

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 28, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/03/28

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, keep us mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work give us strength and wisdom.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table today four copies of separate resolutions from two ECS groups in my constituency of Little Bow. The first is from the Enchant ECS, and the second is from the Coalhurst Elementary School Kindergarten Committee. Both of these urge the Alberta government to mandate the right of access to fully funded kindergarten programming to a minimum of 400 hours per child per school year.

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 with the exception of Question 185, Question 186, and Question 190. As well, I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Motion 196.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

### **Bill 25 Teachers' Pension Plans Act**

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 25, being the Teachers' Pension Plans Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill keeps a commitment the government made to the teachers of Alberta some time ago. That commitment was to rewrite the Teachers' Retirement Fund Act to reflect the reforms to their pension plan agreed to in 1992 by the government and the Alberta Teachers' Association. Because the existing legislation was first introduced over five decades ago, the government is taking this opportunity to establish the foundation for the complete modernization of the teachers' pension legislation. At the same time, it is the intent of the Bill to continue the existing funding arrangements and pension benefits entitlements.

[Leave granted; Bill 25 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of the document Future Directions for Alberta's

Heritage Fund. This is the all-party committee's report of hearing from Albertans in eight public hearings held across the province, 1,700 phone calls tabulated to the 1-800 number, and 50,515 returns of the questionnaire from the tabloid sent to all households in Alberta. This is a tremendous response from concerned citizens throughout the province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of the forestry product regulations in Idaho and Oregon and a résumé of 36 other states for the benefit of the environment minister showing that logging and cutting on private land is treated just the same as on government land.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table six copies of a document recently released by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada entitled School Achievement Indicators Program: Reading and Writing Assessment 1994.

As well, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to table six copies of How Are Students Doing? This document, produced by the Department of Education, exhibits the results from the January diploma examinations.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'm filing with the Assembly today the annual report of the Alberta Securities Commission for the year ended March 31, '94, and, as well, a document entitled the Alberta Advantage: March 1995, a document that I provided to members of the investment community as well as our investment borrowing syndicate as well as those who were interested observers during my visit to New York and Toronto last week.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table four copies of a letter from Dr. Christopher Penney in Calgary to the Minister of Health indicating that he disagrees quite vehemently. In fact, physicians are being totally ignored. Morale is extremely low among the physicians [in Calgary] and it is not surprising [therefore] that some are leaving for the U.S.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table four copies of a paper done by three University of Alberta professors entitled Road Kill: Women in Alberta's Drive toward Deficit Elimination, which points out that women are disproportionately affected negatively by this government's cuts.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have two items to table, four copies of each of two documents prepared by the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. The HSAA holds in excess of 120 certifications representing over 7,500 employees in over 125 different health-related disciplines. The first is the final report of the Health Sciences Association on ad hoc laboratory services. The other is their submission evaluating the laboratory services restructuring business plan format.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 48 grade 8 students from Olds junior/senior high

school. They are accompanied by teachers Ms Thelma Hilton Wenc and Ms Angie Dezall and parents Mrs. Husted and Mrs. Shipley. I wonder if they would stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature 54 grade 6 students from the C.P. Blakely school in Sylvan Lake. They are accompanied by their teachers Miss Cunningham, Miss Friedrick, and parents Ms Cindy Brown, Mrs. Barb Thurston, Mrs. Brenda Janzen, Mrs. Karen Mehlhaff, Mrs. Denise Barry, and Mr. James Ekelund. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a great couple from the Calgary-Egmont constituency who have been very active community members as well as very involved in Calgary-Egmont constituency. Dr. Don Watt and his wife, Betty, are here in preparation for a great convention this weekend, where Don is running for southern vice-president. They're seated in the members' gallery. Please welcome them.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and the Assembly a gentleman who immigrated to Canada from Iran a number of years ago and who recently became a Canadian citizen, much to his delight. Mr. Moussa Shamipour is seated in the public gallery. Mr. Shamipour, would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**head: Oral Question Period**

**1:40 Impact of Budget Cuts on Women**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, a study by three University of Alberta professors confirms what we in the Liberal caucus and what Alberta women have always known, that the cuts imposed by this government are affecting women disproportionately. The study entitled Road Kill: Women in Alberta's Drive toward Deficit Elimination states:

The Alberta Advantage should stay in the spotlight, not so that we can celebrate it but so that we can understand that the base on which it rests is the exploitation of Alberta's women and children.

My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Why is it acceptable to this government that women are being forced out of their jobs and back to being an unpaid labour force filling the gaps left in our communities by this government's policies?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, our government's objective has been from the outset to balance our budget and to create a climate for businesses to create jobs, because, as we know, economic independence for both men and women is very important to the people of this province. We believe that women and men want to work, be productive members of society, and provide for their families. The statistics in fact are that there are 606,000 women

employed in Alberta. That reflects an increase of 20,900 since February of 1994. Seventy percent of those women are employed full-time, which is up 13,000; 30 percent of them are working part-time, which is up 7,500. Since 1989 the employment position of women in this province has improved over men. In 1989 the rate of unemployment was 9.8 percent for men and 9.6 percent for women. As of December of 1994 it was 7.9 percent for men and 6.5 percent for women.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that there is a differential effect of some of the changes that are being made in government programs, and of course that is true. There is a differential effect, but there are a number of things that we are dealing with to try and address that differential effect. There are programs in Economic Development and Tourism that have improved the number of women who are entrepreneurs. The Minister of Labour has set up legislation on the subject of midwifery which will allow more growth in that area for women. Alberta Health has earmarked \$20 million for its workforce adjustment strategy. There are also training and education programs available through Advanced Education and Career Development. I'd point out that 51 percent of those in full-time attendance at public postsecondary schools are women, and 67 percent of female former welfare recipients are now training through skills development grant programs.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for women's issues set aside all that array of statistics, which obscures the real issue, and just answer one specific question, and that is: why is it that since this government took office two years ago, more than twice as many women have lost their jobs in this province as have men?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that statistically it's been clearly demonstrated that there are more jobs for women in the province of Alberta than in 1989.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, one of the most disturbing things that we see on this side of the House is a minister who remains silent when there are women who have serious problems which are not being addressed. Why won't this minister speak out on behalf of women instead of apologizing for this government's decisions? If this minister won't do it right, why doesn't the Premier appoint somebody who will?

MR. MAR: Well, first of all, from time to time of course I do make statements on behalf of women, but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, women are prepared to speak for themselves.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the numbers just used by the Leader of the Opposition saying that more women were being affected by restructuring and layoffs – the facts are that on March 31, 1993, in the Alberta government service, there were 12,862 men employed and 14,891 women employed. That's 53 percent of the workforce that were women. Move two years later to January 31, 1995 – this is after this year's announcements – females employed in the government service 12,808, males 10,781. The percentages had moved up, and . . . [interjections] I wish they would be quiet, because the Liberal leader gave false information. The facts are that in this last year the reductions . . . [interjections] They don't like to be confused with the facts. The facts are that 250 women were moved out of the government service this year,

men 469, almost twice as many. Once again false information from the Liberal leader. False information.

MR. MITCHELL: Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour doesn't understand that nurses in fact are government workers, and they are being laid off in droves.

### Seniors' Suicides

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, seniors now have the highest suicide rate of any group in this province. Cuts to seniors' benefits, increased property taxes and user fees, Calgary veterans lining up at food banks at their Legion: this is the Premier's legacy for the people who built this province. My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Why is it that the seniors' suicide rate in this province is 25 percent higher than the average suicide rate?

MR. MAR: Well, suicide, regardless of the age category of the individual, is always a tragic and serious issue. I, of course, am particularly concerned when it concerns seniors. Seniors' suicides are not a new phenomenon, and they are certainly not exclusive to the province of Alberta. Our federal government statistics show an increase nationally, increasing over the last 20 years. A study recently released by Mount Royal College shows that suicidal seniors – there are three reasons that were identified in the report: seniors feel disconnected from their friends and family, they feel that they're unimportant, and they feel that they don't have meaningful roles or a sense of purpose.

Mr. Speaker, of course, our provincial government is keenly interested in programs that deal with those particular issues of making sure that seniors have a meaningful sense of purpose. So to that extent we are funding seniors' centres, we fund Meals on Wheels, we fund recreational opportunities for seniors, family and community support services, Alberta's health and wellness programs, and others, all with the intention of dealing with the issue of isolation of seniors. It is a very, very important issue.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, it's results that count, and we see the results in an increased suicide rate for seniors.

Does this minister not understand that there is a direct relationship between the way in which he is cutting support for seniors and the elevation in their suicide rate in this province?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I rely upon the Mount Royal College study, which showed that really the issue is much different from the issue of dealing with government cuts. It deals with issues of isolation and having a sense of purpose and a sense of meaning. We do work on programs, but again this is a trend which is a national trend. It is not an issue which is exclusive to the province of Alberta.

MR. MITCHELL: Does this minister not understand that the reason for increased seniors' isolation might include, for example, that they're losing their homes because their property taxes are going up, because their benefits are going down, or that they're being thrown out of a long-term care facility because this government won't fund the facility, and they have nowhere else to go? Does that increase their isolation? Does that enhance their suicide rate? I think it does, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, there are not seniors who are being thrown out of the facilities in which they live. This is an issue of

great concern, having housing facilities for seniors. There's no doubt that we are in times of change. Change is stressful for many people. It is not just seniors, but it is stressful for all Albertans to deal with change. Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of seniors and of Albertans are resilient people, and they'll deal with change. For those people that are falling through cracks – that is exactly the reason why we have appeal processes set up, to deal with the exceptional cases. But in the majority of cases, seniors lead happy and healthy lives within their own homes and independently.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Grain Marketing

DR. NICOL: Thank you. Time is going by. Farmers are out there preparing for their spring work. Yesterday a government member asked the ag minister if he was prepared to hold a producer plebiscite on grain marketing. The minister said that it was being referred. Referred, Mr. Speaker. This Legislature told him to conduct a plebiscite. My question to the minister of agriculture: are you going to hold a plebiscite, yes or no?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, who has asked this question once before – I think it was two days after the motion was passed, as I recall. The question should properly be referred to the federal minister, who has the responsibility for this jurisdiction. This is where the legislation really inhibits our Alberta farmers from having the opportunity of accessing this continental market. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East: what has he done to communicate to those who are responsible to have that piece of legislation?

What I indicated to the hon. Member for Taber-Warner yesterday when he asked the question was that, indeed, we are in the process of putting together a process. Now, what the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East was asking for in two days was to have a plebiscite. That's very interesting. In two days. Who is going to be allowed to vote? Who is going to be eligible for the voting process? Is it going to be indeed of any value to our federal counterparts? Are our federal brethren even going to consider this?

Mr. Speaker, I wrote to my federal counterpart some time ago asking him for a clarification of the status if indeed we do carry forward with a plebiscite: what will his response be, and will he accredit this plebiscite? To date I have not had the courtesy of a response.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, supplemental question.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday you said that you were going to instruct the Alberta Grain Commission, a group of political appointees, to communicate with the industry to develop a strategy when this Legislature has asked for a plebiscite. Are you going to have a plebiscite, yes or no?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's interesting to note and I think the commodity organizations and the farm organizations that are all a representative part of the Alberta Grain

Commission will be very interested to know that they are actually only political appointments, not agricultural appointments. We have representatives from the wheat growers, the canola growers, the barley growers, the Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee. Virtually every farm organization is represented on this Alberta Grain Commission. What we are in the process of doing is, in conjunction with the industry, in conjunction with the wheat growers and the barley growers, who we'll be meeting with next week, as I mentioned yesterday to the hon. Member for Taber-Warner, we're going to allow the industry to assist in the development of this. We will not have the politicians telling the agricultural community what it is that they should be doing.

DR. NICOL: I wish that this morning I would have put on my barn boots instead of my city go-to-meeting boots.

The final question, Mr. Speaker: yes or no? Very simple, yes or no?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I've given the answer several times. Again I will answer the question. Together with the industry, that decision will be made, as well as the timing, as well as what the process will be. It will be the industry that will make that decision together with the department.

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

MR. SAPERS: Question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. See? You set an example, and they follow, Mr. Speaker.

### Forest Management

MRS. FORSYTH: The media focus on the logging issue has generated tremendous interest from all Albertans. During the past few weeks I've had a great many calls and letters from constituents who are upset with apparent logging practices on private and Crown land. My question today is to the minister of environment. Why is the logging industry treated differently than the oil industry, who have strict environmental standards that must be met on both Crown and private lands?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for the question. It certainly is a good one. The fact is that on Crown land the oil and gas industry and the forestry industry have very extensive rules to follow. They are similar. As a matter of fact, if the oil and gas industry is building a road or forestry is building a road, they must follow the same kinds of guidelines. The forestry industry on Crown land must file cutting plans. They have to abide by Free to Grow, which is a very extensive program, one that was implemented in 1991. That requires them to reforest within two years. There's a whole number of things that they have to do.

There are, in fact, six Acts that apply to private land, as they do to Crown land, whether it's gas and oil or forestry. They relate to soil conservation and the fishery. That is the same whether it's private-land logging or oil and gas activity on private land. As a matter of fact, all the issues around pollution are the same. I think there is some confusion probably inasmuch as the ERCB have a number of other regulations that apply to oil and gas that of course don't apply to the forestry industry because of

the difference. One is a subsurface mineral, and the other one is a resource that's on the surface.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the forest industry is depleting one of Alberta's most important natural resources, how can we ensure that this resource will be there for my children and their children?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. LUND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that all forest companies that are harvesting timber on Crown land have what's known as an annual allowable cut. That annual allowable cut really means the annual growth of the forest. They are not allowed to go over that annual allowable cut, and that is set somewhat below what is actually grown each year. So in fact through that process and through the Free to Grow process, the assurance that the timber is going to be there in the future is inherent in the way that it's managed. As a matter of fact, one of the things that we're finding is that the growth under the proper management is greater than was expected, so in fact there could very well be more timber available for future generations than there currently is today.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you. Why doesn't the government require cutting permits that incorporate environmental requirements for the harvesting of timber on private land?

2:00

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that on private land the environmental rules apply as they do on Crown land. As I have said many times in this House, there are six Acts that apply to private land as to Crown lands. So as far as the environmental issues are concerned, they are dealt with similarly on private land.

Since we are talking about private land and the trees are a private commodity, a product of the landowner, I think the minister of agriculture possibly could add something.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister of agriculture.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an important issue and one that has to be properly recognized for what it really is doing as far as agricultural development is concerned as well. Indeed, as the hon. minister has properly identified, there is identical legislation that does cover the environmental issues regarding development on private land as well as on public land. As a matter of fact, we are working with the private landowners in developing a proper conservation strategy. As a matter of fact, we're doing that in conjunction with the federal government, the provincial government, as well as our own department. As a result of that, a publication has been put together. Conservation and Logging on Private Land in Alberta has been developed for the use of those who are developing logging on private land.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that through the period of time when all the land was identified for its various uses in the province and the quality and the level of the quality of the land were being established, there were clearly 6 million additional acres that haven't been developed today that are identified

as suitable for agricultural development in this province. Now, of those 6 million acres virtually all of it has some form of wood cover, and what we really are doing at the present time is simply utilizing the land perhaps in a different manner. Perhaps it will eventually go back to forestry development. Nevertheless, whether it's used as feedstock for cattle when it's grassed down or whether it's used to refurbish the fibre industry, it's still being used to its ultimate value.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Special Places 2000

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the government announced its Alberta natural heritage policy, Special Places 2000. The policy falls well short of preserving Alberta's endangered spaces, which was the whole idea behind the plan, because now it adds economic development as a fundamental goal of the program. This announcement today leaves many Albertans who participated in this process asking: what's so special about special places? My question is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. The state of the environment report issued on February 27 does not include economic development as a goal of special places, but the announcement today does. Why is that?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member in his preamble made a statement that is certainly not accurate. He indicated that economic development was a pillar of the program. That's not the case. As a matter of fact, tourism and economic development are tied together. All one has to do is look at the national parks. We have tourism there. Those are special places. But we also have economic development. And so many instances – look at a ski hill. I could go on and on and on and give examples where there's a special place, whether it be recreation or tourism, and there is some economic development. So this is not inconsistent. As a matter of fact, I think it is a very important component of the program.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why did the minister allow his standing policy committee to dictate the addition of economic development as, and I quote, a focus throughout this initiative. Why did you allow the standing policy committee to do that?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, since Special Places 2000 was initiated back in 1992, there has been a lot of public input. After the report of the committee that was chaired by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was filed, there was a lot more input. We've been developing this over a period of time, and as far as picking out one group or one individual that had input and saying that that's what changed it, that's not the case.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the nomination and review process, why did the minister build in a kill button at every single stage of the nomination process for an area for Special Places 2000?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, one of the objectives of this program, of course, is to fill the gaps that may be there in the whole

program of identifying areas for special places. There are 20 subregions in the province. There are some gaps within that area, so we want to make sure that we are filling the gaps. Now, if in fact there's an area that is already well represented, maybe it's not necessary to proceed with that nomination. If in fact the local people, the stakeholders that are most directly affected, cannot agree with the area management plan or the total area that's been designated, they have the ability to change that. I think that what'll happen through this process is that we are going to have all of the stakeholders, the people that are involved – in fact, we're going to have a much better buy-in and a better program because we're going to involve the public.

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

### Sheriffs' Offices

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question comes directly from a constituent, and it's to the Minister of Justice. Some time ago the Civil Enforcement Act privatizing some of the services of the sheriff's department received the approval of this Legislature. When can the public expect to see these changes in the way the business of the sheriff's office is presently carried out?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Civil Enforcement Act, which was passed in this Legislature in the fall, we as legislators gave the opportunity to privatize our seizure procedures in the province. The intention is to streamline debt collection. We will as of the 3rd of April begin a series of public information meetings around this province in eight different centres, and the intention is that we would allow Albertans to discover what is in that Act and what the opportunities are for Albertans to take on a privatized method of seizures in this province.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. What sheriff's office services will be moving to the private sector, and how will the minister ensure necessary controls are in place?

MR. EVANS: Well, essentially, Mr. Speaker, there will be three areas which will be privatized: first, the conducting of seizures themselves; secondly, the storage and the sale of seized goods; and thirdly, the distribution of the proceeds of those sales.

Now, the hon. member has also asked: how can we ensure the integrity of that process? Well, there will be bonding requirements. There will be insurance requirements. There will be training requirements. We intend to set up a code of ethics as well for those who will be acting as bailiffs or civil enforcement agencies.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is again to the same minister. As the focus of the sheriff's office will be shifted from actually conducting seizures to conducting reviews to make sure that everything is going along in a complementary way, my question is: how will the sheriff's office's function change, and can you tell us a little bit about the personnel within that department?

MR. EVANS: Well, the purpose of this exercise, Mr. Speaker, is to improve the delivery of service to Albertans. We're going to be able to do that through this privatized model using fewer people because the people who will be continuing to operate in the sheriff's office will be, as the hon. member has indicated, reviewing how the operation is being conducted under strict guidelines. We expect that that process, quite frankly, is going to start in about October of this year, after the training process, after the applicants for this privatized opportunity are well aware of what the restrictions are and what they can do and what opportunities are made available to them.

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

## 2:10 Medical Laboratories

MRS. FORSYTH: Question.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll get right to the question. The funding for medical lab testing has been cut nearly \$8 million this year, and it'll be further eroded by about \$25 million next year. This will result in the loss of thousands of jobs and the closure of dozens of lab collection sites. Now, the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, which represents laboratory technologists, has studied the proposed changes and has come up with several recommendations. What has the Minister of Health done to ensure that the issues raised by the Health Sciences Association, including conflict of interest, quality of care, patient access, have been addressed and will continue to be addressed by the regional health authorities?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that I have received those recommendations from the Health Sciences Association, but certainly I'll check, and if I have or when I do, I'll review them very carefully. However, I would expect that the Health Sciences Association have most properly presented their findings and their concerns to the regional health authorities, who are the groups that are responsible for delivering the lab program in this province.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SAPERS: Yes. The reports were produced months ago, and I tabled them earlier today, so the minister will have a chance to look at them.

I'm wondering if it's all right with the Minister of Health that as a result of lab closures right around the province wealthy Albertans may be able to pay to have specimens collected at their physician's office while everyone who can't afford it will have to make their way to one of the few remaining collection sites and then wait in line to have the tests done.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure exactly what the question was. It seemed to me that it was far more of a statement than a question.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that we had a difficult decision to make in restructuring laboratories in this province. We have a lab system that was partly private and partly in the public sector, and unfortunately there was a great inefficiency in both sectors, so the decision was to restructure to ensure that we're using our lab facilities most efficiently.

It is interesting to see that the city of Edmonton, with some 600,000-plus people in the community, had about 120 collection

sites. The city of Vancouver, who have 2 and a half billion people, did not have any more than that, Mr. Speaker. It seemed very obvious to me that if a city of the size of Vancouver could accommodate less collection sites than we have here currently, surely we could come down somewhat. I think the hon. member would well address the concern of ensuring that we have an efficient, an effective, and a high-quality lab system in this city and in this province, and that is what the regional health authorities are addressing as they restructure how we deliver lab services.

MR. SAPERS: I hope this question will be clear to the Minister of Health. Will the minister explain exactly how patients will receive the same quality of care that they have been receiving in cities like Calgary, in Alberta, with only half the current number of lab techs working in about one-third of the sites? How is that going to work?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's going to work by making the system far more efficient. It isn't very efficient to have half of the sites operating at 50 percent efficiency. The people in this province deserve better value for their tax dollar than that. I think it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the dollars that the people in this province entrust to us are spent in an effective manner, and that is not by promoting inefficiency. However, what we should promote is quality, and quality doesn't come with the number of collection sites. It comes with quality workers and a quality system.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

## Heritage Savings Trust Fund

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. A number of MLAs in this Assembly have the stated goal of selling off \$6.4 billion of the heritage trust fund assets for a number of reasons, including to fund core programs on a need defined basis. Given the advice of Albertans to keep the fund, what steps will the Treasurer take to protect the fund from these pilfering attempts by some members?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I hope you will acknowledge my resistance to the temptation to respond to that.

I would respond, first of all, by acknowledging the efforts of the committee that reviewed the Alberta heritage savings trust fund and tabled in this Assembly this afternoon the Future Directions for Alberta's Heritage Fund, chaired by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, also with membership from Red Deer-South, the Member for Calgary-East, the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, and even the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I think they've done an exemplary job in listening to Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

Having briefly now read the report, I would remind hon. members of the five important principles that Albertans told the committee to stick with.

1. The Fund should be retained, but not at the status quo.
2. The management of the Fund should be at arms length from the political process.
3. Private sector investment managers should be involved in investment decision making, along with Alberta Treasury staff.
4. The Fund should be more transparent; the Fund's managers should be more directly accountable to the people of Alberta.
5. The role of government is to set objectives for the Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I think the advice of well over 50,000 Albertans in the process is advice that we as members of this Assembly

should heed, and I look forward to having the kind of debate that will protect Albertans from the very concerns raised by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With some members in the Assembly calling for a stabilization fund to replace the heritage fund, could the Treasurer comment on the impact of such a move?

MR. DINNING: Yes, I could. I would simply say that establishing a stabilization fund is merely a smoke screen for the liquidation of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. It's clearly something that Albertans told this government, told the committee not to do, Mr. Speaker. Over time our concern would be that the stabilization fund would be drawn down such that all of the assets formerly of the heritage fund would be drawn down and sold to pay for overspending, and all the while, on a consolidated basis, the government would be running a deficit. The Deficit Elimination Act, agreed to unanimously by all members of this Assembly in May of 1993, and more recently second reading of Bill 6, the Balanced Budget and Debt Retirement Act, make any deficit of any kind after 1995-96 illegal, and clearly this Assembly will not operate illegally.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you. To the Treasurer: is the establishment of a stabilization fund for these purposes consistent with the government's commitment to open and understandable accounting?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer is absolutely not. It is entirely inconsistent with what this government is trying to do in establishing one set of books, not having things mystically and magically off to the side. I must admit that I was a bit concerned when I heard some members of this Assembly calling for the stabilization fund, so I wrote to the Auditor General. I'm filing in the Assembly today the response from the Auditor General, where he made it clear that

the idea of a stabilization fund runs counter to the move to fully consolidated reporting. I believe that the government and the public must continue to focus on the Province's consolidated position . . . Therefore, I encourage you to avoid the establishment of a stabilization fund and the resulting confusion it could create with the public.

Clearly, our view is that the government will stand its ground against the liquidation of the heritage fund. That is what Albertans told us to avoid doing, and certainly the creation of a stabilization fund is merely a disguise for doing just that.

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

2:20

### Internet

MR. CHADI: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Computer technology is advancing at an amazing rate and giving Albertans access to new information, services, ideas, and entertainment. Alarming, among all the valuable programs available on the Internet, we hear increasingly of programs involving pornography, hate propaganda, and now Internet gambling. We can regulate and protect Albertans when these products are delivered in a tangible

form, but it's difficult to restrict the free flow of information over the Internet. My question is to the minister responsible for consumer protection, whoever that may be: what steps have you taken to regulate the programs available over the Internet?

MR. DINNING: I would happily take the question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and he would report back to the Assembly.

MR. CHADI: Then, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the minister responsible for lotteries: will the minister commit to all Albertans that he will not allow any company offering Internet gambling to establish itself here in Alberta?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I don't usually answer hypothetical questions. That is another discussion that would have to take place with our legal people and everything else as to what constitutes our airwaves and networks outside the province and their legal application in the province. So under the existing laws today I can assure you that my attitude would be no, but I am not aware of the legal ramifications of somebody standing outside and using telephone lines to sell services, no more than I see some of the dial-in things that you can get through the newspapers today in this province.

MR. CHADI: Mr. Speaker, my next question would be to the minister responsible for science and research. Would the minister undertake to make it part of her authority's mandate to develop a policy with respect to consumer protection from harmful programs available on the Internet?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, my responsibility is with regard to research, and if this is part of our research project, certainly we would take on that responsibility.

### Health Facility Construction

MR. YANKOWSKY: Mr. Speaker, the Capital health authority recently announced dramatic changes to health care in and around Edmonton. Contingent on these changes are capital dollars that must be spent to move programs such as ophthalmology from the Charles Camsell hospital to the Royal Alexandra hospital and an upgrade of the emergency unit at the University of Alberta hospital. To round out the complement of community health centres, I understand a new one is to be built in northeast Edmonton. My questions are all to the hon. Minister of Health. What is the total cost of the three aforementioned capital projects in Edmonton?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there is consideration by the Capital health authority for a number of capital projects. The three that I picked up that the member identified would be in a range of about \$16 million. However, there are some other projects that are involved in the Capital health authority's plan. So I may not be entirely exact on that figure, but that's about what those three projects would be.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be more cost-effective to move ophthalmology surgery to the Grey Nuns hospital, where fewer renovations are required?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the details that the authorities across this province have been doing over the past months is looking at ways to more efficiently deliver programs and services. Certainly in the two major centres that have a responsibility not only to serve their communities but in many cases all of Alberta or in Edmonton's case, northern Alberta, the western Arctic, and northeastern B.C., there has been a great deal of work done on consolidation of programs so that they could ensure that they truly had centres of excellence in some of these very highly specialized areas. It was considered, I believe, by the Capital health authority that it would be far better to have the ophthalmology area in one of the referral hospitals of which there are three: the Royal Alexandra, the University hospital, and the Glenrose.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is: could the old Belmont Correctional Centre building in northeast Edmonton not be renovated to become a community health centre more cost-effectively than building a new facility?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there has not been a decision made on the building. The Belmont facility was considered; it was looked at. However, in that assessment the Capital health authority are looking at a number of possible buildings. When you look at the development of the community health centre, it has to be a building that can handle public health, some emergency and urgent care services. It is quite a complexity of services that will be offered there. So the Capital health authority are viewing all sites or buildings that might be available or plans for a building with those programs in mind, and I think that's the decision that it will be made on.

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

#### Social Assistance

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The steady erosion of supports for families on welfare continues. We have heard that effective April 1 the department will no longer pay child care expenses for a parent on assistance who is actively looking for work or for a parent with a temporary medical problem in need of respite. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Mr. Minister, how do you expect a parent on welfare to actively search for work if they don't have proper child care? You'd have them in a catch-22. Or do you expect them to take their children with them to the interview?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the particular issue is an issue that we've changed some policies on, because the way it was set up before, a person could look for a job forever and continue receiving subsidies. What we've done to speed up the process of getting people back into training and job opportunities is to set a time line as to how long that person would be eligible for those subsidies while they are looking for a job. If they are unhappy with the changes, there's always the appeals process to go through, and it's still there. That hasn't changed.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS HANSON: Thank you. The supplemental is: would the minister tell the House how long that time line is, please?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I think a reasonable time line to start with would be around two months, and then of course, like I say, there is an appeals process. At the same time, the manager of an office can provide additional dollars if there is a requirement. So we do have all the safety backups required to assist people to get back into the workforce. That is our top priority, to assist people to get back either through training or direct placement in employment opportunities, and we will continue doing that.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS HANSON: Thank you. My final supplemental to the minister: will the minister assure us, then, Alberta families and children on welfare, that he will not totally take away the funding for child care for parents either looking for work or who are temporarily ill and need respite?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, you know, I've answered that question a number of times in this House. There is nothing in our policies that will take away any funding from those particular people. We are in fact in the next two years, like we've done in the past, putting close to \$100 million in those particular areas to provide the supports that are required to move people from being on social assistance to employment and training. This program will continue. That is our plan in this government.

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

#### Health Care Funding

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The restructuring in health care has caused I think every MLA, certainly on this side of the House, to get closer to the physicians in their area, and I certainly have a series of ongoing meetings with physicians. My questions are to the Minister of Health. There are a number of concerns being brought to us by physicians across the province about the loss of their independence as regional health authorities and their nonphysician managers take over resource allocation decisions. To the Minister of Health: is the government planning to move all physician funding under regional health authorities as they have done with laboratory funding?

2:30

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there is no plan to move any further resources of physician funding to the regional health authorities. However, I would say that there are a number of discussions occurring with the Alberta Medical Association, who act on behalf of physicians in the province, as to the appropriate methods of funding physicians and physicians' services.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that in a number of regions there may be discussions occurring between physicians and the regional health authorities in those areas to discuss how resources are utilized. We do have a mechanism for change of how we deal with physician payments and physician resources. That is through the Administrative Council, and that would be the system that we would work through.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. There have been reports of putting a cap of \$200,000 per annum on a physician's income. Is the government



planning to implement a capitation model for the funding of physician services?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly I've said before in the House and I'll say it again: I respect the negotiation process that we have in place with the AMA on physician agreements. However, I am concerned about a report that was around on capping physicians' salaries at \$200,000. I can tell you that there is no proposal to cap individual physician's salaries. However, I think that when the discussion occurs around capping or capitation, we have to understand that there is a difference in those two terms and a difference of understanding. Sometimes reporting can go awry. However, again as I say, I very much respect the negotiation process, and I believe that those negotiations on any subject of physician payment should occur at that area.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, is the minister developing negotiation processes similar to the current process with the Alberta Medical Association with other practitioners, such as midwives?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly there have been discussions on funding issues with the Association of Midwives. One thing I can say is that there has never been any suggestion that we would move midwifery payment under the fee-for-service area, but those discussions on funding must continue with the Association of Midwives. I believe that we had a commitment to a decision in that area some time this summer.

head:

### **Members' Statements**

#### **Trade Mission to Texas**

MR. LANGEVIN: Mr. Speaker, I love my country and I love this province. I believe that this is the best place in the world to live. We are blessed in Alberta with a democracy which is the envy of many countries. At every election Albertans have the opportunity to go to the polls and decide for themselves who will govern this province for the next term.

We've had in the past and we have today in this Legislature MLAs of different political stripes, who are here to articulate on behalf of their constituents their vision, aspirations, and expectations. We often have on the floor of this House some very passionate, forceful, and colorful debates, but, Mr. Speaker, I get very concerned when we take our debates to the international scene. Whenever the Premier of this province leaves the capital city to travel on a trade mission to promote our province, attract investors, and create jobs, we should be seen as united.

The stunts that some members of the Official Opposition pulled last week were disgraceful and tasteless. It was political partisanship at its best or, should I say, at its worst. Mr. Speaker, I feel sorry for those of the Official Opposition who were not part of the decision. Unfortunately, they are all painted with the same brush.

I cannot understand for the life of me why some members of this Legislature would undertake an exercise to undermine the well-being of this province and of all Albertans. This is not acceptable, and I hope it will never be repeated. I don't know what they thought they had to gain, but little do they know that there are no votes in Houston for them. They may also be surprised at the next provincial election at the number of votes for them or the lack thereof.

Thank you.

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

#### **Mount Royal College**

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To succeed and prosper in the global economic order, we must be able to work not only in our province or in our country but anywhere in the world. This international perspective promises much and offers to the province and the people of Alberta a great future. Mount Royal College in Calgary is taking a leadership role in preparing people for international challenges. In particular, the college is forging links with Mexico and developing relationships that will offer economic advantages and also enhance Alberta's international profile.

In January the college was one of only six Canadian institutions accepted into the international consortium for economic and educational development. This trilateral consortium will result in new partnerships with institutions in the United States and Mexico. More immediately, in one month's time a group of 30 science teachers from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico's principal public university system, will be in Calgary. Spearheaded by Mount Royal College, this project will help train science teachers in Mexico's high schools. This is the first time in Alberta that a consortium of Calgary postsecondary and secondary institutions has worked together on a partnership of this nature. It is expected to bring about \$500,000 into the Alberta economy. This consortium includes SAIT, AVC Calgary, and the two Calgary boards of education, the public and the separate.

Mount Royal College is also working with the Monterrey Institute of Technology, one of the largest private university systems in Mexico. Last year 80 students and six teachers participated in summer study tours at Mount Royal College. This was the first time in Canada for this consortium and over six weeks brought another \$500,000 into the economy. This program will return to Calgary this summer.

Mount Royal College has also proposed to be the first Canadian site for a year abroad component of this bilingual preparatory program and has signed a formal faculty and student exchange agreement.

I'd like to bring this information in front of the House and share the success of Mount Royal College and this great endeavour with respect to the economics and advantages of education in Alberta with this Legislature.

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

#### **Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my privilege to serve on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Review Committee. It was an all-party committee. I found that it was a remarkable way both to break the bonds of partisanship and also to come to a common understanding of what individuals were saying about a particular issue. I know from talking to my colleagues who served on the all-party freedom of information committee that they had a similar experience. It was equivalent to the free vote. You could discuss issues, and you could work together for a common goal.

I must tell you that having seen the report, having gone through the report, I think it's a very fair representation of what we heard on the road and certainly from the brochures that I sampled, because there were too many to look at individually. It's a very

fair representation in terms of capsulizing the competing objectives that individual Albertans had with regards to the fund.

I would just note three things. I think that all-party panels work. I think that when you solicit the views of Albertans, you will get a good set of views that are rational, that are dispassionate, and that give you a good idea of what the issues are and how they should be dealt with. I certainly think the message I got from that in terms of what the perceived role of the fund is in the future is that it is a tool to be used in the best interests of Albertans, to be at arm's length from political processes, and to be run in a way that benefits all Albertans.

So I would just like to say that it was a good idea, and I think it worked well.

**2:40**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West has given notice that he wishes to raise a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In the diatribe which he referred to as a supplementary answer to the question posed by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Government House Leader used the term I think twice: false statements. Now, that's been referred to in *Beauchesne* 489, 490, 491, but I'd like in particular to turn to *Beauchesne* 494. Now, the Leader of the Official Opposition quoted statistics from a paper entitled, Road Kill: Women in Alberta's Drive Toward Deficit Elimination, showing the job loss for men in the Alberta union of public employees to be only 1,700 compared to 2,939 for females. Now, the member opposite has been here long enough that he should know how to make his point without using language that has been unacceptable to this House for some time. I noted you called, "Order" a couple of times during that particular speech by the member opposite. I want to return particularly to *Beauchesne* 494:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts.

But I want to highlight the next section, Mr. Speaker.

No imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

Now, the member opposite rose with a different set of statistics that he claimed were correct and claimed that the others that were offered by the Leader of the Opposition were false statements. That type of language should not be accepted in this House.

I rise today because it has been repeatedly used by this member. You have raised concerns about it in the past, and I would urge you to be more stringent in calling members to task for using language that's inappropriate.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry you have to be pained with this again. My use of the word "false" was very deliberate and very intentional and was by no means an accident. It's unfortunate that the member opposite – and I feel a little badly for him because as I was speaking, he was being goaded by his leader to get to his feet and protect his very shallow attack. So I do feel badly for him there.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-North West, the Opposition House Leader, is well aware, though he didn't quote it, of section 490 of *Beauchesne*, which says that "since 1958" –

let's see, that's almost 40 years, a generation – "it has been ruled parliamentary to use the following expressions," and the word "false" is there with a number of references, and the word "falsehoods." Now, if information can be declared and stated as being false – as far as imputing any motives, I'll leave that up to the audience both here and in the broader electorate to see if indeed there was an intention to impugn motives.

Mr. Speaker, again – and I referred to this last week – there is not just a tendency but an outright practice by members of the opposition to get up with information that is inflammatory, to use words as we heard last week, like "coward" and others, in the preface of their questions, to be highly inflammatory in their approach. They know that it doesn't matter if it gets ruled out of order later in a point of order because as we look around, nobody's sitting in the galleries in terms of the media, the cameras are off, and they don't have to worry about being exposed. Now, they were exposed quite brutally last week, and it took foreign media to do it.

Again, it's a tactic that is specifically planned to try and get a negative sense out to the public. The plan itself doesn't work, as we've seen in poll after poll. They're getting increasingly desperate. But, Mr. Speaker, the consequence of that type of approach as used by the opposition leader today does demean the entire process. It does work; it does get us upset when the information is false. We get upset, and of course we dispute it. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just sits and laughs. I would think that the Woman of the Year would be a little more sensitive to that type of approach. As I conclude my remarks, I'll say that it's a planned tactic. It's something that we see in other jurisdictions. It's a negative attack tactic. Like a drowning person, swinging wildly they hope to attract a little bit of attention as they continue to go down.

Mr. Speaker, I used the word "false," and I was not just reflecting on the statistics but on the entire approach of the Leader of the Opposition, who was indicating and trying to get a false message out to the public that the policies of this government are an attack on women and associating them with something called Road Kill. That is absolutely, one hundred percent false.

THE SPEAKER: Well, we've moved from "misleading" to "false." The Chair has not ruled "misleading" as an unparliamentary word. The Chair is not going to rule "false" as an unparliamentary word. As has been pointed out, the word "false" appears under both categories: parliamentary and unparliamentary.

This just points out the circumstances and the manner in which a word is used. The Chair would have absolutely no difficulty with the hon. Government House Leader's use of the word "false" in its original use, but what bothers the Chair to some extent is the continued use within a very short period of time. That just changes the environment for the use of the word, and that's the whole criterion of what makes a word parliamentary or unparliamentary – that is, the environment in which it is used – for most of the words that have caused interventions from the Chair. Some words are absolutely unparliamentary, like "lying." No matter what the environment is, those are unparliamentary. But for other words that are found under both categories, the environment is important: how they're used and whether the way they are used is likely to lead to disorder and disruption in the House.

So the Chair is not going to rule that the word is unparliamentary. The Chair would just urge hon. members that perhaps the same message could be gotten across without using a word that is likely to cause the necessity for the Chair to intervene. Each side

has had the opportunity of further elaborating on what was meant by the use of this word, and the Chair is going to say that the matter is closed.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than**

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Second Reading**

**Bill 205**

**Debt Retirement Act**

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 205, the Debt Retirement Act, is a private member's Bill, and as such it is restricted from having many of the elements that you would expect with a Bill dealing with debt management. It reads very much as though it were a schedule of payments on the principal of the debt, and that is what it is. It is so because as all members are aware, private member's Bills cannot deal specifically with money issues. So to understand the motivation of the Bill, you have to assess some of the elements that lie behind it.

The one principle that lies behind the Bill, Mr. Speaker is that it starts out with a higher value of net debt than the Bill that has been brought in by the government, which starts with the net debt at \$8 billion. This places it at around \$16.8 billion. That accounts for why the payment scheme appears to be more onerous than that of the provincial government: because it in fact starts with a higher net debt. It also tends to be front ended in terms of the pay-down, because that then will generate higher savings in terms of funds that are available for core programs in health care, education, et cetera. So that's one difference.

**2:50**

Another difference is that because the payments on the principal are high, as hon. members alluded to earlier in the day, it also discusses linkages to use of the heritage savings trust fund. That was made explicit by other members across the way. The point there was that in those instances where it appears that the fund in terms of rates of return is earning less than the average cost of servicing our debt, there's a really clear payoff to using those funds and paying down the debt. Hon. members will say, "Is that inconsistent with what in fact members of the heritage savings trust fund review panel heard?" My argument would be: not really, because what I heard as a member of that panel from many Albertans is that the fund should be used in a prudent way. Many Albertans in discussing whether or not to keep the fund would always comment on the data provided in the brochure. The brochure was very clear in saying that the average return on the fund exceeded the average cost of servicing our debt. While that may be true, it is also true that certain portions of the fund, especially those portions in the short end of the market, the cash and marketable securities division, do earn less than the cost of our debt.

Now, we face a peculiar problem that no other province in this country faces, and that is that 46 percent of our debt will be maturing over the next three years. That of course is a significant problem because the outlook for interest rates is, to put in mildly, highly volatile. As it presently stands, Mr. Speaker, Alberta pays about 30 points above the rate charged Canada for borrowing. How much Canada will have to pay on its subsequent debt borrowing depends very much on two issues over which the

province of Alberta has absolutely no control. The first is what happens in the Quebec referendum when that is held. There will be periods of uncertainty related to that. Fiscal integrity is always translated then into uncertainty in the capital markets, and since the cost at which Canada borrows unfortunately sets a benchmark from which the province must borrow, you're looking at the Canada rate plus about 30 points. That outlook is highly volatile. As I say, since we have to borrow over 46 percent of the unmatured debt over the next three years, trying to pay that down or in some way address it I think is prudent.

The second issue, Mr. Speaker, that leads to volatility in that market is of course the ability of the federal government to meet its deficit reduction goals, the first goal being the 3 percent of GDP, and then at some point setting targets for the elimination of the deficit. The latter has not been done, but financial markets seem to suggest that the budget this year is a reasonable, good first step to ensuring that the 3 percent of GDP is met.

However, a very significant share of the federal government's debt is held abroad, and because it is held abroad, that puts Canadian capital markets and the cost at which we borrow in some jeopardy. Any uncertainty there means that for our foreign borrowings we'll in fact have to pay a premium. So it makes some sense now, because of the highly uncertain international market for Canadian debt, to try and address that sooner and, as I say, because of issues related to federal debt and issues related to uncertainty related to the referendum. These two features are unique, but unfortunately they fall precisely, Mr. Speaker, at a period when the province has to refinance 46 percent of the outstanding debt. I think that makes it unique from the perspective of prudent financial management in the province.

So two issues, one of which is: I think there is potentially a role, if it makes economic sense and only if it makes economic sense, if in fact the returns on assets held by the fund pay less than the cost of servicing our debt. As I say, I don't find that inconsistent with anything I heard on the road in light of what Albertans said. You wouldn't in fact ever sell off any asset and cash it in if it was paying more than the intended use.

The other issue that is important and what this Bill attempts to do. One of the reasons it has such a focus on higher net debt is because of the concern that the sooner we pay down foreign-denominated debt, the better off we will be, because it reduces our exposure in terms of exchange rate volatility and of course interest rate volatility.

So those are a number of factors, then, that lead the payment schedule that is set out in this private member's Bill to be so high: because of concerns about unique factors that face us now and face no other province. I daresay that when the Alberta government has to go into the markets over the next three years to borrow, it is a highly uncertain environment. Even the gross borrowing requirements this year – and I'm now approximating this – I think are somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2 and a half billion dollars. That is a significant amount of money, and those gross borrowing requirements reflect both the need to refinance debt that is coming due plus the anticipated \$500 million deficit that is forecast for the coming year. This private member's Bill attempts, then, to do so. Again, not to anticipate some arguments that may come from members on the other side, but it is a private member's Bill, and because of that it cannot go into the same detail that, for example, a Bill like Bill 8 does. It is a money Bill and therefore a government Bill.

Now, one issue I would bring up in this context concerns in fact the use of the heritage savings trust fund. I note that in reference

to a question that was asked by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake about the uses of the fund, the term "pilfering" was used. I know that was used in jest, because, after all, that would imply an absence of diligence on the part of the heritage savings trust fund review committee and the Auditor General and the Treasurer. So I know that was used in jest. But an important issue is raised, and that is: what is the use of the fund? This relates again to this payment schedule. The hon. Provincial Treasurer highlighted very clearly that under Bill 8 any effort to liquidate any of the assets of the fund is viewed then as a rundown of assets. Now, if you ask yourself: well, what does that mean? It means, then, that we have a rainy day fund – and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that many individuals did refer to the heritage savings trust fund as a rainy day fund – that we can't actually use when it rains because if you do, on a consolidated account a deficit will emerge. So we will have a savings account, a contingency fund, a rainy day fund that you can only use when it doesn't rain. Then if you're running a surplus, you can run down the asset there, and it won't generate a deficit that would be inconsistent with the provisions of another Bill that is on the table.

3:00

So there's a peculiarity there, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the uses of the fund. This is why this Bill, in terms of background material that is in support of the Bill, suggests that when it makes prudent financial sense, one would look at some of the assets of the fund, particularly those that were earning less than the cost of servicing your debt and particularly in light of the unique features that face us in the next year or two, in light of the overall uncertainty, concerns then about the cost of borrowing and the fact that 46 percent of our debt comes due.

So I think some of the issues that are raised in this Bill are worthy of debate, and I think the Bill does indicate very much a shared commitment by parties on both sides of this House to ensuring an orderly liquidation of the debt and the elimination of the deficit. What differs between hon. members in this House is only the how, not the why. I think it is a legitimate debate to engage in.

For the purpose of some hon. members who have just returned, I would say again that this Bill does see a role for the heritage savings trust fund, though the Bill – in fact, I daresay the Speaker could almost rule me out on relevance on this because the heritage savings trust fund isn't explicitly mentioned in the private member's Bill because, again, of constraints of construction of a private member's Bill compared to a government Bill. This does envisage then when there is a specific fiscal issue, as in so much of our debt maturing when international capital markets are so volatile, that there is perhaps a role when assets, particularly on the cash side, aren't earning what it will cost us to refinance that debt. Again I will pose the conundrum for the hon. Provincial Treasurer: what is the use of a rainy day fund if you can never use it when it rains? That is, you know, one of the peculiarities of the debt retirement and deficit Bill.

Let me just reiterate what this Bill's core features are. It starts off with a higher level of net debt, and inclusive of that higher net debt is the unfunded pension liability. That is there because we think the debt owed Albertans has first claim on resources. It is the government's share of that unfunded liability, not the employees'. We see the provincial government paying down its share faster but leaving the obligations of the employees intact, again subject to whatever legislative consequential amendments would be required in the various public sector pension acts to ensure that. It also has a higher level of net debt because we think, as

does the government, that the faster you can pay down the debt, the more funds are available for core programs.

Where we differ with the government is that any Bill called a debt retirement Bill that leaves \$25 billion outstanding at the end of the day is a tad short of being a debt retirement Bill. Again to use the analogy that has often been used by the Provincial Treasurer, if this Bill is sort of the homespun equivalent of paying down one's mortgage, you generally have to pay down the whole mortgage before you get title. Paying down one-third, unless he shops at a different bank than I do, means that you get no title. So I would suggest then that paying down a larger share of the net debt makes sense.

Now, one of the issues that might arise is unfunded liabilities. There then my reply is: if not unfunded liabilities, make it \$16 billion in gross unmatured debt. The real issue is exposure in capital markets at a period when we're facing, I think, more unsettled capital markets than we ever have had. I think this is a consequence of successive federal governments having borrowed abroad to such an extent that we are now vulnerable to international capital flows. Because we are now vulnerable, I think we ought to work as quickly as possible to try and eliminate as much debt as possible, particularly that debt which is externally held because that's where the vulnerability arises.

You only have to look, Mr. Speaker, to the Dirty Thirties and the effect that having fixed debt obligations had on Alberta farmers, on the Alberta government, when capital markets were highly unstable. It is in fact debt, and debt payments are the first obligation of government. They're the first obligation of any individual. They are the first claim on our resources, those interest payments. The more we can work collectively to reduce the volume of those debt payments the better collectively we all are. So this Bill, then, in a sense, I would view as constructive and complementary to what the government envisages in terms of trying to eliminate a larger share of the net debt. This Bill differs from others that are on the Order Paper in that it doesn't deal with issues of a balanced budget. Those issues in fact ought to be debated with regard to Bill 8.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will close on this Bill. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge . . .

MR. DUNFORD: West.

THE SPEAKER: Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last time there was hesitation about where I was from I said, "West is best." I want you to know that I heard from all kinds of Lethbridgites indicating to me that . . .

MR. PASZKOWSKI: They agreed?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, no. The ones that phoned me didn't agree.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Why?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, they thought that the east was pretty good too.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The west is served best, though.

MR. DUNFORD: Speaking of serving best, I wanted to open my remarks by digressing just a minute from Bill 205 to publicly express my appreciation of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's activity on our heritage savings trust fund review committee. I thought he was a very valuable member, and I want him to know that I appreciate that very much.

Notwithstanding any of the above, here comes the "but." Mr. Speaker, in speaking about Bill 205, I wanted to say that debt retirement is certainly an important topic, and I'm glad to see that the opposition understands just how important it is to reduce the debt. I want to say very strongly, if I can, that we must reduce the debt not just for ourselves and not just because it might be politically popular. We must reduce the debt for future generations. We simply cannot pass on a legacy of debt to our children and our grandchildren. We must act now. That's why I'm so glad to see that the Liberal finance critic acknowledges the importance. But as we can see, Bill 6, presented by the Provincial Treasurer, is a far superior Bill.

When you compare the two Bills, Bill 205 falls short of being a good plan for debt retirement. One key element of Bill 205 which is faulted by this speaker is the fact that the definition of net debt does not exclude pension liabilities. Mr. Speaker, we already have a plan to reduce unfunded pension liabilities. This Bill would have us unilaterally eliminate the plan to reduce unfunded pension liabilities and put these liabilities in the same basket as the debt, and this is not necessary. In 1993 the Public Sector Pension Plans Act was passed, which would see unfunded pension liabilities reduced over the next 50 years. After a long negotiation process the government was able to come to an agreement with all involved parties regarding pension plans.

The inclusion of pension liabilities in the debt elimination plan of Bill 205 seems strange to me. In May of 1993 the Liberal opposition agreed to the plan. On May 11, 1993, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark said of the plan to eliminate unfunded pension liabilities over 50 years, and I quote from *Hansard*: "Mr. Speaker, we support this Bill." We now have a member of that same caucus bringing forward a Bill less than two years later that is now wanting to see that pension liability agreement scrapped. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a change in the amortization rates for unfunded pension liabilities to a 24-year period would be very costly to the government as well as to pension recipients. Municipal employees, teachers, and others would be hurt by this plan. In short, Bill 205 is not good for teachers, and it's not good for other recipients. It's not good for the government, and it's not good for Albertans.

### 3:10

I find other things wrong with Bill 205. If this Bill were passed, the flexibility given to the government would be enormous. Bill 6, on the other hand, constrains this government and future governments from veering off the path of fiscal responsibility. Generally speaking, Bill 205 isn't too bad a Bill. It has a reasonable time frame set out and allows for monitoring of government progress on debt retirement. But the Treasurer's Bill, Bill 6, goes so much further. The key part of Bill 6, for me, is that it compels the government to stay the course of fiscal management. The limits will be placed upon the government to continue on its battle against the debt. As I said before, that is very important to all of us. By locking these limits in place now, we can rest assured that we will not have to worry about future governments living beyond their means or becoming lax about debt reduction. It allows the government to say no to interest

groups which may want provincial money. All in all, Bill 6, unlike Bill 205, is a solid, comprehensive plan for Alberta's future.

First off, the Treasurer's Bill will outlaw any deficit budget. Every year after 1995-96 must have a balanced budget. We already know that this government is serious about fiscal responsibility, but future governments may not be. That is why Bill 6, unlike Bill 205, is so innovative. Another important element is that Bill 6, unlike Bill 205, requires that government use all of the surplus funds in a given year to reduce net debt. In other words, surplus funds cannot be used by the government to spend up a storm come election time. The government of the day must stay the course of fiscal responsibility and let voters decide on the government's record. This gives further assurances to taxpayers about the fiscal responsibility of this and future governments. That is what the people of this province want, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want and deserve responsible government. They need an insurance policy on future governments, but if we pass Bill 205, that insurance policy is not there.

I sleep much better at night knowing that my house, car, and other valued possessions are protected from possible unforeseen events, and Bill 6 is the same thing. Bill 205 is not. If a tax-and-spend government gets into office in this province, their actions will be restrained by the legislation contained in Bill 6 as opposed to Bill 205. The people of Alberta will be able to rest a little easier at night knowing that they don't have to worry about a government like the one in Ottawa, by the way, freely spending their money. The markets will positively respond to Bill 6 as well. Bill 205 does nothing to reduce the fears of the markets or the fears of Albertans. Bill 6 is like an insurance policy from a reputable insurance company. Bill 205 is not.

It's not just the insurance that is great in Bill 6, unlike Bill 205. It's knowing that there's a well-thought-out plan that will be laid out in legislation as well as periodic checks put in place for monitoring progress. Bill 6 forces the government to pay down 20 percent of the net debt every five years, no exceptions, no excuses. The five-year milestones pay the net debt off quickly enough that the interest savings will accrue to the taxpayers. The milestones will allow for fluctuations in the business cycle. So if there is a good year for revenues, the government can pay down the net debt quicker than anticipated, but if revenues happen to be lower in one year, the government won't be forced into making a huge payment toward the net debt. Only the five-year milestone has to be met. Now, this makes good sense, Mr. Speaker. It's like paying off your loans. If you earn more money in one year, you can use it to pay more of the loan off. If the year wasn't so hot, you make the minimum payment. Bill 6 allows for this flexibility; Bill 205 does not. Bill 6 makes good economic sense, and while Bill 205 does make economic sense, Bill 6 is stronger.

Revenue shocks are also lessened with Bill 6. Budget estimates will be required to use conservative forecasts of revenue from corporate tax and nonrenewable resources. This is a great improvement over the forecast done only a few years ago. By using these conservative forecasts of revenue, the government can be better cushioned against revenue shocks, revenue shocks that could otherwise endanger the debt retirement plan or funding for services such as health or education.

By showing financial markets that we're serious about debt reduction, this enhances the Alberta advantage, Mr. Speaker. We cannot show that commitment with Bill 205. Fortunately, we can continue the course of fiscal responsibility with Bill 6. That Bill does something that no other Bill or legislation in Canada does: it makes a commitment to the taxpayers of Alberta. Saskatchewan

and New Brunswick have balanced their budgets, and they need to be applauded. But their New Democrat and their Liberal governments have not shown their commitment to taxpayers like the government of Alberta. Bill 6 lays out a plan unlike any other. While other governments, such as the Liberal New Brunswick government, make promises to pay down the debt, they have no legislative plan, nor do they have any plans to legislate debt retirement. Their commitment to taxpayers is absent. On the other hand, the government of Alberta has a plan and remains committed to the taxpayers of this province, and passing Bill 205 gives up on that commitment.

To me, Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense to pass Bill 205 when we have a far superior Bill to consider. While Bill 205 has some merit, it is clear that the Treasurer's Bill is far better. Bill 205 is enabling legislation only. So for the meat on the bones or the specifics that would have to be added, we would need to either pass additional legislation or leave it up to the government to be fiscally responsible. I think we can trust this government to be responsible, but what about other future governments? Hoping that they will be responsible is not enough. We must enact legislation with concrete solutions to the debt problem and do it now. Unfortunately, passing Bill 205 does not give us those solutions, but Bill 6 does.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 6 has all the necessary elements for an effective debt retirement plan and gives assurances to Albertans about the fiscal responsibility of this and future governments. Unfortunately, Bill 205 does not. It would be foolish to think otherwise, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to vote against Bill 205.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support Bill 205, which is on the Order Paper in my colleague's name, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and it's the Debt Retirement Act. First, I want to cover some of the points covered by my colleague from Lethbridge-West.

As of today, I'm sure he's aware, there are five provincial governments in Canada that have now balanced their budgets, so it's far from an incredible feat. It's something that we would expect in today's difficult financial times.

3:20

The Member for Lethbridge-West went on to some of the faults of Bill 205. Some of the faults of Bill 205 were that the definition of net debt didn't exclude unfunded pension liabilities. Well, Mr. Speaker, what this Bill is trying to do is put Albertans up front with foreign creditors, not behind them, because we believe at least that they must be considered equals when they extend some finances to the provincial government. The Member for Lethbridge-West went on to say that this exclusion of these pension liabilities would somehow hurt teachers and others, but I'm not sure. He didn't go on to explain how it would hurt them. In fact, I'm sure they would be pleased if the unfunded pension liabilities were to be renegotiated as part of a shorter time period for repayment.

He went on to say that, generally speaking, it's not too bad a Bill – and that was a positive statement – but he said that Bill 6 would go further and deal with the debt in a much better way, that it would deal with somehow greater accountability and responsibility to Albertans. But at the end of the day, when this amortization period is done and the course of Bill 6 is run, Albertans are still saddled with \$27 billion worth of debt, and somehow that's

not something that's included in this debt retirement Act, Bill 6, that is being defended.

Then the Member for Lethbridge-West went on to say that God forbid there should ever again be a tax-and-spend government, that such a government would ever get into office in Alberta. You know, Mr. Speaker, I agree; we do need some legislation to protect Albertans from such a government ever returning to power, because here in Alberta we've had a Conservative government, many of whom remain as cabinet ministers, which over a period of nine different budgets accumulated \$32 billion worth of debt. So it's appropriate that we should have some form of protection there from this tax-and-spend government, the regimes we had in the past that brought us this. Interestingly enough, they were under the Conservative brand. So it wasn't a tax-and-spend Liberal brand; it was a Conservative brand that brought us this spending.

The other point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is that the Member for Lethbridge-West said that the government should be responsible. I agree. Government should be responsible, but not just on the spending side, for God's sake. Government has to be responsible on the consumption, on the buying side. We have to ensure that we're getting value for every taxpayer's dollar that we're expending, yet we have no evidence. Here we are two years after a new administration has come into effect, and we still don't have any indication that we're getting a greater bang for our buck – is that the term? There's still no indication. We just know that we're getting much less for the taxpayers' dollars.

Now, I understand – and I certainly would encourage the Treasurer to respond in some way on this one – that today Alberta borrowed half a billion dollars; \$500 million was borrowed on the domestic market. I'm sure there will be some kind of nod of approval? No? There's nothing coming forward. This is what I understand: today the charge card is still running wild; \$500 million was borrowed today. I don't know at what interest rate. I'm sure I'll find out at some point later. So you're darn right: we need protection. We need protection from tax and spend, and in fact worse than tax-and-spend is borrow-and-spend governments, Mr. Speaker. What we need protection from is borrow-and-spend governments.

Mr. Speaker, so often in this House what I've heard – and I'm sure the voice I just heard moments ago – is: provide us with some positive input; provide us with some alternatives. It's one thing to be the opposition, but at some point you have to provide alternatives, and Bill 205 is exactly that. It's looking at an alternative. It puts the government in a position that I find myself on this side of the Assembly so often in, where they present a Bill and we say, "Well, that component's good, the principle is good, but yeah, but." Now the government's in a yeah-but position, and I would like to see if they would adopt some of the ideas that are incorporated in Bill 205.

So if we could just go through some of them. The object of Bill 205 is to propose an unfunded scheme to eliminate the province's \$16.8 billion net debt by the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. The proposed legislation essentially follows the principles laid out in the Alberta Liberals' 2020 Vision plan for debt management and retirement. The scheme is unfunded because, as my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud said, the Standing Orders don't permit anyone other than a minister of the Crown to present a money Bill. [interjection] In fact, it's true. In fact, it's true. The Treasurer is saying that it's not, but it is true. Only the Treasurer or a minister of the Crown can present a money Bill.

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

THE SPEAKER: The Provincial Treasurer is rising on a point of order.

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

MR. DINNING: Would the hon. member take a question, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: It's up to the hon. member.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing like practising for the future.

**Debate Continued**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct: a nongovernment member cannot introduce a money Bill. But when will the hon. member do the honourable thing and table in this Assembly the Bill that he would table were he ever to become a member of the government side? Where is that? When will he table that Bill?

MR. SEKULIC: I would appreciate it if the hon. Treasurer would repeat his question.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the hon. member: when will he table the Bill, not introduce it but table the Bill that he would have prepared were he a government member? We hear lots of ideas, lots of suggestions, but where's the beef?

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, granted the Treasurer's been here for a much, much longer period than I've been here, and he apparently knows of some mechanism by which we can present a plan and table it. The only thing is that I believe that would be somewhat undemocratic because it couldn't be debated. I don't know that there's a mechanism by which it could be debated if it's not on the Order Paper as a private member's Bill or a government Bill. If in fact there is something to learn here, I'll investigate it. If there is a way, we'll have to come back and table a document for the Treasurer to peruse and perhaps take some good ideas from. So thank you for the suggestion, Mr. Treasurer.

A debt retirement amount from the generation of annual surpluses will be set aside yearly starting in the fiscal year 1996-97 and used to redeem and pay down the \$24.5 billion unmatured debt. That's the debt held by third parties, such as U.S. and Canadian financiers and Albertans themselves. The schedule of the debt retirement amount is similar to that proposed in the Alberta Liberals' 2020 Vision plan, and in fact I think it's on page 5 of Bill 205.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. member, but Standing Order 8(2)(b) provides that the time for consideration of this matter has expired and we must now move to the next order.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

**Health and Safety Standards**

505. Moved by Mrs. Laing:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to ensure that health and safety standards are

being met in all personal care facilities by establishing regulations and a comprehensive monitoring system.

[Debate adjourned March 21: Mr. Sapers speaking]

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion before us is a motion that I hope will get wide support. When I had a chance to speak earlier, I spoke about the fact that the Liberal caucus has been arguing for the need for such standards for some time. I will conclude my comments simply by establishing for the Assembly what would be a Liberal wish list for group home standards, the kinds of things we think should be the product of this motion.

Now, first of all, we believe that licences for group home operators should only be granted to individuals with extensive and appropriate experience and academic qualifications. In particular, their qualifications should be in caring for seniors and persons with disabilities. There should be clear guidelines for staffing requirements, including mandatory police checks for all potential staff and ongoing staff training and upgrading. These training and upgrading plans, Mr. Speaker, should be part and parcel of the licensing procedure.

**3:30**

The dispensing of drugs by unauthorized and/or untrained staff should be outlawed. It should be enforced that only those individuals who meet licence requirements for professional associations and organizations be allowed to administer drugs. There should be proper standards for hygiene of the residents and for the home or the facility itself. There needs to be documented records of the provision of adequate supplies of nutritious foods. Security needs to be in place that protects both the residents and their personal property.

Mr. Speaker, for residents who are under the care of the Public Guardian, there must be continuous contact and spot checks by the guardian's office to ensure the resident is well cared for. I would suggest that this should expand beyond just the caring for their financial needs. As we get into a discussion in this Assembly about living wills, the need for an enduring power of attorney I think should be included in the process of these spot checks, looking after the residents' best wishes.

Mr. Speaker, there needs to be staff in place to monitor and enforce any regulations and standards, and there must be stiff and stern action when these standards are broken. Continuous infractions should result in immediate suspension of the licence. There should be whistle-blower protection for staff and for family members to report any potential wrongdoing or any actual wrongdoing. There must be standards to ensure that all buildings adhere to public fire and safety codes.

Finally, there must be clear programs for personal development, and they must be not only established but adhered to for dropping off residents who may be unsupervised at shopping malls or in other personal care facilities or for other personal matters. Mr. Speaker, the point is that simply taking a senior to a mall, dropping them off, leaving them on their own, and then coming back and getting them at some later point in time is not personal development, and it shouldn't be allowed to pass for that. So there must be program criteria established with standards attached to them for the recreational or extracurricular kinds of activities that the residents may be involved in.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking to Motion 505 in two capacities today: first, as the chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council; and, secondly, as an individual concerned with the safety of the residents of Alberta's personal care facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Seniors Advisory Council has been promoting a greater variety of community living options for seniors, particularly the personal care facilities. There has been an increased number of private care homes for seniors in recent months, and this form of seniors housing is expected to increase. There is a growing urgency to address this issue. The percentage of seniors in our population is growing rapidly. There is a shift to community-based care, and the planned decrease in per capita nursing home beds will increase the need for alternative housing for seniors who need some care and some supervision.

Since October of 1994 the council has received approximately 31 calls specifically related to personal care facilities and has mailed out approximately 87 sets of its guidebooks. The council is very concerned that older persons may be subject to abuse and exploitation. The council, in its 1993-94 annual report, recommended that

as these homes develop, standards [should] be [put] in place and enforced to ensure that older persons are not subject to abuse and exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, the council is concerned about abuses of any sort, be they financial, physical, or mental. While many of our seniors are very capable and quite independent, we still want to do all that we can to protect them from unscrupulous behaviour and the risks associated with unregulated homes.

It concerns the council that there are no legal restrictions on who can operate a private care home. While it is assumed that most operators have some sort of experience in providing assistance, we are finding more and more that many individuals looking into these homes do not have the appropriate experience. The private care home guidebooks – the Guide to Private Care Homes for Prospective Residents and the Guide for Private Care Home Operators – were developed in 1992 as a result of an expressed need coming from the seniors community and its service providers. The aim of these books was to encourage operators to institute standards voluntarily in the absence of provincial standards. The response to these manuals has been very positive, and the council has received letters of appreciation from different community agencies. It is also pleased that the licensing and enforcement unit of Alberta Family and Social Services is using these guidebooks.

Mr. Speaker, the Guide for Private Care Home Operators addresses such issues as the training necessary to be a caregiver, environmental and building requirements, fire and safety standards, food preparation, and selection of residents. The service plan, the admission agreement, the keeping of records, the rights and privileges of residents, and other concerns are also identified. This book is only a guideline, however, and as we know, operators may choose not to follow its suggestions.

The guide for residents is designed to help individuals choose which type of facility will best meet their needs in order to make informed decisions and lessen the likelihood of getting themselves into potentially harmful situations. Mr. Speaker, this particular guidebook was also of help to the families of those elderly who are looking for this type of care and also for caregivers who work in the community in establishing a good discussion and educating the seniors as to things that they should look for.

The guidebooks have also been used to help other groups design their own guidelines. The Capital Care Group, for example, developed their own guidelines and standards for operators. They

have prepared an extensive set of policies and procedures, a manual, to ensure that the standards of care are instituted. The Capital Care Group has even established a screening process to ensure that potential operators have some medical background or experience in working with seniors.

On the other end of the spectrum from the Capital Care Group are private care homes which have been established in the province by individual homeowners and are not associated in any formal way with a service delivery organization. It seems likely that these organizations may not benefit from the guidelines or from an internal monitoring system. In fact, homes with three or less residents do not even have to be licensed. This reflects, Mr. Speaker, the uniqueness of these programs, because they are adaptable around the province.

While the guidebooks have certainly filled a need, the problems facing our seniors have not been adequately addressed. Guidelines similar to the ones advocated by the Seniors Advisory Council need to be enforced by appropriate regulations. As it stands now, there is absolutely no obligation, besides an obvious moral one, to adhere to the standards that the council has developed. Mr. Speaker, the Seniors Advisory Council is in touch with seniors on a daily basis, and we are regularly fielding calls from private home care operators. The council is perhaps in one of the better positions to determine the necessity of these regulations, as a result. As I stated earlier, the advisory council has recommended that the regulations be developed under the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act.

Mr. Speaker, once the need for appropriate regulations is established, there are a number of factors we have to consider when developing and enforcing these standards. The first consideration I would like to point out is the concern of the broad spectrum of seniors requiring care. As we all know, there are many active and healthy seniors out there today, and just because an individual turns 65 does not mean that they become frail and dependent. We also know, however, that some seniors do require a great deal of care. The regulations and program standards that are developed have to be able to encompass the wide range of care and independence of all seniors. I think it is extremely important to identify to the seniors community and to those approaching the magic age of 65 that we recognize the vitality and the dedication and the enthusiasm that they bring to our communities. The thought of having to regulate how they choose to live in our communities would be inappropriate, and I think it's important we maintain that distinction.

There is also the matter of municipal zoning bylaws that has to be taken into account. Provincial regulations should not interfere with local requirements and local priorities. Every community is different, and care must be taken to avoid intrusion into municipal jurisdictions.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a variety of municipalities and cities looking at this issue from a social concern. I do think it's important to recognize that regulations and guidelines that might be appropriate in a larger centre such as Edmonton or Calgary may have different interpretation or application in our smaller communities. The resources within those local communities to support the seniors should also be taken into account. I think it's very important that in the discussion on developing appropriate regulations or guidelines, we look at the variety within our communities.

**3:40**

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to identify that the regional health authorities are looking for alternatives to deliver care, and



perhaps, then, the authorities themselves could pay a larger role in delivering this type of community service. I would at this point in my debate identify that I feel that any discussion in the area of regulations should involve the regional health authorities so that we're working in a parallel process, meeting the mutual goals and needs of our community with respect to seniors.

In conclusion, our seniors need the province to step in and make personal care facilities a desirable and safe alternative for the care of the elderly. As chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council of Alberta, I support Motion 505. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll keep my comments relatively short, Mr. Speaker, so that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, with all the wisdom, more wisdom than I have, can have the opportunity to make some comments as well.

I commend the member for bringing the motion forward. It recognizes an area where there is shortcoming. I've had the opportunity myself of having been involved in related fields. I was on the board of Capital Care when it was still called district 24. I thought the excellent level of service provided by Capital Care, taking into consideration the budget restraints they were faced with, like other health care centres, health care facilities – they did a superb job. But still, despite all that monitoring there were instances where people fell between the cracks. The same was true with the Greater Edmonton Foundation, which was responsible for a number of lodges and self-contained apartment buildings for seniors. Again, despite the monitoring, the rules, the regulations, there were instances where people fell between the cracks, and it was the seniors that were the victims when things went wrong.

I can recall one instance where the former member Dennis Anderson, who was chairman of the review committee, called me as chairman of the Greater Edmonton Foundation pointing out a concern with one of the lodges, that I took to our board: that a matron was abusive. The end result was that the board made a decision by a vote of 3 to 2 to keep her on staff. That good member – and he was a good government member, a Liberal at heart but a good government member. I remember him calling me and saying: if your board is not prepared to dismiss that matron, I'm going to step in. As a result, I went back to the board, and we had that done. I point those out because they're examples that even with the monitoring that is in place, there are still cracks that do appear.

The Member for Calgary-Glenmore, I can recall, years ago was involved in a very, very extensive study. I'm not sure specifically what came of it, but it talked in terms of the level of care in our extended care centres. Here we're talking about a problem that is even worse in the sense that we're referring to group homes where there are four persons or less, that are unlicensed. Unlicensed. If you get the wrong persons in there being responsible for the operations of that group home, that can lead to problems.

I believe the member initiating this Bill has good intentions at heart, and because of her past experience on the review committee she's been able to determine firsthand, like many others of us here have, that there are shortcomings, that there is a need for regulations. There have been some ugly incidents, some unfortunate incidents that have been referred to that have occurred in the past. No matter what type of monitoring, what type of regulations, there is still that possibility that things can go wrong, but at least this would reduce the degree of potential for abuse that there is at the present time.

As we restructure more and more the province of Alberta – and we seem to head more to privatizing virtually everything. When we talk in terms of privatizing people services, people programs,

one has to do it with a great deal of reluctance, and one has to ensure that when there are private operators involved that are motivated by the dollar – that's mainly the reason that an entrepreneur will proceed with a business venture, and these group homes that are unlicensed are operated on a profit basis, are profit motivated. What's the expression that is used by some people? Some businessmen's happy face is the dollar sign. So we have to have the monitoring in place as we head more and more towards privatization.

The Member for Edmonton-Glenora – and it'll now be recorded in *Hansard* – spelled out very specifically a wish list for detailed improvements that should take place to make those group homes a safer place, a better place, and increase the quality of lifestyle for those residents in there. I don't want to repeat them, because they are in *Hansard* and there are other members that wish to speak and I realize we are running out of time on this motion.

So on that note, I'm going to conclude and again commend the member for initiating this motion. I would hope that all members of this House support the motion and that when the motion is passed, the government acts upon it.

MRS. HEWES: Do I get to go or somebody else?

THE SPEAKER: Well, no.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 505 addresses a situation of serious concern and hopefully not consequence to a growing number of Albertans. This motion identifies two areas of considerable concern: the first is the standard of care received by many residents living in an unlicensed personal care facility, and the second is the total lack of regulation governing program standards or quality of care now provided within both licensed or unlicensed facilities. Recent complaints are indicative of the need to develop and monitor such regulations. Motion 505 seeks to rectify these concerns, and as such I am pleased that I have the opportunity to speak in favour of this very important and timely motion.

Personal care facilities have the opportunity to play a very important role in our society. I'm sure that all of us can identify constituents seeking this type of care, and in the not-too-distant future we too may be considering private care homes. The fact is that more and more people see these homes as an attractive alternative. Increased need must be addressed by increased monitoring, increased regulations, and increased licensing requirements.

I've talked to a number of different people in my constituency about these types of facilities. What I have found is that rural constituencies may have an even greater vested interest in these homes than urban centres. Individuals seeking care may not have the selection that urban residents have in their choice of formal or traditional institutions. There are almost no facilities available to seniors in rural communities who require a level of care between the seniors' lodge and the extended care facility. As well, urban residents generally have more options available to them such as day support programs or assisted living programs. In many rural areas, however, these services are simply not available. It is not unheard of for people to enter long-term care facilities simply because they have no other choice available to them.

Regulated personal care facilities can play a vital role in giving our seniors and older adults a viable, well-protected alternative. Regulations would go a long way in providing rural residents with

more options for the provision of safe and effective care. Personal care homes can offer an individual a family-like setting, but this setting must be subject to regulations so that the individual is assured a safe environment, support, protection, supervision, and assistance. As well, when you consider other jurisdictions, it is apparent that Alberta needs to seriously reassess the lack of regulation.

A study funded by the Seniors Advisory Council in 1991 concerning foster home care looked at adult foster programs throughout North America. This study found that 36 states and four provinces had programs that supported community care in residential facilities. This study also indicated that personal care facilities constitute a substantive care alternative in many U.S. states. From the recent upsurge and interest in our province we have every reason to believe that will soon be the case in Alberta as well. In Canada Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec, and British Columbia all have guidelines and licensing procedures for operators, although requirements do vary. While Ontario does not yet have comprehensive regulations in place, it has been doing a considerable amount of work in this area.

### 3:50

In 1992 Ontario released a report on unregulated residential accommodation. As Ontario's Lightman report suggests, we are dealing with a profound public policy void. Ontario realizes that residents of these homes require at least some sort of protection. The Lightman report also raises an issue which I think aptly describes Alberta's situation. We did not set out to create a system of rental housing in which the most vulnerable members of society are the least protected, but that has certainly been the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's vulnerable citizens require special consideration and special protection. This is definitely one area where Alberta does not want to differ drastically from other provinces. Alberta has to recognize the needs of personal care facility residents and come in line with other Canadian jurisdictions. Alberta's shift to community-based services, like many other provinces, necessitates the development of regulations for these types of homes. The bottom line is that if we are going to be encouraging these types of facilities, we have to have mechanisms in place to guard against abuse and unsafe practices.

Mr. Speaker, I find it particularly disturbing that we don't know how many residents are subject to physical, emotional, or even sexual abuse, that we don't know how many people receive acceptable or intolerable care, and that we don't even know how many unregulated premises operate in this province or how many people reside in them. This uncertainty is all the more reason to protect the residents of personal care facilities. Ignorance is not an acceptable defence in choosing not to regulate these homes. Personal care facilities should be a stable refuge in our often turbulent and threatening environment. We simply cannot ensure this is the case as long as our personal care facilities remain unregulated and unmonitored. There is a need for regulations and there is a need for monitoring in these facilities.

I congratulate the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing this initiative forward. I strongly support Motion 505, Mr. Speaker, and encourage the other members of this Assembly to recognize this motion as necessary to the safety and well-being of senior Albertans.

Thank you.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure how many minutes I have left; a few. I'd like to add my support to those members who have already spoken and thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing the motion forward. I particularly want to thank the Member for Calgary-Currie and the Member for Lacombe-Stettler for their comments, with which I find no disagreement. I think they have outlined quite clearly some of the reasons why we need this motion at this time.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that I've been concerned about and a field that I've worked in for many years. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford mentioned some of his background in this field of practice, and in fact the two of us were involved a great many years ago, more than I care to mention, in establishing with a group of disabled people in the city of Edmonton and surrounding the Sir Douglas Bader Tower, which has been a model for independent living for disabled people who are able not only to control themselves in their own apartment with some help but also to access - home care now is able to go in, and they are able to manage that and therefore control their own life and determine where they want to live and how they want to live. This is something that I think is a goal and an objective for this government, and certainly this motion allows that to happen, allows those choices to be there for people but makes sure that the choices have the protection of the government and the community to make sure that they are safe places, places where people can be happy and have a good life for themselves and reach their own objectives.

Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that I've been more concerned recently with some of the moves of the government that have precipitated some of my own thinking.

How much time do I have? How much?

MR. BRUSEKER: Thirteen minutes total.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. I just want to leave some time for some other members.

Some of the moves of the government have provoked me to ask questions in particular regarding seniors. But this is not a problem that is exclusive by any means to seniors, and I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Bow had that in mind in presenting it. It in fact deals with people who are disabled, with children who are in foster care, with seniors, to be sure, with any persons who find themselves in a position, because of frailty, to need to have some support in their housing.

When we see moves, some of which I agree with, to close many of the institutions of our province, institutions where children have heretofore been kept in residential care, when we see moves to close the Alberta Hospital Edmonton beds and hopefully help people live within our communities, and when we see moves to close or limit access to the Michener Centre so that people in that centre can move safely into community living, then we know, Mr. Speaker, that the kinds of rules and regulations we have at present are probably insufficient to deal with that more wholesale move to give people new choices. I fear that some of those changes didn't perhaps take into consideration some of the things that the Member for Calgary-Bow is aware of, and therefore we want to see some protection put into our communities to make sure that there is monitoring and that there are regulations and that people know what they're buying into. The deregulation of lodges is a more critical one that's happening currently.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that there are many facilities of this nature in this province of excellent quality with caring, trained people, but I think the potential is here for indifference and

neglect, for exploitation and even abuse. So I think we have to look at what is expected of government within this new environment of freedom of choice, moving into a more community style of life away from institutions.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that those who are involved in this field of practice and want to be accessible to the general public would want to be accredited, would want some form of licensing, some form of sanctions, some regulations to which they would be expected to adhere so that they could in fact be listed among accredited homes or accredited agents for homes that would guarantee that there would be a certain minimum standard in those homes. The kind of thing that I'm talking about – the Member for Edmonton-Glenora listed some of our sort of wish list, but I would want to make sure that there were regulations relative to licensing that had to do with the capacity to have visitors, to have nutrition, to have a proper space, to have some freedom to come and go, to have some freedom regarding meals and other activities, that it would not be a restrictive setting that people would find themselves in. [interjection] The Member for Redwater says that even bed and breakfasts need to be licensed and inspected.

4:00

I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the licensing Act and, more particularly, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee don't do what this new environment needs to have done. The Social Care Facilities Review Committee doesn't have the capacity to do what needs to be done, and if you read that Act, you will see that it's quite restricted. There are no penalties prescribed within the Act. There's no real direct accounting to the minister. There's no requirement to account, although one assumes that if they find infractions or situations that are inappropriate, a report would go to the minister and some action would take place. But there's nothing in the Act to require that, and I believe that's missing. I think there needs to be something that says, "Here's what this licence means," so that when the public buys that service for their loved one or buys that service for themselves, they know what they can expect and they also know that they have some capacity to go and complain and appeal if the circumstances are not being met.

I'm also aware that there have been some very important moves made in recent years in foster care of young people. The level of acuity of the care of those people has increased in recent years and has forced a very different approach that government will take. That's been a positive one, that we have begun to deal differently with young people in foster care and provide the backup and support to those youngsters who are in there and those people who run foster homes. In the same sense, Mr. Speaker, I believe that what's happening with, for instance, the Capital Care Group or the Good Samaritan Society in Edmonton. There are some very interesting and imaginative initiatives taking place, but in those cases there is the backup. There is an association. There is an accountable society that answers to the public, that has strict guidelines, and that provides the supervision and provides the kind of explanation and training that the personnel in some of those difficult situations may require from time to time. So I believe we need to review that social care facilities review Act, and I think this motion from the Member for Calgary-Bow would lead us right into that. Where in fact is that Act deficient? Where does it need to be tightened up?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Currie spoke about the guidelines, and I am appreciative that those exist. I also want to say how very appreciative I am of the Seniors Advisory Council and the work they have done and the kinds of recommendations

that they have made to the Legislature. They're on the right track, and I am pleased to hear the member indicate support for this motion, because I think this is exactly how we need to work together.

Just a couple of other comments. There are many seniors' groups in the province, Mr. Speaker, that we should be consulting about this, and I would hope that they would be involved in reviewing this motion as well, because many of them run housing support systems for their members and are quite prepared to provide information. Of interest to me is the news this last week that there is a new shelter in Calgary for abused seniors. A little frightening to hear that that kind of thing is happening in our cities and towns, but I believe that, too, will provide us with some interesting insights about what's happening with seniors' lives in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to see the government show some leadership here. The need is demonstrable as far as I'm concerned. It's been attested to in many parts of the province, small centres as well as our large urban centres. I think it's high time that the government moved. It is a new environment. We are seeing a lot more freedom of choice, but I believe we owe it to those people who want to make this choice that the homes they choose to live in are accredited, have a standard that can be depended upon, are bonded, are not in a position to exploit or abuse those residents who will live in them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank Edmonton-Gold Bar for giving up some of her time to enable me to say a few things and to commend the speakers that have already spoken on this most important motion put forward by Calgary-Bow and to thank her.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the need for protection for persons in care has become a fact of life in this part of the 20th century. Without regulations and a comprehensive monitoring system we as a society and we as a government cannot begin to ensure safety for people in personal care facilities.

I am particularly concerned about vulnerable persons in our unregulated personal care facilities. Vulnerable persons are those individuals who, because of some sort of disability, have difficulty in expressing or acting on their wishes or in ascertaining or exercising their own rights. These people need regulations to protect them, because in many cases they are unable to and cannot protect themselves. Mr. Speaker, when individuals with any kind of disability rely on others for their safety and well-being, they have an inherent right to be protected from abuse. I believe it is now time to have the government take some responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of residents in these homes.

We think of family patterns, which have changed so much in the last half century. There are so many families now where there's only one child or two children, and these children are now coming to their 50s or 60s, and their parents are in their 70s or 80s. They aren't themselves able to look after their parents like earlier generations were able to look after their parents. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we have people living much, much longer than they once did. This is something that's not going to go away from us as a society. Monitoring, then, is a very important component of any system of regulation. Without a viable monitoring system, regulations are almost entirely incapable of producing any lasting effects that are going to be of benefit to these vulnerable people.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have about one minute left. In closing, I would just like to again say thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow. I support Motion 505 and urge all members of this Assembly to do so. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion 505 as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

CLERK: Motion 506, Mr. Mitchell.

### Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Motion 506 deals with the matter of electoral boundaries, which is the subject matter of Bill 20, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 1995, which received first reading and is now on the Order Paper for second reading. Standing Order 23(e) of this Assembly's rules against anticipation has some bearing, as does *Beauchesne* at paragraph 566(7), which states that "a motion . . . with the same subject-matter as a bill, standing on the Order Paper for second reading, cannot be considered." *Erskine May*, 21st edition, reinforces this view at page 327. The rationale would be that Bills lead to a more effective result than motions, as stated in *Beauchesne* at paragraph 513(2). Accordingly, Motion 506 cannot proceed today.

### 4:10 Postsecondary Education

507. Moved by Dr. Massey:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce legislation that would ensure access by any person who has satisfactorily completed an Alberta high school diploma to the first-year class of an appropriate provincial postsecondary educational institution.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion is a motion for students, for postsecondary students and high school students in the province, it's a motion for institutions and the kind of program planning that they will have to undertake, and it's a motion that would ask all involved – students, institutions, and government – to come to grips finally with a problem that's plagued us for years, and that's the problem of access to postsecondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, historically access has been a problem. We have a growing population and a growing demand for adult education programs, and it has for years caused pressure on institutions to accommodate those students and those programs. The result of that pressure has been a number of things in terms of the institutions. One, they've had to manipulate their entrance requirements. The effect of this is, of course, that students in high schools are unable to do the kind of long-term planning that they once were able to in terms of their grades, and it has also meant

the introduction, in a number of programs, of quotas. So what should really be an academic problem, a problem of qualifications – and that is whether a student has the ability to undertake and profit from a program – has become an accommodation program, and in all fairness the ethics of that situation I think are extremely questionable.

The history of postsecondary education in our province has been one where if you were qualified, if you were reasonably successful in completing a high school program, you could expect to be accepted at one of our postsecondary institutions. That expectation is changing. It's changing so that now instead of being an expectation, it's almost being looked on as a privilege. I think that shift, that shift in thinking, bodes poorly for the future of our province.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

There's going to be an increasing pressure on institutions. It's bad enough now. The government has tried to address the problem in part with the access fund, the access to innovation, the money that was set aside in the budgets to try to encourage increased access, but according to the department's document Profiles and Trends, there may be as many as 31,000 high school students seeking access to postsecondary education in this province by the year 2005. When one factors in the increased number of people on social assistance that are now appearing at postsecondary institutions via the new student loan program, access is going to become even tighter. If one goes further and includes the thousands of people displaced by cuts to education and health care and social services, it would seem that the demand for retraining and the demand for postsecondary programs is going to increase and certainly not lessen. So the purpose of the motion is to guarantee access to a program for these qualified students. If you look at it from strictly an economic point of view, it makes sense to make sure that our qualified young people, qualified adults have access to those programs.

Much has been said on trying to shift responsibility to learners paying for programs. Much has been made of the benefits to individuals. But there is a widely recognized and now quantified benefit to the wider society, the wider community. The Snodden report joins a number of other studies which cite the economic benefits of a highly educated populace. Among the most obvious benefits, of course, are the high earnings for those individuals with some postsecondary education and the consequent increase in the taxable income for the government, but their dependency on health care, their dependence on the social system, their draw on the criminal justice system will be much less than their counterparts who have not had that advantage. Increased literacy rates, research and development, and a more flexible workforce are all advantages of a highly educated populace, and Albertans I think have indicated that they want that opportunity, particularly for our young people, to achieve those higher levels of education.

A number of surveys have been conducted, but a recent survey looked at the response of people to providing programs at this level. There's overwhelming support. In fact, it was one of the few areas where people indicated they'd be willing to pay more in the form of taxes if they were assured that access to postsecondary institutions would be improved for students.

I'd like, if I could, to go back to the motion for a minute. It's not a novel motion. It's not a new motion. It's a motion that a number of American states have in place. I picked an example that I was familiar with, and that is the state of Kansas. Kansas

and Alberta are similar in several ways, but the most noteworthy is their populations, around 2 and a half million people. Another similarity in both Kansas and Alberta is our reliance on the petrochemical industry. This is noteworthy because Kansas does guarantee a space in the freshman year for every successful high school graduate in one of their publicly funded postsecondary institutions. Now, they don't guarantee equality of results, only equality of opportunity. They have similar infrastructure, similar economic challenges, and a similar population, and they've been able to legislate that piece of legislation.

I'd like to quote from the Kansas statutes, and under 72.116 it says:

Entitlement to admission to state educational institutions. Any person who shall complete a four-year course of study in any high school accredited by the state board of education shall be entitled to admission to the freshman class of any state educational institution under the control and supervision of the state board of regents, on presenting a statement containing a transcript of his or her high school record signed by the principal of the school or superintendent of the school district and certifying that such person has satisfactorily completed the course requirements of the state board of education necessary for graduation from high school.

So that piece of legislation is one, and you'll find similar pieces of legislation in a number of states. Mr. Speaker, in Alberta the desire for this kind of legislation is obvious as the demand for access goes up and the opportunity for students is more fleeting.

Just a few closing comments about the current situation. Without the assurance that they are going to be able to take a place in postsecondary institutions, all kinds of other unanticipated consequences and actions are being undertaken. There's a great pressure now, for instance, on high school students not to take a full year of high school in their 12th grade and to in fact plan deliberately for a second year, fearing that their marks won't be high enough if they don't. So they limit the number of courses they take and spread it over a two-year period. That's because they can't be assured what the admission standards are going to be. They know that to get in, they're going to have to have a 75-plus average, and the only way to do that for many of them is to try to meet those higher standards. Meeting higher academic standards has had a price: 84 percent of the high school graduates reported in 1988 that they had repeated a course and cited their main reason for repeating was to improve their chances of acceptance at a postsecondary institution. There are other things happening to not only just the postsecondary institution but K to 12, the basic education institution, because of this fear that access will be denied.

So with those comments, I urge support of Motion 507.

4:20

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes and speak to Motion 507. First of all, I would like to clearly state that I, too, have a concern about access for students into postsecondary education in this province and have been doing some things that I believe are positive to ensure that will happen. I do have some concerns with the direction that this motion would take us and with some of the positions put forward by the member opposite that flow from the motion.

So often we hear criticism across the way about the American system of whatever system it might be, but in this particular case we're finding that there's an ally there, which is a little bit surprising.

Let me just deal with the issue of some of the wording in this motion that gives us some difficulty. "Any person who has

satisfactorily completed an Alberta high school diploma" would be guaranteed a place in "the first-year class of an appropriate provincial postsecondary educational institution." I'm not sure what might qualify as a provincial postsecondary educational institution, whether that means anyone who has the ability and has been allowed to deliver postsecondary education in our province under licence or some other circumstance. I would need to know that. I also need to know if it's directed that the student would have a choice, any choice. I can see that that motion would give us some difficulty if all the students chose to go into university, for instance, as opposed to our community colleges and our technical institutes. I'm not sure that there would be any way that circumstance could be addressed. I also wonder if the hon. member's motion includes distance learning as an appropriate provincial postsecondary educational institution, in which case Athabasca University has the capacity, an almost unlimited capacity for enrollment. They can take a dramatic increase in numbers and could address a great deal of what the motion calls for, if that in fact is part of his intention.

I should also make note that the decisions regarding admission of qualified students is a responsibility granted to every provincial postsecondary educational institution in this province. In fact, it's enshrined in legislation. So this motion would call for the government to rescind that legislation and come in with overriding legislation that would enforce access.

Now let's go back a little bit to the motion and talk about what it takes to get a high school diploma. A high school diploma can be obtained, I believe – and I may stand corrected on this – by taking certain core subjects and getting at least 50 percent in the subjects that they may be enrolled in that are a requirement for a diploma in this province. There certainly is a place in our system, and should be a place, for students who get a diploma with 50 percent and come out and want to take some additional training. I agree with that, but again I'm not sure that the member is indicating that the student should have his choice, or should a university be able to say, "Some of the programs that we offer here need a higher mark than 50 percent"? I think the member needs to give some clarification on what his intentions are with his motion there. I also believe there are more creative ways to ensuring that qualified students have access to postsecondary education.

The member mentioned the access fund. The initial submissions that we've had from the postsecondary educational institutions in the province endeavouring to obtain funding from the access fund have been very encouraging. The amount of students that they indicate they can accommodate by that level of funding indicates that it will reach its goal. If it reaches its goal, indications are that a great deal of our access will be addressed in this province, because in today's world, in this school year we have space in our colleges. Most of the colleges have some space available for first-year students. Also, we've expanded the degree completion opportunities for people who start their studies in colleges and technical institutes, and the recently announced applied degrees give some additional opportunity for students.

Now, the postsecondary institutions are also working collaboratively on technology networks designed to bring programs to the workplace and to outlying communities, where qualified students will have opportunities to engage in postsecondary studies. That's I think something we have to give some consideration to: the new technology that's emerging almost as we speak that's going to give us a lot of new ways to deliver programs to students who are interested in postsecondary training

in our province. The postsecondary institutions need to be more accountable for their programming performance. For this reason, departmental and institutional officials are developing key performance indicators to evaluate how well institutions are doing in admitting and in educating and then graduating and preparing students for careers and professions vital to the province and vital to the future of the students.

I think we all accept the fact that education is the key to the future of young people in today's world, and we're anxious to see this happen. I think, though, this has to be addressed in a variety of ways and in a rational way, not to come up with a broad-brush legislative clause that says, "All students who graduate from high school can have access to postsecondary education" without qualifying that and spelling out under what circumstances that would be true, how well it would work for the students, and how it would respond to those. Students whose applications are not accepted by Alberta postsecondary institutions because of those programs being full may apply for students' financial assistance for out-of-province study.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'll . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: You don't have to conclude, hon. minister. Although I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development, the time limit for consideration of this item this afternoon has concluded, and we'll go to the next order of business.

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

**4:30**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I would call the committee to order.

**Bill 3**  
**Managerial Exclusion Act**

THE CHAIRMAN: This afternoon in Committee of the Whole we have under further consideration Bill 3. It's a little difficult right now to determine who it is that's wishing to speak on it.

MS LEIBOVICI: I do, right here.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you. I must admit that I'm quite surprised that we're here this afternoon to discuss this particular Bill. Perhaps the Minister of Labour is waving to the hon. Chair so that in effect he can say: "No, this is a mistake. We're not going to be talking about Bill 3 this afternoon." The reason I say that is that we keep coming back, and there is an amendment on the floor, just to remind everyone, that talks about the movement of the firefighters union or the ability of the firefighters to organize into one union or into two unions.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

Now, in the closing statements from the Minister of Labour on March 20 he took great detail to expound on the matter of consultation that, according to the minister and according to the department, took place with regards to Bill 3 and how that tied into the particular amendment that's on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I don't particularly want to belabour the point, but I

think it's very important that the facts are entered into *Hansard* as to what the consultation was that did take place.

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

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Point of Order**  
**Relevance**

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, in considering in *Beauchesne* the stages of a Bill and what is appropriate debate, clearly at second reading the issue of consultation was gone into in considerable depth, albeit with disagreement on both sides in terms of the actual content. We're now not just in committee; we're into an amendment, a very specific amendment. The member is still talking about consultation, so I would ask and plead, citing *Beauchesne* on relevance, that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark please confine her comments to the simple amendment.

MS LEIBOVICI: Quite briefly, there would be no debate on this particular point if the consultation had taken place as claimed by the Minister of Labour. To just indicate that we were in this particular debate on March 20, 1995, at 5:25 on that afternoon and that debate did centre around this particular amendment, I can just read what the hon. minister said. What he said was that he took notes at all these meetings. "October 7 . . . with the firefighters." Then he goes through a list to indicate what consultation did not take place. The reality is, once again, that there would be no amendment, there would be no Bill if the consultation, as claimed by the Minister of Labour, had in fact taken place. Therefore, it is very pertinent to this amendment.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, I think the hon. Minister of Labour has a point, although we've always been lenient on this. But I certainly hope and I know you will, hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, talk on the specific amendment to the Bill.

**Debate Continued**

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you. As always, a wise ruling.

As I was indicating with regards to the particular amendment that's on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, what the amendment says is that the firefighters need not worry but that there will be only one union. There has been considerable correspondence since that particular amendment has come on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and that particular correspondence has dealt with a number of factors. One is whether or not that is an appropriate amendment to begin with. There is a differing opinion between the different fire fighting groups, but the most pertinent point still goes back to this lack of consultation.

Now, there is a letter in the possession of the Premier of the province from the Alberta Fire Fighters Association that says that finally it looks as if we're getting some kind of consultation with the Fire Chiefs Association and this has occurred despite the fact that this Bill is on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and is in fact pressuring both parties to the letter of understanding to come to some kind of an agreement. Now, again this would not have had to be the case if on February 23, 1994, there had been consultation with the firefighters. As a matter of fact, the reason that meeting was scheduled and was requested was because the Liberal caucus had informed the Alberta Fire Fighters Association that the Alberta fire chiefs . . .

### Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, would the two members for Red Deer kind of get together without yelling back and forth. Would everybody have a seat. If you want to talk, sit down beside the person and talk. If you don't want to sit down beside him, don't sit down but don't talk.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### Debate Continued

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

. . . had indeed approached the Labour minister and were continuing to push for managerial exclusions within the fire service. They in turn then provided the Labour minister with a brief background but were unaware of any written submissions, and this does not in fact constitute consultation per se. On March 8 there was a meeting that was arranged.

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

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: A point of order, the hon. Minister of Labour.

### Point of Order Relevance

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, citing the same citation and also citing your very recent ruling. I always listen intently to the usual good comments from Edmonton-Meadowlark. As she knows, there is nothing wrong with this amendment. She continues to talk about consultation, which has nothing to do with the specific clause-by-clause analysis that is supposed to take place in committee. Second reading is where that happens. In third reading that can happen. We're in committee, and you have already ruled, Mr. Chairman.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I know you were listening to the way that I tied this discussion into the particular amendment that's on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. Once again, this amendment would not be here if it were not for the fact that these consultations on March 8 of 1994, April 7 of 1994, April 15 of 1994, October 7 of 1994, February 9 of 1995, and March 6 of 1995 had indeed taken place. The point of the fact is that these consultations were not consultations. They were meetings where other things were discussed. They were meetings where perhaps on one occasion there was one individual there. They were meetings that were not necessarily called by the Minister of Labour.

4:40

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, we're on the point of order, and I've heard the word "consultation" four times. There's certainly a disagreement on whether it took place or whether it didn't take place, and I'm not here to rule on that. But we have to stay with the amendment lest we will have to go on to the next member.

Hon. member.

### Debate Continued

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Once again, a good ruling.

The hon. Minister of Labour, as is the Premier of this province, is in possession of a document that says that in Bill 3 a full,

comprehensive consultation process is now under way. What this particular letter talks about is the fact that the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association and the Alberta Fire Fighters Association – and I think all Members of the Legislative Assembly need to be aware of this particular fact – have initiated letters of understanding regarding Bill 3, one of which deals with the particular amendment that's on the floor of this Legislative Assembly. Now, you have the two parties that are most affected by this particular piece of legislation – and we will at this point in time put aside the Edmonton firefighters association – looking at how to resolve the particular issue of managerial exclusion and how to deal with, again, the amendment that's on the floor of this Legislative Assembly.

So you have a draft letter of intent here that both parties are negotiating, and these are parties that are in Calgary, in Fort McMurray, in Grande Prairie, in Lethbridge, in Medicine Hat, in Red Deer, in Spruce Grove. These are parties that have agreed and are sitting down to look at the amendment that's on the floor as well as look at the Bill that's on the floor and try to come to a resolution. So what we have is two parties sitting around a table saying: okay; let's see if at our local levels we can sign a letter of understanding between the bargaining units and the employer groups and agree on how we are going to implement looking at managerial exclusion.

What we have in front of us, though, is a Bill that wants to have government interfere. Now, this is a government that I've sat here for the last year plus several months and heard say how they want to pull out of regulation, how they want to pull out of interfering, how they want to have decisions made at the community level. Here's a perfect example of how that is happening. Yet what we also have is a government that seems to be in an all-fired rush to push through Bill 3. Just in case you think, oh, well, this will never be resolved, what the firefighters are saying is: give us until April. They've even set a deadline. They've set a deadline for April 4, I believe, to try and come to an understanding. It's actually that: the above shall be carried out at a local municipal level no later than 12 noon on April 3, and a final report shall be forwarded to the Alberta Labour minister for his consideration, with such to be done no later than 12 noon on April 6. So what these firefighters are saying is: give us a week; we can probably work this out. But again we're here debating something in the Legislative Assembly where I don't believe the Legislative Assembly has a right to be.

Over and over again we've heard the Minister of Labour say: I can't get involved in a labour dispute; that's not what our role is; we can provide mediators, we can set up a process, but I cannot get involved and I cannot make those decisions. But here the Minister of Labour is jumping in with both feet into a situation that may well resolve itself within a week. Now, I ask the members to take one step back and say: where's the sense? Where's the sense in us pushing through legislation, in putting people into boxes where they don't need to be if in fact it can resolve itself? The particular amendment that's on the floor talks about one union, which the Labour minister believes will address the concerns of the firefighters. The fact is that the Labour minister is as aware as I am that we have two differing opinions on this, and this is again something that needs to be resolved between the firefighter unions as well as between the chiefs.

There is further documentation here that talks about the AUMA resolution that was passed at the 1994 AUMA convention. We've been told that the AUMA proposal was very simply: let's deal with the managerial exclusions. But what the actual resolution says – this is part of the AUMA resolution – is that the

coordinated feedback from those . . . employers and . . . unions most affected would be required prior to amending the legislation. It also would obviously be most helpful if those parties most affected were able to work toward a common position on this issue.

Now, we have AUMA saying: hold off. We have AUMA saying: why not wait to see if these differing parties can work it out? We've got a letter directly to the Premier of this province on March 27, which was Monday, saying: hold off; give us a week, until April 6 at the latest, when we will forward a letter of intent. This is what the minister himself said would happen. The minister himself said that would happen, that there would be a letter of intent from the fire chiefs that would come to this Legislative Assembly. Well, how can you ask for better? How can you ask for better than to have the letter of intent signed by both parties? It satisfies the AUMA resolution. It satisfies the concerns of the fire chiefs. It satisfies the concerns of the firefighters. Yet the fact of the matter is that for some reason – I have yet to discern what that particular reason is – there is this rush, this rush to push forward legislation.

MR. DAY: Twenty years, Karen. Twenty years.

MS LEIBOVICI: The hon. Minister of Labour is saying that this is an issue that has taken 20 years. Well, Rome wasn't built in a day is how the saying goes; right? Quite honestly, if all that is being requested is another week, I do not think that is an unreasonable request.

One of the things that the Minister of Labour had asked of myself last week – and I said I would answer it – was in terms of, as he termed it, the Damascus road conversion. One of the cautions that I would like to provide to the Minister of Labour is that sometimes when individuals are in a bureaucracy, they do things that are perhaps easier. They try and find the easy road to getting a particular issue resolved. Negotiations, going through the arbitration procedure, if that's what it is, mediation, and conciliation are a lot more time consuming than saying to a Legislature: "Why don't you pass the legislation and make it easy for us? Why don't you do that?" I'm afraid that the Minister of Labour has succumbed to this, has succumbed to the easy road, the easy way out.

As the Minister of Labour has said, this is a long-standing issue, and I am well aware of that. Members who have been on councils, both in Calgary as well as in Edmonton, are well aware of that as well. Again, take a step backwards and say, "What is the basis for this particular controversy in the fire fighting ranks, and what is the basis of the wish for management to pass through the Managerial Exclusion Act?" I think what you find is that what needs to happen at times is better relations between the firefighters and the fire departments. Now, if the members approach jurisdictions such as Fort McMurray, I think you'll find that the managerial staff there are not as convinced of the need for Bill 3 and an amendment to be put forward as is being put forward. What in fact you will see is that they have been able to work things out. I think, again given what this government has said about its role and its responsibilities, what they are now looking at doing is interfering. And when you see the amendment, they're also stepping into another puddle, shall we say, where they are now making the decision whether there are going to be firefighters who will ever have the right to become unionized again.

Looking at whether that is the proper option or not, I don't think the department has thought it all through, specifically with regards to the amendment. When you look at the definition of

firefighter and when you look at the fact that in Edmonton fire fighting services also include rescue and ambulance, what you in fact have is a problem. In the city of Edmonton the ambulance workers are in a certified union of their own. Now, firefighters, as per the definition, include ambulance services, so if you are . . .

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On a point of order?

#### Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DAY: Under the rules of *Beauchesne* I wonder if the member opposite would entertain a brief question.

MS LEIBOVICI: My pleasure.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, hon. member.

#### Debate Continued

MR. DAY: Could the member explain her shift in thinking on this: why, when she was a negotiator for the city of Edmonton, this type of situation where managers could not be taken out of the bargaining unit was an extreme vexation to her, which she expressed clearly to a number of people, and now it seems everything is fine and she has shifted. I wonder: is it just politics, or is there something else?

4:50

MS LEIBOVICI: I did explain that, and unfortunately you may not have heard. I'm not sure how you come to that, that it was an extremely vexatious – I'm not sure what your words were; what was the word? – that it was of extreme vexation to myself. What I explained was that the bureaucracy, of which I was a part, sometimes looks for an easy way out in which to resolve some difficulties, and the hardest way is to sit down at the negotiating table and to try and hammer out the issues.

Perhaps the minister was unable to hear the other point that I was making in terms of the definition of firefighter. Firefighter, within the Act, talks about those individuals who – I just want to make sure that I've got the exact wording. It's subsection (o).

"Firefighters" means the employees, including officers and technicians, employed by a municipality and assigned exclusively to fire protection and fire prevention duties notwithstanding that those duties may include the performance of ambulance or rescue services.

Now, the question that I have for the Minister of Labour and the Department of Labour is: how do they reconcile this particular definition with the fact that there are ambulance workers who are certified under another collective agreement and are another union?

In the amendment that has been put forward, the reading and the argument could very well be that firefighters, including ambulance workers, need to be in one union, in which case, Mr. Minister of Labour, you have a huge mess on your hands. You have ambulance workers who have just been certified in the city of Edmonton saying: whoa, we're part of this union. You've got firefighters who are saying: well, we now can include you within our bargaining ranks. So I think that issue has to be looked at and discussed.

I see the member for . . . [Ms Leibovici's speaking time expired]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before I call on the Minister of Labour, could we have unanimous consent to introduce guests?



HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? Carried.  
The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

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

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to you and members of the Assembly Brenda Jacques from Sylvan Lake. Brenda is in the city on business and has come to see the Legislature at work. Brenda is a hardworking community builder, and I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Bill 3**  
**Managerial Exclusion Act**  
(*continued*)

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I want to bring people right up to date, because I think some of the members opposite just need to be brought right up to date. The negotiations referred to by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark: they are dead, if I can use that word. As of 5:45 last night, besides agreeing to disagree – one side would probably like to continue, but in fact they have hit the stage of no more discussions. No more negotiations. This has been going on for 20 years. There is agreement that there's disagreement, but those negotiations are now over. I have held this legislation for a number of weeks hoping for the slightest possibility that some new glimmer of light might appear. None has, and as of 5:45 last night all that discussion is over, and that's why we're moving ahead.

On the amendment, I think members need to be reassured, and this may reassure them somewhat. I have in my possession a letter from Rob Hartman, president of the Edmonton firefighters union. Now, the president makes it very clear that he's not in agreement with Bill 3, so I don't want anybody thinking that I'm trying to say he is. However, he does comment on the amendment itself. He's very specific. First he says he doesn't agree with Bill 3, but he said: if the government proceeds, against the wishes of the province's firefighters, to pass Bill 3 into law, we would, however, find ourselves in the position of strongly supporting the government's amendment to Bill 3, which specifically provides that there would be only one bargaining unit in each fire department; such an amendment would leave no question as to who is in management and who are members of the union. That's from Rob Hartman. Now, again I'm making it . . .

MS LEIBOVICI: May I ask a question? I rise on a point of order. Would the Minister of Labour also read into *Hansard*, then, the letter from Wayne Hudson on that particular issue?

MR. DAY: I'm going to comment on all of Wayne Hudson's volumes of faxes in a moment.

This is the fire department that the members opposite claim to represent. Their president is saying: we don't like Bill 3, but if it's going ahead, we do like the amendment. That was the exact position that I made when I presented it, so you're aware of that.

Also, you need to be aware that most mayors, most municipalities have contacted me, copied me with letters, and copied to members saying: please go ahead with this. I'd like to read into the record briefly some excerpts from Mayor Jan Reimer's letter to me on this point, expressing the city of Edmonton's support for Bill 3.

MS LEIBOVICI: A point of order.

**Point of Order**  
**Relevance**

MS LEIBOVICI: Relevance to the amendment.

MR. DAY: Yes. Right here in the letter it's got the word "amendments." I was coming to it, and the member didn't allow me to get there yet.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's very ironic that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark would bring up a point of relevance.

However, hon. minister, would you get on with it, and certainly on the amendment.

**Debate Continued**

MR. DAY: Thank you. It's in direct reference to the amendment, and the mayor talks about amendments here. I must say that in two paragraphs she explains in a clearer fashion than I have the intent of the Bill and the amendment. It's actually about four or five sentences only, but she goes on to say: for more than a decade Edmonton has sought amendments – even more than one, if we were to take it – to provide a managerial exclusion between the chief and the deputy chiefs. We have forwarded numerous submissions and letters to MLAs, cabinet ministers, and the Department of Labour respecting this matter. Through resolutions to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association we've raised this issue and gained the support of other Alberta municipalities.

The key point here . . . [interjection] Is it too loud for you? Okay, thanks. Some of my members behind me are supporting me so actively that I'm raising my voice a bit.

At issue has been the definitions of employee and firefighter and section 33(2) of the Labour Relations Code. These provisions, in place for more than 20 years, make large, complex fire departments extremely difficult to manage. Although every chief officer of our department has managerial responsibilities, each of them is also a member of a union.

Then she points directly to the crux of the issue here: in Edmonton this means there are eight uniformed managers out of a complement of more than 800; with support of legislation . . .

MS LEIBOVICI: Mr. Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of Labour, a point of order.

**Point of Order**  
**Relevance**

MS LEIBOVICI: *Beauchesne* 459. Really, I think we're stretching the relevance of this particular speech by the Minister of Labour with the references to amendments. This particular letter that was written to the Minister of Labour was long before the amendments were presented by the Minister of Labour on the floor of this Legislative Assembly.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, first of all, that wouldn't be relevance. Secondly, this is March 20. That's 1995, not last year. Speaking directly to the amendments, directly and specifically.

**Debate Continued**

MR. DAY: Also going on, saying: with supportive legislation we will be able to develop a more appropriate managerial structure geared to the demands of our modern, complex, and

multifaceted fire service. The last sentence I want to read into the record is: I applaud the Minister of Labour for bringing forward a legislative resolution to this long-standing issue. I'm particularly pleased with the permissive nature of the Bill which allows for municipal decision-making," something the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was in support of. Edmonton believes that Bill 3 will provide the legislative . . .

#### **Chairman's Ruling Decorum**

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. Minister of Labour, order. We won't have a point of order; we'll just have order. Obviously, we have some disagreement in the House, and it seems like there's an hon. member on both sides of the House that wants to get into debate. We're not going to allow that. So what we're going to do is give everybody their turn to speak, and if you don't agree with different members, that's fully permissible.

Hon. Minister of Labour, we'll let you finish your remarks, and anybody else that wants to talk can go ahead and do so.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, in all sincerity, I'm trying to calm the fears, the justifiable fears and concerns of people across that some of these areas have not been addressed. Here I've now cited from the mayor of Edmonton unqualified support for this Bill, unqualified support also from most of the mayors around the province of Alberta who are trying to deal with this situation, trying to deal with it, trying to allow all unions in this province to be treated the same. Remember, when there's a breakdown in discussions of who should come out of the bargaining unit, what this does is it allows it to go to the LRB. No managerial unit can arbitrarily pull someone out of the bargaining unit.

5:00

Also, because of concerns that came up last week on the amendment, we have Rob Hartman, the president of the union, saying: "I don't like the Bill, but if it's going ahead, we absolutely strongly" - his words - "support the amendment." In relation to Mr. Wayne Hudson, who is secretary-treasurer of the union - and I respect anybody's point of view and try to respond to all faxes however voluminous they may be. As about the 10th volume of faxes from Mr. Hudson was being removed from my desk, I asked that contact be made with the president of the union, Mr. Terry Wilson, to see who indeed is speaking for the firefighters of Alberta. Mr. Hudson is perfectly allowed to fax, to talk, and say whatever he likes. I don't want to prohibit that, but representing the firefighters, the president did say: it's me, the president, Mr. Wilson, that speaks for the firefighters.

So it is Mr. Wilson that I communicate with. He has not sent me the volumes of faxes that Mr. Hudson has. Mr. Wilson, representing the firefighters, does not agree, would prefer that Bill 3 didn't go ahead. Let's make no mistake about that. He is the spokesman for the firefighters. Mr. Hudson has a point of view that is valid, but he is not the spokesman, and I want to make that very clear.

Mr. Chairman, given the fact that the support is here for the amendment from the president of the firefighters union, I would now call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: On the Bill itself.  
The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, As you know, Highwood is home to many of Calgary's fine firemen. They choose to live in Highwood, although they serve the people of the city of Calgary. A number of these constituents of mine have expressed their concerns about Bill 3 to me by fax, by phone, in person, and by letter. Their concerns are varied, but there seems to be a central theme in almost every one of them, and that is that they are concerned as to whether or not the minister intends to include captains and lieutenants in the managerial exclusion. My question is straightforward. To the minister: would he confirm or deny that he intends to catch lieutenants and captains as management in Bill 3? If this is not then his intention, would he clearly outline the appeal process that a firefighters' union would need to follow in order to present their case in the event that a municipality sought to include the captains and managers in this management arrangement?

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would move that we adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Highwood has moved that we adjourn debate on Bill 3. All in favour of that motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried.

#### **Bill 6**

#### **Balanced Budget and Debt Retirement Act**

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. We're on the amendment to Bill 6.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you for bringing that up, Mr. Chairman, the amendment to Bill 6. I believe that the amendment deals with transparency. It deals with an amendment to section 6 or 7 and requires the Auditor General, as opposed to the Audit Committee, to be responsible for reviewing certain components of Bill 6. On the amendment, I would like to call the question and come to the Bill.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. We're ready for the question. There's only one problem: I haven't got a copy of the amendment because the page has just taken it. Obviously everybody in the House knows what it says except the Chairman.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Yes. I want to raise several issues with regards to various clauses in Bill 6. The first is with regard to definitions. It would be section 1. The issue here is that this definition of Crown debt according to the public accounts and to the latest budget, then, means that this Bill will lead to a net debt of about \$8.7 billion retired as opposed to a larger figure. A figure of \$8.7 billion in terms of net debt will still leave us \$25 billion of gross debt at the end of the plan. Again, I've made this point that

that is a significant share of gross debt to be left at the end of the day, and it still leaves us exposed to many of the vicissitudes of international capital markets, foreign exchange rate risk, et cetera. So with regard, then, to the definition, clearly we would have preferred a definition that included either gross unmaturing debt of \$16 billion or the Provincial Treasurer's definition of net debt inclusive of unfunded liabilities as the net debt to be retired.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

I want to spend some time speaking to section 2, deficits disallowed. Now, Mr. Chairman, who could be against deficits disallowed? I would just like to point out, for those of you who have local council experience, what this particular section implies. Let me give you an example of concern about this particular section. Say that the Provincial Treasurer, in the second quarter as he receives the quarterly update, finds that despite the cushions that he has in place, despite the flexibility that is set out in section 4, there is no slack. The cushions are gone. They can only make the minimum payment as set out in section 4. What this requires, then, is that in the third and fourth quarters the provincial government ratchet down their expenditures to local government.

#### 5:10

Now, local government itself is locked into many commitments made in that fiscal year. They will have locked themselves into their contracts with employees. Hospital boards will have locked themselves into contracts with their physicians, nurses, et cetera. Universities will have locked themselves into contracts with their staff. Local governments will have made their arrangements. What this Bill requires, then, is that all of that volatility in the natural resource market is transmitted to local government in the third and fourth quarters if the cushions are eliminated and if, in fact, the provincial government can only make the minimum annual payment required.

Now, that really poses a problem, because those levels of government, universities, hospitals, aren't allowed to run deficits. So what this means, then, is that the cuts will be imposed on a very ad hoc and unplanned basis in the third and fourth quarters in order to achieve what is set out in section 2. I mean, this is a very powerful clause, and I'm sure that the Provincial Treasurer is aware of it, and that's why, in fact, he's tucked away so much money in various places in this in terms of cushions, because he, too, shares my concern about the nature of the unplanned, ad hoc adjustments that would be required in worst case scenarios.

How do you deal with this? Well, you hope that it never comes to pass and that the provincial government, then, doesn't have to download these cuts in the third and fourth quarters to local government, because again the nature of the cuts would be very, very serious and they would necessarily be imposed in an ad hoc and unplanned fashion. Well, what's one way of dealing with it or perhaps two ways of dealing with it. One is that you perhaps make the argument that this clause should be relaxed slightly and that perhaps no deficit could be run in successive years.

Now, is this a hemorrhaging of fiscal resolve? Is this the thin edge of the wedge to unrestrained deficit spending? I would argue that if hon. members on the other side viewed this as being realistic, they could pass it in good conscience, the argument being that you would still have to clean up the deficit in the next year, and it could be done on a planned basis as opposed to being funneled into the third and fourth quarters of the current fiscal

year. That's really the concern: how do you do it? It's not an issue of whether you do it; it's just how you do it.

Now, I think that moving it beyond successive years, we've got a very serious problem, because you keep hoping that you're going to have a good year the next year. So the first year you run a deficit; the second year you run a deficit. The magnitude of the expenditure reductions you'd have to run in the third year would be even worse. So I think really the issue is: how do you provide a planning horizon to adjust to shortfalls in such a way that they can be implemented and imposed in a planned and orderly fashion?

As I say, my concern is that section 2 is set up in such a way that it really does tie you in tightly. I would think that hon. members on the other side could view themselves as having lived up to their word and still face people at the doors and live with a slightly relaxed version of section 2.

The only other alternative I could suggest – and again this is in the way of constructive alternatives – is an issue that I broached earlier in the afternoon. The way that sections 1 and 2 are set up in terms of definitions, it requires you to balance the budget on a consolidated basis. As the hon. Treasurer had noted in question period, to liquidate assets of the heritage savings trust fund in the context of a rainy day would in fact leave you with a deficit, and you can't do it.

Again that brings you to that paradox: of what service is the fund if you can't use it on a rainy day? You can only use it when you don't need it. So that's a bit of a paradox. That's, I guess, one of the consequences of trying to run two parallel tracks: one, the heritage savings trust fund review; the other, this debt management and balanced budget legislation, that was independent of the heritage trust fund review process.

Those are the only two reasonable ways I could see of doing it. Obviously, it would require the will of both sides of the House to view those as being constructive, as reasonable, and surely at this point it would be up to the government's side to propose such amendments. I think these are issues that have to be addressed.

Now, I will add that I have talked to some editorial boards. I did bring forward these issues, the importance of these issues, and there was not what I would call a groundswell of concern, which somewhat surprised me because I thought myself that they were compelling arguments, at least the necessity in a worst case scenario of having to impose the cuts in the third and fourth quarters if the first two quarters were bad. I think that the temper of the times now is that people do not view this as being a likely event, and this may be an amendment that would have to be considered down the road should worst case scenarios emerge.

I have discovered in consultation with various groups that from their perspective this appears to be a reasonable Bill. In fact we have brought forward the issues, we've debated them in the House, we've talked to stakeholders, and those stakeholders are quite willing to live with this. I think it is our job as the loyal opposition to reflect that, after having served notice of what we think is important, and to leave the debate at that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 6 agreed to]

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported if and when the committee rises.

[Motion carried]

**Bill 10****Alberta Heritage Scholarship Amendment Act, 1995**

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development is doing a lot of moving. Would you care to move this?

5:20

MR. ADY: The question's been called.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 10 agreed to]

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill 10 be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

**Bill 11****Students Finance Amendment Act, 1995**

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 11 agreed to]

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek I move that the Bill be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The committee reports the following: Bills 6, 10, 11. The committee reports progress on Bill 3. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. All in favour of the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House now adjourn until 8 o'clock this evening, when we'll reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:25 p.m.]