, Mr. Speaker, on this Thursday afternoon at the keen faces and those who are just so excited about getting in the debate, I'm in fact going to now close my remarks and let other people contribute to a very well-crafted and finely delivered Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in the Assembly and comment on this session's Speech from the Throne. On Monday when His Honour the Lieutenant Governor delivered the Speech from the Throne and all members had an opportunity to read through the document, I found that the document was lacking significantly in substance, that it was weak in areas where Albertans were looking for leadership, looking for direction, looking for a new vision from this government, and in fact failed to instill in Albertans a sense of optimism about where we're going in the future with the cuts that we have endured, as all Albertans, in the past two years.

There is clearly evidence in the throne speech that this government and the governing party of this province have nothing new to tell Albertans, have only to repeat old statements. I look at the statement Mandate for Change in the throne speech, and it struck me interesting that this is what the government considered to be new as far as the government of Alberta is concerned and something that was a mandate for change. What this government offered as a mandate for change was to balance the budget. That was a new mandate for change. To create a climate for wealth and jobs. That was something new that governments were going to do that governments had never done before, part of the new mandate for change. To streamline government. That was something new, something that governments before hadn't done. So this was a new mandate for change. To listen to Albertans. That was something new and unique that a government had never done before. That is the complete and entire mandate for change of this government. Nothing new in terms of parliamentary reform. Nothing new in terms of a legislative mandate to deal with those kinds of issues to improve the process for Albertans. That was it in terms of its vision and approach to responding to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, that, to my way of thinking and on behalf of my constituents, is clear evidence that it's nothing new, everything old, no vision, no energy to respond to the people of Alberta.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, in this throne speech the Premier and the government have indicated that they are here to respond to only one sector or one group of Albertans, and that group of

Albertans that they will respond to, the only group they will respond to, are those who are the customers of the province of Alberta. Members opposite have said for the past couple of years that Albertans are customers. Members on this side of the House have said that Albertans are not customers and that the government is not a business.

What we have now is a government that will only define itself as a government responsive to individuals who consider themselves to be customers of the province of Alberta, and the government considers itself to be akin to a retailer in a strip mall. So it simply responds to those consumer-driven, those contractual kinds of relationships where money exchanges hands and both parties leave the transaction feeling good. That's what a customer is, Mr. Speaker. A customer comes to a retailer and chooses to do business, and there is consideration that passes, and there are products or services given back. But if we don't look at that scenario, that analogy of customer and retailer, and look at the flaws in that analogy with respect to a government, then we are not, I don't think, demonstrating to Albertans that it is a very flawed analogy.

What does a customer do? A customer chooses the product or service that that customer wants. The businessman, the retailer, provides that service and provides that climate to allow that individual to do business with him. For what purpose? For repeat business and to make a profit. One of the things that every business in this province has the right to do is go bankrupt. That's a right of a business in this province, Mr. Speaker: to go bankrupt. Now, the government would have us take the position that it, too, wants to be a business, and if it fails to respond to the wishes, as a business would, then perhaps that's the ultimate end point for a government as well, and that's certainly not acceptable.

So what's a customer? What obligation does a customer have to a retailer? I don't think he has much at all other than to hand over the money for the product or service that he gets back. But this government would have Albertans believe they are nothing more than customers. They're not customers; they're citizens. There is a big difference between being a customer and being a citizen. Being a citizen of this province carries with it rights, responsibilities, obligations. It carries with it pride. It carries with it a sense of belonging. It carries with it a sense that you are part of a community. None of those attributes, none of those feelings of being part of a community, of pride in your community, of pride in your province, whether or not you are five, 50, or 99 years of age in this province – regardless of who you are or what you are, as a citizen of this province you are entitled to rights, you accept certain privileges, and you also accept certain obligations to be a member of the community.

So, Mr. Speaker, with this government's approach to what government is and what the people of this province are, they would now have Albertans believe they have no need for a sense of pride, no need for a sense of obligation to community, to province, as well as to family, and no need to feel the sense of rights and responsibilities that come with being a citizen of the province. Those important components and aspects of what we are as a society are no longer important to this government. All that's important is the money that will change hands between the buyer and the seller. That's all that's left now from this particular government.

3:10

With the specific issues that I look for in the throne speech, specifically with respect to environmental protection, no doubt I was obviously disappointed to find that the words "environmental

protection" were never even mentioned. We have been concerned that the government's position on environmental protection is sadly weakening, that in its zeal for more money and more revenues from more sources environmental protection will take a backseat to any kind of development that is interested in coming into this province. Whether or not that revenue source is from oil and gas leases or from timber resources or from whatever exploitation of this land that we can undertake, to this government it is much more acceptable to allow that to occur and to put environmental protection at a lower level of importance than energy or other developments. I make that statement because the throne speech does in fact specifically talk about those kinds of developments. It talks about changes to the energy sector; it talks about changes to royalty structures. But it makes absolutely no mention of environmental protection in the scheme of the vision of this government of the province and where we are going in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I read with interest in the throne speech the Premier's use of the terminology that we had seen before in his address to Albertans on television: the same speech, pretty much. "People, prosperity, and preservation." It was of course in the category of preservation that we were looking for something concrete with respect to environmental protection and saw none.

What I found interesting – and I hope members opposite will help out in the debate – was that one of the things that the government intends to do to preserve life in the community is develop a self-regulating body for the real estate industry. Developing a self-regulating body for the real estate industry is one of the things that the government is going to do to preserve life in our communities. Well, what has that to do, Mr. Speaker, with keeping our neighbourhoods safe, our air and water clean, and people involved in the life of their community? I'm very interested to hear members opposite tell me how a self-regulating body for the real estate industry is going to keep our neighbourhoods safe. So I certainly look forward to that debate from members opposite as to what exactly that statement from the government means in terms of its legislative agenda or its intentions for the future.

I think that overall Albertans will be very disappointed with the Speech from the Throne, that it is a very thin document, that it does not give Albertans a sense of confidence, a sense of comfort. Probably most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it does not give Albertans a sense that this government has energy to provide the best possible government that it can for the people of Alberta and that it will continue with its old ways of Conservative dominance and governance of this province, something that you can't expect from a party that has been in power, admittedly, for almost an entire generation and has its roots running so deep that many Albertans now understand that really nothing can change at this point.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents I say that we are disappointed in the throne speech, and I look forward to further debate from members on that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are three words in the Speech from the Throne that I want to relate to, and those words are "people, prosperity, and preservation." I want to then note the comments made on page 2 of the Speech from the Throne, particularly where it says:

My government's greatest concern is people. Good health is a gift we must treasure, and education is our hope for the future. Albertans want high-quality health care and education.

Accordingly, efforts will key on new ways to provide those programs and services more effectively and efficiently.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity just a day or two before the Legislature opened, before the Speech from the Throne was handed down, given, to have a town hall meeting in my constituency. About 200 individuals came forward and attended the town hall meeting that I and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood had. A number of concerns were raised, and I'd like to just highlight those concerns for the members of the Legislature.

Most of the issues, most of the concern, most of the unhappiness centred on the issue of health care. One individual spoke about the discharge in a room of four patients. Some sort of system of collecting waste from the body – the vessel was broken. The individual went into the bathroom of this area where four people were being tended and the vessel broke. The discharged liquid fell on to the floor of the bathroom, and it was reported. Nothing was done for most of the day, and the people in the room and the person that was involved in this incident didn't blame the staff of the hospital but blamed the fact that the staff simply couldn't look after this issue. It was a low-priority issue. It wasn't a low priority for those four people in the room or the people that came into the room, and I think that's something that needs to be noted and taken into account.

Another person talked about how he was asked to prescub himself and shave himself before some open-heart surgery. Now, I know that when I went through two bouts of activity at the hospital, I was scared, and I know that this particular individual must have felt that same kind of anxiety that I felt. To be told to go and scrub yourself and shave yourself before you have open-heart surgery I think is taking efficiency down the wrong road.

Some people at the meeting talked about how a patient went to a hospital in the city of Edmonton, tried to get into the emergency unit and could not, had to drive to Calgary and never made it, never made the whole process and died because of this routing to another hospital.

I've had some experience dealing – and I heard this at the meeting as well – with people in auxiliary hospitals and senior care facilities. We're now at a stage where care to those seniors, to those people in auxiliary hospitals, I think is on the edge and falling the wrong way. There are people that need help when they call out to have somebody assist them to go to the bathroom because they simply can't make their limbs – their arms, their legs – work. There has to be some kind of help that allows them to do that. I don't blame the people in the auxiliary hospital, including the one where my mother is located, because they simply can't do all the things that are expected of them. Some people are hiring additional care. So what you get is health care for the rich or for those who can afford better health care and health care for everybody else. I don't think that's what Albertans want or expect, and I don't think that meets the criteria of what's called for in the Speech from the Throne when it says that the government's greatest concern is its people, good health care.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, we heard an exchange between the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier of our province about chaotic systems in the health care area. I think there are too many examples like the ones that I heard at my town hall meeting and examples that members of this Assembly have heard that show, that prove, that convince that there is great need to improve the system in our hospitals. When 900 doctors attend a meeting and are angry, I think that's pretty good evidence that something's out of whack. Just two days ago when I went for some tests for myself, one of

the senior members of the medical profession at the University hospital talked again about how unhappy he was with some of the things that were happening at the University of Alberta hospital. We need to get better planning. We need to focus. We need to ensure that priorities are met, and priorities like the ones that I've talked about I think are priorities. They are to me.

I heard one individual stand up and talk about the difficulty that he's having with AISH, the payments that he gets for AISH. He had difficulty expressing himself. He talked about how, when he has to pay for his room and board and his ability to get around, he simply doesn't have the means to enjoy the kind of quality of life that I think all Albertans would expect that he should enjoy. We, I think, have some responsibility to give a helping hand to individuals who need that helping hand, like people on AISH.

I heard a representative from one of the volunteer social service organizations in my area of north Edmonton talk about the difficulties that some mothers were having in not being able to send their children to all of the functions that were occurring at school. They only get so much money for additional help at school from the ministry of social services. When I said, "Well what happens to your children when you've run out of your resources?" the mother said, "The child stays in the classroom and works on some homework whilst the rest of the class goes off for a swimming lesson or for a trip to the museum or wherever." I don't think that's the kind of society we want. I don't think that's the kind of Alberta we want. I plead with the minister, who's sitting here, to look into some of these issues and solve them.

An aboriginal youth in my constituency came to visit me – he didn't come to the town hall meeting – just a few days before the town hall meeting, and he complained about the difficulty that he was having in getting social service attention. Now, I'm glad that my intervention allowed for a positive result to have occurred for him. He said that with only a grade 2 reading skill he wanted to improve himself because he knew that he couldn't get anywhere with his inability to read. I think the system has to be improved to a much greater degree than simply allowing a system to exist where MLAs or people in authority have to intervene on their behalf. A policy has to be there to ensure that that aboriginal youth and those people in the hospitals and those people on social services are cared for with dignity and that there's a sense of an objective at the end: that somebody can read and somebody can get out of that hospital and somebody can be looking after their own needs.

It was interesting for me to listen to this representative from the volunteer social service group, mostly women who have children who have fathers who have run away or abandoned the family, talk about how they're getting pressed on their budgets. Mr. Minister, I think you've got to look in on this one. They talked about how rents are creeping up in the Edmonton area. Rents are creeping up in the Edmonton area, and they have no alternative except to pay that increase in rent. What it means is that the budget availability for food is decreased, and often their children go without milk or the necessities of life. I'm not happy with that kind of an Alberta. I'm not happy listening as an elected representative at a town hall meeting when a person has to stand up and talk about that, and I plead with the government to take some action in that regard.

I was interested in hearing from one individual who talked about the need for recall, and that's another issue. We've had tremendous accomplishments in this Assembly in the last two years with parliamentary reform. This has been a government that has been listening to some of the pleas for parliamentary reform, and we've implemented some of those needs, some of

those desires. The recent agreement by House leaders to allow for a more freewheeling discussion when we review budgets I think is a big step in the right direction. The old system that we used a year ago, where it was stifling, where you had to put a question to the Chair and then a supplemental and then another supplemental and that was the extent of your question, was so stifling that it was unproductive. I think recall is another step that members of this Assembly have to look at. People want to know that they've got recourse when they don't like something that one of their members has done. That recall has to be set up in such a way so that it isn't frivolous, so that people can't do it just on a whim. I think the Bill that was crafted and presented to this Legislative Assembly a year ago was well crafted, but I ask that members on the other side, government members, and members on this side revisit that issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about prosperity a little bit. We had an experience in our caucus a few days ago where we had Mr. Smith, who's been asked by the Premier and the government to look at moving trade and opportunity in Alberta along more positive lines, come to us and tell us what he was doing. I was impressed that he came. I was impressed by what he said. There were a lot of objectives that none of us could disagree with. But the proof is in the pudding. Let's see what's going to happen.

I note with great interest that our province in the area of trade and development of commerce has taken an initiative in the development of the Torrens system in Ukraine. The Torrens system is the grid system as we know it for our land registry system. Now, when a businessperson goes to Ukraine or goes to one of the former Soviet countries and wants to build a hotel or a motel or some sort of building or do a subdivision, they're completely thwarted because there is no Land Titles Act. There is no land registry system. When you have no land registry system, you have no general plan by a municipality. Nobody knows what to do, and you start getting businesses abandoning countries that need help. Well, I thought we were doing a great thing when I heard about this venture into Ukraine by UMA and having the Alberta government provide some assistance. I was really shocked when I heard that the province of British Columbia has a whole SWAT team working on the Baltic countries and on part of Russia, part of one of the western regions of Russia, selling and developing the Torrens system of land registry. I think we need to do a lot more in our relationships with the former Soviet countries.

I read with great interest the new position paper that has been brought down by the federal government on its foreign policy. They say that emphasis should go away from the military and should go towards prosperity, towards economic development. It says that we have a privileged access to some places in the world. We have a privileged access to places like Poland. We have a privileged access to the Baltic countries. We have a privileged access to Ukraine, because in this province about 10 percent of the population are Canadians whose origin is that from Ukraine. There are about 1 million Canadians of Ukrainian origin, and I think that privileged access allows us to do things like the Torrens system and to develop some other initiatives. That means prosperity here and prosperity there.

3:30

The paper talks about partnerships. I invite members to look at that document, to look at some interesting ideas that we can take up to develop that partnership and to encourage prosperity. I like the reference in the Speech from the Throne to the issue of north/south trade and opportunity. I found it fascinating when the Prime Minister toured the Caribbean and South America,

fascinating that when his plane was refueling in Costa Rica, he was hijacked, as it were, by the President of Costa Rica and a number of Presidents or Prime Ministers from the Caribbean and Central American countries, who said, "We want in too; we want to be part of the prosperity that's being developed on the north/south basis." The Prime Minister said, "Well, you know, I'm prepared to look at that."

I think there's a big shift coming or well on its way in terms of that north/south prosperity initiative. I was in Costa Rica over the Christmas holiday, and I think there are tremendous opportunities there for Canadians. We're well liked. We're respected. I saw our flag in numerous places. I saw Petro-Canada signs in some places. When I spoke to people that could engage me, they had a high regard for Canada, and they wanted Canada to involve themselves with Costa Rica and other central and southern American countries.

What have we done? What special initiatives have Canadians, Albertans taken to develop that prosperity on a north/south basis? We've got privileged access because we have Canadians who are Spanish speaking. We have universities and some centres of excellence in universities and trade areas where we could better focus them on that north/south prosperity agenda. Mr. Speaker, I would like to see something more specific be undertaken by our universities, perhaps like what B.C. has done.

We have a separate, independent Alberta trade venture system. British Columbia, I've learned, has now taken it out of government hands and said to an individual, "You now and your department or your office must deal with the private sector, and you must start to create opportunity for British Columbia in other parts of the world." When I tried to get the B.C. commissioner of trade on the phone today, he's somewhere off in India and then going off to the Baltic and then going off to Hong Kong. We need more focus to create more prosperity. We need to target for Albertans exactly what it is that we should be doing and then say: "We're going to have a university program of educating people about the Spanish-speaking countries. We're going to teach them about the two languages of South America. We're going to start to move more aggressively in this area."

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that we could be doing, so many things that we have the resources to do. Most of it is the fact that we have people resources that would allow us to do this very quickly.

I end my comments, Mr. Speaker, by saying that things are not so good in terms of people, prosperity, and preservation, that things are not so good in terms of health care and education. I didn't talk about education. We can't brag about things that are an embarrassment. We need to fix the things that are problems, and I think we have to think about some new visions and new horizons to create prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to be able to rise today and speak to the throne speech. As I go through it, there is much in here that I am proud of, proud of these statements like: the greatest concern of our government here is people and prosperity and preservation. These are proud, proud statements, profound statements. Statements as well like, "Uphold the principles of the Canada Health Act." Statements in here that say that we will implement recommendations resulting from public discussions and education. Statements

that say that we're going "to create an environment to attract and maximize trade, tourism, and investment in our province" and that we're going to take some steps in terms of the elimination of overlap and duplication between all levels of government, the federal government and perhaps maybe even the municipal governments, that we are going to look at value added in our agriculture sector to improve processing and more investment, that we are going to look at doing something with our Alberta heritage savings trust fund this year, that in fact the government's concern is that "Albertans place great value on keeping our neighbourhoods safe," that in fact we will work harder to ensure that the relations between the federal government and the provincial government are strengthened.

Those are wonderful statements, Mr. Speaker, statements that of course make me proud to be an Albertan and proud to hand out this book. But after being here for a couple of years, in the Legislature for almost two years, I know what I've heard in a couple of throne speeches now, and some of the areas that I spoke about just now about what the government plans on doing is stuff that I've heard before. They are words that have come out in other throne speeches, in other things like maybe the business plans of the province. They seem to be hollow words. I don't think I can just sit idle and not engage in debate when I see stuff like this.

I've traveled around the province considerably over the past six or eight months. I've met countless people. I've met so many people that have come to me and said: "Sine, we've got to do something different about this or value added in agriculture or value added in our economic development sector. We need to be able to do something with the heritage saving trust fund." So it's encouraging to see these words in here, Mr. Speaker, but we now must act on them. We can't just hear them one more time or see them and read them in print one more time.

I want to start by talking about the overlap and duplication and perhaps maybe the elimination of it. In the throne speech itself it says that we are going to now strive to see that this in fact takes place. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not so long ago that I heard it, that I read it, and in fact in January of 1993 the Treasurer of the province initiated a study to identify the overlap and the duplication between the federal government and the provincial government. Well, at that time they identified \$7.8 billion that was spent by the federal government in Alberta. I've got some grave concerns about that, because now the federal government is going to start looking at maybe reducing some of their expenditures in all provinces, and I know Alberta is going to be affected. We all know that. We didn't really make very many provisions right now simply because we don't know what the federal government is going to do. Their budget is going to come out, and of course it coincides pretty much with when ours comes down. So I think we may end up with some surprises here in Alberta, and I think the red ink perhaps could be a lot bigger than we anticipate. I hope that's not the case, but I think it very much could be the case.

In that study, Mr. Speaker, there was \$4.3 billion identified where the services were overlapped or duplicated here in Alberta. Now, that happened a couple of years ago, when this was identified, and really we haven't made any steps to date that I know of. There were some very small steps that were undertaken, but I think they never even came to fruition. I refer you to perhaps the idea of having the federal government take care of the collection of corporate income taxes. I would have thought that was an expense by Alberta that was unnecessary, and that would be one area that we might want to look at. I know we looked at it, and I know now that we're still collecting it here in

Alberta. I wonder what ever happened with that. Why couldn't we make a deal with the federal government, particularly when we see in the throne speech itself where we state that Alberta will work hard "with its federal and provincial counterparts towards a stronger and better nation for all Canadians"? So I'm looking forward to seeing something happen with regard to the overlap and duplication. That is one area where I know we can save a tremendous amount of money, perhaps maybe even assisting the federal government. God forbid. But we could do that because of the overlap of the \$4.3 billion that is spent.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, my next area of concern is in agriculture. I know that the government speaks a great deal about value added and processing and investment, and it's laudable that we do. When I was traveling throughout the province last fall, I'd go to places like Lethbridge, and in places like Picture Butte I'd see 75,000 head feedlots. Feedlots of 10,000 were very common. See; where I grew up, I mean, a feedlot of 250 head was pretty big, so seeing that down in southern Alberta really impressed me. The thing that did not impress me, though, was the lack of processing that we have. The fact is that there are thousands of head of fat cattle leaving Alberta daily. I saw the trucks leaving the province.

**Point of Order
Factual Accuracy**

DR. L. TAYLOR: Point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Is the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat rising on a point of order?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Yes. *Beauchesne* 451. The member is simply not stating the exact truth. There are not thousands of head of cattle leaving the province a day. That's simply not true. Furthermore, the processing in Alberta within three years will be able to handle every animal that is in Alberta, plus we will have to transport fat cattle into Alberta from the U.S. because our processing facilities will be at such a large capacity that there will not be enough cattle in Alberta to feed the two main packing plants. So I would call on the member to withdraw his comments which simply are not fact.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair would remind the hon. member that his citation really has no relevance to the point that was made.

MR. CHADI: Mr. Speaker, I'm certain that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was referring to fat cats, not fat cattle. I'm referring to fat cattle leaving Alberta. Now, perhaps my numbers could be off, that there were thousands. I'm not certain of that, but I can tell you that there is truckload after truckload after truckload that leaves Alberta each day. It's probably more like closer to a thousand than thousands. Whatever the number is, it's still too much, and I think what we need to do is improve what we've got here in Alberta in terms of our value added and the processing in that industry.

Debate Continued

MR. CHADI: Mr. Speaker, I was really encouraged when I went in the north to a place like Nampa. I went there and I saw what northern forage was doing. There's a company out there that has this huge, huge building that stores hay. It's timothy hay, I think, taken from the summer months. They ensure that no rain hits this hay at all, and they store it even in these huge buildings while

they have another huge facility compacting these large bales of hay that they've taken off the fields into little bales that are about maybe two feet by two feet or something like that, and they wrap it in plastic. They pack that, and they load it up on the train cars, and it's destined for Japan. I was encouraged to see stuff like that.

I know that when you travel throughout this province, there are many, many times that you notice on the side of the road or in the fields that there's much hay that just goes to waste. There's nothing we can do about it. There's just too much hay some years in Alberta. So when I see stuff like that, I'm really, truly encouraged, and I would hope to think that in the Speech from the Throne that in fact is what we're referring to. We're referring to things like the Nampa example that I just gave you. I'd like to see our government do more of that. I want to encourage our government – and I want to do it myself – to travel this province and encourage more of those kinds of companies to set up.

Another area – and I'm sure that many spoke about it before me in this House with respect to the Speech from the Throne – is the economic development of our province, that in fact we want to create an environment to attract and maximize trade, tourism, and investment in our province. As I've traveled throughout the province – and I learnt a great deal over the past couple of years after being elected as an MLA – particularly in this last six or eight months, people are telling me that what we need to do is to have a quality of life in Alberta that would attract people to come here and stay here. It's not so much that it's a low-tax environment, as the Premier so often proudly states, that we need to have. In fact, if that were the case – and I know of other states, states like perhaps Montana or Oregon, that have tried it, and I know that Newfoundland, for other provinces, has tried it. You won't see companies and investment flocking to Newfoundland or to Montana or to Oregon. If somebody really wanted a tax haven, I mean, corporations would locate in a place like the Cayman Islands. Why would they come to Alberta if that's in fact what the driving force would be?

I think that what we need to do is listen to those Albertans that have said that the quality of life that is deteriorating in Alberta as a result of the current government sanctions with respect to health care and education must change. You know, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't so long ago that I lived in a little town, and I can remember quite clearly what used to happen when people drove into that town and considered relocating to that community. You can count on this. The first thing they would look at if they were a young family would be the school system. If it was a middle-aged couple, regardless of whether or not they had children, they would look at things like the health care facilities there. They'd look at amenities like perhaps maybe swimming pools. They'd look at parks. They'd look at the beauty of the area, the quality of life, these sorts of things. But, more importantly, it was the education and the health care that they were more convinced needed to be before they'd locate in those areas. I know there were many families that came looking in our community, and they couldn't find a swimming pool, for example, but Athabasca was about 50 miles away, and you can bet your boots that they located there because they had those amenities. It's the quality of life. That's what we need to improve in Alberta. That's what will attract people. That's what will attract investment. Taxes. Yes, it is a consideration, and I don't discount that at all.

I'm pleased to have had an opportunity to listen to Mr. Art Smith. I think that if the Premier did one thing right, it's getting a guy like Art Smith to head the Economic Development Authority in this province. I question why he put two Smiths in there.

Maybe it's just for confusion. But we've got Art Smith, who is a very capable individual, and I listened to what he had to say when he made a presentation to our caucus the other day. I'm encouraged, and I wish him well, and I'm looking forward to seeing the results of the Alberta Economic Development Authority. There are an awful lot of good people on that committee, people from Edmonton that I know very well, and I know that they are very qualified for those jobs. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that these people that are on the development authority are doing so as volunteers. They travel this province, taking time out of their schedules, and take part in something that is an extremely worthwhile cause.

3:50

Another area of concern for me within the Speech from the Throne is the fact that we are now finally looking at the heritage savings trust fund. For some time now and for the time that I was elected to this Legislature, I've heard that what we were going to do was hold a review. Again, I'm encouraged to know and see that there is a review finally going on. It's a long awaited one, simply because a couple of years ago the Financial Review Commission – this is a commission put together by the province of Alberta, handpicked members by the Treasurer – concluded with respect to the heritage savings trust fund that it in fact gave Albertans a false sense of security.

Subsequent to that, there were different reviews that were initiated by the government. The Institute of Chartered Accountants made certain representations, and they suggested that we ought to liquidate the heritage savings trust fund. In fact, Moody's, the bond-rating people, Mr. Speaker, made a comment as well. What they said was that in order for Alberta to sustain its credit rating, it would be imperative for them to reduce its debt, and one way to reduce its debt would be the liquidation of the heritage savings trust fund.

These are some of the recommendations that were coming forward, Mr. Speaker, and some of the things that weren't acted on again. I know, having taken part in the heritage savings trust fund committee, that when we sit in that committee, you talk about what happens with the funding and you scrutinize the ministers that come forward and sit before that committee. The ultimate conclusion, of course, would be that you'd make certain recommendations, and those recommendations would be taken to the government, and the government would supposedly act on them. Well, there were many recommendations that were made to the government via the heritage savings trust fund committee, and that again didn't get anywhere. The encouraging part, though, is that we now have this review going on. I know and feel confident that in fact what Albertans are going to say about the heritage savings trust fund is that we should liquidate those investments that are not providing us the return that we should get, in fact, but keep the ones that are providing us a return that is over and above what we're paying on our debt. There are some good investments in there, but there are some really lousy ones as well.

I note that when we talked about the heritage savings trust fund and made certain recommendations, there was a company called Vencap that we had provided, I believe, \$200 million for back in 1983. We recommended that we should immediately call in or try to make a deal with Vencap. I know that Vencap was prepared and ready to make that deal, but again that hasn't happened. So when I talk about hollow statements, statements that are wonderful statements but hollow, these are some of the things that I'm referring to, Mr. Speaker. I think we've got to act on those a bit more than we have in the past.

I also want to touch on safe neighbourhoods. I note again in the Speech from the Throne that we have under preservation, "Albertans place great value on keeping our neighbourhoods safe." Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how we can live by those words knowing full well that we've shut down prisons in this province and we've put criminals back in our neighbourhoods. Are our neighbourhoods really safe? No matter where I go in this province, no matter who I talk to, people tell me, "Well, you know, these criminals are back out in our neighbourhoods." I know that we're shutting down two jails. We've shut down the Belmont institution here in Edmonton. One would think that, you know, the inmate population in other jails . . .

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair regrets to advise the hon. member that his time has expired.

The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly it is a privilege for me to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I would first like to congratulate His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the delivery of an excellent speech, and when I say "excellent speech," I mean an excellent speech for the benefit of all of our Albertans. To focus on a balanced budget is probably the single most important thing that any government can do and have a benefit for people not only that are here now but people that are going to be here in the future for many years. To be able to put forth a Bill that will keep a balanced budget in place is something that we can all be proud of.

I can't help but think that when I listen to the members of the opposition speak about the Speech from the Throne and the negative part that they want to bring out that we have in the past couple of years made a remarkable change in this province. People recognize that, and they know that it's a change for the better. I think everybody knows that you have to change. Our people are recognizing it. We're doing it in health care. We're doing it in education. We're doing it in deregulation and so many things. People are accepting that now, but our opposition is not accepting that. They've been in this House for two years now, and they still won't accept change. Certainly I think that many, many times people say that those who will not change are on the road to failure, and I think our members should think a little bit about that. It's very easy to look back on things that are wrong, but it's sure nice to hear some positive remarks once in a while about the things that are right. We're hearing it now from our people in this province, and many of those people are very pleased with the direction that we go.

When we're talking about quality of life and, yes, people – we care about people. Yes, we are affecting a lot of people. Some people have to sacrifice and work harder to keep up with the change and help through that transition. Mr. Speaker, we likely have the highest standard of living in the world, and if we even cut it by 5 percent, we've still got a beautiful place to live in this country and a beautiful standard of living.

We can get into issues, whether it's health care or education, where someone isn't treated properly. Certainly there's the human element in the delivery system. There are many things that affect that. Yes, the transition is difficult for a lot of people, and there are going to be some hiccups along the way, but when we're finished, we're going to be better than we've ever been before. I think we can all be really, really proud of that.

The energy industry and the agriculture industry. Look at what has happened in the last two or three years since we've made our changes and helped make our industry more responsible for themselves and their own marketing. Many things have changed worldwide. Certainly we've made a stronger industry out of both of them. The prices have stabilized. Our interest rates have stabilized.

4:00

I think if our opposition really wanted to spend their time well, they could probably talk to their counterparts in Ottawa and get them to leave the dollar alone and not be jacking up the interest rates. That's the single most important thing that has hurt our agriculture industry in the past when trying to be competitive in the world market.

When we talk about the heritage trust fund and some of the things that we're doing with that now, I think it's admirable to take that out to the people and let them have a good look at what we are doing with it. I listened to people say, "Sell it all off, and we'll get a better credit rating." We better take a look at what that heritage fund has done for us over the past 15 or 20 years.

I would have to ask this question. When you get into research and the dollars that went into research from the heritage trust fund – a research industry in this province has been very, very beneficial to this province. One of the things that we've done with the research: the breakthrough with the cure for diabetes from Dr. Rajotte. That's worldwide. That's one of the greatest things that we could have done. Would that have happened had we not had the heritage trust fund? I don't know the answer to that. But if you had asked the taxpayers to put some of this money into research, the millions and millions and maybe even billions of dollars that we've put in from the heritage trust fund, do you think we would have had the research park out there now and our health care facilities?

Point of Order Questioning a Member

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan rising on a point of order.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: No. I would like to ask a question of the Member for Wainwright.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister of public works can decide whether he would allow that.

MR. FISCHER: Sure, if it's short.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: It's very short.

Debate Continued

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Are you against change, then, when it comes to the heritage trust fund?

MR. FISCHER: Certainly I'm prepared to change. I want to change for the better. When we get into the heritage trust fund, I think we can make some great changes to it and be a lot better than we have been in the past, but I don't think we should throw out absolutely everything just because we want to have a change.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Remember that. You said it.

MR. FISCHER: One of the other things when I think of our financial situation: we have got our budget fairly close to being in order now. We're going to pay down our debt. We listened to our opposition and many of the press talking about our huge debt and how we're going to pay it all down. Even out of the heritage trust fund there are a lot of programs that are loaned out that are covering part of that debt. Sometime down the road we're going to ask ourselves: are we the taxpayer now going to pay off \$32 billion, or are we going to let the people that borrowed money out of the Municipal Financing Corporation or out of ADC or out of AOC pay their own debts? Because if I'm going to pay off some of those debts through my income tax, I guess I'm going to have to tell my family that, well, maybe you better pay yours too. So we're going to have to face that one of these days.

The people of the Wainwright constituency were pleased when they heard about the Speech from the Throne. I've heard so many times from people: "Please stay on track, even though it's hurting me a little bit. I don't have all the dollars that we had here before. Please stay on track. I know it's right."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll say thank you and sit down.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the throne speech. I listened to the throne speech, probably one of the shortest throne speeches in terms of content on record. But I see it as good news, bad news. There is some good news. The good news is that, yes, this government is tackling the deficit, the deficit that was created by this very same government. But let's not forget that Alberta is not the only province that's tackling their deficit.

We see what's happening in Saskatchewan. We see what's happening in B.C. We see now what's happening at the federal level. There is a realization that one has to get their fiscal house in order to continue to provide programs and services for the people. It's how it's done that varies so much from province to province and the federal government. When this particular throne speech came down, it talked in terms of deficit, budget management, money, money, finances, finances, but it lacked something, and that, Mr. Speaker, is the bad news. It lacked what I call a people vision. It didn't address concerns that are being raised by Albertans from Grande Prairie down to Lethbridge and all over the province.

I recall when I first came to Alberta in the early '60s. It was a good province, and there was cause to look forward to opportunities. There were programs in place that allowed me the opportunity to get retrained, to become a productive member of society, a contributing member of society. In the early '70s when I became involved with a number of community organizations within the province – and we had a new government then. Yes, it was a Tory government, but it was a fresh government. It was enthusiastic. It wanted to do things. It wanted to be responsive. Mr. Speaker, I understand some members over there will argue that they have new leadership. Yes, they have a change in leadership, but it's not a change in government, and there's a whole bunch of difference in putting one person in charge of the same ship, a new captain in charge of that particular ship, guiding that ship.

In the early '70s what we saw was a total change of government, and in those days the throne speech would come down and people would look forward to it with anticipation, with excitement, because they knew that that throne speech was going to address concerns being raised by Albertans. They knew that

throne speech was going to present solutions to problems that were out there. I was one of those amongst the many Albertans that looked forward to the throne speech, and it was a big event. It meant a lot. But this particular throne speech doesn't excite people, and members or constituents that feel it excites I think are missing something.

The throne speech boils down to labeling Albertans, taxpayers, as "customers," and to call Albertans, people, customers that rely on government is wrong. If I go to Superstore as a customer, if I'm not happy with the level of service, if I'm not happy with the products they're providing me, I have a choice: I can go to Save-On, Safeway, IGA, Food for Less. But with this particular government, if a person is not satisfied with the service they're getting, with the programs they're getting, they don't have the opportunity to go from A to B to shop around. So you can't, Mr. Speaker, simply regard Albertans as customers. They're people. They're people that are paying taxes to keep us here where we are and to provide for them and to be there when they require us.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I had the opportunity to do much more so than a rural member, being in Edmonton and also being a member of the opposition – not being on the front benches allows me the opportunity to spend a lot more time in the constituency office than, let's say, the Premier of the province or the ministers or members from outside of Edmonton that have to travel back and forth and just don't have the opportunity to visit their constituency office virtually every day and listen to people. People are coming forward, and you have to talk with them. You've got to deal with them on a one to one to understand some of the hurt that is being caused out there as a result of the method of financial restructuring that we're presently going through.

The health care system is the one that for some reason seems to be targeted by the provincial government. They've got to demonstrate just how tough they are rather than set priorities. The slash-and-burn, across-the-board type of approach, and come high water or whatever, they are going to cut back on health care by X percentage. It goes on and on.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, the other day – and this story can be repeated I'm sure many times over throughout the province – I had a constituent come in who had pictures of his mother, who lived in an extended care centre, pictures of her bruised. She had fallen out of bed, and she had lain on the floor for hours. In that whole station, in that whole area, in that whole unit there was only one staff member, and because of other things that were happening, that staff member wasn't able to attend to this particular individual. This is a pioneer. This is a lady in her 80s. I said to this constituent, "Well, we'll take those pictures forward, and we'll show that this is another example of the type of hurt that can be caused within the restructuring of the health care system." That person said: "No. I'm afraid that my mother may have to pay the price. I'm afraid that the administration of that care centre is going to turn around and make it that much more difficult for her." Being at that age, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said the other day, they anticipate one thing, and that's fear. Fear was what this particular lady was going through. She had no place to turn to for help.

Many of us sitting on the opposition side here and I'm sure many sitting on the government side have had the opportunity to be part of a health care unit or a health care board in the past. I had the opportunity of being a board member of rural hospital district No. 24, which is now Capital Care. I saw the level of service that was being provided at that particular time. I still keep in touch with the administrators, with the board members, who

are gone now, having been replaced by the regional health board, and, yes, they are facing severe difficulties. The difficulties they face are really felt at the bedside. So the minister may feel that there aren't problems there, but there are problems, and to have the Premier stand up and say that as we go through these budget cuts, as we go through this restructuring, there are going to be bumps and grinds along the way is not good enough. That lady lying on that floor beside that bed for hours because nobody could attend to her – to the Premier it may be a grind or a bump, but to that pioneer of this province it meant a great deal more than that.

We can look at the education system, Mr. Speaker, and again the throne speech fails to address what's happening. I have constituents come down and they talk about the fear that kindergarten may be gone in Edmonton or certain parts of the province and if some centres like Edmonton have addressed it. But they've addressed it by shifting dollars that would be programmed for other areas into kindergarten because the government has neglected to recognize that there is a need for 400 hours of early childhood education per student. It's failed to recognize that. So when the school boards make up that shortcoming, it's got to come from some other areas.

The area that of course it comes from is primary education. What do we see happening there? Larger classrooms. I understand the Edmonton public school board has removed the regulation that prevented classrooms from being more than 30 students in size. Mr. Speaker, there is becoming a serious problem within the educational system. We have students coming to us that are prepared to go to university, prepared to go to a technical institution, a college, or whatever, but they simply can't arrange their financing because the jobs are not there for them to work at like they used to be in the summer. Student finance has changed dramatically in that they can no longer look forward to a portion of that being written off. Some of those students who do manage to get through – some are fortunate that they have parents that can assist them – even with assistance from their parents may end up thousands, tens of thousands of dollars in debt. What do they have to look forward to when they get out of university, NAIT, Grant MacEwan College, whatever?

The Premier talks about jobs, about the creation of new jobs, and 44,000 new jobs created here, whatever. But let's really look at what's happening in terms of those stats. We see the types of jobs being eliminated, and everyone has to admit that there is a great elimination of jobs. These are jobs normally held by professional people, health care workers, people within the educational system, management within corporations, people who have a reasonably good income that can go out there and afford to buy their own home, that can keep consumer spending going. Those jobs that are being lost are being replaced by jobs within the retail sector, a lot of them being part-time jobs where people are working maybe four hours, eight hours a week. That job of four hours to eight hours a week in terms of numbers may replace a job where a person was making \$45,000 a year as a professional person. Yes, the Premier can argue that the net gain in jobs may be positive, but one has to break that down and look at the types of jobs that have been gained. If you put all the income levels together as to what was there before and what is there now, I would say that even though there is a so-called gain within employment, the benefit to Albertans has decreased considerably.

MRS. McCLELLAN: You show us some stats.

MR. WICKMAN: Touching on stats is not necessary. To the minister: all you have to do is get out there and talk to people and they're going to tell you. You go to Superstore. You go to

Save-On. You can't just sit in the ivory tower and look at pieces of paper. Go over and talk to them, and you'll find out I speak the truth. You'll find out. I'm talking about what's really happening there.

Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the Premier respond to questions on lotteries in this province, I was horrified. To equate scratch-and-win tickets, whatever, to what's happening out there with the VLTs, I don't understand how anyone – and unfortunately the former minister of lotteries, who had the opportunity to challenge those machines on occasion, isn't there any longer to provide that input to the Premier. Nevertheless, the whole point has been missed. Again, our Member for St. Albert here makes a point of traveling this province, and he comes back with the horror stories that are being created by the VLTs. The addiction is unbelievable; 9 percent of gamblers account for 69 percent of the gambling going on in this province. So you equate those figures and say that it's not a serious problem.

He talked in terms of the moneys going back to the community groups, to the municipalities, their share of lottery revenues. That's not what we're hearing out there at all, Mr. Speaker. We're hearing from groups that are saying that their funding has diminished to half of what it used to be, in some cases one-third, because of the competition of VLTs. When our critic for municipal affairs goes out there, the municipal leaders aren't saying that at all. They're saying: "There's a problem here. You're robbing money from our community, and you're not giving us back a share. You're not recognizing what's happening in our community." I don't understand why a government member isn't able to go down to one of these places that have all these machines and talk to people, hear some of the horror stories, and there have been horror stories.

I want to conclude by talking a bit about Edmonton because it is very special to me, having lived in Edmonton for the last 30-odd years, representing a riding in Edmonton and previously having represented a ward in Edmonton as an alderman. Edmontonians feel like this government has abandoned them, and they feel like they're being penalized simply because they chose not to elect a government member. Mr. Speaker, I go out there, I talk to people, and they say: "Why has government neglected us? Why does government just callously cut back on civil servants without realizing the impact on Edmonton?" You drive throughout Edmonton. On every block houses are up for sale. You don't see that in Calgary. You don't see that in Grande Prairie. You go to Grande Prairie. What's the vacancy rate? It's .4 percent.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Edmonton is taking a beating. It is taking a tremendous beating. A government that is responsive would address where there's a greater need, and there is a greater need in Edmonton right now than in any other part of the province in terms of getting the economy flowing again, but the government fails to recognize that because they chose not to elect a government member. Maybe they chose to show the wisdom of only electing Liberals, but they shouldn't be penalized for that.

On that note, because there's a lot of enlightened speakers here who want to put forward their messages, their words of wisdom, I'm going to conclude to give them the opportunity.

Thank you.

4:20

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the Speech from the Throne. I'd certainly like to

acknowledge the commendable job of delivery by His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, a man of great wit and obvious vision. Now, that comment is directed at the Hon. Gordon Towers. It certainly isn't directed at the content of the Speech from the Throne.

The first thing that I would like to do when we get into the actual Speech from the Throne is acknowledge. Yes, I would compliment the government of Alberta for wrestling down the deficit, although I would question the manner in which they are doing it. I'd also commend the government of Alberta for finally realizing that you have to put a debt management program in place. It's unfortunate that it's taken them so long to get to that point.

Now, it's indeed interesting. When I opened the Speech from the Throne on that famous date, February 13, the first thing that caught my eye was "Mandate for change." Now, indeed that's the very reason that I'm standing in this Legislature, because a vision was within the Mandate for Change: The Alberta Liberal Plan for Legislative and Budgetary Reform, dated April 1993. It's absolutely wonderful when you see people who have obviously become stale and don't have new ideas so they have to look somewhere else for vision, which indeed is the Mandate for Change. I say that unfortunately you're two years too late.

This document, as I stated, is the reason that I made a decision to enter politics once again. Quite frankly, I had become so concerned with what had happened to this beautiful province under Conservative management; that building up of an incredible debt indeed had to be dealt with. So within the Mandate for Change . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that when they become uncomfortable on the other side of the House, they want to throw coals or stones. It shows that really there is not much strength of character when people resort to those kinds of tactics.

MR. WOLOSZYN: The truth hurts.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes, the truth does hurt, and I want to tell you why it should hurt you. When you're looking at the content of Mandate for Change, you're looking at significant parliamentary reform, which this government has made a feeble, feeble attempt at, and unfortunately because of that feeble attempt we do not see a democratic process in this House.

Now, moving into the Speech from the Throne and "Mandate for change," I'm looking at "people, prosperity, and preservation." The first thing that comes to my mind, Mr. Speaker, is that the words indeed do a disservice to Albertans. I look to the people of Alberta – and in this document they're referred to as "customers" – and say: you should be insulted. The first thing that we as elected officials should remember: we are servants of the people. They're not our customers. We're their servants, and we in elected positions too quickly forget that.

The other thing that this government and members on the other side of the House forget is that every member of this House, Mr. Speaker, was elected by Albertans, and we're here to serve those people. That's what's called democracy. The people within this House on the government side tend to ridicule that statement by saying: we won; you lost. The only people who are losing when we have statements like that are Albertans.

Now, moving once again to people, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry also related some concerns of his constituents that I've also had. I'll use an example of a beautiful young man who unfortunately was brain damaged when he was born. He has a high intellect, he's artistically incredible, but the unfortunate thing

is that as far as employment goes, I would say that that's not possible. But what's that young man facing? Going through a reassessment by social services for his AISH allowance. He has been to two neurologists who quite frankly don't want to take the time to fill in the forms. I think it's a sad state of affairs when young Albertans, through no fault of their own, suffer brain damage and then in adulthood are being asked by this very government to go back and justify why we as a society should be caring for that individual. That's one example. I could use a few more examples. This isn't an able-bodied person who's sitting on his butt not prepared to work, but that's the inference being given by this government to people like this dear young man that I've gotten to know.

The other area, Mr. Speaker is one that I mentioned yesterday. It's wonderful to make a statement like good health is a gift, but as I made the statement yesterday, not everyone is born with that gift and not everyone during their life keeps that gift, not because they don't have healthy life-styles. We have no control as to whether we are going to end up in a situation where we need significant health care. Yes, there are certain areas where we can, whether it be smoking, whether it can be overeating, whether it can be alcohol, but we all know that there are certain illnesses that you or I have no control over.

Yesterday I used some examples of what was happening that would suggest that the Canada Health Act is not being respected in the province of Alberta. I just want to expand on one point that I raised yesterday. We got into the whole area of ambulances, and the comment was: well, you know, ambulances have never really been an integral part of the health care system. The difference today, Mr. Speaker, is that doctors didn't question when they saw the need for a patient to be admitted into the hospital so they could use the interhospital transfer system to get the care they needed. What doctors are doing today is indeed being put in a position, because of budgets within the hospital sector, of saying: "No, I'm sorry. I won't admit you. You will stay as an outpatient, and you'll be responsible for your ambulance transfer costs." I think that is doing the gravest disservice to ill people. The reality as well is a family in a stressful situation where a loved one is needing that level of care and a doctor is phoning them or putting it to them firsthand: "Do you have insurance? Do you know what proportion your insurance will cover if we use the ambulance?" They don't know the answers.

Now, a senior lady came to me in my constituency office and said – and I won't use my name, but she put it to me as her Member of the Legislative Assembly – what had happened to a senior couple. The husband took ill. They had to put \$5,000 up front to get her husband home for health care. They only were remunerated the \$5,000 after her husband was deceased, and it took six months for that to happen. That isn't a caring society, and that shows that our health care system to my mind is indeed fractured.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford used an example of elders. It could be abuse; it could be accidentally falling out of bed with no way of knowing. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm deeply concerned about what's happening with our elders. I would not have believed two years ago that I would be standing here as the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan conveying that I indeed have had to direct people within my community to the Health Facilities Review Committee because of deep concerns about elder abuse in our community.

4:30

I know also the Member for Leduc has been facing the same situation. This comes from within our churches; it comes from

within staff; it comes from family members. Now, is it because we're short staffed in facilities that we're seeing these complaints coming forward? I've also been told by not one but by many staff that they're fearful to go public because they'll lose their jobs. Some female members of staff have said to me that they would like to go public, but their husbands caution them from doing that because indeed they could lose that second income that they desperately need. I say that this does not represent a caring government, and it doesn't demonstrate it when we talk about the people within this document.

I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that the government has to act quickly, so I commend them for recognizing that we have to broaden the mandate of the Health Facilities Review Committee.

Now, dealing with education. There's not a day goes past if I'm within a part of my constituency, when I've the good fortune to be there, that people aren't coming to me and sharing a concern, whether it's about early childhood or whether it's about special-needs students or indeed it's advanced education. But the thing that struck me most was this young woman who wrote this to me in a way, to "whom it concerns," who has never been politically active before. I just want to share with you what she communicated, because she said "to whom it concerns," and I think it should concern every member of this Legislature. It should also concern every Albertan.

First off, I would like to say that I think it is reprehensible that this government has used its power of office so flagrantly in these matters of the educational cutbacks in Alberta. They have given the people of Alberta barely no time at all to learn the acts and then be able to respond. When I started this petition, I had barely enough time to register in my own mind the serious implications of the Framework for Funding Papers. I knew I had to do something besides sending the letter I had already written. I started to talk to some people at my work site and one suggested I start a petition. Being that I am an average working Albertan with no previous experience in starting a petition, I started to collect names. When I was able to get a copy of a petition guidelines, I already had approx. 40 names. I ask that you accept these names, being that they are signed in good faith by parents who are very concerned with the government's plans re: the Framework for Funding. Rest assured that given more time I would have gotten many, many more names.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table four copies of this at this time. The reason I'm doing that is that, as I say, many, many Albertans who have never been involved in the political process are coming forward and saying, "Government, yes, we've got to get our fiscal house in order," but they question the manner in which this government is doing it. So I would suggest to this government that they should look at what the Member for Edmonton-Glen-garry developed from the grass roots through this Mandate for Change and how you indeed get your fiscal house in order.

Two of the areas that we have not moved on are looking at efficiency audits and expanding the mandate for the Public Accounts Committee to truly bring full accountability to the legislative process. When you start to put the mechanisms in place that will look at how we're delivering programs – indeed, is government policy being followed by the bureaucracy? – I firmly believe that only then will you be able to see whether moneys are being expended in the appropriate manner. I think through that process also you would probably find inefficiencies that are presently there that would allow us to redirect money into the much needed areas, whether it be health care or education.

But before we even start thinking about redirecting money, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that if you use the same methodology in hospitals, in health units, in the way we deliver health care, and

in an educational system, we could free up significant dollars directly for patient care and directly into the classroom. None of those things have happened. I was a chairman of Alberta Hospital Edmonton. The frustration is to try to even get the Auditor General to recognize that in an audited statement your assets should be clearly shown but over and above that to get people within the bureaucracies to acknowledge what a program is and to evaluate it. It's still not in place today. It's sad to see that we've gone across the board and cut without knowing whether we're cutting in the right areas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've dealt with a concern of what could be elder abuse, or it could be the lack of having the proper resources to ensure that our seniors are properly cared for. I'm also very concerned that through deregulation we're seeing an economic burden increasingly being put on our seniors. Once again I find it sad when pioneers of this great province come to me and say: "Can't you do something for us? We're in a situation now that the income we have doesn't cover our costs." I said: well, have you not got some savings that you can start to liquidate? You know what they told me? "We have some savings, but those savings are to pay for our funerals. We don't want our families to have to pay for our funerals." I have residents in Fort Saskatchewan that that's happening to right now. What do I say to them? We've removed their pride. I would like to say: "Don't spend your savings. We can find some resolution to that." We've tried everything. We still haven't come up with a resolution. So the bottom line is that these people are going to have to start dipping into their savings, and they have. So it's the family, ultimately, that's going to have to pay for their funeral expenses. I think it's tragic when we take that dignity away from our seniors.

Now, moving to preservation, and my colleague the Member for Sherwood Park addressed it. I join him in the concern that this is tokenism. There's no depth to it. I look at the debate that's going on in Edmonton right now about some of our best soil, in the northeast. I can remember back over 20 years ago in Fort Saskatchewan with some of our best agricultural land, grade 1. Land developers wanted to take it out of that use and put concrete on it. Well, quite frankly, after being brought up on a farm and knowing how precious soil is, not just to this generation or the next generation but to the rest of the lifetime of this world, I felt that I couldn't sit there and not become involved. So I appeared before the Local Authorities Board, objecting as a citizen that we would have the audacity to put grade 1 soil under concrete. We have to move because we are the trustees of the assets for future generations, and grade 1 soil is one of those. I would say that this government to this point in time has failed miserably in that area. So when we're looking at preservation, let's be serious about it and address an issue like the soil in northeast Edmonton.

Let's address the air quality issue. The way that we can bring some peace of mind to Albertans, whether it be in my constituency or in my colleague from Sherwood Park's constituency, is ensuring that we have the best quality of air in our communities. But at the same time as we're doing that, when we see asthma studies in our communities that clearly tell us that we have a significant increase above the national average for asthma, we have to act, Mr. Speaker, by finding out why.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to give congratulations to the Lieutenant Governor for the

admirable way in which he delivered the speech. I guess some years divorced from his partisan politics, he was able to do it without having problems with the contents.

Also, Mr. Speaker, while I'm at it – this is the start of the session – I want to congratulate you and wish you the best. Listening to people talk on the throne speech must be the most exquisite form of torture that has been invented in the 20th and 21st centuries.

In talking on the throne speech, there are so many targets you can work at. It's hard to tell where – but with my 20 minutes I will hit on a few areas. There's a great deal of talk, of course, about balancing the budget. It's rather intriguing, the balancing of the budget. If you look at some common denominators throughout Canada now, you'll notice that New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Alberta are all balancing their budgets, Mr. Speaker. It's rather a revolting development.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. N. TAYLOR: Hello, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan, Alberta, and New Brunswick: you know, they have one thing in common. Rather interestingly enough, as was mentioned earlier, they had inept Tory governments, every one of those three provinces that ran up huge debts. Getty, Hatfield, and – what's his name? I'm thinking of Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: I can see his face. He's quite handsome.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I asked my colleague who the past Premier of Saskatchewan was. She said she couldn't remember, but he was quite handsome. I think it was about the only qualification he had, because he certainly ran the province into debt badly.

I think one of the credits that has never been properly given to the present Premier is that he was a member of a cabinet that sat here and ran the government into debt so badly, and now he turns around and poses as a saviour. Sort of like the guy that borrows your truck and runs it into the ditch and, after he's pulled it out, wants a reward for pulling it out of the ditch. This is what is rather intriguing, how he was able to do that.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Grant Devine.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah. It was something divine. I should have known it was something close to God. Grant Devine was the Premier I was trying to think of.

Balancing the budget, which this government and its sales department has been very good at broadcasting to the *Wall Street Journal* and so on and so forth all around the world – you've got to give them credit, because they couldn't admit that a Liberal government and a socialist government that both had bigger deficits per capita were balancing their budgets just as quickly as we are and without the terrific social dislocation that has happened in this province. In other words, they have balanced their budgets by cutting at the top and by streamlining administration, some things that don't occur here at all. They haven't had any boom in natural gas nor have they had a boom in gambling revenues.

The Premier, of course, is very fond of quoting the Fraser Institute praise and accolades and awards for what he calls the Alberta advantage. Well, personally, winning a line in the Fraser Institute's publication is sort of like getting honourable mention in *Mein Kampf*. I'm not sure just how much credit is due and how difficult it is to get, but it's certainly not someplace I would want

to appear. I think I'd rather be indicted as a piano player in a house of ill fame than I would in the Fraser Institute. Nevertheless, they seem to think it's quite great over there, and they seem to make a big fuss. They're well deserving of it if he figures the Alberta advantage, which he quotes is having the lowest taxes in the country, is really that. And to get the accolades of Exxon, the Rockefellers, and so on – having low taxes, I would think they'd be suspicious. Maybe there is a generation gap here, Mr. Speaker, but I was always raised that when Rockefeller, Exxon, and people like the Fraser Institute were telling you that you were doing well, you'd better check your hole card and see what the heck was going on. They've operated under the philosophy for years that, as they say: it's every man for himself, the elephant said as he stomped in amongst the chickens.

Of course, the Premier seems to think that turning these elephants loose in amongst the chickens of Alberta is somehow or another going to win us great accolades and a better standard of living. He calls it the Alberta advantage, but if you want to go to areas with low taxes – I've been in the international mineral industry for many, many years and there are many areas around the world with low taxes, but I don't think I'd want to live there. I mean, low taxes. You can get low taxes in many islands in the Caribbean, and you can get low taxes in the odd little banana republic in Central America or Africa. There are many areas where you can get low taxes. [interjection]

I'm sorry for taking a minute to put in my hearing aid, because somebody might say something intelligent over there, and I didn't want to miss it. Usually I can read their lips.

But low taxes is no measurement of the quality of life. In fact, Oliver Wendell Holmes, one of the great Supreme Court justices of the United States said: with my taxes I buy civilization. That seems to be a book that neither the Treasurer or the Premier have read.

MR. DAY: I'd say we're overcivilized.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The Member for Red Deer-North calls him a socialist; I guess because he had red robes when he sat in the House.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: He was saying that we're overcivilized.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yes. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North thinks he's overcivilized. Well, that has also been a characteristic of many uncivilized tribes I've run into all through the world. They've always felt they were overcivilized. It's only the overcivilized that recognize that they're undercivilized.

If I may go on a little bit further, we talk about this advantage, but we haven't talked about the Alberta disadvantage. I think that when you start to add and look at the Alberta disadvantage, besides having the front row over there, it's their whole policy. I have transferred people back and forth in corporations through the years and brought in people that create jobs. One of the first things they ask me is not what the income tax rate is; it's what kind of schools will their children be going to. They are interested in their children getting the best opportunity possible. If they want a low tax rate, they can go to, as I say, republics and islands around this world with low tax rates but no school.

After schools they ask: what kind of health care? They may have a wife or a child or they're worried they will have one, or they may have an aging mother or father that's going to join them. They want to know the kind of health care. That will

determine whether I can move them here or move them from Canada to whatever other place they're going.

The third one is usually the recreation abilities and the relaxing abilities. Here we have a government where the minister of the environment is closing down parks, areas where people can go out on a weekend. He shakes his head. I can hear him shaking his head all the way over here, Mr. Speaker, but the point is that they are closing. They've been closing in my area. They're hoping to turn it over to private enterprise. That's the third area.

But you take those areas of health care and education and recreation, and this government is blowing holes in it. You can't call it an advantage. It's a disadvantage, and they will find that. They will find that there will be people not locating here because they can have their children get better education other places, get better recreation other places, and also get better health care. That's been a large part of the cut here, plus attacking the seniors. Do we want to have an economy here where we continue to cut the seniors, where people come here to exploit and take their money out as fast as they can get it and then move someone else to retire? It's taken years by previous governments – some of them might have spent too much – to make Alberta a desirable place to spend your sunset years. But this government acts as if it's a new 1890 mining town: come in here, dig up the gold, make some money, get low taxes, and get the hell out before you're 65.

4:50

These are the things that make society more excellent. I would recommend the reading of Kipling to some of those people over there. There's a poem called *The Things That are More Excellent*. Before you're falling off to sleep today or tonight or tomorrow night and you've finished saying your rosary and blessing the Premier, you could just pick up and read the poem about *The Things That are More Excellent*. You will find it is not the money you dig out of the ground; it is the other things I've mentioned. So in effect we have an Alberta disadvantage, and that news is spreading. That news is spreading.

You'll notice that Trizec, with more employees than Suncor, has moved to Toronto. Sure, Suncor may have moved out here. If you want people that can dig bigger and broader holes in the ground, you're going to find them all right. But there are people that are based and their economy is based on the type of people they have working for them, who are worried about education, worried about health care, and want the advantages for their children that maybe they didn't get. They're moving out, so we've already seen a little bit of the exodus.

Sure, as I say, if you give away oil and gas cheap enough, we can. Of course, we have a Treasurer that says, Mr. Speaker – he's got the old Jay Gould, Rockefeller idea. "Don't tax the rich. Don't tax the rich. If you need money, go get it from the poor, because they don't know what the hell to do with it anyhow. They've already shown that they can't spend their money wisely, because that's why they're poor." It may be that if they can't spend their money wisely, it's because God didn't bless them. The point is that if you go out and tell the rich that they don't have to pay taxes, you've got to get taxes from someplace, so you're going to get them from the poor. So this is the Alberta disadvantage.

We can move into forestry, for instance, to the hon. member over there whom I have fenced with occasionally. We've got a massive hemorrhage of logs being cut in Alberta leaving this province . . .

MR. DAY: You've got a verbal hemorrhage.

MR. N. TAYLOR: No, no, it's not a hemorrhage. When I speak on this side, it might be a hemorrhage. On that side it's diarrhea.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to be able to say is that we have a hemorrhage of logs leaving this province that should be processed, a rate of 700 jobs a month that could be cutting our timber here. Why, we don't even have anybody at the borders checking the loads of logs coming off Crown land. Crown land is supposedly not supposed to have logs shipped out unprocessed. But three massive holes in it, and I'll just give this information free to the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House. I know he looks as if he's asleep, but he's actually listening. I can see his nose twitching. He's got three things he can look at. One is that he can start having 24-hour trucking inspections at the border. Here we're worrying about logs exiting, and those weigh scales at the border are not manned all day. Do you think a B.C. trucker is so dumb that he doesn't know when they close down at night? That's the first thing: he can watch that for 24 hours. The second thing the environmental minister could do is check that the lumber is not going from leased lands on the – I forget what it is. Something like a T-40 or T-39; there's a slip.

MR. LUND: You're all wet, Nick.

MR. N. TAYLOR: No. That's the most intelligent thing I've heard him say for some time.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, the second thing is that the certificates that show where the lumber comes from can have any township or range on it, because the fellow that's hired there is out there to weigh the trucks, not examine them. As long as a fellow has a form on which it says township 28, range 24, hell – sorry for using that profanity – it could be in the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat's riding, where they take dogs that are 12 years old and transport them for 50 miles to see a tree before they die. In other words, they go through. They can put that location down on their slip, and they go floating right through. There's no check on it at all. So that's the second thing he can do: have an environment inspector check where these logs are coming from.

There's a third hemorrhage from private logs. That is that any log, although it may be cut on Crown land, can be shipped from a mill in here to another mill in B.C. as long as the ownership is common. In other words, if you take a log and slab it on each side, square it up, you can send it out of the province. So this minister sits there like Lochinvar's groom. You remember: dangling his bonnet and plume while Lochinvar ran off with the bride. What we have here is that he's dangling his bonnet and plume while the trucking industry and the lumber people of B.C. are running off with our logs.

Now, let's go a step further while we're on lumber. Right now most of the royalty that the hon. minister and the Premier are charging runs around 40 to 60 cents a cubic metre. As a matter of fact, it's never gone over 50 cents, but I give them 60 to give them the benefit of the doubt. That's the stumpage that now is being collected by the province on pulpwood. I think if I'm wrong, he can stand up and say it, but he knows darn well I'm right. As a matter of fact, I've underestimated in such a way that he wouldn't dare get up.

At 60 cents a cubic metre, which is roughly equivalent to a tonne, do you know what private pulp owners and private poplar owners get – and I'm one of them – at a mill today? Three dollars to \$3.50, nearly six times what the government's rate is for pulp. That would make a difference of \$7 million to \$10 million a year in the royalties paid. But this government in its

hurry, because they were blessed, because the international finance community – and after all, Alberta's got a reputation from every international brigand and monetary pirate in the world as an easy mark. They came in here and said: "Well, we'll cut all your trees for you, you lucky dog. Give us a loan guarantee, and we'll put in a floating rate." It started out at 23 cents a tonne. It's now up to 50 cents a tonne, but as I say, private pulp owners are getting \$3 a tonne.

So unless there's something done in our renegotiation – now, we have room to renegotiate because there are all kinds of things that are left airy-fairy in some of the FMAs. But I would like the minister to explain in the next few days – and I'm giving him a warning now because I might ask some questions, so he won't have to fumble around. I'm going to ask a question in question period on what he is doing about the low royalty rate for deciduous pulp. Then after he gets that unscrambled, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go after him and ask what he's doing about the low royalty rate for coniferous. Coniferous, to the uneducated ones, are the ones with the needles; remember? The other ones, with the big leaves, are the deciduous ones. They can both be used for pulp and can be used for lumber, and it's almost a joke.

Now, while we're on the environment – and I mentioned this the other day – there are two types of environment. There's the physical environment and there is the arts environment, if you want to call it that. Those are very, very necessary for this Alberta advantage to kick in. Right now it's a disadvantage. Not only did the environment used to be trees and mountains – and the environment minister is letting the trees disappear at a rate so that the whole country will look like Medicine Hat and Cypress if we don't watch it. Not only is he doing that, but he's contemplating a water tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Now, the hon. Speaker and these members say: not a tax. But these are the same people that said user fees are not a tax, so how would you trust them? A user fee for water maybe? No tax. No tax on water, no. A user fee maybe? They've got any number of different words they can use in the English language to cover tax on water, probably not till after the next election. I'd like to see the supporters of some of those from Medicine Hat and Bow Island and Cypress get across and talk to those farmers down there about taxes on water. It's all right for the minister of agriculture to talk about user fees on water and it's all right for the Acting Speaker to talk about user fees on water because they've come from areas where there's all kinds of water. As a matter of fact, if the south runs out of water, we'll have to lay a pipeline up to their constituencies to get the water to take to the south. Fortunately, they are living where only 20 percent of the people of Alberta live, yet 80 percent of the water is up there. So we have that. That's the physical part of the environment that we are not looking after: water, trees.

5:00

The minister of the environment keeps looking up at the clock, but I'm not going to let him off the stove yet. As a matter of fact, there are a couple more degrees I'm going to turn up on the griddle there. He may be looking for the time to go, but he can't. I think what we'll do is move an amendment to this throne speech in a couple of days and do the whole thing over again. I want to thank you for the opportunity of taking the minister's shoes off and running a match under them now and again.

Thank you very much.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, welcome this opportunity to speak to the throne speech and to share with the Assembly some of the questions that this particular speech raises for me and for constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods. As I look through the document and put it in the context of past government action, it raises four questions, and I'd like to address those four questions.

First of all, the question it raises is: what is the vision of the province that is embedded in this document and in government action? Exactly what do they want Alberta to look like when their course of action has been completed? That leads to a second question, because so much of what the government has done and so much of what is contained in the throne speech has this curious intertwining of government and business. The question it raises is: do government and big business actually now run the province as a partnership? Is that the vision they have of our province?

A third question that comes out of the document is: does the government know the difference between government and business? The fourth question I have is: have they looked at experience elsewhere. Have they looked at other governments that have adopted the same routes and at what has happened when you pursue that particular course of action? What happened in England? What happened after Reagan? What happened after Roger Douglas? Have they looked at those experiences and taken those into account?

With those four questions, I'd like to return to the vision of the province that government members seem to hold or I'm afraid may hold. Mr. Speaker, I'm alarmed. I'm alarmed when I hear members stand up and tell us that we should expect less for our children, that somehow or other we have reached the zenith, that the plateau has been reached and we can go no further and we're going to have to go downhill from now on and we should learn to enjoy it. I don't accept that for this province. I don't accept that for my children or my neighbours' children. This is a province with great potential. There's much room for better schools. There's lots of room for better universities. Health care can be improved. Those things have to happen. The standard of living can be raised. We may live differently; the chase for consumerism may be somewhat dampened. We will live different lives, but they can also be much richer lives. I reject any view of the province that would have us somehow or other be less than what we could be or what we are today.

Mark Lisac, for those of you that have had a chance to read his book on the Premier, guesses that the government's view of this province is that it should become Hong Kong by the Rockies, and I hope that isn't the view. I hope that writer Lisac is incorrect in maintaining that that is really where the government is headed. If you're in Hong Kong and you're downtown at those expensive hotels and sitting in those luxurious lobbies and being whisked around the settlement in limousines and having private industrialists entertaining you, it's quite one thing. But go three miles down the road from those hotels and look up the hillsides, look at what happens to the common people, the people that are working in the basements of those hotels, that are keeping that colony going, and it's quite a different life. I don't accept that that kind of life is the kind of life that we should be relegating or we should be anticipating anyone in Alberta living. So the notion that this should be a Hong Kong by the Rockies is one that I hope is not what the government holds, but I fear that, if Lisac is right, they actually do.

I think that there's another vision that permeates the government's work and is in the Speech from the Throne, and that's the notion that government is bad. We have this view that government somehow is bad and that if we could even privatize the whole thing, that somehow or other would be better. Does that really reflect what people in Alberta think? I think not. If you look back at the history of local government in this city, the first residents were quick to establish school boards for the common good. People here in Alberta have recognized the good that government can do in terms of acting on our common values and our concern for others. So that vision of government as being bad and less government being less and no government at all probably being best is a vision that I'm afraid permeates some of this material and the government's actions, and it's one that I reject. I think that we were reminded last night at the Lieutenant Governor's dinner just how precious the institution of government is. The actions that we take are actions that should reinforce it and make it better, not detract from it.

I also fear that the government has been captured by the budget cutting. We have to get rid of the annual deficits. We have to work on the debt. Everyone recognizes that, but that's a means to an end. What are we doing all this for? Surely there has to be an end in sight, and that has to be a better Alberta. It has to be better lives for all Albertans, and it's lost. We're captured by the whole business of budget cutting and delighted when the *Wall Street Journal* applauds the efforts of the province. But few, if any, words are spent on: what kind of schools do we want? What kind of universities do we want? What kind of museums? What kind of cultural activities? How do we want people to spend their lives in work: at three or four part-time jobs? Is that how we expect them to spend their lives in the future?

What do we want in terms of careers? At one time it was quite respectable for people in universities, in high schools in this province to aspire to work in the public service. That was considered to be a good career to look forward to and to prepare yourself for. That's no longer the case. Those workers and the work that they do have been denigrated. So that whole notion of where this province should be and what we want it to be like I think is lost in this throne speech, and it's lost in the action of the government.

I guess that leads me to what I think has been a disturbing melding of government and big business interests. If you again look back at Lisac's book, he devotes a chapter in the book to cataloguing the business people in this government and in this province that have the government's and the Premier's ear. He traces the industries and businesses that they represent and the kinds of interests that they're pursuing with the Premier. I look at the great glee and the pride that the members opposite take in the articles appearing in the *Wall Street Journal*. That kind of accolade legitimizing their work worries me. I look at the great satisfaction they take in praise from the Fraser Institute with few, if any, words in terms of how that Fraser Institute is financed. Where does the money come from to keep the Fraser Institute going, and in whose interest does the Fraser Institute operate? Let me tell you, it's not the schoolteachers and hospital workers around this province that the Fraser Institute is concerned about.

5:10

I look at how quick the government is to wheel out those examples of praise for what they're doing and how quickly they'll dismiss 17,000 people at a rally outside the Grey Nuns hospital. They somehow or other can't be listened to. Their opinions, their wishes are quickly dismissed and ignored. So I think there's a

disturbing linking. This government, which says time and time again that it's getting out of the business of being in business, has actually now moved into partnership with big business.

I think there's also a rather dangerous blurring between government and private enterprise. It was the third question that I raised: do they know the difference? There are really important differences between business and government. If you look at the value systems, if you look at the assumptions that underline those two institutions, you'll start to see those differences. Business is interested in profit, and government is supposed to be interested in the common good. Those are two very, very different values.

Business is interested in competition and thrives on competition and rightfully so. Government is supposed to promote co-operation. Government has an obligation to bring people together and to act on the express wishes of people. Co-operation and bringing and drawing communities together should be a strong part of the values that government holds and endorses.

Businesses can and do fail. Seventy-five percent of the new businesses started in this country failed last year. Seventy-five percent. That's the market, and they should be allowed to fail. Governments can't be allowed to fail. Too many people depend on them for hospital service, for education, for family and social services, and for other services essential to their lives. So governments unlike businesses can't fail.

Businesses treat people as customers. We saw that in the throne speech. Customers are quite different from citizens. Citizens in a democracy expect to be equal to those of us serving here and to be our masters. To start and turn the tables around and to treat them and to even think of them as customers is astounding to say the least.

There are other differences. Businesses are private affairs. Businesses have to be private. They have to keep their developments, they have to keep their plans secreted from their competitors if they're going to survive. Government is a public affair. Good government is open government, and good government operates its best when information on the kinds of activities they're engaged in is available to all.

I think there's a different ethical perspective. Business looks at resources in one way, and government has an obligation to look at resources, for instance, in another way. Often business looks at resources as needed material for the products they're producing and in terms of conservation has quite a different plan than government should have. So there's an ethical perspective that is quite different if you're in business or if you're working for government interests. The dangerous blurring of business and government and not knowing when one is one and when it's the other really is disturbing, and it's so reflective of the kinds of things that have come out of this throne speech and out of the government activities in the last year and a half or so.

I guess the last question I'd like to address – and it really astounds me how in Alberta we repeat our history. We're so willing to import ideas from elsewhere 10, 15, 20 years later. It permeates the education field; it permeates a number of things that we do. We'll look at ideas that have been used and then cast off or discarded elsewhere and adopt them for our own. That's the case in terms of the present government's action. Thatcher went this road. Reagan went this road. Roger Douglas went this road. The evidence is clear: quality suffers. I mean, the generalization, if you read anything about those governments, is that quality is reduced: reduced in schools in terms of the kinds of programs that are provided for students; poorer universities, the narrowing

of programs; hospital care more costly to users and more difficult to get. Quality across the board suffers, and it's going to suffer here.

Experience elsewhere tells us that going this route, particularly with the great emphasis on privatizing, is going to result in massive efforts to regain control. It's fine to give the obligations and responsibilities away, but what happens when it doesn't work out? Getting back control has occupied a great deal of energy of the governments in those countries. Some services have actually increased in cost, so privatizing does not always mean that costs are going to be reduced. If you want evidence for that, you should listen to some of the reports on private care in the United States, where insurance companies have had a great deal to do with the costs, and certainly having them privatized there hasn't reduced costs.

One of the more important ones when you take this approach to government – and it goes back to that vision of Alberta – is the class system that becomes so much more accentuated as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. You don't have to stay in many constituency offices very long to see the steady stream of citizens coming in barely able to make ends meet. People on social assistance who with any kind of a calamity – and by calamity I mean an extra \$50 expense – are driven to panic because there are just no resources there for them. That whole notion that we should assign and expect a group of Albertans to be poorer, to not be as well-off as some of us is one that I think just has to be rejected and one, from experiences elsewhere, we should be really, really concerned about.

I think the great concern in slashing the public service is that – and again experience elsewhere is that, sure, lots of people lose their jobs – the senior bureaucrats actually end up with more control, and you don't have to look far here. If you look at

education and look at the senior officials in Education now, the kind of power they have, the kind of control they exert over the education system is much, much greater than it was a year and a half ago.

There's less accountability. As private enterprise takes over government operations, there's less accountability. It works in government's favour because when something goes wrong, the government says: "It wasn't us. It's that contractor out there. That's why you're having trouble at the hospital. It wasn't us that didn't adequately provide resources for staff. It was that private contractor. Don't blame us." So those governments end up being less accountable to the very people that put them in office to look after their affairs.

Lastly, I guess, one of the changes from elsewhere that I find disturbing is the whole weakening of public institutions. Schools, universities are all much weaker after this kind of government, in bed with big business, co-operating with big business, operating the province as if it were a business, has finished their work.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned, and I find the throne speech wanting in three really very important areas. First of all, a rather warped vision of what Alberta can be and underselling and underestimating the power of our people. Secondly, the confused set of values that it seems to support: there's no clarity of what's important and what should be supported when it fails miserably to distinguish between the means – why are we doing this? – and the ends – where do we want to go?

Thank you very much.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, considering the hour, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[At 5:19 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

