

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 14, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/03/14

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province and ourselves.

We ask You to ensure to us Your guidance and the will to follow it.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of a number of Edmonton and area residents petitioning the Legislative Assembly, specifically 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.

[And] . . . 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.

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

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am presenting a petition on behalf of 27 citizens of the Peace country region who are requesting that the government eliminate taxpayer funding of elective abortions.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table on behalf of over 100 residents of Calgary and area a petition calling on 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

and to ensure that

all children have an equal opportunity . . . to succeed and compete in life by having equal access to basic educational resources.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition urging the government of Alberta "not to make sexual orientation a part of the Individual's Rights Protection Act." This is signed by 24 Edmonton and area residents.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to table today a petition in the Assembly signed by 52 Albertans from

southern Alberta urging the government "not to make sexual orientation a part of the Individual's Rights Protection Act."

head: **Notices of Motions**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I give notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

As well, I give notice that tomorrow I'll move that motions for returns stand and retain their places on the Order Paper with the exception of 159, 162, 174, 176, 177, 178, 179, 182, 183, and 184.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give oral notice that tomorrow I will introduce Bill 20, Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 1995.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members will recall that when the Financial Review Commission made recommendations to the province, one of the things it recommended was that the Audit Committee report annually on the progress made by the government in implementing the recommendations of the Financial Review Commission. I am pleased to table that report today.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to file four copies each of the following documents: a copy of a letter from Mr. Ken Noskey, president of the Metis Settlements General Council, to the Premier indicating that they were in no way involved with the decision by the Liberal caucus to pose the question regarding the Premier and his relationship with the Metis settlements; a second tabling, a copy of a letter from Randy Parenteau, chairman of the Fishing Lake Metis settlement, to Ken Noskey indicating that they did not contact the Liberal Party and did not consent to the Liberal Party using the settlement issue for political posturing.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the Motion for a Return 180 I wish to table six copies of the agreement entered into between the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation and Learning and Skills Television of Alberta with respect to the sale and management of Access television network. I would like to include with this, although it was not asked for, the agreements relating to the transfer of CKUA radio to the CKUA Radio Foundation. I wish to table those agreements as well because I feel certain that the opposition will come back and ask for them at some time anyway.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table information on Building and Sharing the Art Experience by the

Prairie Art Gallery in Grande Prairie. It's a dynamic art gallery with a dynamic leader, Elizabeth Ginn.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table this afternoon the statement from the board of directors for Hospice Calgary and the accompanying news release, all dated March 13, 1995.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MR. SMITH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the esteemed members of the Assembly Dr. Keith Archer, a political science professor from the University of Calgary, and 22 students from Dr. Archer's class. It's appropriate that they're here today knowing that University of Calgary alumni are well represented in this government. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, through your kindness a visitor from the Christian Democratic Party in Ukraine is now visiting our caucus and the Conservative caucus and dealing with the Speaker's office. She noted to me that school children are not allowed to go to the Assembly in Ukraine. That shows you how bad it is, how badly understood the whole system of democratic politics is.

It's my pleasure to introduce 55 students from a school in my constituency, Evansdale school. The students are here with their teachers Mr. Roebrook and Mr. Haruch, and they're accompanied by helpers Mrs. Follack, Miss Bradley, and Miss Anghelone. Would they stand and be welcomed in a democratic society that likes to have students participate in politics.

Thank you.

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Mayfield 16 visitors from the Alberta Vocational College here in Edmonton. They're accompanied today by their teacher Ms Faith Fernald. I believe that they're sitting in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

1:40 **Capital Regional Health Authority**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, today the Capital health care authority will announce layoffs of as many as 2,300 Edmonton area health care workers. My question is to the Premier. How can this Premier say that people won't be hurt by these cuts when clearly no one anywhere has done any kind of formal assessment of the health care needs of the people in the Edmonton region?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, when we embarked on this program over two years ago, we said quite clearly that, yes, there was going to be some pain, and, yes, there was going to be some sacrifice on the part of Albertans. We're into the stage now of the program, I guess, where those tough decisions are indeed

coming around. The Capital regional health authority, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition pointed out, will be bringing down its budget this evening, and that budget calls for some fundamental and very major restructuring and reorganization of health care delivery systems in the city of Edmonton.

MRS. SOETAERT: Don't get sick in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: Order.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I've lost my train of thought. [interjections] If you would just be quiet; right? Please. [interjection] I know you can't. I know how difficult it is for the hon. member.

What I was going to say is that this now, Mr. Speaker, is an opportune time for members of the Liberal caucus, most of whom come from the city of Edmonton, to attend the meeting this evening, to attend this open, public meeting and to examine the budget in detail and offer to the Capital regional health authority honest and constructive criticism.

MR. MITCHELL: Does the Premier understand and does he believe it to be acceptable that the Capital health care authority is going to eliminate all elective surgery for the months of June, July, and August in this region? That includes heart bypasses, hip replacements, knee replacements, and I can go on, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again I reiterate that this is an opportune time, a golden opportunity for the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to attend along with members of his caucus the meeting this evening and to pose those very questions to the regional health authority and seek the answers that they require.

MR. MITCHELL: I wonder whether the Premier could tell us how much money the Capital health authority is spending on the public relations firm Calder Bateman to sell the cuts that this Premier and his provincial government are forcing them to make.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, this is a wonderful opportunity, and I will ask the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition: will he attend? Will he commit in this Assembly to attend the open, public meeting of the Capital regional health authority this evening and ask those questions of the authority?

MR. MITCHELL: Maybe Calder Bateman should write the Premier some answers to some questions.

Last week the government scoffed at our claim that women are disproportionately bearing the brunt of the Premier's budget cuts. Now we have some further proof. The elimination of obstetrics and gynecological services at the University of Alberta hospital will have serious effects on all Albertans but in particular on women. To the Premier: on what basis are you allowing an unelected regional authority to make that kind of decision?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, hospital boards since the beginning of time and since their inception have been making decisions. The only difference was that there was a hospital board, an unelected hospital board, for every hospital in the city of Edmonton, and they made their own decisions. The only difference now is that we have a consolidation of those boards under the Capital regional health authority and in 16 other health authorities throughout the province. They have been charged and have been

given the responsibility and indeed the authority to make these decisions. Once again I ask the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to attend the meeting this evening and ask those questions of the authority.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling a study which establishes the world-class status and the economic importance of medical research at the University of Alberta hospital. How can the Premier justify dismantling the University of Alberta hospital's outstanding women's health research program?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this Premier is not dismantling, nor is this government dismantling. We have given the Capital regional health authority the responsibility and the authority to undertake a restructuring of the delivery of health care services in this city to focus more on community health and to provide an adequate health care system in a more effective and a more efficient way. The details relative to that program will be outlined at an open, public meeting this evening, and once again I invite the Liberals to attend that meeting.

MR. MITCHELL: This is the forum where all Albertans are represented and where they have elected representatives like the Premier that they can hold accountable for these kinds of decisions.

Has the Premier made any attempt to determine, to assess, to study the negative impact that this move will have on the University of Alberta hospital's ability to carry out world-class research in the area of women's health?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Liberals will fulfill their responsibility to their electorate and monitor very carefully the program that will be outlined this evening by the Capital regional health authority. I know that the Minister of Health will be doing precisely that. I know that the MLA who so kindly joined us not so long ago, who represents one of the constituencies of Edmonton, will be monitoring the situation. I know that the hon. Member for Stony Plain will be monitoring the situation very carefully. If we see something going awry, we will provide our political input, as I hope the Liberals would do.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Special Waste Treatment Centre

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this House I asked the Minister of Environmental Protection about the \$100,000 fee Bovar gets paid for consulting with itself on the Swan Hills plant. The minister didn't seem to have a very good handle on this agreement, but one individual who does is the individual who negotiated this agreement in 1993: the Premier. My questions are to the Premier. Is it still the policy of this government, as it was in 1992 and '93, that friends of the government like Bovar should always benefit and that Albertans should cover the cost of these friendships?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that was somewhat of a ludicrous opening comment.

AN HON. MEMBER: Somewhat.

MR. KLEIN: Well, not somewhat; it was. It was absolutely ludicrous.

Mr. Speaker, when the Special Waste Management Corporation was formed and the plant located in Swan Hills, it was done for strictly environmental reasons. Yes, this government knew at that time that there was going to be a cost associated with the destruction of hazardous material, just as there is a public cost associated with the collection and the handling of all waste, whether it's hazardous waste or normal household waste. We all pay in one way, shape, or form. There was a recognition at that particular time that, yes, there was going to be a cost associated with this.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection wishes to supplement.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to supplement the hon. Premier's answer because once again there's some very - I guess misleading is not parliamentary. But some information coming from that hon. member is not accurate. Yesterday the hon. member said that there was a minimum of \$100,000. In fact, it's a maximum of \$100,000, and in fact what is going on is from the joint venture agreement . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, if they would listen, they could possibly learn something. They'll ask some stupid questions about this again because they're not listening.

The fact is that under the joint venture agreement, yes, there is some money paid to Bovar for consulting work that they do. This includes legal advice, tax advice, and investment advice, those types of things. Chem-Security would, in fact, have to go out and hire that outside of Bovar if in fact they weren't getting those services from Bovar.

1:50

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing ludicrous about my opening statement is that yesterday I asked the Minister of Environmental Protection.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will the Premier confirm that under the agreement with Bovar, that he negotiated and approved, even if the ownership in the Swan Hills plant changes, Albertans are still on the hook for the \$100 million loan guarantee that he approved?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the situation relative to the Swan Hills plant has changed dramatically over the past six months. There has been a hearing before the Natural Resources Conservation Board relative to the importation of waste from other Canadian jurisdictions. That recommendation has been accepted by cabinet. I believe that an order in council has now been passed to allow this activity to take place. The asset value, I would suggest, of the plant has changed really quite dramatically. The person who really has the information relative to the updated situation, the new situation as it relates to that plant is the chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, and if I'm allowed to do so, I would ask him to supplement.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Premier, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly, there is an outstanding guarantee. I believe it's for approximately \$88 million, and certainly the hon. member is accurate in suggesting that the government is backstopping that. Nevertheless, that was the continuation of the agreement as

originally structured, and when the expansion took place, this government undertook to participate in that expansion as a 40 percent partner. We are also, as the Premier has indicated, accepting waste into this province. We are starting to turn the facility around, and hopefully in the near future we will see some subsequent reduction in the subsidies which are presently taking place. We are, as has been noted in the newspaper, attempting to renegotiate and restructure our arrangement to eliminate those subsidies.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question's related to the agreement that the Premier negotiated and approved.

Will the Premier confirm that under the agreement he negotiated and approved, even if ownership of the plant changes, Albertans will still have to pay subsidies to the plant, to Bovar, that could easily top \$100 million?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw indicated, there are attempts now being made to have the whole situation renegotiated in light of the dramatically changed nature, I guess, of the Swan Hills plant. The asset value of that plant, I would suggest, has increased dramatically since the decision of the Natural Resources Conservation Board relative to the importation of waste.

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

Metis Settlements

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago questions were raised concerning the relationship of this government to the Metis settlements in Alberta, and there has recently been some concern in Calgary expressed at meetings that I have attended about the involvement of Metis people in the delivery of child welfare services once it is moved to a community-based program. Can the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs explain the government's ongoing relationship with the 6,000 Metis settlement members?

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, of course, I filed some letters in this Assembly outlining what the Metis settlements feel in relation to the questions brought up by the Official Opposition in the House a couple of weeks ago. Of course, the ongoing working relationship with the Metis settlements could not be any better. In fact, Alberta is the only province in Canada that recognizes the Metis with a land base and also transitional financial support for them to achieve self-government within the 17 provided. In addition to that, we do have ongoing meetings. In fact, just recently five cabinet ministers met with the Metis settlement members to discuss various issues such as water, sewer, road networks, child welfare, and other areas.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: what will be the future involvement of Metis people in the delivery of child welfare?

MR. CARDINAL: Of course, I've always indicated, Mr. Speaker, that it's a very unfortunate situation that 50 percent of the 8,000 children in care, 2,300 in foster homes, are of aboriginal ancestry. This government, of course, works very hard to make sure that wherever possible the aboriginal community has the opportunity to deliver the services for their own people. That is why, when we announced the program recently, the 17 authorities that are going to be established out there will also, in addition to that, provide the Metis settlements the same opportunity to deliver the services for their children, also the Metis nation, and the 45 Indian bands.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned, at this meeting that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and I attended in Calgary, there was a great deal of concern about future meetings. So to the minister: what meetings are planned to discuss the outstanding issues with the Metis settlements in Alberta?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the meetings of course are ongoing. The Metis settlements on an ongoing basis meet with individual cabinet ministers and staff. In fact, within the next month the Premier will be meeting with the Metis settlements again to talk about general issues on the Metis accord to make sure that the transitional process continues as it has. In addition to that, there are other native groups, of course, we continue meeting with. Our goal, not like the Liberals, is to see the time when the aboriginal people become self-sufficient again, and this is part of the overall process. In fact, just on Friday the Premier and I will be meeting with the All Chiefs Summit 2, about 45 Indian bands, to talk about issues in relation to aboriginal people and working towards ending the poverty of all our aboriginal people in Alberta.

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

West Edmonton Mall

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Provincial Treasurer refused to provide information on the deal struck between Alberta Treasury Branches, Nomura Canada, and TD Trust Co. in the \$440 million refinancing of West Edmonton Mall. The Treasurer is between a rock and a hard place. Either he knows of the deal and knows that it'd be so bad for taxpayers that he won't acknowledge it, or he doesn't know, and an acting superintendent is solely responsible for \$8 billion in investments, which Alberta taxpayers backstop. I don't know which frightens me more. My first question is to the Treasurer. Will the Provincial Treasurer release details of this deal so that we know how much more above the present \$106 million Alberta taxpayers are presently on the hook for?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, Alberta taxpayers are on the hook for nothing. In fact, what I will continue to rely on is the work of the person in the Auditor General's office who reviews and audits the financial statements of the Alberta Treasury Branches every year. In fact, the auditors are permanently housed within Alberta Treasury Branches, given the nature and the size of the organization. Just as I must so must the hon. member across the way be reliant upon the Auditor General to ensure that the systems and the provisions and all matters financial are properly overseen.

The hon. member is trying to drag me out here to the middle of the floor and ask me to reveal financial transactions that exist between a client of the Treasury Branches and Treasury Branches.

So I guess my concern would be: where would the hon. member want me to stop? Would he want me to reveal his transactions with Treasury Branches? Would he want me to reveal the transactions that occurred between Treasury Branches and the Member for Edmonton-Roper when he was a client of Treasury Branches? Where would he want me to draw the line? I know where I will draw the line. I will draw the line at zero because I will not break faith with the customers of Treasury Branches.

2:00

DR. PERCY: I draw the line at \$100 million, Mr. Speaker.

Is the deal so bad, Mr. Treasurer, that your office is afraid of the public reaction were the contents to be released?

MR. DINNING: Well, there you are, Mr. Speaker. The member wants me to reveal a detailed relationship between a client of Treasury Branches and Treasury Branches. Now, were I to do that, were I to fall into his trap and meet him on the floor of the Legislature across that line, he would drag me across and ask me to reveal two or three or 10 or a hundred thousand more. Do you know what he would do then? He'd throttle me for having revealed that relationship. So, you know, the hon. member is right. I am caught between a rock and a hard place, but I will stay at zero because I will reveal no relationship between a Treasury Branch client and Treasury Branches. That would be breaking faith.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, this is non arm's length because of the letter sent by the Ghermezians to the Premier.

My final question to the Treasurer is: will the Treasurer release the results of the report prepared by Gordon Flynn, vetted through the 15-member Don Mazankowski review committee, which the Treasurer appointed, concerning Alberta Treasury Branches and governance that the Treasurer has been sitting on for the last four months? Will he release it?

MR. DINNING: So, Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member saying that if I got one of my buddies to write a letter to me or to the Premier asking the Premier to have the Treasurer release the transaction, the relationship between Treasury Branches and the Member for Edmonton-Roper when he was a client of Treasury Branches, I would then be authorized to release that and put it onto the floor of the Assembly? Well, it's that kind of gobbledygook that we expect from the Liberals, and that's why they're sitting in opposition.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Rural Waste Management

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a concern that affects two areas of my constituency and I'm sure quite a number of other rural constituencies. My question is to the Minister of Health. We're constantly looking for ways to avoid overlap and duplication, yet we seem to maintain a number of regulations that promote exactly the opposite, and I'm speaking in the area of rural waste management systems. Alberta Environmental Protection funds and sets the standard for these systems, the local municipalities build and operate them, but the local health authority and in some cases more than one of these inspects and provides the permits to operate them. To the minister: is there any reason why the function of inspection and permits needs

to be done by the public health inspector rather than an environmental official who might already be on the jobsite?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, traditionally environment and health inspectors have had an historic shared interest in waste management issues. Certainly on the environmental side it's a primary concern to protect the air, water, and soil, et cetera. There is obviously a health concern too because these waste facilities can carry public health hazards, disease or chemicals, getting into systems. Currently, this responsibility does fall under the Public Health Act. I should say that the minister of environment, myself, and our departments have been working collaboratively over the last months to see if there is a way that we can streamline that process and ensure that we don't have duplication of experts in both of our departments doing essentially the same work.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why would a public health inspector get involved in something like fencing standards or liability insurance or approval of operator subcontracts?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that certainly is really the nub of the whole issue. While it is a shared responsibility and as along as it is a shared responsibility, then health inspectors do have a responsibility to ensure that the fencing is adequate to contain matters that might be there. Insurance is an issue certainly because health inspectors would have some liability responsibility to ensure that the facility is adequate to ensure that there isn't a public health concern emanating from that facility. Again, I think the important area is that the minister of environment and I have spent some time reviewing this with our officials to see if we can take some of that duplication out of the system and make it easier for our municipalities to work in this area.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address my final supplementary to the Minister of Environmental Protection. From the point of view of that department is there any reason why the functions of permits and inspection could not be done by Alberta Environmental Protection?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. Minister of Health has indicated, our officials have been working over the last period of time trying to see if we can streamline the system, and we have come to the conclusion that Environmental Protection can in fact do all of the things that are currently being done. Of course, the municipality is still going to have to give a development permit as it relates to a landfill. Those that have been involved in siting a landfill recognize that a lot of the interest is to do with groundwater, and groundwater does fall under the jurisdiction of Environmental Protection. So we will be moving to have a one-window approach, and it will be through Alberta Environmental Protection.

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

Food Bank Use

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's self-described grand experiment has now marginalized even more Albertans. Today's Food Bank figures from Edmonton confirm that the cuts imposed by this government are causing serious hardship and increasing the level of hunger in this province to an all-time high. My questions are to the Premier. Mr. Premier, how can you ignore the Food Bank's increasing and damning evidence proving the depth of hunger in Alberta, which is the direct result of your actions?

MR. KLEIN: What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that as a result of our programs, as a result of our commitment to major restructuring and reorganization to bring about a more effective and a more efficient government, including the area of Family and Social Services, we have also managed to keep our tax rate at the lowest of any jurisdiction in this country; we have been able to avoid the implementation of a sales tax. Because of our policies we were able to create the environment for 89,000 new private-sector jobs. That's what's important.

MR. CARDINAL: I'd just like to supplement that, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is right. The Liberal way, of course, would be to provide more welfare. That's not what the people want, and we know that.

The other issue I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, is that we have statistics that show a very small percentage of people on welfare use food banks, very, very small, almost none.

MS HANSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file copies of a letter from a Food Bank volunteer inviting the Premier to a serious discussion on Food Bank usage. Thank you.

Why then, Mr. Premier, did you refuse to meet with the volunteers of Edmonton's Food Bank? Instead you fobbed off the invitation to the Minister of Family and Social Services, who just as quickly passed it on to a public servant to deal with. Why didn't either one of you take this seriously?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the allegation that we don't take these things seriously is utter nonsense. It is quite appropriate for the Premier, once he receives an invitation to meet or when asked for information, to send that letter and that invitation to the appropriate minister. I understand from my appointments secretary that we get something in excess of a thousand invitations a month, and I simply can't attend them all. That's why we have ministers of the Crown, people who are in a position to deal quite specifically with individual cases. I will review the letter that the hon. member tabled with the Minister of Family and Social Services, and if there is an opportunity for me to meet with the Food Bank officials, I will do so.

2:10

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that I do supplement the Premier because the hon. member criticizes us for not being serious. We are serious. Eighteen months ago or so when the welfare reforms were announced, we had over 94,000 cases of people on welfare, 94,000 cases. We have reduced that now over 44 percent allowing us – [interjection] listen, if you're interested – to move each year over \$100 million to high-needs areas, exactly the area the hon. member's talking about. In addition to that, we have more people working and training now than we've ever had before because of the welfare

reforms. Is it wrong for people to work, or should we provide more dollars for welfare so people don't have to work? Is that the hon. member's request?

MS HANSON: It's not welfare; it's food I'm talking about.

Mr. Premier, my last question is: what will it take to convince you that your actions have created an unbearable demand on provincial food banks, and therefore they need your immediate help?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is an allegation. I would like the hon. member to provide me with all the documentation she has that provides substantive proof that this is an unbearable situation. I will, however, commend the food banks and the volunteers who work for the food banks. They perform a tremendous service for society.

I can reiterate that because of the policies of this government – and I'm going to talk about the upside of restructuring – in terms of sustaining a good economic climate, we were able to create the climate for the private sector to create some 89,000 new jobs over the past two years.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

Organ Donor Program

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I had the pleasure of dealing with one of the registries offices in the province. I went in and renewed my driver's licence, and I received one of the new one-part driver's licences to replace my old two-part licence. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. First of all, I was very impressed with the new digital technology, but when I got home I realized that my new licence no longer had on the back my pledge of organ donation that was involved with the old licence, and I'm wondering if the minister could advise this House how Albertans indicate their wish to donate organs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a very important question. [interjections] The organ donor program is a very important program to a lot of Albertans, even though it may not be very important to the Liberals. The new driver's licences did not include this offer of organ donation on the back because of the technology right now. I suspect that it may be able to be included at some time. There are a number of people in Alberta who don't have driver's licences, and they wish to be involved in the organ donor program. So we have now included that on the back of everybody's Alberta health care card. So there is the opportunity there, but it's on the back of the health care card now.

MR. RENNER: Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could perhaps advise the officials, the workers in the registries offices to point that out to people when they renew their licences, because there are a lot of people who are very, very much involved and committed to organ donation, and they may not be aware that they now have an alternate route available to them through the Alberta health cards.

MR. THURBER: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I could put out a directive and a notification to all registries in Alberta to have that information provided when one goes there.

MR. RENNER: Well, it's obviously a help to people that have the alternative available to them. I think that the driver's licence was a good place for that donation. I'm wondering if the minister could advise if he has asked the people involved in the programming of the software to incorporate the organ donor certificate in future drafts of that software.

MR. THURBER: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I haven't advised them to do that at this point in time. I can have that reviewed. I will make a commitment to have it reviewed and to see if that in fact is a possibility. I stress again that there are a number of people in Alberta who don't have driver's licences, so I would suspect that we would have to include it in both places so they have that opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

Gaming on Native Reserves

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of native bands are negotiating to set up American-style casinos on their reserves, like the kind Jack Binion owns. This will probably only benefit the bands where the casinos are built and give the Premier an excuse to build his own casinos outside the reserves. The Saskatchewan government, on the other hand, has made provision to share profits from gambling with all First Nations people. Now, the first question is to the minister responsible for lotteries. Has the minister made any specific efforts to ensure that First Nations people on reserves get the same per capita treatment with respect to lottery and gambling profits as do the rest of Albertans?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the casino issue on reserves and First Nations is a federal issue. If you want to study the Criminal Code as well as the Constitution, at the present time there would have to be a dramatic change – a dramatic change – in how Ottawa and the federal government address that view. They did address that in Saskatchewan, by the way, because they made an agreement with Saskatchewan, but it has got its complications on what we call urban reserves and dedication of certain lands outside the original treaties and the settlements that were achieved there. If the member is insinuating that we should advance in another direction, different on First Nations than we are in the province of Alberta at the present time, then make that presentation to the people of Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to supplement that. The Premier and I recently met with an individual band in southern Alberta to discuss that specific issue. In fact, the band agreed to hold a meeting in the very near future with other band members across the province, and they will meet with the lotteries committee that's out there to discuss this specific issue. That's a number of months down the road.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, that wasn't the question. I hope that when the hon. member is looking for organs to be donated, he will give an ear to the minister of lotteries. [interjections] It's all right; I could have asked for a brain. [interjection] I've got it.

To the Premier: knowing that the Premier has already spoken to at least one reserve about the establishment of a casino – and I think it's just been confirmed – has he proposed sharing lottery

and gambling funding with them? That's off the reserve. Has he proposed sharing lottery and gambling funds with them to forestall them setting up a casino?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, I met along with the hon. minister who's responsible for native affairs with representatives of the Tsuu T'ina Nation. Certainly that is one of many nations I understand now considering casinos and that has in fact been in negotiations with Las Vegas operators to pursue gambling on Indian reserves. That is simply one component that complicates the whole situation relative to gambling, and perhaps part of that can be sorted out through the Lottery Review Committee.

I can tell you that when we have the chiefs' summit – and I believe it's next week – I know darn well that the whole issue of gambling on native reserves is going to be on the agenda. I'll check it out with the chiefs first, but I will take this opportunity if I possibly can to invite the hon. Member for Redwater to attend that meeting and perhaps pose some of these questions to the chiefs. Maybe he would do as I've challenged the Liberals to do all along, and that is to become part of the solution.

2:20

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for lotteries wishes to supplement?

DR. WEST: Yes. I'd like to supplement, because the question specifically asked if there was a share of lottery funds available for First Nations. I just want to clear up that insinuation that they weren't, because many of the community facility and enhancement grants, if there are applications come from First Nations or reserves, have been accessed by some of the First Nations groups. I know of two roofs on arenas that have caved in recently that have been accessed through the council, and there are others, sporting initiative grants and that, and they're all funded by lotteries. So at the present time the lottery revenues are accessible through the present programs to First Nations.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the answers. I hope you would file with the House exactly how much goes to native reserves. Also, thank you, Mr. Premier, for inviting me to the meeting. Like you, I hope it's in the afternoon.

If casinos go ahead on some reserves, will the Premier promise that he will not use that as an excuse to introduce casinos into Calgary and Edmonton?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am not introducing anything to anyone. Basically the Tsuu T'ina Nation requested the meeting. Certainly we haven't been involved directly in any of these negotiations whatsoever. Any approaches that have been made to the government were made entirely by the people proposing casinos; i.e., the people working on a convention centre in the city of Calgary, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede board, the Edmonton Northlands board. They have all made representation, as I understand it, to the Lottery Review Committee. So we haven't initiated anything relative to casinos.

There's no doubt about it. Let's not hide our heads in the sand. There are very active negotiations under way, as I understand it, with various Indian nations. There still is a strong pursual by some of the organizations I just mentioned to have an enhanced style of gambling, and that's what the lottery committee is trying

to sort out. Hopefully a lot of these questions will be answered when the report is tabled.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Hunting Licence Auction

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. In the last month and the last week one animal in each of the species of elk and sheep has been auctioned off and raised some \$248,000 U.S. funds, as I understand it, for continuing work in wildlife programs. The first question I have to the minister is: will you give my constituents the assurance that no more than one animal in each of these species will be auctioned off in future years?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, there are two animals in each of these species. There are two elk and two sheep licences that will be issued, one each for nonresidents and one each for residents. The auctions that the hon. member refers to were for the nonresidents. Those for residents will be on a lottery basis, and those tickets will go on sale quite shortly. The draws for those two permits will be made in plenty of time for next fall's hunting season.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other question that I had to ask dealt with the administration fee, which I understood was some 15 percent. Would the minister explain if that 15 percent was an auctioneering fee or if it was the actual cost of administering some \$248,000 U.S.?

MR. LUND: The 15 percent goes for the advertising, auctioning, and handling of the sale. Now, if in fact the costs don't amount to 15 percent, then the excess money will go into a fund administered by the Federation of North American Wild Sheep. They have a trust fund somewhat similar to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and they fund programs and projects that enhance wildlife habitat and management. While it's a broader range, certainly Alberta will be eligible for funding under that program in the future.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. Mr. Minister, will you commit to me and my constituents, anyway, that you will consult with the Alberta hunters if in the future this government intends to increase the number of auction draws?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, this idea of auctioning off some special permits is not new. The idea was here in Alberta as long as five years ago, when I first heard about it. So it's been out for discussion for some time. Saskatchewan has a similar program. Many of the U.S. states have similar programs.

As far as expanding it to include more permits, no, that will not happen. One of the primary reasons that this permit sells so high is because it's unique, and if you start increasing the number, then in fact you're going to decrease the value. We believe that taking two animals, two males out of these species in one year certainly is not going to adversely affect the population, and if in fact there

is some problem with the population, the program would be discontinued.

I think it's important to recognize that in the normal sale of licences, we raise about \$1.5 million for Buck for Wildlife, which is the program that pays for a lot of the habitat enhancement, the management, and the research that's being done at the university. Just these two sales, Mr. Speaker, and the lottery are probably going to raise about \$500,000, which is 30 percent of what we raise through all of the sales of licences in the province.

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

Hospice Calgary

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when I asked the hon. Premier about the closing of Hospice Calgary, he indicated that he knew nothing about that decision, but he did acknowledge that it provides a valuable service. Presumably when he said that, he may have been thinking about the 150 children in Calgary that receive bereavement counseling, he may have been thinking about the 135 families who use the day hospice and some of the other programs, and he may also have been thinking about the more than 2,000 calls received each year by the help line. Now that the Premier has had time to investigate, I want to follow up, and my question, then, is to the hon. Premier. Since Calgarians elected this Premier, not the members of the Calgary regional health authority, what's he going to do to save this service?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, does he have something wrong? You know, I really can't understand where the Liberals are coming from. They have for years and years accepted that boards run universities, and boards have for years and years run hospitals. In many cases those boards were appointed either by city councils or county councils or by government itself, and there wasn't a problem. What is the problem now with a regional health authority that is appointed, as were hospital boards appointed previously, Mr. Speaker? What has changed?

Relative to the hospice situation, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Calgary regional health authority has not made a decision relative to the Calgary hospice funding request. No decision has been made. But I will point out that government has never funded Hospice Calgary, has never. We gave a onetime grant, as I understand it, of \$30,000 to Hospice Calgary, and it has operated strictly as a private-sector, voluntary organization.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, since the Calgary regional health authority has now identified palliative care as one of the designated programs, I want to ask the hon. Premier: what recourse do Calgarians have when your appointed, unelected Calgary regional health authority members make a bad decision?

2:30

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again I point out: what is the problem with an appointed health board? I mean, we have had appointed hospital boards. We had 200 of them, as a matter of fact. Now we've only got 17. We had 200 health boards that were, for the most part, appointed. So what has changed? The only thing that has changed is that we have fewer of them. We have 17 instead of 200.

Relative to Hospice Calgary, I would point out again that this is an organization that has been supported throughout the years through private donations. As I said, we gave a onetime grant to

this organization of \$30,000. I understand that they might have received a small amount of funding at one other time through the Wild Rose Foundation. It has operated like so many other voluntary organizations throughout this province: it has operated ostensibly through private donations. Now, it has made a request to the Calgary regional health authority for, I would suspect, some core funding. The authority, I would reiterate, to my knowledge has not made a decision on that request.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, private fund-raising is fine, but what does he say to the assertion of the board of directors of Hospice Calgary, who said, "The Board of Directors feel that the uncertain climate in Health Care had a major negative impact on the Society's donor base."

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will make this commitment, and I've done this for numerous charities. That is, I've lent my name to various charitable organizations; I've assisted personally with their fund-raising drives. If Hospice Calgary cares to contact me, I would be more than delighted, along with my wife, Colleen, to get involved with this organization and help them with their fund-raising.

head:

Members' Statements

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

Child Poverty

MS CARLSON: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Connection Housing is a Calgary nonprofit agency that assists low-income and homeless people. They are asking the government to assess the impact of cutbacks on families at this time. Further provincial government funding cutbacks will hurt families and children who are barely scraping by under the current conditions. Before we cheer hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts, we have to ask: who's going to be hurt by them? The answer is the children, particularly children who come from low-income families. By cutting more from health care or social assistance payments, you ensure that those children will be sicker, hungrier, and generally deprived of the necessities of life.

In January Connection Housing figures show that 338 new households, which is approximately 1,000 men, women, and children, registered with their agency over the same time last year. That's a 28 percent increase. About 50 percent of those people are absolutely homeless with no recourse for shelter in the immediate future, and this includes families with children. In January the agency was able to fill only 196 of the 600 requests for emergency food hampers for street people.

The growing trend towards greater child poverty has been well documented. Between 1981 and 1991 children living in poverty in Canada rose from 763,000 to over 1.2 million children. During the same time period Alberta's rate of child poverty tripled from 8 percent to 23 percent, and this figure is still growing.

We have to start thinking about the level of crisis and the loss of hope among families and children who have lived in poverty for an extended period of time. None of the long-term consequences of that have been included in the current calculations of balancing the budget. The government is urged to remember that cuts to children are the unkindest cut of all.

Lewis and Frances Vandermeulen

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, 52 years ago in Holland a Jewish father, mother, and daughter entrusted into the care of a

Dutch non-Jewish family their daughter and sister of one year, a child called Greta. Shortly thereafter the Jewish father, mother, and daughter were murdered by the Nazis. The child was protected and cared for by the Juch family for some nine months, until, fearing interrogation by the Gestapo, they passed Greta to a second Dutch lady, Mrs. Reinink. Mrs. Reinink, a widow, had a neighbour who was suspected of being a Nazi collaborator, and Greta was handed over to a third family, the Lewis and Frances Vandermeulen family, who lived down the road. Greta was taken into the Vandermeulen family as one of their own and stayed with her new brothers and sisters from 1943 until 1947, when as a four and a half year old she was sent to Australia to live with her only living relative.

Today Lewis and Frances Vandermeulen live in Barrhead, in their 89th year. On February 26, 1995, Lewis and Frances Vandermeulen were named Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. They were declared Righteous Gentiles by the state of Israel in the presence of Greta Allen, the woman whose life the Vandermeulens had saved during World War II.

For those of us who have been able to study the events of Europe from 1933 to 1945, we have been able to do so from a distance and with security. For those who were there and had to endure the savagery, the brutality, and inhumanity, we must listen, we must believe that the Holocaust was real, we must try to understand, and we must vow that such evil can never again descend upon any part of our earth and its people.

The events that brought the Vandermeulens and Greta together arose out of tragedy, the worst that mankind can offer. The thanksgiving ceremony in Barrhead arose out of the best that mankind can offer. Lewis and Frances Vandermeulen risked not only their lives but the lives of their four children in the protection of Greta for nearly two terrifying years. Lewis and Frances Vandermeulen did more than care; they risked life for righteousness and human dignity and the protection of life. They are true heroes.

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

Child Welfare

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Family and Social Services is in the process of restructuring the child welfare system in a move towards the community delivery of children's services. The Liberal opposition believes this revamping exercise should have a positive impact on children's services provided that the government keeps its promise to respond to the recommendations for a firm focus on early intervention and prevention, for allowing land-based aboriginal communities direct control of services for native children and that there is a genuine effort to involve community people as well as nonprofit organizations in the planning and decision-making for local services.

We have concerns that although the minister has stated that delivery agencies will be restricted to nonprofit, there is no mention of that in the report, nor are there assurances that existing standards will be upheld, that patronage appointments will be outlawed, or that service contracts will be awarded by public tender. Urban aboriginal people have not been recognized, and there is a concern that the unique needs of their children may be marginalized.

The report states that government child welfare workers should be assisted in job finding opportunities in community agencies, but

there are no details about involving the union in order to ensure that these professionals will be fairly treated. We are disappointed that the workers have been told to remain silent about their concerns. This is not honest and open government.

We need assurances that legal responsibility for child welfare will remain with the Alberta government and not with the community. The only way we can ensure that this government remains accountable for children is by making the government liable for neglect or wrongdoing. The move from the bureaucracy to community control will only work if the Department of Family and Social Services is serious about doing the groundwork and providing adequate funding while retaining legal responsibility for children where it belongs: with the Minister of Family and Social Services.

head: **Orders of the Day**
 2:40
 head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than**
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 head: **Second Reading**
Bill 204
Liquor Control Amendment Act, 1995

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Before recognizing the hon. Member for Little Bow, the Chair feels compelled to make a comment arising from a correspondence to the Whips of the two parties from the Ethics Commissioner which indicates that some hon. members have a concern about possible conflict of interest. The Chair has no knowledge as to who those hon. members are, but apparently there has been communication from both sides of the House to the office of the Ethics Commissioner.

According to section 2(2) of the Conflicts of Interest Act, any member who has an interest in, I suppose, the sale or marketing of alcohol should declare that and according to the Act then should withdraw from the debate and the vote on this legislation.

Is there a point of order?

MR. KOWALSKI: No, Mr. Speaker. I sent you a note wondering if I might have a request to introduce a guest in the Assembly. I don't know if you received it or not. Sorry; I don't know.

THE SPEAKER: Yes. Also, before recognizing the hon. member, there are two requests in that regard, not just the hon. member's. Is there unanimous consent in the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.
 The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

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

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a very well-respected, well-liked Calgarian. The gentleman is an architect/businessman. Perhaps that's businessman/architect. I'm never sure. It just so happens his wife is the Member for Calgary-Currie. I'd ask Peter Burgener to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, also in the members' gallery is a distinguished Member of Parliament representing the constituency of Yellowhead in the province of Alberta, Mr. Clifford Breitzkreuz. Perhaps all members could join in welcoming this Member of Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than**
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 head: **Second Reading**
Bill 204
Liquor Control Amendment Act, 1995
(continued)

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week – I believe it was the 7th – you opened this session with a prayer, and part of it said, "Keep us mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province." I'm happy today to bring before this Legislature Bill 204, the Liquor Control Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, the simple intent of this Bill is to raise the minimum legal age for the purchase, sale, and consumption of alcohol products from the current age of 18 to 19 years of age. I strongly believe that by doing so, we'll be acting in the best interests of not only young people but their families and the rest of Albertans as well.

As I declared some days ago when I formally introduced this Bill to the House during the first reading, the rationale behind this Bill is threefold. The first reason is an attempt to eradicate drinking among high school age youths. The second is to make our legal age consistent with that of our neighbouring provinces of Saskatchewan and British Columbia thereby reducing the incentive for cross-border drinking trips. Finally, raising the drinking age in Alberta could significantly reduce the number of young people involved in alcohol-related automobile accidents that cause serious injuries and death. Fortunately for those who survive such an ordeal, there's an untold number of related health care costs that will also be realized by the province.

Mr. Speaker, I had a background as both a school board and a hospital board trustee before I became a member of this House. I'm also a parent. I have kids that will be, are currently, or have been students of the junior high and high school levels. I've had my eyes opened to what happens in the social circles that are so much a part of the high school experience, and I know that alcohol consumption is part of that environment.

Now, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify myself on the issue of alcohol consumption. I simply feel that by raising the drinking age by one year – one year – we can save a lot of turmoil and grief for young people and their families. Firstly, I want to persuade members of this Assembly, morally and responsibly as representatives of your constituents, that raising the legal age by one year will go a long way towards removing alcohol from the high school crowd, as we may call it.

In Alberta we send our children off to the first grade at six years of age. Those that pass all the way through the school system without failing will begin their grade 12 year as 17 year olds. This happens in September, and many of these students will have reached another birthday before they graduate at the end of June. Since June is exactly the halfway point of the calendar year, we can assume that a good half of the students in any given

class of grade 12s will turn 18, and that means these young people will be legally permitted to buy and drink alcohol.

Now, as I said, the very fact that half of the 12th grade can legally purchase liquor opens up access to all high school students. I am not saying that all high school students drink, but because a sizable number of their peers legally can, that makes the legal access to alcohol for 14, 15, 16, and 17 year olds much easier. One might argue that if we're dealing with kids who illegally drink, raising the legal age is not going to have any effect. Well, the flaw in this argument is that it's easy to break the consumption aspect of the Liquor Control Act, but it is much more difficult to skirt around the law when it comes to the purchase of alcohol.

I believe our teachers have enough challenges in the classroom without the challenge of dealing with an impaired student. I believe the students who want to learn have a right not to be disrupted. Currently half of the 12th grade can legally purchase alcohol. Quite often they are the source of alcohol and liquor for their friends who can be as young as 13 or 14. A high school dance on a Friday night may be preceded by a prefunction drinking party at someone's house whose parents have gone out for the night, out of town, away for the weekend, or out of the country on holidays. Although it's a tragic example, and although one of the media columnists chose to write about it and tried to pin me as doing this as a knee-jerk reaction to a very tragic event a week and a half ago in a Mill Woods home, these are in fact things that happen. For those people that were involved, my heartfelt sympathy goes out to them, but this Bill was introduced last fall, and it wasn't a knee-jerk reaction. It's a culmination of many years of different groups and people asking for the introduction of this Bill.

Sometimes the drinking takes place in someone's car while parked in an alley, in a parking lot, on a country road, or at a bush party on some farmer's land. Kids of all ages are confronted with opportunities to drink because their 18-year-old classmates can get it for them. Mr. Speaker, have you ever heard this line? "Twenty bucks. Get me a case of beer, and you can keep the change for yourself." The old bootlegging theme. I'm not saying that these bootleggers or their buyers are necessarily bad youths. They're just young people confronted with the same kind of peer pressure and experimentation that I'm quite certain many of us went through as adolescents. I'm aware that our government has taken a stance whereby we're pledging to get out of people's lives in whatever way we can. On this issue, however, we're talking about some very serious health and safety issues that still warrant control and regulation by this government.

Young people may rant and rave about the prospects of having the drinking age raised now, but sometime in the future hopefully all of these teens will have the opportunity to reflect and recognize the wisdom of what I am trying to introduce in this House today. My call to raise the drinking age is not a move against young people in this province. It's just the opposite. It is for them.

2:50

How many of you have heard these words said to you or said them yourselves? "You don't even know how to work all day, but you want to party all night," or "You'll thank me someday." That must sound as condescending and stuffy as my dad sounded to me. So I can imagine that any teenagers who may read these comments in *Hansard* someday will be thinking what I thought when my father imparted his wisdom to me. The teenager's response traditionally has been: "Gimme a break. I can handle it myself. I can figure out all the answers." Well, I didn't have all the answers then, and I don't profess to have them now, but it

is amazing how intelligent my dad got as I got older. Mark Twain was quoted as saying: when I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around, but when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned in the seven years.

I do know that when I was a young person, my peers and I had enough trouble figuring out the ways of the world, without having alcohol in the picture. A dozen beer among three friends may have seemed quite lavish then, and as I grew older, the Member for Calgary-Varsity may have even helped me throw back a few more than three on occasion. So I do expect that he'll support me totally in my endeavours here. But seriously, Mr. Speaker, today power drinking one's way through 24 beer is a badge of honour. For those of you who don't know what power drinking is, that is a case where, literally, two young people take 24 beer out to a bush party and see how quickly they can put them down before they have to do something else.

When it inevitably does come into many of the lives of our high school kids, it creates numerous unpleasant difficulties. Sometimes these young people get through these problems as just a part of growing up, but others won't be so lucky. The ones I'm referring to, Mr. Speaker, are the kids who make the ill-fated choice to drink and drive. While it is unfortunately true that individuals of all ages in Alberta endanger the lives of themselves and others by drinking and driving, the statistics show that it is the teenage Albertans that have the highest number of alcohol-related automobile accidents. This is not a onetime statistic either; it is a sad reality that is true year after year. For many of us here the sad reality is knowing friends or constituents personally who suddenly lose a daughter or a son.

Teenagers who drive when impaired outnumber any other age category according to the statistics supplied by Alberta Transportation. In fact, Alberta Transportation conducted an in-depth study into the possible benefits and consequences of raising the legal drinking age in Alberta in terms of automobile crashes. They conducted an analysis on how raising the drinking age would affect the volume of alcohol-related car accidents in this province. They did so based on raising the age to 19, to 20, and to 21. Mr. Speaker, the study revealed that raising the legal drinking age in Alberta by one year, to 19, would reduce the number of fatal car accidents in any year in this province by as many as eight, reduce 61 injury crashes, and avert 99 property damage crashes. Ask a parent who's lost a child if they wouldn't do that to have their child back.

I would also ask the Assembly to consider this. Currently young people are entitled to drive at 16 and legally consume alcohol at 18. In other words, they have two years' driving experience before they can legally drink. On the other hand, consider Europe, where the drinking age in many of the countries is 16, but young people are not allowed to drive until they're 18 throughout Europe. By raising the age to 19, the gap would be extended to three years, or put it another way: our young people would have an additional 50 percent experience behind the wheel before they could legally drink alcoholic beverages. Even if a young person has been drinking but not to the point of having a blood alcohol level of .08, he or she is still impaired. This 50 percent additional driving experience could make a world of difference. This would benefit insurance rates. They could go down if actuaries could demonstrate a lower loss ratio as a direct result of fewer alcohol-related or other accidents of this type in this group. How many times have some of you here heard this phrase: "If I could just have her back. If I could only talk to him one more time."? To those people who have lost their loved one, the value is immeasurable.

As I stated earlier, Alberta Transportation also had figures projecting what would happen if the age were raised to 20 or 21, and of course that would save more lives. In fact, there are a number of very reputable medical and social organizations that agree with me that the legal drinking age in Alberta needs to be raised, and most of them feel that 19 is still not enough, that it should in fact be raised to 21. The groups that would prefer the legal age raised to 21 include both the Alberta Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and the Alberta Motor Association. Other groups such as the Alberta School Trustees' Association, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Alberta Hospital Association as well as the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre have stated in general terms that they advocate a raising of the drinking age. I am aware of resolutions since 1977, when I was first elected as a councillor, from the Alberta School Trustees' Association and the Alberta Hospital Association supporting such a move.

However, that opens up a whole slew of potential arguments. Perhaps if the drinking age were raised to 25 or even 30, we could save hundreds of lives per year. We could hypothetically save thousands of lives every year if we outlawed alcohol altogether and went back to the days of Prohibition. Zero tolerance has been discussed, but that's far too restrictive, in my mind. I am by no means advocating that; rather, I am trying to rationalize a given age at which we have to draw an arbitrary line. It is my contention that 19 is more reasonable than 18, while 21 might be too much of a denial of privileges – and I repeat, privileges; it's not rights – to young people.

Earlier I had mentioned that I don't want to come across as an old-fashioned stick-in-the-mud, so I will again point out that there are a number of very well-thought-of and highly respected associations that would like to make a larger leap than I am presently proposing. Mr. Speaker, I don't totally subscribe to the theory that if you're old enough to die for your country, you're old enough to drink. There hasn't been a war on Canadian soil, in this country, involving our armed forces. We already have an uneven drinking field on a Canada-wide basis. There is no special dispensation given to an 18-year-old Albertan who might want to drink in another province, state, or country where the legal drinking age is 19, 20, or 21. The problem I see with raising the age to 21 is that the majority of Canadian provinces have a minimum legal age of 19. If Alberta were to bump the age up to 21, we'd have gone from a scenario where we are not consistent with most of the other provinces in Canada to another scenario where we're still not consistent. I have a problem with this because I recognize the fact that currently there are many 18 year olds in B.C. and Saskatchewan who cross the border to drink in Alberta. If we raised our age to 21, then we'd have a situation where 19 and 20 year olds from Alberta would take to the highways to travel to neighbouring states and provinces, and that wouldn't gain anything either. If we raised the legal drinking age to 21, we would not be solving one of the big problems, from my perspective, and that's an inconsistency with our neighbouring provinces.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I believe the proper minimum age for being able to buy, drink, or serve alcohol is 19. Twenty-one is too high, and 21 is too unfair for young people who have to wait that long. Eighteen is too low because it opens up access to kids that are many years younger than 18. They have many more productive things to do in their lives before 19 than to plan parties. They have the rest of their adult lives to imbibe or party if they so choose. Believe me; many parents would be relieved to know that

they have government on their side when they want to encourage their young people to concentrate on their education, their futures in sports, arts, postsecondary education, job training or apprenticeship.

It was pointed out to me after this Bill was drafted that if the new age were to come into effect on proclamation, many 18 year olds that are currently employed in licensed establishments would lose their jobs. I think we could alleviate that situation by means of a grandfather clause or by delaying proclamation until these teens turn 19. We could do this at the committee stage. In the meantime, I feel it's of great importance that this Bill pass through second reading.

To the members of this Assembly and to your constituents, I would sincerely commend our youth who do act responsibly, who do have designated drivers, who do go to school to learn. We do have many responsible young people. I urge this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to do the responsible thing to be able to say that we tried to prevent mind-numbing tragedies involving the innocent and the impaired driver, the lost educational opportunities, the savings in health care and rehabilitation, not to mention the immeasurable value of a life lost.

Members, thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper. [some applause]

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much. Thank you for that very limited applause. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise today to speak to Bill 204. I do know and I've heard that in the past a Bill similar to Bill 204 has been presented to the Legislature. I'm not certain how many times it's been presented in this Legislature, but I'm under the impression that it has been in front of the Assembly a couple of times at least.

DR. WEST: About 200 times.

MR. CHADI: The Minister of Transportation and Utilities says 200 times. I think that's a bit of an exaggeration, but I believe it's meant to say that it's been here enough times.

I want to start by saying, first of all, after listening to the Member for Little Bow talk about eradicating the drinking in schools, that I don't condone that sort of action, the drinking in schools, and I don't believe any member condones this sort of activity. I don't think raising the drinking age is going to do that though, and I think alcohol is accessible to students, as it is to teenagers of all ages. I know that alcohol is so prevalent today in our society. I mean, it's in the homes of every individual perhaps or almost every individual. It's not that difficult to get alcohol, and they don't necessarily have to go to the store and buy it or send a classmate who's 18 years of age to go get it. Today it's just about in everybody's home, and they have access to that.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Little Bow said earlier in his comments that the reason for introducing this Bill is because of listening to the constituents. I applaud him for bringing it forward, and I firmly believe there are many constituents throughout the province of Alberta that would like to see it raised to 19, perhaps even to 21. I've heard that argument. He says that we have to use common sense here. Indeed, if we're speaking in the realm of common sense, let's look at what the age of 18 can do and what the age of 18 can't do in Alberta.

In Alberta the age of 18 is the age of majority: the majority of what you can do and what you cannot do. You become an adult

at the age of 18. It's widespread throughout industry, throughout business, throughout life that at 18 years of age you are an adult. You have the capacity at the age of 18 to get a bank loan. You can borrow money at that age. You can go and buy a car and borrow money to buy that car.

You can buy and sell real estate. That's something that I wish we would have lowered to the age of 16. Perhaps I would have maybe started a little earlier on in life, rather than having to wait until I was 18 to do so. That was a real bummer, I'll have you know, Mr. Speaker. I really wish that I could have got into the fray a lot earlier than 18 because buying and selling real estate was something that really attracted me at a very early age.

I know that at the age of 18 I can get a credit card, and if I prove myself responsible or if any individual proves themselves responsible, they've got a thing called the gold card. If you're even more responsible or proving to be more responsible than that yet, you can get a platinum card. They'll give you even that today, and that to me is certainly a feat of responsibility.

At the age of 18 in this province and anywhere in Canada you can vote. You can get elected to this Assembly at the age of 18.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't so long ago that we introduced Bill 1, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act. In going through this Bill, it says that before we do anything in terms of introducing a sales tax in this province, what we will do is go to the people of Alberta, and the people of Alberta includes every single 18 year old that's out there. They're going to be voting whether or not we have a sales tax in this province. That's how it's referred to in Alberta.

I've heard the argument, of course, that at 18 you can fight for your country and you can die for your country, and then of course I ought to be able or anyone should be able to drink. I can't argue with that. I have no argument for it whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

I have a bit of concern with respect to a loss of revenues. Although it's not a major concern of mine, I've just wondered if any studies were done with respect to how much this actually means in terms of revenues for the coffers of the Alberta government. I suspect, for example, that the ALCB sales would go down. I suspect that sales throughout the province in drinking establishments would go down, and there could be real concern with those stakeholders. Again, it's not a major concern as much as it is a concern for a commonsense Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard the argument that the two provinces bordering us, B.C. and Saskatchewan, both have a drinking age of 19, and that limit is there. I do note, as well, that those two provinces have NDP governments, and I for one will not follow those two governments. I think here in Alberta we're leaders. I'm not going to be one that will vote to follow those types of governments.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member bringing this Bill forward with the enthusiasm that he has. It truly has arguments on both sides, but after weighing those arguments, I will vote against this Bill. I would like to leave the drinking age here in this province at 18.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 204, the Liquor Control Amendment Act. I've had the privilege – and I call it a privilege – of working with young people, high school students anywhere from 14 years old to 21, 22. There were even some 25 year olds and a 30 year old in our school at

one time. I think what we have to look at is: what's the best way to deal with the concerns that the Member for Little Bow brought up? We can try and legislate and enforce this type of situation, or we can do the more commonsense approach, educate: work together as a society, as communities, as families to teach the proper use of alcohol in moderation for those who want to use it.

3:10

What I see here is a Bill where what the government does is divide and pit one group against another, adults against 18 year olds. Mr. Speaker, I don't buy that. We should be working together as a community. It's very important that we do that. We're using this as a scapegoat, 18 year olds having more accidents. Now, I have looked at it, and I haven't had the member provide us with any research to show that what he's saying is in fact true. Has he done selected documents or studies to prove his point? What is the total picture? They have a \$200 million research budget, if you combine all the departments, and we have no research given to us from that member. Is the research that he says accurate or not?

The government is saying that 18 year olds are not responsible, and I strongly disagree with this. The majority, I would say probably 99 percent or more, of the 18 year olds, 17 year olds, 16 year olds, whatever age, are responsible. There are a few that are not, and these few have caused tremendous heartache and hardship to others and even to the health care system with the accidents and so on. We cannot underestimate that, but we also must make sure that those that are responsible – and having worked in a high school situation, I have looked at most of the 18 year olds, 17 year olds, whatever, take responsibility. We do not want to penalize for the actions of a very small minority, and this is what we would be doing if we brought forth this here Bill.

Have they talked to 18 year olds? Have they consulted with them? This is a government that said that they would do that, consult, see what the 18 year olds would say. Maybe they would say, "Yes, raise it to 19 or 20." And some of them do say that. I've talked to some who've said, "Yes, it should be elevated." But when you talk to the majority, they want to be responsible. They want to do their part in society, and what is known as a self-fulfilling prophecy may come true. If you don't believe in 18 year olds or 17 year olds or six year olds, they do what you expect them to do. If you believe in them and raise their expectations, the majority of times they will live up to your expectations. That is a better way to go: have certain expectations in society, in families, and communities that 18 year olds will be responsible.

I just want to quote a famous author that the government, I'm sure, is very proud of, John Steinbeck. He wrote *Grapes of Wrath*, but he also wrote a very beautiful short story that's called *Flight*. I used it for many years in junior high, a high point in the literature course. The theme of it was: a boy becomes a man when a man is needed. It concludes with the statement: and some boys are 55 years old. Some boys are 55 years old. You cannot dictate when a boy becomes a man, and this is what we have here. There are 40 year olds – in fact I had a constituent who was 40 years old just this last week. He was saying that we should raise the age to 41. He had partaken of four Rusty Nails. I'm not even sure what they are. He had one heck of a hangover and was sick from taking four Rusty Nails. So at any age you can be irresponsible.

I really believe that we as a government, as an opposition, as adults must use our greatest resource, our young people. We have 14 year olds who are out in the workforce. They work in different restaurants, stores, and so on. Mr. Speaker, they are

responsible. They do their job because the expectation there is that they will be responsible. In rural Alberta, where agriculture is the backbone of this province, we have young people 12, 13 years old, younger even, driving farm vehicles very responsibly because they are taught and they take this responsibility on.

I have a friend in the member's riding who at 11 years old was driving a big sugar beet truck. He could hardly see out the window at 11 years old. It wasn't the modern power steering, power brakes one; it was the old clutch and grind type. He did it very responsibly at 11 years old. I wasn't sure if I could do it. But they rise to the responsibility. The government has to start believing in young people and not penalizing the majority for the actions of a few. We don't want to punish our youths.

I had the opportunity for four years to be an activities coordinator and was responsible for the high school dances, and I set the tone for those dances. The odd alcohol problem came in, but it was one or two at a dance and usually from students outside the school. You set the tone. You set the boundaries. You set the expectations. The first day I threw one student out at the very beginning who was under the influence and started to swear. Gone. That whole tone was set. They realized what the expectations were. We want them to be responsible. We set the expectations. What we're really saying to ourselves is that we're not setting the expectations. We're not taking responsibility as adults for doing this for our young people. When you set the tone, they live up to our tone.

I've done the same in education. When students came in from a nonacademic class, "I can't do this," I didn't buy that. I said: when you finish high school, you'll be in the top 8 percent of the educated elite in the world, and I expect all of you to graduate. I'd say this regularly – daily or weekly, whenever they got negative – and they started to believe it and were successful. So I believe we can do the same in the area of responsible drinking and driving.

The 18 year olds, if you don't have a place for them to drink, they'll go and drink in the cars, the back alleys, as the member has said. They'll find a place. It's not going to stop them from drinking. The bush bashes. You can at least have a place where they can go, whether it's a lounge in the town or city or wherever, where they can become responsible. The different groups in society – MADD, PAID, SADD – have set this tone. They're not against drinking; they're against irresponsible drinking. They say: "If you're going to drink, have a designated driver. Drink in moderation if you're going to drink." They wanted the opportunity to sit in a lounge and be able to spend the night, have a couple of drinks, have a good time, and not have to do it in a vehicle, back alley, or somebody's house. We all know of the house parties. They destroy and devastate houses. It's not responsible. We want to teach them to be adults at a young age, not at 18 only but even in the families. Parents should be teaching their children to be responsible: when to drink and how much to drink and what the consequences are.

Mr. Speaker, the government has introduced a liquor store on every corner. This has been very damaging. Fourteen year olds in different towns are now going out and buying – I forget what they're called; you have liquor, vodka, in the soft drink, and they sell it – coolers. I hear this as I travel around this province. Down the streets in different communities around the province they can get it. It's the high school network. They know exactly which store in our city or town they can get the liquor from. Word spreads around the whole Edmonton area: if you want to get booze, you go to this store. It's common knowledge.

Internet, the computer system, lets them know. A store on every corner. On one hand, the government has introduced liquor in every store to encourage drinking, and then they say: now you're not responsible; we'll raise the age.

It's very simple. In the schools, as the member mentioned, that's 18 or so and only half the class. Because of quotas at university many students are coming back to raise a 75 average to an 85 average or an 80 average to an 86 average to get into certain faculties. So the age in school is not just 18; 19, 20, 21 years olds are back in school. We will not solve the booze problems in the school by raising it one year. I mean, what proof is there to say, when you're 18, that a day later, when you're 19, you're going to become responsible? [interjection] Seventeen, 16 year olds, I expect them all to be responsible.

3:20

MR. WOLOSHYN: Then make the age 30.

MR. BRACKO: I can't hear you. [interjection] I mean, for a member who doesn't even know where he belongs – NDP, then he comes to us and we say, "Get lost," and then a Tory, and he doesn't know if he's a Tory. You know, your wisdom is right there, member. Anyway, it's interesting. [interjections]

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, 17 percent.

MR. BRACKO: Yes, that's true, and I want to comment on that, Mr. Speaker. I like to hear that, because I remember in 1968 when I brought school groups – I've been following this Legislature since '68, the Socreds. There was a minister called Gerhart who said the same arrogant statements to Peter Lougheed, and I liked it.

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

THE SPEAKER: Order please.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. DAY: I'm citing both *Beauchesne* and Standing Orders on relevance, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader does have a point. We are dealing with Bill 204, and the hon. member should stick to that.

MR. BRACKO: I appreciate that. I was just responding to the ignorance of the party Whip from the Tories.

Debate Continued

MR. BRACKO: In the schools there will also be those over age with easy access to bring liquor in. It's up to the school, the principal, the parent committees to set the policy: if you're found with liquor in the schools, you can be gone. It's that simple. You set the guidelines in the school. It's not whether it's 18, 19, 17, 16.

The other one is that we need some consistency here. You can drive at 16, 14 with your parents. You can smoke at 16. Why don't you get the Act together so it's consistent. You can go to war at 18, and many even went at 16 and 17. You can go to jail at 18, 16, 14. [interjection] You can get into politics, as my colleague here said, at 18. But you're not responsible enough to drink. We've got to take responsibility as an adult society, as

legislators to have those expectations, to use education as the best way to do this. AADAC is a strong supporter of this. They don't say to raise the drinking age. They say, "Let's do it through education." They've had some excellent ads. Even the different companies now are showing the results of what happens to assist in being responsible.

The conclusion that I'm going to leave with this Assembly at this time is: don't punish everyone for the abuses of a few. That is not developing responsibility in our greatest resource, our young people. Provide the research if it's there, and don't use isolated articles. Be consistent: cover tobacco, alcohol, driving, and so on. Have expectations for our youth; they'll live up to it. Don't pit one group against another.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would rather do it the positive way, the way that it can be done. I know that it is the way that works, and I will not be supporting this Bill.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make some additional comments on the issue of whether or not we should raise the drinking age in Alberta to 19. From the outset I am declaring my support for this Bill. The primary reason is one that has already been touched on, but I would like to speak further to the benefits of raising the legal drinking age and how much it would do to reduce the amount of drinking amongst high school students.

Mr. Speaker, the teenage years are often labeled as the most difficult and awkward years of a person's life. Young people are going through all sorts of changes both in mind and body. This time of rapid change in their lives often means that teenagers can feel insecure and ill at ease, and it is natural for them to latch onto something that can help them more readily identify with their friends. In other words, teenagers sometimes lack the confidence and social skills – and I am sure that many adults do as well – and as a result, young people are especially drawn towards activities that will best allow them to fit in. At a time when teens are the most vulnerable and are looking for ways to fit in, many of them find alcohol to be the answer. This is very understandable, given that liquor can provide that. Not only is it something that everyone else is doing; it's also a time when they can get rid of their awkward inhibitions while under the influence of this substance.

Alcohol is erroneously seen as the perfect tool by which teens can empower themselves. At parties and other social functions, to be seen with a beer or a highball in their hand when so many of their friends are doing the same thing is one sure way of fitting in, Mr. Speaker. As liquor allows a person to lose their inhibitions, it is again an apparently perfect solution for a young person who feels insecure in a social context. So the sum of this is that alcohol is actually a very effective social tool for kids in the sense that it provides them with so much of what they think they want and need.

The problem is that liquor is successful in providing for many teens that crucial confidence that they need, and this seemingly perfect solution is a drug that can be very harmful. We are not talking about the latest clothing fad or some new jargon that are likewise methods that teens can use to fit in with their friends. While this sort of thing is used to achieve the same effect, alcohol is certainly very dangerous. It is also potentially addictive. It can incite violence in a person who is under the influence. It is a drain on the very limited financial resources that teens have. It

distracts kids from studies and other healthy extracurricular activities. Finally, it impairs judgment in such ways that activities while under the influence of alcohol, such as driving, become much more dangerous. Of course these drawbacks on alcohol consumption are true for people of all ages, but when they are combined with the feelings of inadequacy and their longing to fit in with their peers, that so many teens have, the result is a very unhealthy situation, to say the least.

I would like to qualify my statements by saying that I hope I'm not coming across overly condescending in my comments relating to the maturity level of young people and their capacity to make responsible decisions. Quite the opposite. The majority of teens in this province prove themselves to be decent and responsible, and I am simply acknowledging some of the realities of growing up, which I know from both observation and experience that they are facing in their journey to adulthood.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I'm lending my support to Bill 204 as put forth by my hon. colleague and neighbour from Little Bow. The simple fact of raising the drinking age one year would remove convenient access to teens. Please note that I emphasize convenient, because that is very important. I am not so naive as to think that raising the drinking age in this province is going to completely get rid of underage drinking problems amongst high school youths. However, what raising the legal drinking age will do is make access more inconvenient, because there will be very few kids in high school social circles who can legally purchase liquor for him or herself or provide it for friends. I truly believe that if there were not an ease of access, which high school kids enjoy, the amount of drinking that goes on amongst them would decline significantly. The important thing is that a great deal of the problems and tragedy that alcohol causes in this age group and their families would decline significantly as well.

The sponsor of this Bill provided this Assembly with some statistics from the Alberta transport study. I recall him giving numbers on the number of accidents that caused property damage and injury for the drinking ages of 19, 20, and 21. Of course, we are debating here today the merits of boosting the legal drinking age by . . . [Mr. Hierath's speaking time expired] Pardon me, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(2)(b) we are now required to move to the next order of business.

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

3:30 Right-to-Work Legislation

503. Moved by Mr. Friedel:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to initiate a study to examine the implementation of right-to-work legislation in the province of Alberta.

[Debate adjourned March 7: Ms Leibovici speaking]

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my time is limited, what I thought I would use it for is to summarize some of the presumptions that are made with regards to this motion. The premise, when one looks at it, is that a study is not really harmful and that the reason for requesting the study is to look at whether or not this province wants to follow the lead of states

such as Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Arkansas, et cetera, down in the United States and the lead of New Zealand.

My contention is that the studies have already been done. There are numerous studies that are available on this particular subject area. The Department of Labour just this summer has done another study. What the studies show is that there is no advantage whatsoever to implementing right-to-work legislation within the province of Alberta. As a matter of fact, what the studies indicate is that it is of an economic disadvantage to look at that and that in those areas where the right to work has been put into place, the states have lower standards of living, lower levels of wages, lower levels of employment, and higher levels of bankruptcy.

Given that background, it then begs the question: why do we on a continual basis look at this particular form of right to work, look at the right to work within this Legislative Assembly? The reason appears to be that there is a desire on the part of certain government members to look at union busting. What I think we need to do is once and for all – every year this issue seems to come forward – put this issue to rest, not look at some way of getting around the issue by saying, "We're just going to do a study; don't worry about it." We need to put it to rest once and for all and say that this is a bad idea and we don't need to discuss it anymore within Alberta. I can only think that one of the reasons that perhaps this keeps coming up is that the unions do provide a powerful voice against government action and that this government itself has indicated that they are not interested in listening to what people have to say and that they are not interested in improving the lives of working people within this province.

There's a phrase that's starting to circulate. Whenever there's an announcement of another cutback within any of the government services, the question is: "Have you been Ralphed yet?" I think that when you look at that, that is not a flattering phrase but one that indicates that there is an atmosphere of fear with regards to workers within this province. What I urge all members in the Assembly to do is to actually look at what this motion says, what the message is that this particular motion will put forward if it is passed within this Assembly, and that all members vote against right-to-work legislation, which is nothing less than union busting and nothing less than leading this province to a lower standard of living.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to be able to rise today to speak to Motion 503. I think my hon. colleague from Peace River has made some very important points in his speech.

We need to study the right to work in order to be able to see what kind of effect it could have in this province. Given the positive impact it has had in other jurisdictions, I don't think we can ignore this potentially beneficial legislation. Other countries have benefited from right-to-work legislation. What we need to do is study what they have done and decide if we could expect the same results here.

Employers in these countries have benefited from right-to-work legislation because of the freedom it gives them in choosing their employees. The best person for the job could be hired whether or not they're at the top of some arbitrary list of potential workers. Employers will be able to hire the best qualified workers, whether they are union members or independent contractors. Instead of being forced to choose from a limited

labour pool, an employer can select the best workers for the job. In other words, the employer will not be held hostage by the closed shop. This means higher productivity for employers, which leads to greater rewards for employees and greater prosperity for all citizens. These rewards come in the form of lower consumer prices and a greater supply of goods.

Mr. Speaker, for the employees this motion is consistent with Motion 531 under my name on the Order Paper. It reads that the government should

recognize an individual's freedom to work where he or she chooses by endorsing a policy which would prohibit, as a condition of work, membership in a union.

Employees benefit from the right to work because they are given the freedom to represent themselves and display their own abilities and qualifications. This is something that has been strangely absent from our labour laws. People have the right to join a union, but they don't have the right not to join a union if they are confident in their ability to get the best deal for themselves. People are actually forced into joining a union in order to make a living. I think this mind-set is outdated and should be reviewed. With right-to-work legislation employees will be permitted to choose what group they associate with. I believe it's important that we allow employees the freedom to associate with whatever organization they choose. Mandatory union membership or dues payment as a condition of employment is job discrimination.

Perhaps the most significant benefit from implementing right-to-work legislation is that it would require unions to be much more responsive to its members. Unions would have to attract its members and work hard to keep them rather than take them for granted. The survival of each union will depend on its usefulness to the membership it represents. More and more businesses are having to adapt to attract and retain customers in an increasingly competitive market. Unions ought to change with the times too. Changing our labour laws will have this effect. Motion 503 is the first step to modernizing our existing labour laws.

At present the only way that people can opt out of a closed shop agreement is by objecting to unions on religious grounds. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark commented last week:

If I am in a place where there is a union and if for religious reasons or for some reason I do not wish to be a member of that union, I don't have to.

This is not the case. At present the only way a person can opt out is if he or she has a religious conviction or religious belief that objects to joining a trade union or a religious belief or religious conviction that objects to paying dues to a trade union. Then that person can pay the amount he or she would have paid in dues to a charitable organization. The rights of workers in this province to belong or not to belong to a union are being restricted, and I think we should change this. People should be allowed to opt out of union membership on personal grounds alone, not just because they have religious reasons for wanting to opt out. Some people just don't want to belong to a union.

Any changes to the labour laws must be examined first. That is why we need to look into the right to work. Conducting a study on the right to work will give us some insight into how to revamp our labour laws. By doing so, we can help ensure that Alberta remains a leading, innovative province full of skilled people. More importantly, we can ensure that this province remains a prosperous place for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. We can make this province better. By increasing the standard of living in Alberta, we all fare much better.

Studies have been done to demonstrate that right-to-work legislation has made other jurisdictions better off. Last week the

hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark recited the low personal income and average annual pay in some right-to-work states. But that is not what is important. It's what you can purchase with your take-home pay after taxes. If the average annual pay in non right-to-work states is high, that by itself doesn't matter. If a person living in New York City makes \$40,000 per year, he or she might still be worse off than the person making only \$30,000 in Idaho, for example. Why is this? Well, it's because of the cost of living. It's really great to have high average annual pay and high personal income for your workers, but that doesn't mean much if the high cost of living takes it away. Once you incorporate the cost of living and the amount paid in taxes into the equation, you get a much clearer picture of what is really happening in right-to-work states. They have substantially higher purchasing power in right-to-work states over non right-to-work states.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, one further point. In my banking career I had the opportunity to review many credit applications for businesses seeking capital to start, expand, or continue their businesses. One of the factors taken into consideration was labour conditions. Suffice it to say that in an environment of unstable labour conditions or with strikes happening, the bank would take steps to protect its position. If this applies to the banks, let me assure you that investors and companies pay attention to labour conditions also.

The ability to attract capital and investment is critical to attract economic development and jobs to Alberta. The economic power of this province is outstanding. Albertans deserve the best. As lawmakers are we not obligated to provide solutions to the people of Alberta? Shouldn't we be open-minded enough to study any ideas that can give our businesspeople and our citizens a competitive advantage? As our economy evolves and the marketplace adapts to meet the needs of the next century, we must change.

Motion 503 gives us an opportunity to study ways to make Alberta more competitive. So I urge all members of the Assembly to vote for Motion 503 for the future of Alberta and for Albertans.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this motion for a number of reasons which I will discuss briefly, briefly because I know there are a number of other members of the House that do want to have chance to say something on the record.

I feel that this motion follows from what can only be described as a very clear-cut ideological agenda on the part of many of the members opposite, the government caucus, and it brings with it a sense of them wanting to impose their values, their view of the world on everybody else. It's kind of a moral superiority, a moral righteous superiority, which we've seen most recently on the part of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. It may be good politics; it doesn't make particularly good government, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's quite disturbing. I think these members should understand that unions have contributed tremendously to the . . . [interjection]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat should please be quiet. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor and is entitled to be heard.

MR. MITCHELL: There was a time, Mr. Speaker, when a lot of people thought hair that long was obviously wrong. It's funny

how values change; isn't it? In fact, I can remember that my father thought it was, and his father probably still does.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What makes you think he's got a father?

MR. MITCHELL: He's awfully sensitive about those kinds of questions, Redwater. There has to be a reason.

So I see that it smacks of a moral self-righteousness which is poorly founded and which serves to impose one world view, one set of values on some other group or somebody else regardless of how they might feel about it. I think it's very, very disturbing that this government would promote this kind of motion in the way that it has.

The facts are very clear, Mr. Speaker. Right-to-work legislation does not improve economies, nor does it create a greater number of better jobs. In fact, in the United States we see time and time again that those states that have right-to-work legislation do not do better economically; they by and large do worse economically. The member for Red Deer – North?

MR. DOERKSEN: South.

MR. MITCHELL: Red Deer-South made the case somehow that employers should be able to hire the best, hire whomever they would want to hire. Employers, to the best of my knowledge, in this province can do exactly that, Mr. Speaker. There is a great deal of choice amongst a great number of highly qualified, highly skilled, very dedicated workers across this province. Unions have had a place for a long time in our society because there's been a need for working people to find support, to find influence and some kind of power in a society that all too often hasn't accorded them that readily or in any kind of easy way.

Unions, to use the Red Deer-South argument, it seems to me will exist as long as there is some need for them to exist. We don't need legislation to arbitrarily establish whether or not that need exists. Why don't we allow marketplaces to determine whether or not that need exists? Why don't we allow employers and employee groups to work together without – without – the intervention of this kind of government legislation? The fact of the matter is that unions have a role to play in our society still, Mr. Speaker. People have a right to those unions, and they have a right not to have their union organizations eroded by an ideological agenda that's very, very shortsighted, that's being perpetrated by this particular government.

I would also like to say that coming from a government that wants to be more efficient, that doesn't want to duplicate effort, it's quite odd that they would be proposing to do a study that their own Department of Labour has already done. Their own Department of Labour has discounted that there are any economic advantages to this kind of legislation, and it seems to me that they should probably listen to that study and not waste Alberta taxpayers' money or propose to waste that money on a study that would only be a duplication of an effort already undertaken.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite obvious, and I ask that the Members of the Legislative Assembly defeat this motion.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to Motion 503. I think the hon. Member for Peace River should be commended for bringing his motion forward. I believe his reasoning is simple. He wants to explore

every possibility and every avenue that could make Alberta a stronger province for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we ought to initiate a study on right-to-work legislation. We need to know what effect it has had elsewhere before we make rational decisions on whether or not Alberta should have right-to-work legislation. Only by initiating a study on the right to work will we be able to understand the issue fully and make a rational decision on its merits or its pitfalls.

I know that right now there are certain people who would automatically oppose this study from the beginning. There will be some opposition members who will oppose this motion mostly because of their campaign fund contributions. We saw this last week when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark put on a good show for us and her union buddies, but I want to encourage all members of this Assembly to remember that we were elected to help make Alberta a stronger province, one that's better to live in and work in and raise our children in. Now that the sometime union bosses are over, I hope that we will get down to the real matter at hand and make Alberta a better place for all Albertans. It is not just for the special corporate interests, as the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark said last week, but for all Albertans, Mr. Speaker, from the richest to the poorest in the province.

To use a familiar phrase, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of determination between us, the Conservatives, and them, the Liberals. When I hear a statement like special corporate interests, I think: just the same old scare tactics. The Liberals don't really want the average worker to be able to succeed. They want people to conform to the old, outdated way of thinking that you can't earn a decent wage or salary for yourself on your own merit. You need to have a union protect you. If you can earn a better wage outside the union, then too bad. They won't let you find out. Your freedom to earn the best life for yourself is stifled, and you aren't allowed to become the best you can be.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not the way our caucus thinks, thankfully, and the people in this province are obviously happy that we don't. Just yesterday the CBC poll showed 68 percent support for the way that our government is doing things. The city of Edmonton found that 58 percent of Edmontonians support the Conservatives. I think that is pretty good evidence that Albertans approve the direction we have taken.

3:50

We constantly search for new ideas to help the average Albertan succeed. Mr. Speaker, we can do this I think calmly and rationally when we think about this subject, instead of closing our minds to new ideas like the opposition Labour critic does. We should allow ourselves to consider the possibility that right to work might just help Albertans and make this province stronger.

Part of what we do in making Alberta stronger: the motion will allow us to make informed decisions about what a right-to-work policy can be expected to achieve. Personally, I think we owe the people of Alberta every opportunity to succeed. One way we have done this in the past and are continuing to do is to give Albertans the freedom to choose. Freedom has been enhanced recently by getting the government out of the way of business and ordinary citizens, but that is not enough. We need to take a proactive approach to making Alberta stronger, and we have. Motion 503 continues this legacy.

Albertans have been strong proponents of freedom. I suppose that's the pioneer spirit in each of us. I see this spirit being stomped on by forced unionism. Forced unionism, Mr. Speaker, is stifling Alberta's growth. Our full potential is not being realized. This is because in some cases people are forced to join

a union to get a job or they must remain in a union just to keep their job. This is not right. People should be allowed the choice of whether or not to join a union.

Forced unionism takes away the fundamental right to be able to associate with whatever organization a person chooses. Even when the union decides that it is time to strike, we ought to protect the rights of people wanting to return to work. If they decide that they want to have nothing to do with a strike and cross a picket line, they should be allowed that right. Forcing them to stand by the union even if they think the union is wrong is not right. How can we stand by and allow a union to force a person to go on strike when he needs to work to put food on the table? Simply, we cannot. Hopefully all members of this Assembly will realize that we cannot turn our backs on the working man. People's livelihoods are at stake here. If the choice comes down to getting a job and joining a union or having your freedom but no pay cheque, most people will choose to feed themselves. We cannot as a government allow this sort of tyranny to continue, Mr. Speaker.

If people want to join a union or want to continue being a union member, they ought to have that right. I do not dispute that. What I do dispute, Mr. Speaker, is having freedom of association from the backseat of the interests of organized labour. The distaste of forced unionism only increases when I see the prosperity of right-to-work legislation that has been brought to other areas of the world. Other countries have put the right to work on equal footing with the long-standing right to join a union. They have put individuals in control of their own destiny, not at the hands of some labour union. Countries such as Britain, New Zealand, and the United States have all had remarkable success with this legislation.

I believe that we ought to look into the impact that right to work would have in this province. Our neighbours to the south have had tremendous success with right-to-work legislation by giving people the freedom to bargain freely on an individual basis with employers. People in 21 states have immense freedom and prosperity. In addition, these states have attracted new businesses, created new jobs, and substantially increased tax revenue without raising taxes. Job growth is high in right-to-work states. Right-to-work states in the United States gained 60 percent more jobs than other states in a recent 10-year period. Part of this tremendous growth was attributed to new businesses in right-to-work states. The new businesses and new jobs combined to make a better economic structure and a better economy.

These are the kinds of results that I want to see in Alberta, and I believe that we can have these results. The Alberta advantage is already paying off for us, but we cannot be complacent. We must always be looking for new ways to enhance this advantage. Implementing a study on right to work will be just another way that we continue to look at these enhancements. Only by looking at new ways to be competitive will Alberta remain a leader in economic growth, government policy, and the skill level of citizens. Average Albertans want the freedom to choose which policy they live under, and this study would give them the ability.

Mr. Speaker, unlike what the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark said last week about unions being "the epitome of democracy," I challenge her to find one precedent where unions have ratified their constitution to stop the forced campaign contributions made to certain political parties. I challenge her to tell her tale of democracy to any teacher who fears losing her job because she wants to tutor while the union is holding a strike. These are the people that the motion is for. This can give them back their freedom and stop the scare tactics.

The Alberta economy has always been enhanced by freedom and innovation. The right to work encompasses freedom and innovation. The potential for gain is remarkable. The prospect for economic growth is high, and the possible gains on the labour market are large. The potential is too large to ignore. Alberta must continue its never-ending search for newer and better ways of achieving economic prosperity. Motion 503 does just that. I urge all the members of the Assembly to vote for Motion 503.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say a few words on this motion because I think it's an important issue actually. We've just listened to the Member for Taber-Warner, who is probably going to accuse me of catering or pandering to the labour interests in order to get a campaign contribution. I'll certainly accept one of those, by the way, if they come my way. But I think that in fact the person on the other side, the Member for Taber-Warner, probably would generate more funds from his big-business friends than anything else.

Anyway, he's also spoken – and I'm dealing with some of his arguments first just to show him that I've listened – about the polls and all that. You know, I have a hard time with that. As if the way the government is standing in the polls right now gives them the right to come out with studies like this that might lead to legislation like this. I don't quite see that yet. Nevertheless, I would also like to say to the member on the other side and all members in fact that there was that famous PCer by the name of John Diefenbaker who spoke in reference to a poll and said: polls are for dogs. I think it's really important to keep that in mind.

Now, what about this particular motion, though, which sounds so innocuous, Mr. Speaker? I feel almost bad to even speak against it because it says: let's just study a particular matter. When I read it at first, I thought: yeah; why not? You know, how could anyone oppose study; right? This is something that we should look at. But you dig a little deeper into the whole matter, and then you discover that this thing has been studied to death. It was only last summer, I think it was, that the Minister of Labour himself said: no, there is no economic advantage to be gained by having this kind of legislation. In fact, he wrote that to several labour unions. So why are we looking at it once again? Are there not more important matters to contend with in this particular province? I would suggest that we can spend more time perhaps on how health ought to be restructured, rather than going at it without any thinking and planning.

I would like to quote one statistic. Now, I know lots of statistics have been used already, especially by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and rightfully so of course. Those were pure and unadulterated statistics. Let me just quote one here: the number of labour disputes in Alberta last year, three – three labour disputes – as opposed to, say, Quebec, 173; and in B.C., 73. If you go to the number of days lost per hundred thousand person-days worked: Alberta, less than one day. I mean, those are really important statistics it seems to me. If they were different, then I would say, "Yeah, maybe we have a problem," but we don't seem to have a problem, so why study it?

4:00

MR. BRACKO: Well, they want to waste taxpayers' money again, nearly \$2 billion of it and growing.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: That's what it probably is. [Mr. Van Binsbergen's speaking time expired] Oh, Mr. Speaker, I just got started.

THE SPEAKER: Well, certainly I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, but under Standing Order 8(4) the Chair must now put all questions to conclude debate on Motion 503.

Therefore, the Chair will ask all those in favour of Motion 503 to please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: Carried. Call in the members.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4 p.m.]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Ady	Friedel	Magnus
Black	Gordon	Mar
Brassard	Haley	McClellan
Burgener	Havelock	McFarland
Calahasen	Herard	Mirosh
Cardinal	Hierath	Severtson
Clegg	Hlady	Taylor, L.
Dinning	Jacques	Thurber
Doerksen	Kowalski	Trynchy
Evans	Langevin	West
Fischer	Lund	

Against the motion:

Amery	Kirkland	Sekulic
Beniuk	Leibovici	Smith
Bracko	Massey	Soetaert
Carlson	Mitchell	Taylor, N.
Collingwood	Nicol	Van Binsbergen
Dickson	Percy	Vasseur
Dunford	Pham	Woloshyn
Fritz	Renner	Yankowsky
Hanson	Rostad	Zariwny
Henry	Sapers	Zwozdesky
Hewes		

Totals: For – 32 Against – 31

[Motion carried]

Resource Project Revenues

504. Moved by Mr. Jacques:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to set aside a portion of revenues generated by future resource projects for the purpose of developing

and maintaining any infrastructure within the local community, thereby minimizing cost and inconvenience to local residents.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Hon. members who came down for the vote may leave but hopefully will be able to leave in such a way that we don't have the chatter. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti was not even able to hear that he was being called.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to move and to speak to Motion 504. Resources are the heart and soul of this Alberta economy. They include the land we farm, the trees we harvest, and the gas and oil we extract. As members of this Assembly we create policies, legislation, and we implement regulations to promote and regulate the development of those resources. By doing so, we encourage orderly development, responsible development, and sustained development. We effectively establish a level playing field by putting all the rules out front for all to see.

As well, we go the extra distance to ensure the protection of the environment. Through processes such as impact studies, integrated planning documents, ERCB approval, NRCB review, and environmental Acts both federally and provincially, we devote massive amounts of time and dollars to ensure that the environmental impact is minimized. Mr. Speaker, we do all of those foregoing because it is the right thing to do. Our actions leverage the Alberta advantage, and they sustain and protect our quality of life. Most important of all, our actions are transparent, and they must meet the acid test of fairness and equity. Fairness and equity is of prime importance to this Legislature, and on this particular motion it's of prime importance to those members who are from urban areas. I refer specifically to members who come from Edmonton and from Calgary, because this indeed is largely a rural issue.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the analogy we faced in the restructuring of the funding for public education, it was a most difficult process, but the underlying principle that drove that restructuring was the recognition that educational opportunities for a student should not be subject to whether he or she lived in a have or have-not school jurisdiction. The restructuring was driven by fairness and equity and not by which jurisdiction had the greatest assessment base. In fact, many would argue that the disparity in assessment base was the root cause of the problem. Like the analogy of funding for public education, fairness and equity is the principle and the spirit of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, the motion contains the words "set aside a portion of revenues generated by future resource projects." Two of the most important words in that phrase are the words "future projects." We're not talking about past projects. We're not talking about existing projects. We're talking about future projects.

The motion also contains the words "any required infrastructure." An infrastructure, by definition, is very wide in scope. Some might claim that this motion includes education and health facilities. While those are obviously included in the generic definition, they are not the subject or intent of this motion. We have in place a system that identifies and provides the required funds for education and health care facilities, and those are not within the scope of this motion. The type of infrastructure that we are targeting in this motion is generally referred to as transportation infrastructure, and more specifically, Mr. Speaker, we are targeting roads and bridges.

4:20

It is also important that I clarify the terminology "local community." In drafting the motion, I specifically avoided the term "municipality." In many instances, if not most, the cost and inconvenience is borne on a multimunicipality basis. The municipality that has the project constructed in its jurisdiction will normally experience an increase in property tax revenue, and in many instances the impact of additional infrastructure costs is indeed offset by the increased property tax revenue. However, these are not – and I must stress, Mr. Speaker, these are not – the communities that this motion is particularly addressing.

The greatest negative cost impact occurs in those communities that do not have the assessment base attributable to the project. It may be an adjacent municipality or an island municipality, such as a town or a village, that is surrounded by a county or a municipal district or an improvement district. The negative dollar impact of any given forestry project or energy project is not confined to municipal boundaries. We have no legislation or policy in place to address that very problem. The policy of encouraging municipalities to enter into revenue sharing agreements is very noble in intent but a failure in practice.

Mr. Speaker, I must point out and emphasize that this motion does not in any way impair or impede the provincial budget before us or the financial outlook provided by the three-year business plans. We are talking about an extremely minute portion of future gas and oil royalties or timber stumpage from future projects. It is not a retroactive policy, and it would not divert future revenues from existing projects.

I must also stress that this motion does not in any shape or form impair the Alberta advantage or create additional taxes or revenues. If anything, it will strengthen the Alberta advantage. Proponents of future resource projects well know that local infrastructure issues will not fester and jeopardize support at the local level. Indeed, just the opposite will occur, Mr. Speaker. Proponents will know that our policy provides fairness and equity at the local level.

What are we talking about in terms of implementation? Let us be very clear in this regard. The data to perform a cost-impact assessment of any future resource project will be readily available from the data provided in required planning and impact studies, just as it is today. By "data" we are referring to both the cost impact and the revenue impact on the local communities. The process would be simple and would not require any incremental dollars to implement.

What about the magnitude of the dollars that could be transferred to local communities from a given project? Hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely not. Tens of millions? No. Millions? Possible, but an unlikely scenario. Less than a million dollars? Most likely scenario.

Mr. Speaker, it's fair to ask the question: is this a rural versus urban issue? There is no question that impacted communities in all likelihood would be rural. I must stress, however – and this is an extremely important point in this whole debate – that this motion in no way challenges the principle of resource revenues accruing to the benefit of all Albertans. As stated earlier, this motion is fundamentally about fairness and about equity.

In summary, what does this motion mean? It would simply allow a minute portion of future revenues from future resource projects to be transferred to a local community in order to offset incremental costs of roads and bridges that are directly attributable to the resource project and for which the incremental costs are not offset by increased revenues at the local level. Again, Mr. Speaker, this motion is all about fairness and equity. In particu-

lar, this motion is about fairness and equity for citizens in rural Alberta.

I kindly ask the members of this Assembly to do the right thing by supporting this motion and to uphold the principle of fairness and equity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I guess I have some questions that I'd like to ask about the motion. I'm not sure if the dollars he's referring to are for bridges and roads for companies that are building the projects, like we saw in the different pulp mills and also Syncrude and so on. Are the dollars he's talking about to help the big companies out, or are they for the local municipalities?

Secondly, could he clarify "future resource projects"? I'm not sure what exactly that means. Is it forestry? Is it gas and oil? Is it gravel pits? Whatever.

Again, what is meant by "the local community"? Is that where the resource project is taking place, or does that include other municipalities farther away whose roads have been used by forestry trucks and devastated without being compensated for what has happened?

And "inconvenience": I'm not sure what that means. Who and how are they inconvenienced?

Looking at this, we've had this going on for 25 years now. I know that we as a government and as a party have pushed fairness across the province. We know that the cities are supported by rural Alberta: their oil, gas, agriculture, forestry, and other resource industries. Many municipalities have been telling me as I travel around the province and they've been telling this government for years that the forestry trucks that come into their municipality – it may be a very poor one – take trees that aren't even in the municipality but use their roads, destroy and damage the roads, and the poor municipalities have to pay for it. This is not fair, and if this is what the member means, to compensate those whose roads and bridges are abused and misused by these companies, then that should be what happens.

We know that right across the province with forestry and with oil and gas this has happened and will continue to happen as we develop our resources. There has to be fairness. In some areas the poorer municipalities have been taking the brunt of this with no resources and need to be compensated by the areas where a plant may be located. A plant may bring in a large amount of income, anywhere from a couple of million to \$8 million or \$9 million. If it's in their municipality or county, they get the total benefits, whereas those other municipalities where the use has taken place are penalized. So this hasn't been fairness. This has happened over the last 25 years, Mr. Speaker. This should have been looked at years ago, and these municipalities should have been listened to.

Also, does it include asphalt highways that are used by these heavy vehicles going to different municipalities so that now some of the responsibility for this goes back to the local municipality?

So with that, we want to see much fairer use, a fairness for rural Alberta. Money should always be set aside in reserve for different issues that come up, and this is one area that you should plan ahead for. We should not only have a two- or three-year plan, but we need to have more like, you know, a 25-year plan, seeing where resources come and how we use that money. Set aside how much we will need. It's an excellent idea to continue on and benefit not only this generation but future generations and not have the next generations pay for the abuses of the past.

So with that, if the member would answer the questions, I would be . . . Oh, sorry.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for St. Albert, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

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

4:30

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Bill 2

Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 1995

THE CHAIRMAN: The Chair would remind members we are limiting the number of people standing and debating at one time to one member.

I would call upon, first of all, the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development to make opening comments and such amendments as he may deem necessary.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I request leave to introduce a House amendment to Bill 2. It's been circulated to all members' desks, I believe. This amendment makes two changes to the Bill. First of all, it changes the requirement that applied degrees include "6 semesters of formal classroom instruction" to a requirement that they include "six semesters of formal instruction." The deletion of the word "classroom" clarifies that applied degree programs can be delivered through distance delivery methods or by computer-managed learning.

The second one is in the amendments to the Universities Act. This House amendment changes the description of nonacademic staff association from "a bargaining agent representing non-academic staff" to a "certified bargaining agent representing non-academic staff." This clarifies that only those nonacademic staff associations that are formally certified under the provisions of the Public Service Employee Relations Act fall within the definition of nonacademic staff association. Associations comprised of students would not be covered by the definition of nonacademic staff association.

Mr. Chairman, these are minor amendments for clarification purposes, and they do not change the basic principles of the Bill. I would move the amendment to Bill 2.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, you all have copies. Are there any comments or questions related to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: Now on the Bill itself, the hon. minister.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make some brief comments on Bill 2, comments that will deal with questions that were asked in second reading.

From the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, one of the questions was: standards including staff complements and kinds of resources for degree granting should be firmly established and institutions required to meet them before they are allowed to grant degrees. In response to that question, I would say that standards for applied degrees are being set. All of the institutions that receive approval to offer applied degree programs will have met

standards related to program structure and also program area and funding. They will also be required to protect other programs and the evaluation plans.

The second question put by that same member: there are still fears by faculty members on boards that they could be removed by boards of governors, and he asked if anything could be done to alleviate their fears that this could be done. I can only say that under the Act only the minister can terminate appointments to university boards, and I don't have any plans for changing the configuration of the board membership as it is presently constituted on boards of colleges and institutes and universities.

The third question: will introduction of applied degree programs squeeze out students who do not want to study in degree level programs? Colleges and technical institutes offering applied degrees will be required to maintain their existing certificate and diploma programs; at least I expect that they would do that. In most cases the directly affected diplomas will remain in place and be articulated with the applied degree. We think applied degree programs will offer new employment-focused opportunities for diploma holders to extend their education and an alternate lifelong learning route. The important point is that colleges and technical institutes will continue to provide a broad variety of postsecondary programs to meet the needs of learners who do not wish to study at the applied degree level.

The fourth question: will applied degree programs result in part-time faculty members who are not qualified to teach at the degree level losing their jobs? In response to that, faculty members who do not have the academic qualifications to teach applied degree courses would continue to be involved in teaching certificate and diploma programs. The introduction of applied degree programs is therefore expected to have little effect on the faculty.

The next question: will applied degrees be transferable in both directions? That's a question that's often asked. In response, there are two aspects of transferability. The first aspect is the ability of graduates of diploma or certificate programs to transfer into applied degree programs. Institutions seeking approval for applied degrees will be expected to maximize credits for students transferring into the program. The second part of the transferability is the ability of students in applied degree programs to transfer to other programs. In this regard, institutions will be expected to work out transfer arrangements with other institutions to ensure optimal transferability.

The next question: will these degrees be given the recognition they deserve? Students should not be penalized when they enroll in graduate programs. The response is that the primary purpose of applied degree programs is to prepare students for careers. They therefore differ from bachelors' degrees, which are generally accepted as prerequisites for masters' level studies. Graduates of applied degree programs may have to take additional courses before they are accepted into masters' programs. Applied degree program graduates, however, will receive recognition in the marketplace. The value of the credential will be apparent to business and industry when students participate in the work experience component of applied degree programs. As a result, a significant employment rate is anticipated for applied degree program graduates. In fact, one of the criteria that will be used to evaluate applied degree programs will be the employment rate of graduates.

I had some questions from the Member for Edmonton-Centre. His first question: a broader public consultation should be undertaken to discuss the roles of universities, colleges, and other

postsecondary institutions in program rationalization. In response to that, I would like to say that we will be consulting with representatives and stakeholders of the postsecondary system on a regular basis. An annual forum is being organized where all interested stakeholders can share their ideas and discuss issues related to the adult learning system. The first of these events is scheduled for the fall of 1995. The agenda for this meeting and for future forums will be set in consultation with the participants. The theme of this inaugural event is partnerships.

4:40

His second question: are community colleges inching more and more to becoming competitors with the universities in their jurisdiction? I suppose that's a question that was asked with the concern of creeping credentialism that some people worry about, but in response to that, there is no question that the roles of colleges and technical institutes are evolving. The pilot project with applied degrees reflects that very thing. However, as students complete their formal instruction in three years and participate in structured and evaluated work experience in a fourth year, applied degrees are much more an extension of the vocational focus of colleges than they are direct competition with universities.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my response to the questions that came from second reading. If there are no other comments, I would call for the question.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to make a few comments on Bill 2. I guess this whole question of degree granting – even transfers from various postsecondary educational institutions from one to another has gone on for a great period of time. I've always been under the impression that there should be a comprehensive review of the whole question, the whole system by which educational institutions should be allowed to grant which degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, whatever the case may be. What programming, what courses then are transferred between those institutions in that overall system of advanced education? I think we can all identify with the problems that are there from past experiences which I'm sure we've all encountered at one time or another.

I can recall myself that when I attended NAIT and took business administration, I was granted a diploma at that particular time, not a degree. It was a diploma. Yet when I went to the university, they were very, very reluctant to recognize the courses that I had taken at NAIT because they were not backed by a degree. As a result, for me to secure one year's credit from a two-year course was only achieved with a great struggle and a great insistence. I still swear to this day that those courses I took at NAIT were just as good if not better than some of the similar courses I took at the University of Alberta.

We also see at the same time, however, Mr. Chairman, sort of a protective – and rightfully so, in some cases of individuals, professional people that have gone out there and have studied for years and years and have gotten themselves a degree from a so-called fine university, got themselves maybe a master's degree and in some cases a doctorate. Because of their years of effort they're entitled to a certain degree of status, but also with that status is an expectation that their compensation for their efforts and their extended knowledge is going to be considerably more than someone that has attended, say, a two-year course where they were granted a diploma or a certificate, as it's now called.

One member across from me can probably identify with this because that particular member's spouse was in the galleries today, and he can understand the number of years that is required for one to graduate with an architectural degree or a master's degree in architecture. Then, on the other hand, you'll have an individual attending a two-year course at a technical institution who comes out with a diploma that may be called architectural technology, very similar to an architect by name. From a layman's point of view there wouldn't be that much distinction between the two, yet to the individual who may have put in eight years trying to achieve the full architectural degree, that person is somewhat slighted by somebody encroaching on their particular territory by taking a two-year course. So there is that balance there. Somehow that whole system has to be reviewed, and it has to be done on a proper basis so that one is recognized for their efforts.

So often in today's society the terminology of what you leave that institution with means so much. A diploma to a lot of people is sort of like when you leave high school: you get a diploma. When you say that you leave a place like NAIT or SAIT with a diploma, it may not always be recognized that that diploma meant an extra two years. So, yes, possibly the answer in many of those cases is to use the definition of "applied degree" because it does state that it is different than a degree achieved at the university level or a university facility and it's different from a diploma earned for having graduated from grade 12.

This is a step in the right direction. It does in fact recognize that some of the existing colleges and institutions will be able to grant certain types of degrees, and it does recognize that there are changes in people's desires as far as geographical locations are concerned. As modern technology changes, it becomes so much easier to transfer or to communicate programming from one particular educational facility to another. So, yes, it does make some sense to more and more mesh the educational standards within the province to make it more compatible so the question of recognition of the various institutions and the transferring of courses achieved at the various institutions are recognized properly.

After saying what I have said, with some reluctance and some hesitation that it's only a step, the bottom line is that I will support Bill 2.

There's another point that's addressed, of course, in Bill 2, and that's the question of disallowing bargaining unit faculty members from membership on the boards of these institutions or facilities for the purpose of voting. I think a little common sense simply states that that's the direction to go. It could be perceived as a conflict of interest. That person has the responsibility for bargaining on behalf of the membership, and then to be in the particular position that the person can vote at the level of the governorship, yeah, it can certainly be perceived as a conflict of interest. Possibly in some of the large corporations it is allowed, where the negotiating rep is a full-fledged member of the board of directors and is allowed to vote. I don't agree with that particular concept, and in this particular case, Mr. Chairman, as Bill 2 is worded, it recognizes that change. My understanding is that, again maybe with some reluctance, there has been some agreement from the various parties affected that they can go along with these changes.

So on that note, I'll conclude, because I'm sure there are many members of this caucus and the other side that would like to make further comments on Bill 2 while it's in committee stage. With your permission, I'll let the hon. Member for Redwater speak next.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll gaze about and see whether there's anyone who wishes to debate on the other side and then gaze back here, and if anybody is standing, we'll recognize them.

Ah, the hon. Member for Redwater.

4:50

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to put in a couple words on the Bill as amended. I go along with most of it, but I'm wondering, first of all, about the degree granting for institutes and colleges that he mentions. I've always thought that the widest competition amongst colleges and universities would be a very desirable thing. I think there's a certain amount of free enterprise involved with the competition amongst each other. When they grant degrees, the competition of its students is moving in the right direction.

I'm also wondering though, too, whether this shouldn't have a companion Bill with it, Mr. Chairman, because if indeed we're going to provide more institutions from where to get degrees, we should be funding our students heavier than the institutions and letting the students pick the institutions. In other words, what we have done for years in the west here – and this applies to a Conservative or a Liberal – is to fund the institutions, and a little bit like the movie on baseball, if we build the institution, they will come. The only trouble with building the institution – I've often wondered through the years. I've been through a couple of them myself and have a large family, most of which went to university. I notice that there was always a great part of the university devoted to publishing and research. I'm not taking away from that particularly; I think that's probably a good *raison d'être* for a lot of universities. But I still think the principle reason – one of my children is a university professor, and I say this in danger of getting a lecture from her – the main value of universities and colleges is to grant degrees to students, is to teach. If they're to teach, therefore this consumer, being the student, should have quite a lot to say in it. I think one of the best ways of doing that is to divert the funds from feeding it in at the top, building a big edifice which students will go to.

In the old days the old Liberal thinking was that students could come cheap to a well-financed university; maybe the students could come free to a well-financed university. I think the other way around may be looked at. A lot of the funds that you used to pour into the top of the postsecondary education teapot should come in at the bottom to the students, and the students then would pick the institution they want. Of course, with more institutions granting degrees, you would get a sort of natural selection process. So a lot of the worrying that we used to do in the past about allowing AVC to get the right to grant a degree would more or less go out the window, because students would be trying to pick and would therefore attend those schools that would give them a kick start in life.

Now, there are the pessimists that will say, "Well, if you give a bunch of students a handful of dollars that you'll lend to them to go pick the school, they're going to pick the correspondence type or the easy BA degree to go out in the world." I don't think that's necessarily so. I think the students will realize that a degree from an institution that has some fairly rigorous standards will indeed be better to earn a living out in this old world than it has been. And I don't think we should worry about loaning students more money. I know a lot of students will say, well, they don't want a big debt. I asked the hon. member I think in cross-examination the other day on one of the estimates, and I think his assistant said that, for the average loan, they're paying them off in about six years. Well, six years is not much. You pay 20 to 25 years to have a home, to build a house to raise a family in, and I don't think that's any more important than a degree. So I don't think there's anything necessarily wrong with having students pay longer, maybe in the form of a surcharge to their income tax, so

that we're not discriminating between the art student and the applied science student or the doctor or lawyer.

In other words, somebody like Michelangelo would probably starve to death in this day's society, but when you think back to Michelangelo's time, who's ever heard of an engineer at that time? Who's even heard of a lawyer that existed at that time? Who's heard of a physician that existed at that time? But art – art. So the people who really contribute to our civilization shouldn't be held back from going into art degrees, and the way to do that is to base the payback on their income. If the poor rascal is a real Picasso – or maybe not Picasso; somebody like Gauguin – and isn't recognized until after he's died, well, he hasn't paid anything back, so big deal. Society has gained a lot more. The same way with writers and so on and so forth. That way we're not discriminating between the moneymaker and the builder with the hands and the one that contributes to society down the road.

I've wandered off a little bit. Anyhow, I was trying to back up the idea that we have a number of colleges, and broadening the degree granting is all right as long as you broaden the choice of the student. That choice can only come by funding them properly so that they can pick which institution. Then the government stays out of the way of saying, "Abracadabra, you're a good institution; abracadabra, you're second-rate," and so on and so forth. Let the students have something to do with that.

While I'm still speaking on the Bill – and I forgot to time myself, Mr. Chairman. [interjection] I'm okay; am I? I often do this when I get carried away.

The College of Art thing. I like the idea that they can grant a degree. I had a wife that gave me the dickens for some time because she attended there and thought it was absolutely awful that the College of Art in Calgary didn't have degree granting, because she happens to be one of those artists that think engineers and lawyers and doctors are leeches on the body politic and the real advancement in sciences are made by the arts. She always thought it was rather wrong that the College of Art was discriminated against. So I applaud somebody, especially coming from Cardston, that would allow the College of Art to have a degree. I was born and raised down in his country, and you always thought of art as being just, you know, a couple of notches lower than piano players in a house of ill fame, and they really weren't making their way and paying their way in this society. It wasn't until I was older and got to know more about it that I realized there is some value. So I compliment the Member for Cardston-Chief Mountain for being on that line of thought. It does indicate that the Premier indeed has picked the right person to maybe look after the department.

The question of the universities you name being limited to those that offer postgraduate work: I think that's probably as good a way as any. Although I think Carlyle, if you remember, Mr. Chairman, said, "The true university . . . is a collection of books." But seeing as we're in a modern-day society, you wouldn't get away with calling a library a university anymore, whereas you might have a number of years ago, so I think it's a step in the right direction.

I think I'm running out of gas here, Mr. Chairman. Gas is probably not an appropriate term to use. Oh yes; the last thing I wanted to ask was applied degrees. Applied degrees always bothered me. Being an engineer, I used to always get quite brassed off. I went to university after the war, and they'd say with a sneer, "Well, you're in applied science," because they were in pure science or in pure arts. I used to always figure, well, the guy that made the wheels go made the trains run. It's

just as important as the one sitting there painting signs on the side. I have often thought that the whole term of applied degrees, which it says is intended to prepare the student for a career and is not a preparation for graduate work – I've often thought that I don't really like that idea. I would like to think that no matter what you took, you could build on that to go into graduate work later on. You may not have all the courses, but the idea of having a terminal course and calling it an applied degree is sort of implying that the person taking it is a graduate plumber or in house ec.

I just don't like the words "applied degree." I think you should call a tradesperson a tradesperson, and I'm not too sure that the concept of applied degrees is a good one. I haven't checked this out with my caucus at all, not that they listen to me at all, and I haven't even checked it out over there, but I'm not sure that I like the idea of applied degrees. I think it's just complicating the whole works, and I think any education should be worthy, to varying amounts of credit, for postgraduate work. You shouldn't tell somebody, "You've spent three years over here and we won't take anything because you're in applied." Surely there's something that it could apply on.

Thank you very much.

5:00

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased today to support Bill 2. I find that in many ways it expands opportunities for students. It allows the colleges and technical institutes to grant applied degrees, permits the Alberta College of Art to grant bachelor of fine arts degrees, puts conditions on staff membership on the institutional boards of governors, and clarifies when institutions can use the word "university."

You know, degree granting has been a contentious issue for years. Colleges and institutes want the power to confer degrees or have large parts of their programs recognized as part of a university degree at another institution. I know I've often had friends who have tried to apply different courses at different universities they've gone to and have been faced with all kinds of red tape and discussing whether certain things would apply to a certain degree here and there. So if this helps to clarify those kinds of things, that would be good.

The established universities have sought to limit degree granting, listing lower standards as their major concern. Those institutions who have gained limited degree granting, like King's University College, have certainly been put through long and involved hoop jumping. They seem to have to lobby for every little acceptance of degrees that they can get. I think the applied degrees are intended to allow career and technical institutions to award degrees for employment-focused training, and I think that's a positive move. Applied degree programs don't duplicate existing degree programs.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. Someone's rising on a point of order. While we do have the illusion of a point of order, we are speaking in committee stage to the particulars of the Bill.

Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you. I want to speak to the applied degrees. I'm in favour of them. I see them as a new type of idea mixing more work experience with knowledge, and I think that's a good first step. I do see that degree granting has been kind of piecemeal and without a thoughtful plan. Standards for degree

granting status should be established so that everyone in every institution knows the rules. Now, I don't know if the minister alluded to that in his earlier comments. Was that what you were alluding to? Then that's good. I'm glad to see that that is being addressed. I look forward to seeing that criteria: if it's standard across the province and people know what they have to work for, how many numbers of semesters of instruction and work experience, what the work base should be, the resource and staffing requirements, et cetera. I think we'd like to see some fairness and planning so that every institution . . .

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt you, hon. member. It is getting rather noisy in here, particularly people who seem to think that their voice doesn't carry, even though they're speaking to someone two or three rows apart. Please, hon. members, could we keep the conversation either low or outside so that we can hear.

Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think what all institutions are asking for is fairness and a fair playing field so that they can plan for future years, see what criteria they need to offer different degree programs. Hopefully, this piece of legislation will be a step towards that.

I think it needs to be made clear that any college offering a certificate or diploma cannot call itself a university, and I would like to see that section clarified so that the graduate program offered is one that leads to an advanced degree, if that's where it's going, to be considered a university.

So with those few comments I will point out that I am supporting the Bill. I think it is a good step towards expanding opportunities for our students in this day and age when lots of students are really lost when they hit grade 12. We certainly need more opportunities for them. Maybe with more of these applied degrees, where you can mix more work experience, which I feel is very practical, with the learned knowledge, this will be a good move for our students coming out of grade 12.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to, first of all, thank the minister for answering the questions that were raised yesterday when the Bill was introduced. The amendments that he offered today are, as he said, necessary housekeeping amendments.

In concluding the comments from our side on this particular Bill, I would like to go back to the minister's understanding of what we meant by standards being established for degree granting. We obviously didn't make it clear exactly what it was we had in mind. What we are suggesting is that we might follow a model such as the British have used in credentialing institutions; that is, to set up an independent body that would make judgments about institutions and set the standards.

Again, if you go back, I had a little bit to do with King's college when they were trying to obtain degree granting status a number of years ago. It really was a very uncomfortable time for that college because the university and personnel that were making judgments about the college kept asking them to meet the standards, and the college kept saying: well, what are the standards? And the standards would change. The fear has always

been that if more and more institutions offer degrees, the standards will drop. So what we're asking is that those standards be made public, that they be established, that if there is a standard in terms of libraries, the number of volumes they must have, that be made public so all institutions know what is expected, that if they have to have a particular kind of laboratory facility, that again be made public and clear so all institutions know that if they want to offer a degree in a particular area, this is the kind of laboratory facility they have to have.

The faculty. I know that this has been a bone of contention with a number of the institutions, and again I think it could be alleviated if we would tell them in terms of: what are the academic credentials that your staff must have before you can offer a degree? What is their publishing record? What's their research record? What is the expectation before a degree can be offered? And facilities: what is it exactly in terms of facilities that you need?

So that's what we were asking, Mr. Minister, that the whole thing be taken out of this realm of ad hocery and each institution applying and then trying to make their case, often at the expense of another institution, the feeling that there's sort of a network that controls who gives and who doesn't give degrees, and that again, as I said – and I've used the words a number of times – it be made more public.

With those comments I'd like to conclude, Mr. Chairman, and again thank the minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just respond briefly to the comments that were made by members opposite.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke about a need to review the roles of the various institutions and levels of institutions in our province. I'd just like to say again that the adult learning forum, which will be convened and that I spoke of earlier, provides an opportunity to deal with that concern. I'm confident that will happen. I also want to point out to him that applied degrees, as part of the criteria when they were brought forward, are precluded from duplicating the traditional university degree. That's not the intent of that. We did not intend to create more universities. This was a new credential that was in response to a concern that students and institutions had and also the marketplace. We brought this program forward certainly not with the thought that it would duplicate universities.

5:10

I have to thank the Member for Redwater for his support of the applied degree concept. He spoke for a few moments about funding really flowing to the student and letting the student find the institution. That may work in a different circumstance, but bear in mind that this is a pilot project where there is a limited number of degree-granting institutions in the system, and every degree will not be at every institution with this pilot project. So that wouldn't work. Perhaps the system may move closer to that some time in the future, but for the purposes of what we are doing and evaluating and providing here, it wouldn't work.

He also had a concern with the ability of an applied degree institution to transfer credits. Those institutions would have the right to go and negotiate a level of transferability of their programs with a traditional university, and I'm confident that at

least some component of an applied degree would be transferable to a traditional university. If a student at the end of the day, having completed his or her degree, chose to go to a traditional university, certainly some of the course work would be transferable, especially in the case where students transfer out of a transfer program into an applied degree. The very least they can pick up, it would seem to me, would be their first two years that were transferable under the original programs. So I am confident that there will be some ability there. That will be worked out in time.

I appreciate the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert speaking in support of this direction that we've taken, that it will work and serve the students to give them more opportunities in our province.

The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods spoke on setting standards, and I did respond to that to some extent. Apparently I didn't go far enough to give him the comfort level he wanted that there were standards in place, so at this point in time I'll just take his comments as information and use them as we move forward with this program.

Mr. Chairman, I'll end my comments.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 2 as amended agreed to]

MR. ADY: I move that the Bill be reported.

[Motion carried]

Bill 4

Medical Profession Amendment Act, 1995

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury has moved this. Would the hon. member like to make a few comments before opening it to other members of the committee?

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank members of the Assembly for their thoughtful input, particularly the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the comments he made on second reading. I particularly make note of the fact that he agreed with the need for this Bill and what it's going to accomplish.

I'm not sure there's a whole lot of point in reiterating much of what was said at second reading, Mr. Chairman. Quite simply I would say that this Bill will enable the development of a physician resource management plan that can be used by the regional health boards, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and initiatives in this regard will be used on a national basis as well.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would call for the question.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to Bill 4, the Medical Profession Amendment Act, 1995. I have to say that I believe it's about time the government rectified the problem of not knowing how many doctors we have in this province. The College of Physicians and Surgeons needs desperately to develop a physician resource management plan and have been asking for one for some time. This Bill assists the doctors in identifying the needs there and the doctors that are required in resource management. So this will let the doctors themselves know what areas they should be expanding into and in what areas we currently have the greatest need.

It's true that the AMA is in desperate need of a census on the shortage of doctors at this time in this province. The fact of the matter is that nobody really knows right now how many doctors are currently practising and in what areas of specialty or sub-specialty or the areas where we have doctors who have recently left, doctors who have opted for joining a medical system which is not in the midst of chaos, as ours is at this particular time.

The Medical Profession Amendment Act gives Albertans some information that they don't have right now and that I believe is desperately needed. It gives the government some information that the government should have had before they entered into the health care restructuring process. Again we see a lack of planning on behalf of the government, and it's again the tail wagging the dog. Definitely this will provide a baseline of information on physicians and on doctor resources: who it is that's practising, what kind of medicine, and where it is in this province.

I'll be supporting this Bill because I do believe that it's long overdue, and it definitely meets the request of the AMA. Thank you.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 4 agreed to]

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 4 be reported when we rise.

[Motion carried]

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I now move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

5:20

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The committee reports Bill 4. The committee reports Bill 2 with some amendments. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour, I would now move that we call it 5:30 and that when we reassemble this evening at 8 o'clock, we do so as Committee of Supply to consider the estimates of the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that we do now call it 5:30 and that when we

reassemble this evening, we do so in Committee of Supply. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:22 p.m.]

