

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 30, 1995** 1:30 p.m.  
Date: 95/03/30  
[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Dear God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Thy guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all our judgments.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville.

MR. VASSEUR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present two petitions this afternoon. The first petition is from 152 residents of the Bonnyville area urging the government of Alberta to ensure that all school boards provide transportation for each eligible child in rural Alberta without the use of transportation fees.

The second petition is from 442 residents of the Bonnyville area also who are concerned about the proposed legislation affecting our water resources. This petition urges the government not to pass legislation allowing possible selling of our water rights without conducting a total provincewide referendum.

Thank you.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would request that the petition I tabled yesterday be now read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to:

1. De-insure the performance of induced abortion under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Act.
2. Use the community-based resources that are already in place that offer positive alternatives to abortion.

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

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to request that the petition I tabled on March 29 be now read and received.

CLERK:

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

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

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to request that the petition I presented yesterday, March 29, regarding the implementation of 400 hours of early childhood services be now read and received.

Thank you.

CLERK:

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

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

DR. L. TAYLOR: I request that the petition I presented yesterday be read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to:

1. De-insure the performance of induced abortion under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Act.
2. Use the community-based resources that are already in place that offer positive alternatives to abortion.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request that the petition I presented yesterday, March 29, be now read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to:

1. De-insure the performance of induced abortion under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Act.
2. Use the community-based resources that are already in place that offer positive alternatives to abortion.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

### Bill 23

#### Treasury Statutes Amendment and Repeal Act, 1995

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 23, the Treasury Statutes Amendment and Repeal Act, 1995. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 23 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file with the Assembly today a statement issued by the board chair of the

Calgary General hospital on March 16, 1995. This statement will lay to rest any questions that arose over denial of medical care at their emergency services.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table this afternoon copies of a letter signed by 70 members of the Corpus Christi School Council urging the Legislature "to mandate the right of access to fully funded kindergarten programming to a minimum of 400 hours per child per school year."

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of an article in the Red Deer *Advocate* referring to a statement made by Judge Dave MacNaughton on VLTs in which he describes them as being destructive and being "one of the worst things to ever hit this province."

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling four copies of a speech that was presented by Cindy Haugen, a crisis intervention worker from WIN House, this past Tuesday, March 28, at the WIN House MLA breakfast.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several documents to table this afternoon. The first is a letter of understanding and apology from the University hospital to the Urquhart family that was delivered to them yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, the second item is copies of an open letter from a well-respected and now retired senior physician here in the city of Edmonton to the Premier of the province condemning the government's health care restructuring process.

The third item, Mr. Speaker, is an exchange of correspondence between myself and the Minister of Health in which the minister states that no additional funding for severance payments will be made available to health care regions. This was in July of '94. Subsequently, of course, \$40 million was approved in supplemental estimates, in part to be used for that purpose.

The next, Mr. Speaker, are copies of three motions passed by Edmonton city council expressing their serious concerns about the Capital health authority budget imposed by the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, the next is an open letter from the obstetrics nurses at the University hospital, who between them have almost 1.6 million hours of obstetrical nursing experience, expressing their specific objections to the consolidation of obstetrics at the Royal Alexandra hospital. A letter from Alberta Health to regional health authorities outlining the distribution of funding to medical laboratories throughout the province. A letter from the Minister of Health to the Health Sciences Association confirming receipt of the association's report on laboratory restructuring. This was the report that the minister forgot about when she answered a question earlier this week. Finally, the Alberta Medical Association analysis of the Alberta Health draft agreement for physician contracts and hospital privileges.

1:40

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] The red meat's on its way; hold on, fellows.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table four copies of a study that was done by Nichols Applied Management on behalf of the University of Alberta hospitals about the economic role and impacts of medical research in Edmonton. They highlight the concerns regarding medical research, particularly where it impacts the University of Alberta hospital.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter that was sent to me containing a resolution passed by the Assumption School Parent Council requesting that I ask the government to fully fund 400 hours of kindergarten. Attached to this was a set of questionnaire responses that they had circulated to parents of children in their kindergarten requesting a series of responses in terms of the value of kindergarten.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request permission this afternoon to table 12 letters from Albertans requesting that the Alberta government fund 400 hours of early childhood services and that these 400 hours be funded from the Alberta school foundation fund.

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 50 grade 8 students from Olds junior/senior high school. They're accompanied today by teachers Mr. Garry Woodruff and Miss Kathy Forrest and parents Mrs. Diane Jaffray, Mrs. Debbie Chrusch, and Ashley Jaffray. I would ask that they stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the members' gallery today are four young men from George McDougall high school in Airdrie. They're fine students, outstanding athletes. As I call out their names, I'd ask each one of them to stand: Jason Russell, a grade 11 student; Rob Fontaine, a grade 12 student; Jeff Haley, a grade 11 student; and Jason Haley, a grade 12 student. I'd ask all four to stand and would just point out to all in the House that Jeff Haley and Jason Haley are direct descendants of a proud and rather young mother who sits in this Assembly as the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly three individuals who've come here to observe question period and probably more importantly their dad, a doctor from the constituency of Bow Valley. I would ask at this time that son Scott, daughter Jillian, and mom and wife, the young Louella Oberg, from Brooks please rise and receive a warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you another guest from the deep

south. They don't often come up from southern Alberta, but I'm pleased to say that this young lady is here to watch the productive work her husband does in this House. I'm pleased to introduce to you Mrs. Sharon Hierath.

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

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to be able to introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly three fine examples of Alberta youth, of course from Calgary-North Hill, truly examples of Alberta's greatest resource, our youth. I'd like to introduce Dave Ryan and Antonio Motta, both Mount Royal students, as well as Carmen Blain, who's a U of C student and truly a benefit to my area. I'd like this House to give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly five very special guests, four of whom are from Edmonton-Manning, and I understand one is from Sherwood Park. They are Eugene and Grace Rienks and their two children, Rebecca and Barry, and a friend of Rebecca's, Sara Kerr. She's from Sherwood Park. I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

### Oral Question Period

#### Health Services Restructuring

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, over 1,000 Calgary doctors turned out last night to express their frustration with this government's cuts to Alberta's health care system. These doctors are extremely angry about what this government is doing to health care. I was there, and I can tell the minister that the doctors are very, very genuine in their concerns. To the Minister of Health: why is she so afraid to show up at meetings like this and to listen to health . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order, hon. members.

MR. MITCHELL: Let me rephrase it, Mr. Speaker. Why doesn't the Minister of Health care enough to show up at these meetings and listen to health care professionals who are sending her a very, very clear message?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, two things. One, certainly it is not whether I care enough or whether I care to attend. I did mention in the Assembly yesterday that I did have the opportunity through the courtesy of the organizer of that meeting to meet with that gentleman, a doctor in the city of Calgary, to discuss the objectives of the meeting and the agenda for the meeting. It was not indicated that it would be necessary in any way for me to be at that meeting.

Two of my colleagues, government members, the Member for Calgary-Bow, who is the chair of that caucus, and the Member for Calgary-Currie, were able to attend as well as some staff members. It is my understanding from speaking to them and others who were at that meeting that it was a very productive meeting, that the doctors did have the opportunity to make their concerns known in a very professional way, to have many of their questions answered, and to get information that they previously had not had.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I take some of the responsibility for communication with our physicians, I expect the Alberta Medical Association to take some responsibility, and I expect the physician liaison committee that has been set up in that community also to take responsibility for communicating with their members. I think one thing that was clear to both the president of the AMA, the chair of the regional physician council, and the Minister of Health is that we indeed all have to work together to ensure that our physicians do have the information they require, the correct information, and that they don't rely on somewhat unreliable sources for that information. So we're going to work very hard to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the meeting was very productive, was very progressive, and very useful. I thank Dr. Nichols and all of the people that were involved and also the fact that every member of the Calgary regional health authority was in attendance to sit with their doctors, to hear their concerns, and to have an exchange with them.

MR. MITCHELL: If the minister had been there herself . . .

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. MITCHELL: If the minister had been there herself . . .

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question. [interjection] Supplemental question.

MR. MITCHELL: . . . she wouldn't have had such a sanitized . . .

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question, hon. member.

MR. MITCHELL: . . . view.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister recognize, as have many Calgary doctors, that Dr. Larry Bryan's resignation from the Calgary regional health authority at this point in the process shows that in fact there are very, very serious problems with her health care restructuring and that he is trying to send her a very clear message about that?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, two things. One, maybe unlike the hon. member – I don't know – I have every confidence in the people who did represent me at that meeting. I have absolutely no reason not to have that type of confidence in those people. I also respect the people from the medical community who communicated with me from that meeting as well. I am not suggesting that the member is suggesting other than that they would give me good feedback from that meeting.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is extremely unfortunate that a member would take the resignation of a person who has served the health community in this province well for a number of years, who has resigned, by his own words, for personal reasons, and try and draw some other reasoning into that. I think it's really unfortunate, and it shows a distinct lack of respect for a person who has been a respected member of the medical community in this province.

1:50

MR. MITCHELL: Is the minister, as many physicians are suggesting, prepared to put a moratorium on the health care cuts for, say, a year or at least until she can get a plan in place that actually has a chance of working?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the minister is prepared to continue to work with the physicians in this province in a number of ways. One, I will continue to work with the president of the Alberta Medical Association and attempt through that vehicle, which has been the accepted and respected vehicle for dealing with physician concerns in this province between Alberta Health and the physicians, to make that work. If I feel at any time that we have difficulties in working through that, I will discuss with the Alberta Medical Association better methods of communicating with our physicians.

Mr. Speaker, I communicated with 4,500 doctors in this province. I have had responses from a number of them. I can assure you that any negative responses will show up in the Legislature, at least quite a few of them will, probably not very many of the positive ones. I'm going to utilize the information that I get from those letters to deal with the physicians in this province and their concerns in a very productive way. The discussions on funding, on physician payment are dealt with at a negotiating table.

MR. MITCHELL: It's hard to work with doctors that the minister won't meet with, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Advisory Council on Women's Issues**

MR. MITCHELL: Continued health care cuts have had a resoundingly negative impact on women. It's increased their job losses, it's reduced their access to health care, it's increased their burden at home, and it's put the future of women's health research in this province in some jeopardy. To the minister responsible for women's issues. If ever there was a need for the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, it is now. Why won't the minister stop his caucus from beating up on the women's advisory committee with their continual threats to shut it down?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the Advisory Council on Women's Issues is in the process of consultation with women throughout the province of Alberta to deal with issues like: how should women's voices be heard by government? Frankly, members of our caucus are entitled to speak as they wish. That is their right, and that is their entitlement.

MR. MITCHELL: The minister continually tells us that somehow women are telling him to shut down the women's advisory council. I wonder whether the minister would tell us exactly who the women are who are telling him to shut down the women's advisory council, because the women who are speaking to me are saying: the one thing this government needs right now is the women's advisory council.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the House the other day, increasingly women are interested in speaking on their own behalf as well. That's not to say that the women's advisory council hasn't done excellent work in the past. The point ought to be made that the Advisory Council on Women's Issues has a sunset clause within its legislation, and the plans are at this time to carry out its mandate to the end of its sunsetted legislation, which is to the end of 1996.

MR. MITCHELL: To the minister whose government formally consults Albertans on the heritage trust fund, formally consults Albertans on lotteries, even formally consults Albertans on gun control: why is it that he won't set up some formal consultation

process with women in this province to see what they think should be the fate of the women's advisory council?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member has been living in a cave, but that's exactly what the Advisory Council on Women's Issues is doing right now, at this time. The women's advisory council has set up consultations throughout the province of Alberta to hear from women, to hear how women's issues should continue to be heard by government. Of course, there are differences between the way that changes we make in government affect women and affect men, and it's for exactly that reason that we seek the input of women throughout the province of Alberta, to find out how their issues can continue to be brought to government.

MR. DAY: Further information, Mr. Speaker. To the women in health care who are affected – that was the intent of the main question – more than an advisory council even, what they need are programs to assist them through a difficult time of transition. That's why myself and the Minister of Health, working with the partners in health care, have set aside \$15 million for workforce adjustment programs for people who are going to be affected. I would not for a minute insinuate that the Liberal leader is lying, but the way he handles this Pulp Fiction, he could win the award for the Lyin' King.

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

#### **Regional Health Authorities**

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday at the AAMD and C conference the Minister of Health asked for input on whether regional health authority boards should be elected or appointed. The delegates made it very clear they wanted these members to be elected in this fall's municipal election, because they should be accountable to the voters. To the minister: why didn't the minister plan this whole process rather than ad hoc, like all other changes to the health care system?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know; the hon. member must have been at a slightly different AAMD and C conference than I was yesterday. I had a member of AAMD and C get up to a microphone and ask me about the process and would there be an election process in time for the fall elections. I explained very clearly to the member who asked the question at the conference and to all of the delegates, who I think listened far more carefully to the answer, that there was not an intention of elections for this fall's municipal elections. I also explained that the boards who were in place have been appointed until June of 1996.

I also asked the members that were there, some very knowledgeable people, to bring forward some input as to not only how – it's easy to stand here and say, "Elect the boards," but the minute I ask the group opposite to bring forward an implementation plan for that election, I get silence. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe I will get silence from the members of AAMD and C. What I said yesterday and what I believe they concurred with is that it is important that the process is right, and that's what they're going to help me with.

MR. BRACKO: The minister needs to start listening to the delegates.

How can the minister defend the situation where unelected regional health authorities can requisition tax dollars from elected municipal councils? Taxation without representation.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member knows that the requisitioning that can occur by regional health authorities is exactly the same as it is under the Hospitals Act and that it will remain the same. He also, I am sure, knows that I wrote to the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and said to them: this is what we're going to do; we're going to continue it exactly as it is under the Hospitals Act.

In consultation with AAMD and C and AUMA and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Alberta Health and the regional health authorities we are going to develop regulations that are appropriate for requisitioning. I believe the best way to do that is with that expert advice and not just arbitrarily done in place. That's why we've set that process in place. I really invite the hon. member, if he has a question on that, to drop the minister a note, and I'd be happy to try and enlighten him.

2:00

MR. BRACKO: A very simple question, Mr. Speaker: why won't the minister have the courage to hold elections for regional health authorities as part of this fall's municipal election to solve this problem? This is what the delegates want.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, briefly, the boards that are presently in place are appointed to June of 1996. There are 17 regions in this province that have health authorities. Their borders are not coterminous with municipal borders for a number of reasons. I have already indicated to the hon. member in my previous answers that I think it's important that we get the input from those groups as to how to put the next boards in place. I was at that convention with 13 of my cabinet colleagues, and that message was given out and I think received well by the group.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

#### Impact of Budget Cuts on Women

MRS. GORDON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] What a team.

A stinging U of A political science department paper titled Road Kill: Women in Alberta's Drive toward Deficit Elimination attacks this government as being antifeminist and patriarchal. The paper, written by Gurston Dacks, Joyce Green, and Linda Trimble, starts off with a quotation that reads:

Economy is the bone, politics is the flesh,  
watch who they beat and who they eat,  
watch who they relieve themselves on,  
watch who they own.  
The rest is decoration.

My first question, Mr. Speaker, is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Mr. Minister, considering the subject matter of the research paper, were you ever asked for an interview or invited to comment, providing another side to this political diatribe?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I was not asked or interviewed for the purposes of the preparation of this political manifesto.

MRS. GORDON: My supplementary questions, Mr. Speaker, are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. Mr. Minister, were taxpayer dollars used either directly or indirectly to fund the writing of this overly biased and poorly researched paper?

MS LEBOVICI: According to whom? [interjections] According to whom?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, please try to control yourself.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea of how that research initiative was funded, whether it was funded externally or internally within the university. I would suggest that any Albertan who has an interest in that should put their concerns to the board of governors or the administration of the university.

MRS. GORDON: Could the minister tell us if he will be addressing this issue with the administration and/or the board of governors at the University of Alberta?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I should also have said that it would be appropriate for interested Albertans to contact the authors of the document and ask them how it was funded. I think that would be fair to do. As far as my intervention: no, I don't intend to do that. I don't think it would be appropriate for the minister to be meddling in the research of the university.

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

#### Special Waste Treatment Centre

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The business plan for the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation estimates that taxpayers' subsidies for operations of the Swan Hills waste treatment centre will decline from \$27 million in 1994-95 to \$2.18 million in '97-98. Intrinsic to that decline is the importation of PCBs, and the plant is specifically designed to incinerate PCBs. My questions are to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Mr. Minister: how large is the stock of PCBs in Canada for the plant, and how long in fact would those PCBs operate the plant?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, back in December we put in place a new board, and the chair of the board is now in the Legislature, so I think this is an excellent opportunity for the chairman of that board to report to the Legislative Assembly and answer the hon. member's question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. [some applause]

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that thumping so I can think up an answer.

Apparently at this point in time there is in excess of 130,000 tonnes of PCBs in Canada. This would include all various forms of PCBs. They're mainly solid. However, there is some liquid. The plant has the capacity to dispose of approximately 50,000 tonnes per year. I don't believe that it would be possible for us to attract all the PCBs to this province. However, if we were to attract perhaps 50 percent, that would keep the plant going for approximately three to four years.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. PERCY: Thank you. Again, my question is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Assuming, Mr. Speaker, that those PCBs do not end up in Alberta, not 50 percent but zero, what would in fact the operating subsidy be for the Swan Hills plant?

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, before answering directly, I'd like to make a couple of points. Certainly importation is very important to this facility. The province was pleased with the NRCB decision. A couple of facts which people aren't generally aware of: only approximately 20 percent of the hazardous waste generated in this province is actually treated at the plant, approximately one-quarter is disposed of through other means, and approximately half is shipped actually out of Alberta.

Our best estimate at this point in time is that if we're not able to put some efficiencies into place, the subsidies that we would be looking at without importation could run anywhere from \$15 million to \$25 million per year.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question again is to the Minister of Environmental Protection or the chairman of the board. How can in fact Alberta taxpayers be assured that there will be a flow of PCBs to the Swan Hills plant? As we speak, the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States is in fact contemplating the removal of the prohibition on the importation of PCBs to the United States. Since most of the them are very close in fact to the incinerators in the U.S., how are they going to end up here in Alberta?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be very unfortunate for the American public if, in fact, the U.S. government decided to allow PCBs to be imported into their country. The fact is that there is no other plant in North America that comes even close to reaching the efficiencies that the Swan Hills plant does. As a matter of fact, it's 99.999999 total destruction of PCBs. Other plants can't even come close to it. So, in fact, what Alberta is doing is allowing for an environmental cleanup for Canada.

2:10

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member wishes to augment?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is aware that Canada is a signatory to the Basel convention, which, one, defined what hazardous waste was. Secondly, it made illegal the disposition of hazardous waste in Third World countries. It also allowed for transborder shipments. Certainly if the EPA were to open their borders, this would have a significant impact on the operation of the facility.

What I would like to do is invite the hon. member and certainly the Liberal opposition to get in touch with their counterparts in Ottawa and point out to them that we have a world-class facility which can accept this waste and urge them to not allow the other provinces in this country to ship their hazardous waste, in particular PCBs, to the U.S.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Hospital Services for Natives

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've received many calls from constituents regarding reports that treaty Indians living on reserves were not included in the population figures submitted by RHAs to Alberta Health. Those figures are the basis for planning the number of beds needed in each region to meet the provincial target of 2.4 beds per thousand population. This will create a problem in those regions with substantial

populations of treaty Indians which are providing fewer beds than are needed to serve their true populations. My question is to the Minister of Health. Why are treaty Indians living on reserves not factored in the population count for funding?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite correct. The native populations in some cases were not factored in. The reason that they were not is that some reserves choose not to be enumerated, and the statistics that were used were taken from the Canada census of 1991. I believe there were about 11 out of 45 reserves in Alberta that chose not to be enumerated, so in those cases they would not be in the population count.

However, I can give the hon. member some assurance that aboriginal needs have been met, I believe, in almost every one of our regions through a process that we enacted with the help of the minister responsible for native affairs and his suggestion and recommendation that tribal chiefs be given the opportunity to name an aboriginal person to represent their reserves on regional health authorities. In every case where we received that recommendation to have that person placed on the health authority, that was taken. So that type of input and information would be available in those cases.

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, the issue is the number of beds that you are allowed, to be able to get funding for those beds. Unfortunately, in these circumstances those people are not factored in. Therefore, specifically in regional health authority 15, where there's a significant Indian population, what are we going to do in order for them to be counted in that figure?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again I would say that wherever there was aboriginal representation, the information as to the populations and so on was brought to it.

I would remind the hon. member that the target is 2.4 beds per thousand for the province and that there may be some variance from region to region. There may be regions that need a higher target. Certainly there are regions that need a lower target. So that's taken into account. On region 15 I could, I think, quite safely say that it's less than 2 percent of the population in that region for bed utilization. So, Mr. Speaker, it would be our hope that there are adequate beds in that area.

However, one other thing we should keep in mind: if the regional health authority finds that the draw on and the need for beds in that area has an impact because of the native population, they will very quickly deal with that in their region and, I am sure, inform the minister that their bed targets may have to be adjusted.

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, I think that when we're talking about the higher utilization rates of health services by aboriginal people, this is an issue that we have to deal with. I'd like to know what changes can be done to the policy to ensure it reflects this specific issue.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would accept that, as the member has rightly pointed out, there are studies that show there is a higher utilization by the native population of acute care services and in many cases other services. However, I do not hold that the answer to that is simply to increase beds. I think the answer is to try and understand why that is and to deal with it at that level, at the community level, at prevention. I think what we should be zeroing in on is good health for all people. We can deal with those issues and, I think, learn from the involvement of

the aboriginal people on our regional health authorities why those statistics are there and try and change the statistics.

### Abortion Funding

MR. LANGEVIN: Mr. Speaker, 70 percent of Albertans want this government to quit funding induced abortion in the province. The Canada Health Act does not define what is medically necessary. The Supreme Court of Canada has never said that provinces have to fund induced abortions. My question is to the Minister of Health. When will the minister abide by the wishes of a large majority of Albertans and remove abortion from the list of insured services in Alberta?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly I view this issue as a medical issue. I would only say to the hon. member that Alberta has said consistently that we are adherents to the Canada Health Act, that the Canada Health Act does determine that we should provide reasonable access for medically required services, and that indeed that is what we insure in this province. I would remind the hon. member again that we depend on our physicians for the determination as to whether a procedure is medically required.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you. Again to the same minister: are physicians being consulted as to which services are being insured and which services are being deinsured?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, yes, we do discuss with the Alberta Medical Association and with the college to some degree on services that should be insured. Again, I think what we have to recognize is that we do have a commitment to provide medically required services in a publicly funded system, and I believe that is not contrary to what I am hearing from some of the members who wish deinsurance for some forms. I think we should continue to look at this on the medically required side of the service.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### 2:20 Calgary Regional Health Authority

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, was at the meeting with the physicians last night in Calgary. The major issue that I think has to be clearly put on the table is the problem of communication, and my question today is to the Minister of Health. With respect to the issue of communication, the decision to appoint doctors to the regional health authority has allowed for some conversations to occur that were not available before. Could the minister please assist in describing what is the new structure with respect to physicians on the Calgary regional health authority?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the Calgary regional health authority has in consultation I believe with their physician liaison council determined that three physicians will sit on the regional health authority board, also a member from the University of Calgary which may very well be the dean of Medicine from that institution. This is not different from the role that physicians have had on boards in past years. Most boards that I have visited over the past two years certainly have had the chief of staff and sometimes the vice-president of

medicine, certainly in the cities the dean of medicine, and in this case I believe that one of the members will be the designate or the chair of the regional physician council. I think that's very important so that that communication can flow out to the other physicians in the city.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: since in that communication there was a problem understanding the new bylaws that were being drafted and there was a problem understanding what program health delivery was going to be in that picture of health in Calgary, what will be the function of these physicians on the board vis-à-vis their relationship to their own association?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the issue of bylaws is one that's very important to physicians, and certainly I think it's an area that really has not had the profile in the past with physicians. The tripartite committee that I was a part of with the president of the AMA and three representatives from the regions has been able to deal with a framework for provincial bylaws, medical bylaws for the province, for physicians. Each region in turn will draw up their own medical bylaws, and they will present them to the Minister of Health for approval. That approval will be contingent on them not being in contravention of the provincial bylaws. Each region will have physicians working on their individual bylaws.

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

### Health Services for the Disabled

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last 30 years many persons with disabilities, including myself, have battled government for changes to gain our rightful place in society. Inroads have been made such as individual rights legislation protecting Albertans with disabilities. Now, the least hint of discrimination is extremely disturbing. To the Minister of Health: will the minister give this Assembly an ironclad guarantee that discrimination against disabled persons in health matters will not be tolerated by her government?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: is the minister prepared to commit that she will communicate with all regional health authorities that discrimination against persons with disabilities is not acceptable and will not be tolerated?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. member that that is not necessary, that there is not discrimination against persons with disabilities in this province with our regional health authorities. I would remind the hon. member that the regional health authorities in this province have taken on the role of developing the community supports model for support to persons with disabilities. My indications from the regional health authorities are that they were very honoured and feel a great deal of responsibility in carrying that out, and I believe that the people who are on our regional health authority boards do not need to be reminded that there should not be discriminatory practice.

What I will commit to the hon. member is that if there are discriminatory practices brought to my attention, I will investigate them immediately.

MR. WICKMAN: My final question is to the same minister, and possibly the minister responsible for Family and Social Services may want to supplement. Does the minister now understand the reluctance on the part of Albertans with disabilities regarding the proposed transfer of programming for persons with disabilities to the regional health councils?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I've had a number of discussions with the Premier's council on the disabled, as have my colleagues the minister responsible for Family and Social Services and the Minister of Education, and indeed in some cases the Minister of Justice has been involved in those discussions. It has been made very clear to us that what the council desires and what the desire of the community supports model is to ensure that there is good access, easy access to programs that are available to them. That is what has been communicated to me.

It is true and it is clear that there has been a concern that with Health it would be a medical model. I believe that we have a strong understanding that Health has moved from the medical model to the wellness model. I would remind the hon. member that we have persons from the Association for Community Living on our task force that is developing that model as well as other persons from the various communities. If that committee comes back with a recommendation as to how that program should be implemented further, we will listen very carefully to those recommendations. I recommend that the hon. member work proactively with that committee to provide a very strong, very positive program that is based on access for our persons with disabilities in this province.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of the Assembly and Albertans I'd just like to supplement the answer as to what Alberta does in relation to persons with disabilities. It is a very sensitive issue. It's one of our highest priorities in relation to restructuring in order to provide a better service for those persons that are under those programs. Alberta spends over \$400 million, and I'd like the member to know that in the next two years close to 50 percent of the \$99 million that will be increased in the high-needs area will go to persons with disabilities.

One important area I'd like to address also is that as the review goes forward in the community support model, I've always indicated that the intention of that review is to make sure that we provide a high quality of service on short- and long-term bases for persons with disabilities. I encourage the hon. members: if they have good recommendations as to how these services should be designed, they should participate.

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

### **Tire Disposal**

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday I participated in a tour of a pilot project at the Pincher Creek landfill along with members of the Crowsnest regional waste management authority and the Tire Recycling Management Board. We experienced the shredding of a 19-year accumulation of over 150,000 tires. They were shredded into two-inch square chips. I must say that seeing a pile of chipped rubber was a welcome sight compared to the 20-foot high, half mile long pile of tires that

was there two weeks ago. My question is to the minister of environment. What was the purpose of this pilot project?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, currently there are some 6 million tires in the province in landfills piled on top of the ground. These piles of tires are not sorted. In Pincher Creek there were, as the hon. member mentioned, about 150,000. So the tire recycling board thought it was an excellent opportunity to try to get a figure on what it would cost to put a mobile unit in there, what it would cost to sort the tires, and see whether in fact this may be something that we should pursue in other parts of the province.

MR. COUTTS: What are the benefits of shredding these tires on location, Mr. Speaker?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, this test will, we believe, show that in fact the cost benefit is there. We believe that when you don't have to transport the tires in bulk, there'll be great savings in transportation costs, because now they will be transporting crumbs or chips to wherever the next use of the tires will be. There's also a health hazard when tires are piled on a random basis, like they are in so many locations. When they're crumbed, that prevents that. There's also the whole issue of fire, and when they are in the crumb form or the chip form, there's much less danger of that occurring.

2:30

MR. COUTTS: My final supplemental I'd like to address to the Minister of Justice. What part did Alberta Justice play in this pilot project?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to have an opportunity to give an answer to an environmental question from a little different perspective.

The part that was played by our correction facilities was that this project utilized low-risk, minimum security prisoners, 12 prisoners on a rotating basis, who came out from the Lethbridge Correction Centre and operated under the supervision of one supervisor per crew of 12 to assist in the sorting of these tires. That's a responsible contribution to a very positive initiative, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Special Education**

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Association for Community Living recently presented the Treasurer and the Minister of Education with an award for the 1993 policy on the integration of students with special needs, and I offer my congratulations to the two ministers. But that was then, and this is now. Now the government has eliminated the category of mildly or moderately disabled from the special needs funding. The question I have for the minister is: why is the government refusing to designate specific funding for children with special needs who are mildly or moderately disabled?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, in reference to the preamble of the hon. member across the way, I think it is very, very important to keep in mind that we have not eliminated the funding for the mildly and moderately handicapped in this



province. In fact, if I recall correctly – and I think I'm pretty close – this year we have allocated some \$77 million for that particular purpose. However – and I'm sure the hon. member across the way would appreciate this as well – school boards across the province, recognizing their obligation to provide the best program possible for all students in the province, have indicated that they would like more flexibility, less accounting in terms of great detail with respect to the allocation of funds. That 77-plus million dollars is now in the instructional block to be part of appropriate programs for these very special students and other students in the province.

MR. HENRY: Given that answer, Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister can explain to me why it makes sense for the government, on one hand, to designate the amount for administration, yet it doesn't make sense for the government, on the other hand, to designate the amount for mildly and moderately disabled children. There's a contradiction here.

MR. JONSON: I don't think there's any contradiction at all, Mr. Speaker. Instruction is a great deal more important than administration. We want to make sure the money goes for instruction.

MR. HENRY: I only wish that mildly and moderately disabled children were more important, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask a specific question to the minister. What consultation did the minister carry out with the association for children with learning disabilities on this specific policy change, and what advice did they give to the minister on this specific change?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I have met with the organization referred to by the hon. member, and they do a great deal of good work in this province. The first priority of that organization is to have appropriate programs for students with mild and moderate handicaps, those types of needs, and also the very high needs, and they want to see that there are the programs in place and there is the money available to provide for those students.

With respect to the actual funding formula, I've explained it to the member across the way, but I'll explain it again. For those very high-needs students who are not distributed evenly across the province and do have very high special needs, we have designated an amount of money, around \$9,000, Mr. Speaker, for those particular students, and into the instructional block so that mildly and moderately handicapped students will have appropriate instructional programs, there is, as I indicated, a commitment of \$77 million across this province, which is very significant.

In terms of the member's question, the important thing to the association is that the service be there. Yes, they would probably prefer to have categories, a number of subcategories, but that has to be balanced against the ease of application and the targeting of the money to the appropriate student in the appropriate way.

THE SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. The Chair would like to take this opportunity to formally apologize to the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie for not recognizing that she had a final supplemental, but we'll try to make up for that later.

head:

### Members' Statements

#### 100th Anniversary of Polish Settlement

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, 1995 will be a year of provincewide celebration for members of Alberta's Polish community. One hundred years ago, in 1885, Stanislaw Banach

arrived with his family and became the first Polish settler in the province that was to become Alberta.

The first groups of Polish homesteaders, mostly from Galicia, arrived in 1897 and settled in Rabbit Hill and Skaro and Wostok. These pioneers were deeply religious people, and as land was cleared, along with log cabins and houses, Roman Catholic chapels were built. In the 1920s immigration from a now independent Poland resumed. The majority of immigrants were farmers, but others were workmen, ex-servicemen, artisans, and merchants, and they found futures in Edmonton and Calgary and in mining communities like Coleman, Exshaw, and Drumheller.

After World War II, in 1946, a new group of military officers, professionals, and skilled workers arrived. Immigration was then halted until small numbers of relatives of Canadian residents were allowed to leave the Polish people's republic after 1956. In the 1960s and the 1970s highly qualified specialists such as engineers, technicians, medical doctors, artists, and university professors arrived.

The suppression of the Solidarity movement in 1981 caused another influx of Polish immigrants. Many came as political refugees and, due to their inherent flexibility and ingenuity, have become successful in establishing their own businesses, learning new skills, and securing jobs as tradesmen.

For over a century individuals of Polish extraction have been arriving in Alberta and today number approximately 124,000. Each generation has had to surmount hardships and adversities, but their conviction, determination, and perseverance have permitted them to make a valuable contribution and become a proud part of this province's history.

As Albertans of Polish heritage celebrate their 100th anniversary of settlement in Alberta in 1995, memories live on through their children and grandchildren, some of whom proudly sit in this House today.

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

### Libraries

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September of 1994 the Alberta Vocational College in Calgary opened its newly renovated library after approximately a half million dollars in renovations. On June 30 of this year most of those library services will be eliminated and students then directed to the Calgary Public Library, already the busiest public library in Canada. How many other school libraries will be allowed to close in Alberta?

Mr. Speaker, we're obviously in an information age, and that very global economy in which we must be more competitive is one based on information. Is this the start of a new trend, to reduce specialty libraries and redirect Albertans to their public library? The public library is there for everyone but cannot cater to particular groups or particular needs.

2:40

What provision is the government making for the special needs of the 6,000 full-time AVC students, many of whom need literacy or special English language instruction and one-on-one attention? Will the Calgary Public Library receive more money to assist in dealing with those responsibilities? Will the Calgary Public Library change its hours so it's open early in the morning when students require access to it? How can the Minister of Community Development reconcile what's happened at AVC with his declaration just six short days ago:

I wish to emphasize to members of this House that there are no libraries that are being threatened with closure as a result of changes to provincial funding.

I understand that AVC has had to choose between instructors or their library, and I regret that committed administrators have been put in that tough position.

I urge all members, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we extend access to information and, more importantly, vigorously resist attempts to limit such access. Thank you.

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

### Minor Hockey

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the weekend of March 17 the town of Pincher Creek and the Pincher Creek minor hockey association hosted under sanction of the Alberta Amateur Hockey Association the 1995 Atom B provincial tournament. Teams participating were the High Prairie Junior Regals, the Gibbons Li'l Broncos, the Barrhead Hawks, the Sylvan Lake Lakers, the Lethbridge Selects, the Standard Spurs, the Wainwright Huskies, and the hosts, the Pincher Creek Elks. By Sunday the Standard Spurs rose victorious, with the Sylvan Lake Lakers placing second. One week later, Mr. Speaker, I attended the Fort Macleod Minor Hockey Association's annual appreciation night where boys and girls in the local minor hockey program received their awards, proficiencies and MVPs. These two scenes are just two examples of what's happened all over this province this month as we come to the end of another hockey season and wait with eager anticipation for the slap of baseballs hurled into catchers' mitts and the crack of bat on ball.

Let's not forget where our young people get their encouragement. We must look to parents for their initial desire to carry out their responsibility to nurture their sons and their daughters when they show an interest in a particular sport and then maintain a level of support: financially and of time, effort and encouragement. Then there are the coaches, the assistants, who by their own nature of enjoying young people guide and develop potential athletes regardless of their ability. Then there are those volunteer drivers, tournament organizers, rink and ice maintainers, volunteer fund-raisers, scorekeepers, timers, concession helpers, ticket takers, and referees, all of whom carry out their duties with enthusiasm and dedication to make the season a success. Let's not forget the business community with their sponsorships of uniforms and trophies, et cetera. All of this is then co-ordinated by the local president of every organization and association and their boards of directors as they ponder meeting after meeting the immediate and long-term plans and goals of every minor hockey association in the province.

You are Alberta's NHL, and your local play-offs and your provincial finals are our young people's Stanley Cup. Keep up the good work.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Before calling Orders of the Day, might there be unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

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

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly here a young constituent of mine by the name of Bart Guyon. He's a

councillor in the municipal district of Brazeau. He's also a member of the regional health authority. He's a very innovative young buffalo rancher as well. He's taken and recycled a lot of used tires to make a total buffalo handling facility. I'd just like to have Bart stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Projected Government Business**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Government House Leader if he'd fill us in on the agenda for next week.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, next week, assuming we're in session, on Monday afternoon we'll be doing second readings as per the Order Paper, and depending on what we do today, we'll be more definite with that with the Opposition House Leader on Monday. In the evening we'll be in Committee of Supply considering the reports from the designated supply subcommittees. On Tuesday afternoon again second readings in the order in which they are on the Order Paper and subject to some daily communication again with the Opposition House Leader. In the evening we'll be looking at the lottery fund estimates. Then Wednesday evening, should there be more interest, we'll move to a second day of lottery fund estimates, if that's the will of the Assembly, and also at some point that evening, revert to Introduction of Bills for the appropriation Bills. Then Thursday afternoon we'll be in Committee of the Whole as per the Order Paper, beginning with Bill 3 and moving along from there. We'll also do the second reading of the appropriation Bills.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee to order and invite all hon. members to take their seats.

MR. DINNING: How many seats do you want us to take?

THE CHAIRMAN: As many as you need.

head: **Main Estimates 1995-96**

### Treasury

THE CHAIRMAN: To begin this afternoon's deliberations on the departmental estimates of Treasury, I'd call upon the hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been asked to give a lengthy treatise so as to be able to fill the benches one more time. There were a number of excellent questions that were asked, so many in fact, so excellent that I expect it'll take us several more hours to respond to all those questions.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did ask questions last time about certain measures and benchmarks in our business plan. I should remind the hon. member that in early December we had the opportunity to release the document Measuring Up, which was a rather comprehensive disclosure presentation of proposed performance measures in all areas of government, certainly in all departments and a number of agencies of government, that we've

now put out and have invited comment back on from Albertans. In fact, you'd be interested to know that the document appeared on Internet, and members, Albertans, indeed people around the world have been invited to make comment on the Measuring Up document. Those replies, those responses are being co-ordinated right now. I look forward to using those responses as we prepare the Measuring Up document, the report card on government to be released in June of '95.

**2:50**

As for loans and guarantees on investments, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud knows that it's our objective to de-emphasize the use of loans and guarantees. We're doing our best to get out of that business associated with business. Certainly it was recommended by the Financial Review Commission in March of '93, and indeed it was a direction that Albertans gave to the provincial government prior to the provincial election. We got the message, and we've done our level best to get out of that business. The numbers speak for themselves. At March 31, '93 – the contingent liabilities under guarantee have significantly declined since that day, an amount of \$3.649 billion. Today it's in the order of \$2.788 billion. That was in the December 31, '94, statement in Budget '95 four or five weeks ago.

With respect to loans and guarantees and policy investments, effort is being made to minimize our exposure to loss and where possible to eliminate that exposure through encouraging early repayment of loans and selling off policy investments. I can give you some examples. In April of '93 we sold our shares of Alberta Energy Company. We've sold a 5 percent interest in Syncrude. We've sold our preferred shares in Smoky River Coal, sold the assets of Alberta Intermodal Services. We've sold the assets of Gainers Inc., a subject of some interest in the Assembly, I know, for all members, especially those who might have preferred to not see the deal go through. Then there was the sale of equity interest in Northern Lite Canola Inc., the sale of venture interest in the Lloydminster upgrader, the amalgamation and retraction of shares of North West Trust Company, and the sale of assets of the Alberta Resources Railway Corporation. Indeed, we're in the midst of working with Price Waterhouse to sell the province's assets associated with the magnesium plant south of Calgary, in your own constituency, Mr. Chairman. I know that you would find that of great interest.

Mr. Chairman, the other thing that I should report on to members since the last time we met is a subject of good news indeed. It's a subject that I think all Albertans, I know all members of the Assembly would want me to account for. I had the opportunity to visit Toronto and New York last week and met with a number of people associated with our borrowing syndicate, with investors who are interested in Alberta paper when we are in the market. I met with a number of merchant banks and Canadian banks and received an awful lot of good advice. It came home, I think, the benefits of that visit and, more importantly, of the incredible action that Albertans are taking to get our financial house in order. It came home when we went to the market this week to borrow \$500 million Canadian dollars. This is a five-year note that was issued on Monday. Its maturity date is March 1, 2000. It's pretty unusual, because this offering was priced at 14 basis points off what would be the best Canada rate on that particular day, and 14 off of Canada is significantly better than many of the provinces in this country would be able to achieve.

I refer to a statement in the *Financial Post* of Tuesday, March 28, the day after the offering, which I think summarizes pretty

well how the market responded to our offering. I want to quote from it.

Alberta collected the benefits of balancing its budget yesterday when it paid just 14 basis points over a Canada bond of comparable term to raise \$500 million through sale of new . . . notes. The Alberta issue of 8% bonds, maturing December 1, 2000, was priced to yield 8.35% against 8.21% for the comparable Canada bond.

The Ontario premium in the market for five-year bonds now is about 30 basis points, and Quebec bonds for that term trade at about 60 basis points above the benchmark Canada.

Well, Mr. Chairman, that is the immediate dividend that Albertans receive by taking the action that this government has taken to get its financial house in order, to do it by reducing our spending and not by trying to achieve it on the revenue side, not by raising taxes, as some politicians in other quarters of this House might suggest and have suggested on a leadership campaign trail.

**MR. CHADI:** Who?

**MR. DINNING:** The Member for Edmonton-Roper asks who. Well, as I recall, not the Member for Edmonton-Roper. You know, he's good enough to be a Tory, Mr. Chairman. He was talking earlier about getting out the red meat or putting away the red meat. He can't. He's wearing it around his neck today, so that's why he can't put it away. It was not Edmonton-Roper. It wasn't the former, former leader of the Liberal Party. In fact, it was the Member for Fort McMurray, and it was the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. They were on the campaign trail saying in response to the what-if questions: "What if? Well, then we would raise taxes." You know, when you're so low that you have to reach up to hit bottom, it's fascinating to see. I must say my admiration for the Member for Edmonton-Roper went up just ever so slightly when I saw him hold his ground, Mr. Chairman, hold his ground and say: no taxes; we don't have a revenue problem; we've got a spending problem. [interjections] You know, it's like an echo from the past. They were music to my ears. There they were.

The Member for Edmonton-Roper out on that trail, unsuccessful, I must acknowledge – I'm sure he looks a couple of yards in front of him and looks down on that small, statuesque leader of his and says: I am no longer a wanna-be; I'm glad I am where I am and I can exit with grace.

Back to the estimates of the department of the Treasury, Mr. Chairman. Those are the benefits, the dividends that Albertans have worked so hard to begin to achieve. We think there are more of those kinds of benefits down the road as our program for new borrowing comes to a halt and as we've balanced the budget, not allowing, as some would want us, to run a deficit every other year, as some members across the way would advocate. That means we would have to go do new borrowings every other year. We're going to try to get out of that business. Our objective is to be out of that business. It's illegal to be in that business, and that's why we've brought forward Bill 6 as part of the association with Budget '95, of which the Treasury estimates are a part. So, Mr. Chairman, I did want to account to members of the Assembly for that kind of success that Albertans have worked so hard to benefit from.

I can see from the rapt attention of all of my colleagues that surround me that they're ready to dart out of their chairs to speak to the modest request put forward by the department of the Treasury as we fulfill our obligations, meet our mission statement as spelled out in the estimates of the department of the Treasury.

I see two of my colleagues in the gallery, Mr. Chairman, who have worked so hard with me over the last number of weeks and indeed years. Mr. Mike Faulkner is the director of administration – I valued his advice and input as we pulled together these estimates – and of course Greg Moffatt, who works with me in my office and is a valuable member of my staff, along with an awful lot of fine people in the office. I'm glad they're here to watch, and I hope they're heartened by the supportive debate that they're going to witness from both sides of the House as these estimates are debated here this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would call on Edmonton-Roper to ask the questions.

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I once again appreciate the opportunity to be able to respond to the Provincial Treasurer. I really thoroughly enjoy doing that. I enjoy listening to him, on occasion though. Today is one of those colourful moments when he's actually at probably his peak, and he caught me probably at my peak today. I'm going to try to be certainly as positive as I can be, and I want to ask the questions that all Albertans would want me to ask and go through these Treasury estimates in a way that would be very productive to this Assembly and to my constituents and everybody else's constituents.

3:00

I couldn't help but notice how the Provincial Treasurer did turn around, though, to his colleagues in his final couple of sentences and said: I know that there are colleagues on my side of the House that will get up – and he emphasized will get up – and speak. So I think the signal is out there, my dear friends across. Somebody had better get up and back the Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Chairman, I want to talk a little about balancing the budget without any tax increases and the fact that Alberta has come an awful long way. There's no question, no doubt, that we have made some strides, positive strides, and that we're working towards that balanced budget. The Deficit Elimination Act that was put in place is a guiding light. It was one that members on this side of the House supported and members on the other side of the House supported. In fact, all Albertans, I think, supported the Deficit Elimination Act.

Let us not forget there are ways of balancing budgets. There are spending problems. There are revenue problems. There are all kinds of problems that one must examine. In the case of Alberta, we did in fact have a spending problem and continue to have a spending problem. We're looking at ways and I know the Treasurer is looking at every single way that he can achieve any efficiencies in any department and will continue to work with the different ministries to achieve those efficiencies, but let us not forget that there are provinces in Canada that have balanced budgets already. They beat us, Mr. Chairman; they beat us to the punch. We're the ones talking about being the leaders in this area of deficit busting, of debt busting, of debt elimination, and so on, but there are provinces that have done it. They beat us to it. Newfoundland, the poorest province in Canada – and you know this – balanced their budget without any tax increases. Now, that is major feat, and I praise Clyde Wells, the Premier of Newfoundland, for doing such a thing. He's done it without any tax increases.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is rising on a point of order.

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

DR. L. TAYLOR: I was wondering if the hon. member would take a question.

THE CHAIRMAN: *Beauchesne* 482.

DR. L. TAYLOR: I lived in Newfoundland for five years, and I have a familiarity with the province, and I'm wondering if he'd take a question on Newfoundland, seeing as he seems to be so familiar with it?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. We don't need to have anything other than just the request for a question. Thank you.

Edmonton-Roper, do you say yes or no? If the answer is yes . . .

MR. CHADI: I'd be happy to respond, yes.

**Debate Continued**

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat on the question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Chairman, after living in that province for five years – it's a wonderful, beautiful, and scenic province. I'm just wondering if the member opposite has any familiarity at all with the Newfoundland economy, the basis of the Newfoundland economy, the unemployment in Newfoundland, the tax base in Newfoundland, what the sales tax is in Newfoundland. If he doesn't, I would certainly be happy to tell him what the sales tax level is in Newfoundland right today.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question has been asked.

MR. CHADI: Yeah, and I did hear it, although I'm not so certain what all of that has to do with balancing a budget. Quite simply, Mr. Chairman, when you table a document that has a zero on the bottom, it means balanced budget. [interjections] That's what it means: balanced budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is rising on a point of order.

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

DR. L. TAYLOR: No. A question. Will the . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. You've asked one. You're now wanting to ask a second one?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Roper, will you take another question?

MR. CHADI: I don't think the hon. member has a question that is worthy of a response at the moment, so . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: If the answer is no, you don't have to give us a reason; just no.

MR. CHADI: The answer is no.

DR. L. TAYLOR: The sales tax is 12 percent in Newfoundland.

AN HON. MEMBER: Nineteen with the GST.

MR. CHADI: Every report that came out of Newfoundland, Mr. Chairman, was that there were no tax increases at all. [interjections] No tax increases means exactly that: no tax increases.

#### Debate Continued

MR. CHADI: Now, all I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, is that certain reports about our Premier, when he was in Newfoundland not long ago – I thought, to be honest with you, at one point that it was quite laudable that the Premier was going around and saying, you know: yeah, you guys are hurting out there; maybe I should consider giving a bit of an interest break on that loan. Then to come back here and find out that they balanced their budget before we did is certainly something to think about. I think all Albertans should stand up and see what they've done perhaps, the poorest province in Canada.

Continuing on with the Treasury estimates, Mr. Chairman, I want to take the Treasurer's attention to the revolving fund, in particular the revenue under Crown debt collections. Now, I understand that the revolving fund perhaps on behalf of provincial agencies and different ministries provides certain services.

MR. DINNING: What page, Sine?

MR. CHADI: That would be page 325, for the Treasurer's information, in the government estimates.

When it provides a service, one would think that it would of course be on a cost-recovery basis, and it appears to be, because we've got revenues and we've got expenditures. So one of course balances the other. My question is, though, with respect to the debt collections. I know from past experience, because of different involvements that I've had with real estate whereby we had foreclosures and we needed to deal with the natural gas contracts that were on those properties, we had to deal with Crown debt collections. My company still continues to deal with Crown debt collections to pay off and clean off the titles if in fact there still is a gasoline on those titles.

It appears to me that \$629,000 was collected and \$690,000 expended. Now, the revenue is there. I'm wondering: is that the revenue that we've charged so that we can just offset our expenses? If that is the case – I suspect that is the case, because there would be an awful lot more than that in terms of revenue that Crown debt would collect in a year. How much in fact are Crown debt collections in a year? It's costing \$629,000. How much are we actually collecting? Give me that dollar figure, if you can, Mr. Minister.

My second question is related to the land purchase fund. Now, I recall, I think last year or the year before, that we talked about moving the land purchase fund, doing away with it. In fact, the land purchases Act was repealed. I suspect public works is now handling this function. But in 1993-94 we did have in the range of almost a million dollars in rentals, and there was gain on land and buildings held for resale of about \$5 million, Mr. Chairman. I know that we kept it in Treasury up until that point. Now, if I were to look in the budget estimates as to where real estate that was owned by the province was later sold, where would the revenues then show up in the budget documents under revenue.

I'm referring to the Budget '95 document, in particular page 42 of the revenue page. It seems to me that we have an awful lot of sales that would happen throughout the year. If public works is handling that function, does public works then not transfer that over to the general revenue fund? If they do, I'd like to know where I could locate how much of that in fact is recorded and where.

#### 3:10

My other concerns lie in the collection – and I spoke about this last time Treasury estimates came up, and I did receive an answer from the Treasurer. This is with respect to the collection of corporate income taxes. Sometime ago in Treasury estimates – I think we were in a subcommittee one year – we talked about the ongoing negotiations at that time with the federal government with respect to the collection of Alberta's corporate income taxes. I recall asking the Treasurer at that time: how much would the federal government charge us for that collection? The answer I got was nil, that in fact it wouldn't cost us anything. That seemed very fair to me. Why would we want to collect our own income taxes at a cost when the federal government would in fact be doing it for no money? So I encouraged the Provincial Treasurer at the time to continue doing what he was doing in terms of negotiation with a view to having the federal government handle that. But in the estimates, when we met earlier this month, the Treasurer indicated that the negotiations have actually hit a snag and in fact are now called off, that it's not happening any longer, that in fact Alberta will maintain the status quo. We will continue to collect our own taxes.

I'm looking at the business plans for Treasury, and I note that when we talk about core Treasury outcomes, it talks about: "A competitive provincial tax system that is fair, simple and efficient." Of course, who can argue with that? I for one will ensure that we follow through with a statement like that. I see in a number of different areas that same statement in the business plans. But with respect to goals, and particularly outcome 2, we see there a bullet which says, "Collect revenue due at reduced cost." If the negotiations have hit a snag like he says they have and if in fact we have decided not to continue in any way these negotiations, due to the fact that we could reduce our costs here in the province of collecting these revenues, we should perhaps consider looking at getting these negotiations back on track if at all possible.

I recall at the subcommittee stage a year ago or so whereby I asked the Provincial Treasurer if he wouldn't consider an all-party committee, maybe a small committee of two or three members of this Assembly, that would deal with this specific issue. I'd like to make that plea again today to the Provincial Treasurer, that in fact he ought to consider doing that once again. I know there'd be members on this side of the House that would be more than happy to try to deal with the federal government on this issue and bring it to a successful resolution.

I noticed in the estimates, with respect to revenue operations, in particular 2.0.4, that we will this year spend \$3.354 million, almost 3 and a half million dollars, Mr. Chairman, somewhat less than last year and slightly less than the year before that. I note again in this vote that there is a capital investment of almost \$800,000, and it's called internal support. My question is: is this expenditure to beef up the revenue collection facilities that we have already today? If we're going to spend I think another \$800,000 to beef up what we've got, then perhaps it makes good sense to consider getting this small group with a view to negotiating with the federal government.

I was also just a bit curious about some of the wording in the business plans. I thought that perhaps I should mention this now. Yesterday when I was speaking to Bill 1, we were talking about never implementing a sales tax in this province without first of all holding a referendum on the issue. That is what is being proposed by the government today. It's something that I would support. There's no question about that. But I did say that the sales taxes in any province are consumption taxes, and I notice a bullet under outcome 2. Once again the statement there on outcome 2 of strategies and outputs says, "A competitive provincial tax system that is fair, simple and efficient." The bullet under there would be: "systems to assess, collect and audit corporate and consumption taxes and other revenues." Now, these consumption taxes that we've already got in this province are nothing more than sales taxes, that I just wanted to highlight, Mr. Chairman.

Just going back for a second to where I was with respect to the collection by the federal government. Under strategies, as well, in the 1995-96 business plan - I do want to bring this to the attention of the Provincial Treasurer - it clearly states that we should "investigate intergovernmental joint ventures to collect common taxes."

AN HON. MEMBER: What page are you on?

MR. CHADI: Page 7 of Treasury in the business plan, right at the very bottom.

It is the Treasurer's own words in the document itself. So just a little more fuel, Mr. Chairman, that perhaps what we should consider is putting together this group, a small group, an all-party group, to go out and negotiate and try to reduce the level of expenditures in this province by having the federal government collect that tax.

Mr. Chairman, with those comments I am going to allow others to continue the debate. I hope to be able to speak a little bit later on. I want to hear what the Provincial Treasurer would have to say. Thank you.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I thought I'd jump to my feet, knowing how anxious and interested the hon. member across the way would be in hearing my answers. I do appreciate the offer of the hon. member to help us negotiate. I've found the offer acceptable since day one. I'm not so sure that an all-party or even a committee - I remind the hon. member that God so loved the world that he failed to send a committee.

What I say to him is this. I appreciate the offer. I would encourage him now, now that the door has been temporarily shut, to go and use his good offices with his Liberal colleagues in Ottawa, and I don't mean this in a partisan way. But clearly we were not able, even with the best efforts of a number of people, some of whom were Liberals, to convince Ottawa that their, quote, unquote, my way or the highway approach to tax policy was not acceptable to Alberta, and I don't think it would be acceptable to the hon. member. The reason why we simply failed to agree - we agreed to disagree - was that the impact on small business, who enjoy the opportunity to pay their installments to the Treasurer once a year rather than monthly, meant that the money stayed in the small business's hands for 11 more months than in the Treasurer's hands. We felt that was an important benefit to the cash flow of those small businesses. Implicitly we're saying that the business knows how to spend that money in those 11 months, or save that money, smarter than the govern-

ment does, and I think that's something the member across the way would agree with me on.

3:20

The matter of discretionary pools that had built up because of different tracts of capital cost allowance and depreciation was going to force the immediate or quicker payment of that \$70 million tax liability by those companies, and we thought that was imposing too great a burden on those companies.

Then, thirdly, was Ottawa when we said, "Look; we're going to work with you to have a good tax policy that applies nationally and that applies to Alberta, but when we ask you to administer something that we think is right for Alberta and you don't agree and don't want to do, we'll agree to disagree. But let's send it off to a third party." For goodness' sake, you could send it off to Judge Decore or you could send it off to Bill Code or Jim Palmer or send it off to any of those other good Grits as impartial, fair, reasonable, notwithstanding that they're Liberals, Albertans. But they said, "No." We said, after looking at both sides, that we'd abide by that third party arbitration, mediation, call it what you will. The answer was: "No. We will not allow a third party to dictate tax policy in Canada or in Alberta." That, Mr. Chairman, just doesn't seem reasonable. We were willing to put our tax fate on that issue in the hands of a potentially partisan but reasonable independent party. But no, and that's where we came apart. It does disappoint me.

I would point out to the hon. member that the estimates for the revenue collection and rebates area is down by \$1.9 million year over year, considerable savings. We said: "Okay. We promised we were going to find these savings over the three-year plan." Now that we've had to back out and we're still faced with these expenses, Treasury Board said: "You made the commitment, Dinning. Live up to it. How are you going to cut back on your expenses?" They were a tough bunch, Mr. Chairman. That Treasury Board: they are the toughest bunch. You're the chairman, but you're there being victimized on the other side of the table. You don't know the bloodshed. You don't know all the bloodshed that the Treasurer is faced with as a minister appearing before that Treasury Board.

What we did in late December, as the member knows, was announce that a number of changes had been made, such that some 50,000 Alberta corporations will not have to file corporate income tax returns with Alberta for those years when they have no taxable income. They will only need to file returns with the federal government, and we will keep track of federal tapes as they come to Alberta to monitor and audit that. Some nearly 3,000 corporations won't have to pay monthly installments if their Alberta tax is less than \$2,000. That's on top of the existing tax installment exemption for small businesses. Alberta companies that claim the maximum ARTC will no longer have to apply each month for installments, and one application at the beginning of the year will be enough. That affects about a hundred companies. And we'll automatically accept in most cases federal decisions on objections to assessments arising from federal action. That's going to result in a decrease in the number of objections filed with the province. That's one announcement that we made prior to Christmas, meant to streamline and make it easy, to reduce the burden on corporate taxpayers and at the same time reduce our costs.

There's a member across the way who has plenty of experience in the business area, plenty of experience in tax, perhaps even plenty of experience in minimizing tax payable, and I would certainly welcome any suggestions that he has in that regard. We've made a first stab by reducing our costs by almost \$2

million, and the reason why you see a \$700 million increase in internal support capital is that in anticipation of moving to the federal tax collection we had put off enhancements to our computer systems. It looks like we're going to stay in the business, and having chosen to stay in the business, we have to make that capital investment, which we had put off in anticipation of the transfer.

A couple of other items. The member talked about consumption taxes. With the exception of a nice period from '79 to probably 1987 we have always been in the fuel tax business. We've always been in the tobacco tax business. We more recently than most got into the hotel tax business. So clearly there have been selective consumption taxes that this province has had in place I won't say since 1905. Mr. Chairman, with your knowledge of history and being here in 1905, you could probably tell us whether that tax was in place at that time. So clearly we've been in that business, and we're going to stay in that business. Our objective is to reduce it. Hopefully some day it might get to zero, but our objective is to not – underscore "not;" repeat "not" several times – get into the business of a broad-based consumption tax, a broad-based provincial sales tax. That's why we put forward Bill 1.

I'm interested in the debate – it's somewhat lengthy – from the other side of the House regarding Bill 1. I look forward to the proof from the pudding. I'm just anxious to get to the vote to simply see how many will rise from their little chairs, notwithstanding the prolonged debate. Will those ladies and gentlemen, members, from the other side of the House rise in support of Bill 1 and show their true colours? I think that will be most entertaining not only for Members of the Legislative Assembly on the government side, but all Albertans will be watching with great interest when that standing vote, that inevitable standing vote, occurs to see just where they stand, Mr. Chairman.

On the matter of investigating intergovernmental joint ventures to collect common taxes, yesterday in response to the absolutely brilliant and scintillating question from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat – would we institute our own PIT, personal income tax, collection system? – the member across the way knows that I said no. Instead, our objective is to see a national tax collection agency that's in keeping with investigating intergovernmental joint ventures to collect common taxes. Why should we have a tax collection agency in absolutely every single province of the Dominion, both of the territories, and in Ottawa too, a minimum of 13 tax collection agencies, when in fact we could have a national one, not federal but national, that would at the direction of an Assembly like this say: "We've made a decision. Go and implement it."? It would reduce the administrative burden, it would reduce the overlap and the duplication that exists in a minimum of 13 collection agencies. Let's simply get out of that business.

Mr. Chairman, one other thing – because I know members will want to rise and speak at even greater length about these estimates – is the matter of Crown debt collections. We have historically as a department taken on the responsibility of going out and collecting other people's debts, other departments' debts. We stopped that this year partly because there wasn't a whole lot of incentive for those departments themselves who incurred those debts to go out and collect them because if they ever did, all the money came back to guess who? That greedy, also a bunch of other adjectives that my colleagues sometimes use, character, the Provincial Treasurer. There was no incentive. So when you got an outstanding account receivable and it's delayed or it's behind – it's an account payable that's not being paid – what we've done

is put the resources into the departments so that they can go and collect their accounts, and they get to keep whatever money they get back. So there's some effort, having incurred the account receivable – having incurred that, now there is an incentive and some further resources that leave the Treasury Department and go to the individual departments. There's an incentive now for them to go out and tackle those stale accounts because those departments get to keep that money. The Treasury Department has its resources to collect its accounts receivable. All of the other government departments that are in that business, for the most part, now have more resources than they've ever had to go and collect those accounts.

I'll leave it there, and if the member has any further questions that don't necessarily need to be on the record, we could have a chat about it.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My remarks will be primarily to program 3, which is financial management, planning and central services. The objective of this program is to support programs and services of the government, to develop financial standards and practices of the government, and to manage the overall provincial business plan of the government.

The Provincial Treasurer in his opening comments said that this was a good news story, this budget and the direction that he's taking the overall government in the next year. I maintain that there's another side of the coin which needs to be addressed and which makes a very bad news story for some of the people in this province. This government has a vision of the ideal family which fuses both neoliberal and neoconservative goals, and this needs to be addressed here in this House. With dad at work and mom home caring for the kids, providing support for elderly or ailing relatives, and offering her services to the school and community free of charge, many government services can be slashed while women are increasingly compelled to play out the role to which this government agenda assigns them.

### 3:30

Dominant features of this policy landscape in Alberta reinforce these patterns. For example, the loss or reduction of many women's jobs forces them to live out the back-to-the-kitchen ideology that this government's promoting. The increasingly desperate financial situation of Alberta's poorer women can be seen in many cases as punishment in the context of: they're not conforming to the patriarchal family model upon which neoconservatism insists. [interjection]

Now, the Provincial Treasurer is worried that I'm not tying in with his budget, but in fact I do, because in program 3 it states here very clearly that he is responsible for managing the overall provincial business plan. So that means he sets the mandate for this government's direction, and it's clearly addressing the issue of that, which I'm sure he's going to be very happy to get up and respond to when I'm finished my comments.

I move for a moment to speak to the Alberta disadvantage. We have here budget slashing which ignores women's differential position in the labour market and their disproportionate dependence on government programs and services. Therefore, Mr. Provincial Treasurer, deficit reduction is not gender neutral, and we would like you to address that and how you justify this disadvantage in program 3 under delivery. I can't find anywhere where it says that you're responsible for delivery of the overall

provincial standards. It simply isn't listed there why you would have a non gender neutral budget.

There's a significant high body count in this province, and we need to address this. This government started Alberta women losing ground in the labour market with the inception of the new Premier that we have here back in December of 1992 straightforward until 1994, and I see no direction in this budget for any changes in the 1995-96 year, where we see the average monthly unemployment rate for women has moved down only one percentage point while for men it dropped nearly five percentage points. So we see again an inequality here. During the same period the average monthly employment to population ratio rose only 2 percent for women compared to 5 percent for men. So how is it that the provincial government thinks it's unimportant and there isn't any gender disparity here? Why don't we see gender disparity addressed anywhere within his mandate?

We see a trend of women becoming more concentrated in part-time employment. During these past two years and it looks like in the year coming up under review the proportion of women employed full-time declined from 40 percent of all those employed full-time in the province to 38 percent. Part-time employment for men shows almost no change. The number of women working part-time steadily has risen from 150,000 in December of 1992 to 165,000 in November of 1994. Part-time women cannot support a family on that kind of income. So can the minister tell us how his department under the objective of program 3, which is to support programs and services of the government, can account for these changes? Or does he care? I'm sure he'll be happy to address that.

We have a job loss among members of the Alberta union of public employees by gender. For 1993, 15,928 males lost their jobs. However, 28,507 females lost their jobs. In 1994: 14,221 males; my goodness, 25,668 women. I wonder if the minister could talk to us about what it looks like in the up-and-coming year. Are we going to see twice as many females once again lose their jobs here, and is that an unwritten policy of this government? These figures show that there's a significant degree of women's job loss and job degradation in the public sector and public agencies which are dependent on government for a large portion of their revenues, such as school boards, universities, and hospitals, which are all operating under the mandate of the minister in his overall provincial business plan. These figures that I talked about show employment changes among members of the Alberta union of public employees, which includes those employed directly by the provincial government or indirectly by public institutes. It covers a 12-month period of time, and during this time period many more female members lost their jobs than male members. So could the Provincial Treasurer please address that for us?

The spending cuts that you've been so happily promoting and so happily stating give us a good news story in this province have devastated public employment sectors, which are dominated by female workers. This is clearly illustrated when we see the health care changes, where the nursing profession is 98.6 percent female and where we've seen dramatic cuts to this area, forcing layoffs of thousands of people. The United Nurses of Alberta estimates that about 10 percent of nurses have lost their jobs as a result of the first round – just the first round – of cuts. So that's very interesting for the minister to address.

The minister drives these decisions through his department, through program 3, and I expect him to stand up and explain how he justifies managing the overall provincial business plan, which truly is very, very discriminatory and results in a job situation

which has many implications for women. First, because of layoffs in the public sector women have been forced to seek employment in the private sector, which often ends up meaning lower wages and prestige and much poorer job security and benefit packages. For example, the for-profit We Care American health firm operating in Alberta hires registered nurses at two-thirds or less of their former wages, which is significant.

Then when we see government withdraw or reduce services, women in their traditional, private, unseen, and unpaid roles have little choice but to pick up the slack as best they can. So the privatization of nurturing in Alberta is transferring women's work, such as nursing, child care, and kindergarten teaching, from the visible and paid sector to the invisible, unregulated, and under- or unpaid reaches of the private sector. For instance, this government has time and time again told Alberta families that they should volunteer in the schools to replace the labour of teachers, and some Alberta women have responded to the government's statement by pointing out that they already spend hundreds of hours helping out in the schools and volunteering for school activities. That the government seeks here to increase the appropriation of women's unpaid time and labour demonstrates its neoconservative assumptions that women have flexible schedules and no full-time employment outside of the home and that this type of role is a natural extension of women's primary function as caregiver. So could the minister address this in his comments, please?

We've seen, because of the mandate of the hospital closures and reduction in beds, that there's been admission denial for conditions that formerly would have led to hospitalization or forced the delay of procedures, and many people are being sent home early. What it means is that those who are traditionally provided for in the hospitals now have to go back to the home and be cared for by women. That was work that was previously done by paid professionals. In fact, we now see even Grant MacEwan offering a course to women to increase their ability to take care of people when they have been sent home early from hospitals. I think that's a significant statement in terms of where the direction of this province is going when they're following the mandate of the Provincial Treasurer here.

### 3:40

We do see that there is a disregard in the direction of cuts from this minister and actually from all of the ministers there on the front bench for women's needs and concerns. So there's a significant challenge here facing Albertans at this time. It's not merely that the comments we hear and see around here are disrespectful or the direction they're going in; rather, what it is is a reflection of what's revealed about the deeply rooted social philosophy of this government that animates or at least tolerates much of the pain that Alberta women are now suffering at the government's hands. This has been significantly documented here in question period, here in debate, by many councils which report to this government, by many social service agencies outside of this government, and by many independent reviews.

The policies of this government both assume and foster the traditional female role as a full-time focus on the family. With this model in mind, the government can discount the burden it places on working women and single mothers when it reduces the social programming and cuts public-sector employment in ways that disproportionately harm women. This is directly related to program 3, where this Treasurer supports the programs and services for the entire government and sets the direction and mode for where we go here.



What we see is gender division of labour, that the government finds natural and desirable, obtained for only a fraction of Alberta's women because the social philosophy of the government legitimizes the suffering of so many of Alberta's women. This neoconservative, patriarchal myth that we see occurring here and the policies that flow from it stand urgently in need of a reality check. No less is required than the articulation and acceptance of a new understanding of gender relations here in this province, the family and public policy throughout Alberta.

At a minimum this new understanding and policy regime should contain at least the following elements. I'm going to list a few of them, and then I'm going to ask the minister where he has addressed these needed, necessary policies in his program delivery. I'm sure that he has made an attempt to. We need to see recognition of the wide diversity of families in Alberta and of the inappropriateness of basing policy on the assumption of the male breadwinner. We need to see a higher minimum wage since most women are minimum wage earners. We need to see pay equity and employment equity regulations; training and wage subsidies for single mothers, support and subsidies that allow them to live with some dignity within their life; levels of social assistance benefits that reflect the true cost of a viable standard of living, particularly for single families; the extension of the widows' pension program to seniors who are divorced; reduce the 64 new user fees or fee increases that we've seen in these last budgets, particularly fees for necessities such as health care services – these fees are a highly regressive form of taxation that especially hurt women because they have the least ability to pay – a fairer income tax regime that reduces the tax burden on those Albertans, disproportionately women, least able to pay; more regulation, not less, of daycare; banning of for-profit child care; increased education requirements and wages for day care teachers; reinstating kindergarten funding and making money available for optional junior kindergarten improvements; and also, very significantly, a major overhaul of the maintenance enforcement program.

I would like to see what the Provincial Treasurer is willing to adopt with regard to these policies. They're very important and they're very fundamental. It's too bad the Provincial Treasurer is not listening at this point because these issues really are very important to many, many Albertans. That he doesn't care is a matter of record in terms of where this budget is taking us in the next year.

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

We see as a matter of policy in this government that you're systematically expanding the private sphere of social life. We see the family and the increase in the unregulated market, which is really at the expense of the public sphere. Gone, we see, are the days where the role of government was the authoritative voice and agent of a progressive society, and this is really a withering of the state, which victimizes Alberta's women and children twice over. First, public policy relegates many of them to live a disadvantaged life. Second, the neoliberal discourse denies the harsh realities of their life. We've heard that over and over again here in question period, when cabinet ministers will say: it's untrue that seniors are eating out of garbage bins; it's untrue that there are increases for . . .

#### **Chairman's Ruling Relevance**

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, excuse me. As you know, I always like to know what relevance the speech has with

respect to the voting that we're doing here, the amounts to be voted. So could you make it more relevant, please.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Well, as I said before, Mr. Chairman, these comments directly tie in with program 3, financial management, planning and central services, where we see that the objective in the program delivery mechanism of this Provincial Treasurer is, and I directly quote: "manages the overall provincial business plan." So I think everything that I've discussed here relates to managing the overall business plan and certainly relates to the objective of supporting programs and services of the government. Treasury has a direct link to every single thing, every single dollar that's spent within this province. I would state that what I have said definitely falls within the mandate of this program.

#### **Debate Continued**

MS CARLSON: To carry on with my comments, many of those comments that we just heard were based on the draft publication, Road Kill: Women in Alberta's Drive Toward Deficit Elimination by Gurston Dacks, Joyce Green, and Linda Trimble from the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta.

I'd like to move on to some recommendations from the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues where they say that they believe that

until women have achieved economic equality [in this province], they will not be able to achieve full and equal participation in Alberta society. In addition, women must be active partners in decision-making processes at all levels.

The structure of our society has ensured that women as a group are in poor shape economically. This is particularly evident in the examination of the economic situation of women over 55.

So has the minister addressed these recommendations with regard to supporting programs and services as the government has outlined in that program 3? I'm sure that he'll be very happy to address that.

There were some recommendations that this advisory council made to the government of Alberta which come within the purview of this minister's department. I would like to ask him if they have been addressed in this year's budget. I particularly couldn't see them anywhere, but I'm sure that he's given them the kind of consideration and respect that they deserve. The first one states:

Whereas:

In economics, consumers and persons aren't counted – households are, which results in the masking of women's personal poverty.

The "household" and the thinking behind it serve as a background to theories of income distribution, taxation, welfare, and economic development. Formulation of government policy is currently based . . . on measures of household income and therefore does not adequately represent the economic status of women as individuals.

So therefore,

the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues recommends that:

the government of Alberta formulate policy on women's individual . . .

#### **Chairman's Ruling Relevance**

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Excuse me again, hon. member. I'm really having trouble with this. We have ministers responsible for most of what it is that you're talking about. The Treasurer certainly is not responsible for the policies of the Minister of

Community Development and so on. I really would like to ask you to please make your comments more relevant to the estimates that we have before us.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, there's a great deal of crossover in many of these departments, as you're aware, and the Treasurer has the mandate here to develop and manage the overall provincial business plan. So we're not talking just about the Treasury business plan; we're talking about the business plan of every single minister in this House. He does have the responsibility to work and co-ordinate with those other departments, and these . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the hon. member doesn't really understand what the Treasurer's role is. I don't think he controls business plans in any other department but his own. Therefore, I can't accept that as an argument for not sticking to the estimates.

MS CARLSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, then would you tell me that it is not true that the Provincial Treasurer manages the overall provincial business plan? We're talking about . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: I really don't want to get into debate with the hon. member. Please; we're here to vote on financial programs.

MS CARLSON: Financial programs have a direct effect on these recommendations and on every statement that I've said here this afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

MS CARLSON: Thank you very much.

#### Debate Continued

MS CARLSON: A further recommendation was talked about to some extent one of the other evenings on which that minister, Mr. Chairman, stood up and said to me: this is something that you should be discussing with the Provincial Treasurer. So now with regard to the last three recommendations, I got direction from the Minister of Family and Social Services the other night that we should discuss this with him: that the government of Alberta formally request the government of Canada to include women's unpaid work in the calculation of the gross domestic product – now, that would be within the venue particularly of the Provincial Treasurer – and that the government of Alberta formally request the government of Canada to begin the process of determining policy based on women's individual economic condition. Again, this comes within his mandate.

3:50

Now, particularly with regard to financial institutions, there's one more recommendation that I would like to address: that the government of Alberta work in partnership with its relevant agencies – so that's all of them – and financial institutions, which is again all of them, that directly come under the Treasurer's mandate to develop written and video educational materials in plain language to improve women's economic literacy; and that government economic policy, which comes directly from the Treasurer, be written in plain language. This is because the language of economics is unfamiliar to many women and further marginalizes their literate participation and understanding in

working to develop policies that may have a positive outcome on their lives. So I'm hoping that the minister will address those.

I earlier spoke very briefly to wage equity. We've seen no specific policies in here under this, and I'm sure that the Treasurer will be happy to stand up and speak to this. It's a great concern of many women in this province, and I'm sure it's also a concern of his.

When we talk about these issues, we're going to see that the provincial government tackles their deficit. This Provincial Treasurer has stood up in this House time and time again saying that it's a good news story when you only focus on dollar reduction, but you don't focus on quality of life, which is what direction we've seen happen here. When you see only a focus on deficit reduction, which this Treasurer is so proud of, we see social programs continuing to be cut. This hurts women hard as they are the main recipients of social benefits, and therefore it hurts children very hard. I'm sure that the Treasurer has just had this slip his mind when he focuses only on dollar reduction, because I'm sure that he personally would not like to be responsible for showing children a great degree of disparity.

I'm very sorry that my time is finished, because I have a number of more comments I would wish to pursue.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud on the subject.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a series of questions for the Provincial Treasurer. The first will relate actually to the Alberta Treasury Branches, and the way I would enter that is either through program 3 of the Treasury estimates, financial management, planning and central services, or through discussion of the Treasury Branches deposit fund, which is in the budget itself. My questions there, first of all, relate to the self-insurance provision of Treasury Branches. We have a Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, and the credit unions themselves pay a levy that goes directly into basically a form of deposit insurance. The provincial government in the mid-80s was forced to come into the . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. Could you direct me, please?

DR. PERCY: Okay. In the program estimates it would probably fall into 3.5, regulation of financial institutions, and that would be on page 313 of the Treasury estimates.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

DR. PERCY: So my question, first of all, there. It's clear we self-insure the Treasury Branches. The potential liabilities are \$8 billion, but it's inconceivable that there would ever be that drain. Has Treasury, in the context of program 3.5, actually assessed what would be an adequate insurance fee and whether or not an insurance fee should be such that Treasury Branches and credit unions are on the same playing field with other financial institutions in the form of insurance that they pay? Either all institutions within the province, credit unions and Treasury Branches, on the same level – and right now they're not. Certainly I'm not advocating that they pay the same rate as under the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, though that would ensure a truly level playing field. So the issue is: what studies have been undertaken, what policies are being contemplated to ensure a level

playing field between credit unions and Alberta Treasury Branches?

The second issue relates to that of governance of the Alberta Treasury Branches. It's clear, then, under regulation of financial institutions or overall within program 3, financial management, planning and central services, that Treasury Branches have been actively involved in trying to set up an overall management regime for the credit unions within the province of Alberta. However, with regards to the Treasury Branches there appears to be an absence of any form of governance other than a superintendent that reports directly to the Provincial Treasurer. So, again, my question is: what has the Provincial Treasurer done over and above the report that has been given to him, and also run through the Mazankowski committee, regarding governance of the Treasury Branches? Will that be governed? Will that be tabled in the House, and when? What is the form of governance that has been promoted within that report, and how does it compare, then, to the form of governance that presently exists for Alberta Treasury Branches?

So issues with regards to the Treasury Branches: what in fact is the appropriate insurance fee that would set up a fund? Would not that type of fee be better integrated with that of the credit unions so that there is a large stabilization fund for all provincially regulated financial institutions in the province? It makes no sense to have them treated differently. One would think there would be scale economies involved with having a common stabilization fund. So that's one set of questions related to the Treasury Branches: governance and deposit insurance.

Another set of questions relates to the business plans of Treasury. I'm now looking at the Treasury business plan. It would be page 8, outcome 3: "Effective management of the province's financial assets and liabilities." Again, the issue here in the context of the business plan is that there are a number of different financial assets that the province has. It has the heritage savings trust fund. It has the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, which again has its own independent board. It has self-insurance for the Treasury Branches. All of these are compartmentalized, but all have something in common: these are Alberta-based financial institutions. The financial risk to the Treasury Branches, the financial risk to the credit unions is very similar. So one would think in fact – and I'm talking to the Treasury business plan – that you would have some commonality and some integration of financial management strategies for these Alberta-based financial institutions. Again, this applies to the issue of insurance and financial regulation.

Another issue that I'd like to discuss – this is in the budget document itself, and again I think it relates to Treasury – concerns the Interim Response to the Alberta Tax Reform Commission. Again, this is relevant to Treasury, because it was the Provincial Treasurer that announced the six-member Alberta Tax Reform Commission. Even though much of the work of the commission was done through Alberta Economic Development and Tourism, it is still the Treasurer that initiated the process.

**4:00**

Questions there relate in fact to page 165 of the budget document and the statement:

The Commission made over 60 recommendations to the government. Over half would mean changes to Alberta's tax rates and revenues (e.g., those dealing with personal and corporate tax rates, machinery and equipment tax, fuel taxes and hotel taxes).

The issue there is very clear. The Treasurer says, "However, any changes arising from these discussions will not be implemented

prior to achieving a sustainable balanced budget." Inclusive in that statement is the machinery and equipment tax. So my question to the Provincial Treasurer: does that mean then, as it appears to state within the budget, the document that the Treasurer himself signed off on, that in fact nothing is going to be done with regards to M and E for next year or till it's clear that there is a sustainable balanced budget in place? That statement is pretty comprehensive. One hears, on the other hand, that there is in fact very active work ongoing with regards to the M and E. So there appears to be some inconsistencies between what is stated in the budget and what is happening elsewhere within government.

Another set of issues I want to discuss concerns, again, section 3.5, regulation of financial institutions. This concerns private member's Bill Pr. 3 and the Alberta Stock Exchange. I understand that it was luck of the draw, that there was a rush to ensure that this was in place and the perception was that Treasury could not get such a Bill on the Order Paper prior to the private member's Bill coming forward. Well, is the Provincial Treasurer saying that his department is so understaffed that they in fact do not have individuals on hand that could draft such a Bill so that it would come forward from Treasury? After all, when we talk about section 3.5, regulation of financial institutions, when we look at the statements that are in Treasury's business plan about harmonization of financial institutions and the like, one would think there would be a central role for the department of Treasury to ensure that any such amendments that affect financial markets in this province go through Treasury, are drafted by Treasury in consultation with the stakeholders, and then come through the legislative process for broad scrutiny. I realize that the Private Bills Committee is filled with able and dedicated individuals who will focus on this. Notwithstanding that, though, I would not like to think the Provincial Treasurer is abdicating his responsibility as the overseer of financial markets within this province.

So the issue really is: will the Provincial Treasurer table in the House, state that he in fact is fully satisfied with the provisions of Bill Pr. 3 and that they are consistent entirely with efforts to integrate and harmonize financial management within this province? That would go a very long way to ensuring that all members of this House were satisfied that Bill Pr. 3 was consistent with the financial objectives of the province and of the department of Treasury. I think it sets not necessarily a good precedent to have a private member's Bill in fact dealing with something that has such provincialwide significance. So such a letter, a statement of approval or review by the Provincial Treasurer, or those that are up there who are in charge of such features, would go a very long way. In the absence of that, one could only argue that the Provincial Treasurer does not agree with the intent of this Bill and is in fact washing his hands of it entirely by having it go this other route.

I look forward, then, to seeing such a presentation by the Treasurer, and that way it would ensure that all members in this House were satisfied with the process and with the intent of Bill Pr. 3. As I say, I fully believe that the Private Bills Committee is a very capable group of individuals, but this is really an issue of harmonization and consistency, and I think there is a legitimate role for Treasury to have a say in this, to table with the Private Bills Committee their review of the process and some statement that is consistent with the overall financial objectives of the province. That would certainly be sufficient, not necessarily a tabling in the House.

Now, the reason I bring that up is because when one looks at Bill Pr. 3, it's clear . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. Bill Pr. 3 is currently before a committee of the Legislature. Therefore, I will have to rule discussion on that particular Bill out of order, as per our previous discussion.

Thank you.

DR. PERCY: Well, I'll go to the issues. I would draw the Provincial Treasurer's attention to the Treasury three-year business plan, page 8: "Effective management of the province's financial assets and liabilities"; or outcome 4, "An efficient, fair and competitive capital market and regulatory environment for financial institutions." The Alberta Stock Exchange is a financial institution, Alberta Treasury Branches are a financial institution, and credit unions within this province are financial institutions. I read that as talking about a level playing field, and I read that as talking about harmonization. Certainly I would hope, then, that in light of my comments about that, which I'm unable to speak of but I had spoken about previously, the minister would view my comments in light of outcome 4, "An efficient, fair and competitive capital market and regulatory environment for financial institutions." That is why I think this is a relevant issue, although I accept the statement of the Chair that the Bill is being debated. My intent, Mr. Chairman, was in fact only to aid the process in that committee by having the Treasurer actively involved.

Other issues I'd like to just refer to briefly, and again the window I would use, Mr. Chairman, would be 3.5, regulation of financial institutions. Here my concern is: what is the role of the Provincial Treasurer or officials in his department in ensuring that Alberta Treasury Branches are in no way, shape, or form involved in derivative markets? I think some of the evidence about the governance of Alberta Treasury Branches and the ability of certain individuals to write a number of cheques and in fact rack up a significant amount of money in a short period of time, as a recently concluded police investigation indicated, suggests that perhaps oversight in Alberta Treasury Branches might leave something to be desired. In the absence of a more effective hands-on form of governance, one has to then say that the ultimate responsibility for the viability of the Alberta Treasury Branches and their management strategies has to rest with the Treasurer, because the superintendent is unelected and there's only an acting superintendent who reports to the Treasurer. So my question to the hon. Provincial Treasurer: what mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is no speculation with financial instruments that could lead to very large losses within Treasury Branches?

Again, this issue is of particular relevance because we self-insure the liabilities of Alberta Treasury Branches. As we saw with the Barings Bank, it doesn't take long to run up a big tab. I mean, it took this government - what? - nine years to run up \$32 billion in gross debt, but it took Leeson - what was it? - two months to rack up a billion dollars in terms of liabilities. Since the province is ultimately liable, I would think that the Provincial Treasurer should in fact be able to assure this House that under 3.5 or in some area of financial management, planning and central services of Treasury there is a vehicle or mechanism in place which would preclude Alberta Treasury Branches being actively involved in any form of financial transaction that would leave Alberta taxpayers liable.

I asked questions in the House related to previous dealings of Alberta Treasury Branches with Nomura and TD Trust Co., and the Provincial Treasurer has said: no, I can't release that information. He has not said whether he knows or not. But I think, Mr. Chairman, it's very important that we all be clear in

this House: it is the Provincial Treasurer who bears the responsibility to ensure that there is prudent financial management of Alberta Treasury Branches and that there are those safeguards and mechanisms in place to prevent any unexpected financial losses that might arise from dealings in certain types of financial instruments. Again, my window for that is the section dealing with program 3.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will take my seat. Thank you.

#### 4:10

MR. DINNING: Ah, shucks, Mr. Chairman. I've heard so many darn good comments this afternoon, I don't know what to do. I want to go on. I want to keep going and prolong this debate. I will address a couple of comments from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Machinery and equipment taxation is a matter that is under review by our minister responsible for Economic Development and Tourism. Clearly, it's an issue that has to be addressed, especially as we look down the road to stronger industrial development in this province. Especially in the petrochemical industry and in other industries there is a concern that the machinery and equipment tax provides sort of a disincentive, an obstacle to that kind of investment. It is a matter that is being reviewed by our caucus. There have been no decisions made, and no decisions will be made until that caucus review has taken place.

As well, there has been further consultation with others who are affected by machinery or equipment assessment, the presence of it across this province. I can think of the MLA for Ponoka-Rimbey and the MLA for Rocky Mountain House. They have an abiding interest in this matter. The Member for Lacombe-Stettler has a deep and abiding interest in that. So it's an important issue. We're not going to move hastily on it, but we are interested in making sure there's a balance between dealing with it and making sure there's no obstacle to economic development.

I'm starstruck by the laudatory praise, implicit laudatory praise, of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud in that he would say that only when I can guarantee or give him an assurance that Bill Pr. 3 is up to the Treasurer's standard would he deign to cast a vote in its favour. That I would have that much influence and be that persuasive with the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, has taken my breath away, literally taken my breath away.

The point I guess is: what does the hon. member think of the Bill? I know you don't want us to talk about Bill Pr. 3, Mr. Chairman, but in expending the funds that are granted to the Provincial Treasurer in the first vote here, the Treasurer's office, in having the resources in that office to be able to provide advice to the hon. member and in carrying on the debate with the hon. member with the resources - \$355,000 from 1.0.1 - I have to engage the hon. member in debate and say: is he going to rely only on my opinion? I thought it would be a first, but what is his view? You know, I think it's time to sort of let him have a little rope, and I'd ask him to provide us the facts and only the facts on what his views are about Bill Pr. 3. I would benefit from his opinion, because then I could form my own and be able to have that kind of debate in the Assembly. I don't think all things good emanate only from the department of the Treasury. I think the Member for Calgary-Egmont, as sponsor of Bill Pr. 3, would be well positioned to respond to the hon. member's question when he comes and asks that question of the Member for Calgary-Egmont at the Private Bills Committee.

Alberta Treasury Branches: it's something that is near and dear to the hearts of over 850,000 deposit account holders as well as some 220,000 loan account holders. Clearly, it has an impact on

the lives of hundreds of thousands of Albertans, and all of those Albertans have the confidence of Treasury Branches. I think it's an outstanding institution, and it's not one that in any way I want to see jeopardized or politicized. All the more reason why: I talk about the Percy-Dinning line, not unlike the Maginot or the Mason-Dixon line, in this Assembly; I simply will not, Mr. Chairman, be drawn over the Percy-Dinning line to respond to an individual account of the Treasury Branches.

I appreciate the hon. member's question. I, Mr. Chairman, rely on the Auditor General in his day-to-day functions and in his regular and, most importantly, his annual audit to respond to those kinds of questions and ensure that those systems are in place, that whatever is done is only done to secure the assets of the Alberta Treasury Branches so they are in no way exposed to the volatility that exists in the market, to reduce that exposure. So I must rely on the Auditor General in his review to ensure that that takes place.

Mr. Chairman, I know we've had an awesomely interesting debate on the estimates of the department of the Treasury, but so as to be able to share the excitement with all members and other issues for the rest of this afternoon, I would respectfully, sir, move that the committee do now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

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

**4:20 Bill 17**  
**Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 1995**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my eminent but regrettably absent colleague for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, I move second reading of Bill 17, the Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 1995.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important just to pass along our good wishes to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, because I think it's fair that all Albertans should know that this is a man who is dedicated to his job and would want to be in this Assembly, but due to a miscarriage of medical justice he is bedridden by a broken ankle. He would want to be here to move this Bill.

This Bill takes the next important step of putting our public-sector pension plans administration on a businesslike footing and is one that is in keeping with the business orientation of this government: all things good do not have to be done by the provincial government. They can easily be done by the private sector with a public-sector appointed board overseeing the policy requirements. This Legislature, backing it up with appropriate legislation, can use the mechanisms available through the private sector to deliver good, high-quality programs. This Bill positions

the government to be able to put it through the Business Corporations Act to create a corporation that will sell its services and make good services available to the public-sector pension boards.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Treasurer is right: all things good need not be done by government. In fact, government has demonstrated very little ability to do the majority of good things. However, having said that, having gotten the negative out first, I think this is a Bill that is worthy of support of all members of this Assembly. It's been part of the Liberal opposition's goal; we've been driving for it. I know that we've been saying it in the Legislature. In fact, it was said by the Liberal opposition before I arrived and joined the team. So there was perhaps some consultation, or someone over there was listening and decided to go with it.

The object of the Bill – I think the Treasurer partially described it – is to corporatize pension administration and establish vendor relationships with pension plans. As I understand it, the following public-sector pension plans would be affected: the local authorities pension plan, the management employees pension plan, the public services management closed membership pension plan, the public service pension plan, the special forces pension plan, and the universities academic pension plan. Now, I think that encompasses the total. So the amendments to section 5 establish a service-vendor relationship between the various public-sector pension plans and Alberta pension administration, the APA, under which services currently provided by the APA to the public-sector plans in such areas as receipt and deposit of contributions by members and employers, payments of benefits to pensioners and their beneficiaries, financial and investment management, and counseling and information services for pensioners and participating employers and employees would be put on a full cost recovery basis.

I think cost recovery is being demonstrated in Bill 17. I think there are a lot of other areas that we can look to pursue cost recovery. I would say that it's an exercise which should be undertaken with great caution, because as we've seen in the last two years, cost recovery all of a sudden has been led into areas of health care and to some extent education. I think we're veering way off path. Despite my belief, one I've stated many times in this Assembly, that business does many things much better than government, government in fact does do some things much better than business, and clearly it must remain in a lead role in those areas. So although I go on record here in full support of cost recovery, full cost recovery in this area, I would say that we do have to exercise a greater amount of caution as the government pursues cost recovery in other areas.

The second component of Bill 17 contained within amendments to section 9 and section 12 is to allow for the corporatization of the Alberta pension administration, the APA, by permitting the delegation of its administrative functions to a provincial corporation established under the meaning of the Financial Administration Act. Financial and investment management services will continue to be provided by Alberta Treasury.

Now, I support this Bill and certainly I believe that most members of the Liberal caucus support this legislation, as it is designed to promote the self-governance principles for the public-sector plans agreed to in 1992 by all three parties, at least that day. In those days they did have three parties in the Legislative Assembly, and in fact there was agreement from all parties.

Corporatization of pension administration functions would allow the government to provide services to the public-sector plans on a more commercial, cost-effective, and cost-efficient basis with full cost recovery. It is another component of the Treasury's agenda to reduce central control over services and transfer full responsibility for administration to departments or extradepartmental entities; i.e., the payrolls and accounts payable. [some applause] Not just yet; not just yet. You know, it's a pleasure to receive some of that applause from the Treasurer himself, as I speak highly of his Bill here I believe. I just wish that he would have permitted me just a five-minute period there to speak to his estimates, because I did have some things on Gainers I wanted to touch on.

Back to Bill 17, it's a significant Bill, an important Bill. I think that under the terms of the agreement reached in March 1992, a board of trustees was established for each of the public-sector pension plans. The board of trustees have a responsibility for ensuring that the plans are managed on a financially sound basis, setting future contribution rates including the cost of administering the plan, establishing general policy guidelines for investments, and administration of the plans.

Corporatization provisions within Bill 17 represent another step towards the December 31, 1996, time line, under which the board of trustees of each plan would have the discretion to appoint administrators and fund managers, subject to ratification by the participating employees and employers of the plan. Under corporatization, pension administration will continue to provide these services to public-sector plans as a provincial corporation rather than a department entity revolving fund.

Now, there's just a number of questions that I'll be getting to shortly that I'd like to have answered.

Once again, we support the principles of self-governance that were the major elements of pension reform. Corporatization of pension administration is designed to eliminate overlap and duplication, reduce red tape for the plans in dealing with government, and allow for a better assessment of the costs of providing this service by government to various pension plans. The opposition supports efforts to reduce spending and shift costs to users if it could be proven that it will lead to greater efficiencies in providing that service. The opposition also believes that to be effective, corporatization of pension administration must promote improved service delivery performance; it must specify principles governing operations and establish stringent requirements for improved accountability and responsibility.

In his 1993-94 annual report the Auditor General pointed out that revolving funds are not working as intended and in fact are not necessary. He noted that the government should be able to fully cost its programs and services without the expense of operating revolving funds. The Auditor General also made reference to the fact that revolving funds do not contain all of their operating costs; some of these costs are recorded in the general revenue fund. The cost of outputs of revolving funds is understated, and in turn, users are paying less than they should for the service they receive.

Nevertheless, a number of questions, as I said earlier, should be asked about the move towards corporatization of pension plans. I'll just outline these very quickly. First of all, how many employees are currently involved in pension administration? I think that's an important question that needs to be answered. I would anticipate that the Treasurer will respond to these questions prior to calling the question on this Bill.

Secondly, how many employees will be affected by the move towards corporatization, and will there be any layoffs? Were

these anticipated in the budget that the Treasurer put forward about a month ago?

Thirdly, in terms of protection of employees' successor rates through the AUPE, if the Treasurer could perhaps elaborate on that.

Fourth, what cost-benefit analysis or studies have been conducted that indicate that corporatization will reduce costs, increase cost recovery for services provided, and lead to greater efficiencies in providing these services to the pensions plans? Although we anticipate that, if there are any studies that have been done, it would be helpful at the time we're debating these to put them forward.

4:30

Fifth, has a business plan been prepared by the new corporation? Will the business plan be made public? What performance criteria will the corporation be expected to meet?

Sixth, will investment and financial management services continue to be administered by Treasury in-house, or will it be devolved to the pension administration corporation?

Seventh, is corporatization of pension administration a preliminary step towards full privatization of pension administration by a private-sector corporation or delegated administrative organization, a DAO? Will employees be represented on the DAO board?

So with those few questions that I've put forward, once again I just want to reiterate that I do support this. In fact, our party has gone on record in support of the nature of this legislation. This is one example where we can work together. So all I would expect at this point is that the Treasurer, as the current representative in the Assembly on this Bill, would just respond to some of those questions, and perhaps then we can get on and call the question on the Bill.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Second Reading Debate**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, second reading is generally not a time when you have questions going back and forth, so you put the hon. Treasurer in an awkward position of replying to them. The questions are answerable in committee, which they often are. If that's understood by the hon. member, then you'll understand why the Provincial Treasurer may choose not to answer any questions right now.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. SEKULIC: Well, it's interesting that I've put the Treasurer in an awkward position, because certainly he didn't look uncomfortable. But I do take the comments, and you're quite correct. This isn't yet the time to pose some of these questions. Perhaps there was a bit of anticipation there, but I'm providing the Treasurer with a greater period of time in which to prepare some responses, and he notes the direction that we the opposition will be taking on this.

With those comments I'll close.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer to close debate.

MR. DINNING: I appreciate the notice of the hon. member, and I will make sure that the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti is encumbered by the knowledge as necessary to answer his questions at committee study.

May I call the question, sir?

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

**Bill 18**  
**Environmental Protection Statutes Repeal Act**

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to second reading on Bill 18, Environmental Protection Statutes Repeal Act.

This Act repeals three Acts: the Alberta Environmental Research Trust Act, the Environment Council Act, and the Water Resources Act. This is all part of our three-year business plan. It's to help eliminate overlap and duplication and to bring our budget a bit in line as well.

Before I get into the Acts, I want to at this time spend a moment to thank the people that have served on these various boards. They've been extremely valuable to the province. The ability for the government to meet people through these various boards and get their input has been a great asset to the government.

I'll deal first with the Environment Council of Alberta. This was set up some 25 years ago, and in fact it was the first in Canada to be established as an agent of the government. This council has really done a lot to create an awareness and a relationship between the government and the people and the idea of sustainable development and how that relates to the economy and to having a healthy environment. It was a very good vehicle for the government to use to get input from the people as well.

The work of this particular council was completed, and I tabled just a few days ago in the Legislature their final report. That report was put together using the council and a number of the various departments in government and will certainly be a cornerstone for a lot of the decisions that we make in the future. I intend to set up a working committee that will look at how we can use the recommendations in that report as we move forward in our quest for sustainable development.

We will continue, of course, to garner input from the public. There are a number of vehicles we will use. The current Environmental Protection Advisory Committee is in place, and we will be using those folks. There are the Alberta forest strategy committees that are out there currently putting together a forest strategy. We have a provincial body, the Alberta Forest Advisory Strategy Committee, which will be bringing forward a report later this year, and we will be taking that forward as a new tool to use as we go forward with our new way of doing the forestry business. Of course, right as I speak, we've got the committee that is chaired by the hon. Member for Dunvegan that is looking at the whole issue of water management and the legislation. The rolling up of this particular council will save the government about \$900,000 a year.

The Water Resources Commission – and this is one that I had the opportunity to serve on myself for a number of years – has done a great deal of work around the province looking at various water projects and some strategies like the wetland policy for both the white area and the green area. They've done a lot of work with organizations like Ducks Unlimited and the various groups with the fisheries' side of things. As I mentioned before, their work right now is concentrated on the water management legislation that we will be introducing in the fall sitting of the Legislature, but that is about the last project that we had for those folks. In the future when we need advice – and I know we will – on water management, we will be using either ministerial committees or some other vehicle to get input from the citizens. The repealing of the Water Resources Commission will save us about half a million dollars a year, so that will add to our reduction.

The other one I want to speak briefly about is the Alberta Environmental Research Trust, another committee that I had the opportunity to serve on. It was one that worked with industry.

There was some government financing that went into it, but that money was leveraged to do various research projects with industry.

**4:40**

I want to take this opportunity as well to compliment the executive director, John Russell. He served in that position for many years. He had an excellent rapport with the oil and gas industry and the forestry industry and was able, through his contacts, to come forward with a lot of very interesting and important projects. One that we were very proud of: it was through the Environmental Research Trust that beaver fever was discovered. They discovered through one of their research projects what organism it was that was causing that problem.

A lot of the work that the Environmental Research Trust used to do will now be done through the Alberta Environmental Centre at Vegreville. Now that we've changed their way of funding so they are on a net budgeting program, they will be able to leverage money from the private sector and do a lot of the projects that were formerly done through the Environmental Research Trust. Of course, they themselves will be working very closely with the new Science and Research Authority so that we don't have a lot of overlap in all of our research in this province.

The administration for the Environmental Research Trust was around \$90,000 a year, so we will save those, and those dollars can be used, then, for further research.

So, Mr. Speaker, the rolling up of these three different agencies will save the department about a million and a half dollars a year. It will eliminate a lot of the overlap and duplication that we had. I think in this day and age it's probably time that we do discontinue their existence and roll the projects into another form.

With that, I would like to move second reading of Bill 18.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just reviewing a few notes that have been made on this particular aspect. The hon. minister indicates that we're moving into a position of efficiency by combining those particular aspects. When reviewing the legislation and trying to put a handle on it, the only concern I really had when I looked at it, the only component of the proposal, was the Environment Council of Alberta. It would be my suggestion that we not abolish that. It did, if you will recall, play a rather important role back in the '70s and '80s. Some members may say, "Well, it's obviously time that we changed that, hon. member," but I would suggest that when we look at the environment today in Alberta and some of the pressure that it's under, there is a need, in my mind, to have a body that in fact could focus public opinion on environmental matters. We shouldn't be afraid of that. The public are the conscience of this Assembly, I would suggest.

Now, when we look at the Water Resources Commission, it has done some useful work in the past as far as the wetlands are concerned. Its mandate, I think, certainly is one that we can set aside and incorporate in the environmental resource conservation board itself.

Now, the Environmental Research Trust was a small body, and certainly we could see that being rolled into this particular aspect without too much difficulty and without too much loss there. When we look at the Environmental Research Trust fund that the minister just mentioned here, it again was not a large body. It did distribute only – I shouldn't say only, because it's \$702,000 that was distributed back in 1992 and '93 through the form of grants. It again did some useful work, but when you look at the dollars

that were expended by that particular group and you look at the administrative cost, it did appear to be a little bloated. So maybe the minister has captured some efficiency there, and I think that's desirable.

I just want to spend a minute on that Environment Council of Alberta and my comments that it should not be abolished. One of the statements I made as I stood in my place here, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that we should look at revamping that particular body and make it a body that could focus the independent public input on environmental issues. There's no one in this Assembly who is not fully aware that there is a large concern in the public's mind in regard to logging in the province of Alberta. That concern has been articulated on many occasions in the House here, particularly when you deal with logging on private lands and the many logs that are leaving the province of Alberta to be processed in the province of B.C. That's only one small example.

When I speak to private lands, we could also very closely have a look at some of the logging practices that are occurring in the province. There's a large concern there. There's a tremendous amount of logging industry that has been developed in Alberta in the last four or five years. I'm not convinced the public has had time to catch up with that rapid development.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that I had the occasion to meet with an official from Al-Pac today discussing that exact issue, about public concern and how they deal with it. They are a very proactive company, and they do, I would suggest, an excellent job of educating the people, and they are very open about their process. They will take you to their plant. They will show you fish from the Athabasca living in the effluent. They will in some cases, if you're fortunate enough, take you for a helicopter ride over some of the areas that have been logged. Those are the sorts of issues that, in my mind, are very much in the minds of the Alberta public today. So I see a role for the Environment Council of Alberta. It may take on a bit of a different form than what we've seen before, but it will give the public a platform, in my view, to voice their concerns to the public.

The government of the day has time and time again indicated that they're very interested in public input. I would think that this is a desirable stage, Mr. Speaker, to focus that public input and do it in an orderly fashion, as opposed to a fashion that may be stepping outside what we consider to be acceptable in the province of Alberta. We certainly don't want mass demonstrations and blocking logging roads and the likes of that. I see this as an opportunity to create and form a proactive group, and I would suggest that it would be to the benefit of one and all.

So with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I will kick off the debate from this side of the House on the Environmental Protection Statutes Repeal Act. Again, I would commend the minister. He is moving in a direction of capturing efficiency. Certainly, as one of the stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, I cannot speak against that particular concept. I would ask that the minister look at some innovation in this particular area.

In my view, there is some opportunity to farm out that Environment Council of Alberta, to make it a public venue and be proactive about the environment and give the public the opportunity to speak to it. The other two bodies: the Water Resources Commission I think the minister has identified very clearly can be set aside; likewise with the Alberta Environmental Research Trust. That is another body that certainly can be set aside, and the efficiency would be evident to one and all.

So with those comments I will conclude, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. CHADI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to express my concerns with Bill 18, the Environmental Protection Statutes Repeal Act. There are a couple of concerns that I have, and I want to place them on the record today. You know, each time that we get up and speak to a Bill, one has to bear in mind: does the Bill make sense for Albertans? Is it something that our constituents in fact would want us to consider? How important is this Bill for Albertans?

**4:50**

So with that in mind, I want to first start off by suggesting to you that the repeal of the Environmental Research Trust is inevitable. This will happen in any event. What's happening is that the Alberta Science and Research Authority is going to take over very quickly here and deal with that component of this Bill. I note that the Alberta Environmental Research Trust, in looking at its financial statements in terms of revenue and expenditures, had in fact expended less than it took in. There were donations to this trust in 1993 and in fact in 1992, Mr. Speaker, that were quite equivalent, all in the range of \$420,000 of donations. Alberta lotteries have given less money in 1993 than they did in 1992; that amounted to \$200,000 in 1993. Then grants from the department of the environment, and they've been consistent: there's been \$300,000 each year that has been applied to this research trust.

The introduction of the research authority is something that Alberta, I think, and Albertans would welcome with open arms. The thought that research dollars in this province would come under one umbrella, would be directed by one group, being the board, is something no one can argue with. Bringing those dollars from each department, including, I would hope to think, the department of the environment – if the minister of the environment will work with the minister responsible for science and research to ensure that those dollars from his department are controlled by the minister responsible – I think would be a step in the right direction, and not only the minister of environment but every single government department, including agriculture. I know there's a lot of money that goes to research for agriculture that should be transferred over and work with the research authority board that is put together now.

I'm glad I sparked your interest, Mr. Minister.

The fact that I won't vote for this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is because the Water Resources Commission, for example, which has done a fair amount of work in this province in the past, is about to be repealed or abolished before the Water Resources Act is complete. This doesn't make sense at all. I think you'd first of all want to know where we're headed before you start to dismantle something here. Again, does it make sense? So when I look at the introduction of this Bill, did it make sense? Does it make sense with respect to the Water Resources Act and the abolition of the Water Resources Commission?

Above all of that, there is one area in Alberta that continues to be lacking, Mr. Speaker, and that is consumer protection. It wasn't so long ago that I rose in this House and I asked who it is from the front benches of the government that is in charge of consumer protection. I received a response, and it is in fact one of the ministers of this government that handles it, but it's sort of obscure. No one really knows who is in charge. No one in the public knows who's in charge of consumer protection in this province, and at one point consumer protection, under the department of consumer and corporate affairs, was a major, major department. It ought to continue to be something very major, but it's an area that we continue to move away from, because



somehow we think consumer protection is not necessary in this province.

But you look at the work that was done by the Environment Council of Alberta, and the fact is that it has been a public watchdog. One of the things this group has done through its public hearings is provide a voice for Albertans, and I think it provided a voice for the government as well. It gave direction to the government. Now, for the life of me, I can't figure out why we would try to dismantle an organization like this, unless of course the government is afraid that it would continue to bring stuff forward that would be contrary to the policies of the government. That should not be the underlying reason we should abolish such a council.

The work that was done by this council were things like the review of water management options in the Oldman River basin. I understand that it was determined back then that in fact the Oldman River dam was not needed, and this is incredible. The environmental impact of forestry operations in Alberta . . . [interjections] I see we rattled the cage again, Mr. Speaker. I think if anyone wishes to engage in debate, this is your opportunity now, but of course they probably haven't even read the Bill for all we know.

In fact, for the members that haven't heard and have asked that I repeat what I've just said: the Environment Council of Alberta did some work with respect to review of water management options in the Oldman River basin, at which time they determined that in fact the Oldman River dam was not needed. Now, this is public information, and that happened quite some time ago.

The environmental impact of forestry operations in Alberta. Of course, they recommended back then – and this here, being a public watchdog, sat back and said: you know, the government should investigate zero-effluent pulp mills. This is a concern for all Albertans, a concern for people that were living around the pulp mill sites. People who were living on the shores of lakes and rivers even as far away as Fort Chipewyan were affected, of course, by the effluent of pulp mills all along the Athabasca River. There was a time when people in Fort Chipewyan did not eat the fish coming out of Lake Athabasca. They refused to. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, there was a time when the government stepped in and said, "Please don't eat the fish, because you could get sick." Now you have a public watchdog like this, and I think the abolition of such a council would be detrimental to people in this province.

Another area that this council would be active in and should continue to be active in is the forestry industry. The fact of the matter is that when I was growing up – and I know for sure many members across, Mr. Speaker, when they were growing up – forestry was a seasonal industry. It was something that people, particularly us from northern Alberta – of course, the ones in southern Alberta wouldn't understand that part of it – would know was a seasonal industry. What we had was logging in the wintertime, and all summer long once the logs were in, perhaps maybe the sawmills would start their cutting and milling. But today it's a different story; we've got year-round logging. We've advanced unbelievably.

I was over at the Al-Pac mill, and I've never seen such an advanced organization and such an advanced corporation. You know, even their logging trucks today – before, a long time ago, when you were traveling on those little logging roads through the bush, you had to talk through your CB and find out where the other truck was coming just to ensure that you didn't meet on a curve or in an area where two trucks couldn't pass by, whereas today it's all controlled by satellite. It's absolutely incredible.

They've got terminals sitting in their trucks, and they can tell where the other truck is at any given time. It's truly fascinating, the way forestry has changed and has evolved, in fact, over the years. Today we're a year-round industry. Today there's no telling where we're headed with this industry.

I think a public watchdog such as the Environment Council of Alberta is truly needed, and it is needed now. If the government and the environment minister are considering the repeal of this council and also the commission and the research trust, what are you bringing in its place? I mean, are we going to scrap the consumer protection area in environment completely? Are we relying on the environmentalists in this province to take up that fight? Or do we continue to work with Albertans to ensure that all Albertans would be satisfied that in fact their interests are protected, particularly interests in the environment?

5:00

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would take my seat, and I'd allow other members and I'd encourage other members from the other side of the House. It appears as though they're absolutely silent on the issue of the environment, and for the life of me I can't figure that out. I would hope that someone would stand up and engage in the debate that is truly, truly one of the areas that all Albertans would like . . . [interjection] It's as important as agriculture, Mr. Minister, and you know that. Agriculture is important, but environment is just as important. Perhaps you should engage in this debate now.

With those comments, I'm going to take my seat and hope that I've sparked enough interest on the other side that somebody would get up. Thank you.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Well, I won't apologize to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for standing in my place to enter into the debate. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, through the Chair to her, I'd invite her to stand in her place and enter the debate, but, alas and alack, members opposite are not participating in the debate. So I will stand and I will enter and participate in the debate on Bill 18, the Environmental Protection Statutes Repeal Act, this afternoon at second reading.

Mr. Speaker, to the Bill. I join my colleagues in stating that unfortunately I will vote against the Bill at second reading. The reason that I state for doing so is not with respect to the repeal or the termination of the Water Resources Commission or the Alberta Environmental Research Trust but because of the unfortunate repeal of the Environment Council of Alberta. Having said that, I think it's important to say in this debate that with some of the approaches that the minister is taking with respect to restructuring the Department of Environmental Protection, not everything in terms of the restructuring is necessarily a bad approach to take, that there has been indeed – and we all know in this Assembly, and we've had the debate many times – overlap and duplication in government services. There can be a streamlining. There can be an efficiency. With what the minister has addressed in this particular Bill relating to the Water Resources Commission and the Alberta Environmental Research Trust, certainly there are no strong objections to the termination of those two bodies with the dollars that are spent and the work that is done and certainly can be done in other areas within the department.

I just want to recall, Mr. Speaker, that in my discussion and the discussion that took place in the debate on estimates in subcommittee of supply for Environmental Protection, I noted for the minister that Bill 18 is a statute that will in fact repeal the Water Resources Commission. Certainly, although it is indeed unfortu-

nate for those individuals who have served the government well in the work that the Water Resources Commission has done, their positions will be terminated as the Water Resources Commission is terminated.

The interesting point there is that the budget for the Water Resources Commission for this fiscal year is exactly the same as it was for the last fiscal year. The minister certainly of course knew that the repeal of the Water Resources Commission was here in front of the Legislature, tabled by him in the Legislature, and that indeed the Water Resources Commission will in all likelihood terminate long before the fiscal year expires. Nonetheless, the same amount of money was set aside for the operation of the Water Resources Commission, and we debated that issue. The minister and through the minister the deputy minister indicated that, well, perhaps that item might have been a little exaggerated for the year. Well, there seems to be a little confusion within the department as to whether or not the Water Resources Commission is going to continue, is going to continue to be budgeted or whether it's not going to continue and it's not going to continue to be budgeted. The government provided to us on this particular issue a very mixed message. On the one hand, it comes forward and says that the Water Resources Commission is going to be repealed, and, on the other hand, in the budget documents it comes forward and says that the Water Resources Act is continuing, implicitly stating that because the dollar amounts for this fiscal year are exactly the same as the dollar amounts for the next fiscal year. So at least on that particular aspect, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister could get his act together.

Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Research Trust will be repealed, and as other members have stood in their place and have spoken to that issue, the research trust will be terminated. Under the provisions of the Bill, the assets of the trust – let me just make sure that I'm clear on this. The "property of the . . . Research Trust in the form of money [is going to go] to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund." Funding commitments of the trust will be paid out of that fund. Also, "property . . . becomes the property of the Crown in right of [the province of] Alberta."

I also note, Mr. Speaker, that in the minister's press release of December 5 of last year, wherein he announced that the Alberta Environmental Research Trust would be discontinued, he indicates that the responsibilities are going to be assumed by the Alberta Science and Research Authority. I guess I just thought it a bit of an irony here that we are now going to have one component of the trust, being the money and the assets, moving over to the environmental protection and enhancement fund so that that will come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Environmental Protection, yet the research and the funding will come out of another minister's portfolio, the minister of science and research. So at the end of this whole process we still have overlap and duplication where we've got two ministers involved with what was originally under the jurisdiction of one minister. I'm not sure what we accomplished, because the Bill creates overlap and duplication, which is certainly an ironic result of the Bill where the minister purports to put this forward in his attempt to reduce overlap and duplication. It kind of makes you laugh a bit.

Mr. Speaker, of course the real reason that we are concerned with the Bill as it has been put forward by the Minister of Environmental Protection is the repeal of the Environment Council of Alberta. I think it's important in this Assembly and during this debate that all members offer their congratulations to everyone who worked on the Environment Council of Alberta from its inception in 1970 as the Environment Conservation Authority and then becoming the Environment Council of Alberta

in 1977. Of course, originally the Environment Council of Alberta was a very important arm's-length body from government playing a very active role in advising the government on environmental policy. One of the significant mandates that the Environment Council of Alberta had was that it had the opportunity and the mandate to hold public hearings. That, of course, as all members of this Assembly know, is a very important function and more so because it is undertaken and done through an arm's-length body, an arm's-length council of government, where they can develop the mandate, develop the public hearing process, and bring reasoned consultation and discussion back to the minister in an advisory capacity.

Mr. Speaker, it was probably in the offing that the Environment Council of Alberta would ultimately see its demise. It has been whittled down in terms of its importance and in terms of its mandate over the last few years. Funding has been cut significantly for the Environment Council through the late '80s and early '90s, and we had a two-year period where the Environment Council was even without an executive director. So it did have a lack of direction for a significant period of time.

### 5:10

Some of the really important work that the Environment Council of Alberta has done and should be recognized for is certainly the major undertaking that it has just completed and that members have just seen in the last few days in this Assembly, which was the future directions of environmental planning report *Ensuring Prosperity: Implementing Sustainable Development*. That, Mr. Speaker, as members will recall, was the next step in the phase of the roundtable on the environment and the economy. Members will also recall that the Environment Council of Alberta acted, and acted very well I might add, in their capacity as the secretariat to the Environment Council of Alberta for the roundtable on the economy and the environment. I think that everybody who participated in that, in fact everybody who observed that process said that that was very much a win/win situation for Alberta. There was an opportunity for consensus building. There was an opportunity for Albertans very much interested in environmental protection, environmental conservation and for industry – there was an opportunity for both sides of the issues to come together, to recognize the importance of working collaboratively and collectively in developing a sustainable development model for the province of Alberta. Through that process that was managed by the Environment Council of Alberta, through that report the government received a number of truly professional and laudable recommendations on where it should be going.

The report that I just mentioned, the future directions on environmental planning, the *Ensuring Prosperity* report, again comes forward in the next step and offers a number of recommendations to the minister about where we should be going in ensuring prosperity through sustainable development. I raise that and I discuss that, Mr. Speaker, because it is all-important work that the Environment Council of Alberta was involved in and pushed and that played a very significant role in its advice to the government of Alberta.

Some of the other important work that it's done – it had a program called *Medium: Green*, which was an environmentally responsible communications strategy to business about how to become more environmentally responsible. There was work done on economic instruments for waste reduction, and that program was called: our forgotten resource, the commonsense approach. Isn't that a good title, Mr. Speaker? Another project that it was involved in was environmental accounting, providing workshops

to business, again to make businesses more environmentally friendly and indeed more environmentally aware.

So the Environment Council of Alberta in its 20-plus year history has done a great service to the province of Alberta. It has provided significant input. Most importantly, it has been at arm's length from the government, and that I think is an important feature of the Environment Council that Albertans recognize. The government will say: the same work is going to take place; we're going to continue working on projects that the Environment Council was involved in. Mr. Speaker, it's going to be wrapped into the department. It's going to be done through the strategic planning branch of Environmental Protection. I think that it's fair to say that it just isn't going to be the same thing when it's combined into the department rather than working at arm's-length to the department.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest and submit to the hon. minister and members opposite that we should in fact be going in the opposite direction. We should be strengthening the Environment Council of Alberta. We should be moving back to giving them a broader mandate, a more positive mandate and bringing them back in as a full partner in the environmental protection area.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just speak to one other issue that was interesting with respect to Bill 18, and that's the consequential amendment that is set out at section 3(3) of the Bill. What that does is that that particular section now repeals section 4 of the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act. It is indeed a consequential amendment in that that particular section of that particular Act does speak to the Environment Council of Alberta and what its mandate is under that particular piece of legislation. What's interesting about that, Mr. Speaker, is that under that particular section the Environment Council had the mandate, when requested by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that it should hold hearings. It should hold

hearings for the purpose of receiving and hearing submissions and representations respecting any proposal made by the Executive Council for the establishment of a new wilderness area or ecological reserve or the addition of any land to, or the withdrawal of any land from, an existing wilderness area or ecological reserve.

Now, what's interesting about that is that we find ourselves today having just received a new implementation plan from the government on Special Places 2000, and the minister has developed what I consider to be a very cumbersome and a very loose process for the nomination of sites under the special places program and the opportunity for that nomination process to be sidetracked at any step along the way. Because each of the sites, other than the Cold Lake site, as nominated by the minister is either a natural area or an ecological reserve, it would have been very interesting if the Environment Council had had the opportunity to play a significant role in the nomination process, in taking those nominations, in working through some of the processes that the minister has at this point identified. What will be done through local committees, that do not have equal representation, ultimately back through the provincial government and members of his department in setting out the nominated sites, whether it fits the guidelines and the criteria, whether or not the management plan is acceptable, is what I consider to be a very loose and unstructured process for the ultimate designation and protection of special places in this province under that plan.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, it would have been appropriate and worth while to retain the Environment Council of Alberta, to allow it to participate in that particular process, to give it that particular mandate. In fact, if necessary, in the interest of saving

tax dollars, if that at this point was one of the only mandates it had or to perhaps work also in terms of completing the sustainable development vision for the province, it would have been preferable to allow the Environment Council to act in that capacity.

Mr. Speaker, for those reasons I unfortunately am unable to support the Bill. I, too, as other members have on this side of the House, indicated to the minister and do indicate to the minister that his attempt at streamlining is laudable. Sometimes it works. Sometimes there's agreement. Sometimes there isn't. On this particular one there is agreement on some of the aspects of the Bill. There is disagreement on other aspects of the Bill. The disagreements outweigh the agreements, and I therefore have to vote against Bill 18 at second reading.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'll conclude my comments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection to conclude debate on second reading.

MR. LUND: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. members that participated in debate at second reading of Bill 18. I should have mentioned maybe a couple of other initiatives that we currently are undertaking to do some of the things that the hon. members mentioned that the Environment Council used to handle. For example, CASA, the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, that we have going out there. There are some very, very important things that they are doing.

The hon. member did mention the Special Places 2000 initiative and how it is set up. Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to take input from the public, and we'll be taking input from the public all across the province, and I'm very confident that we can manage it and still come up with very good recommendations.

So with that, I would move second reading of Bill 18.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a second time]

5:20

**Bill 21**  
**Engineering, Geological and**  
**Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 1995**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services to move second reading.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 21.

As I had mentioned in the introduction of the Bill, the intent of the proposed changes is to bring the public representation and the disciplinary hearing processes in line with the principles and the policies governing professional legislation in Alberta. The cost of this amendment is very, very minimal to both government and to the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to give you a wee bit of a rundown on some of the things the folks are doing. The APEGGA folks are involved in many, many vital projects that do affect our lives. They do also go outside of this province, and they're involved in many projects around the world, projects from advanced wastewater treatment plants to charting offshore drilling rigs.

Also, at home they do play a role in providing information, guidance, and encouragement for our young people. They sponsor science competitions, in-school presentations, career days, and such. Their mission statement is to serve society by regulating, enhancing, and providing leadership in the practice of the professions of engineering, geology, and geophysics. This amendment will increase public representation on APEGGA'S

council and thus increase public involvement in the regulation of professional practices of engineering, geology, and geophysics.

Section 30 is amended to delete the requirement to be an Alberta resident and to allow Canadian citizens who apply within the guidelines as approved by the board of examiners to compete. This was seen as an internal trade barrier, and it's opening it up and giving a little more freedom to the industry.

To give you an idea about the disciplinary activity, in 1994 there were only 44 complaints, Mr. Speaker. This represents less than two complaints per 1,000 members. As APEGGA is self-regulating, investigative, disciplinary, and appeal processes are also important. These revisions will bring the Act in line with the policies of professional legislation here in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question. Question.

MR. FISCHER: Just before we get finished here, Mr. Speaker, the cost is borne almost entirely by APEGGA, and it is approximately \$4 million. The only cost that is involved from our government side is the public representative that we are putting on, and it will cost roughly \$3,000 a year from our Public Works, Supply and Services department.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to move second reading of Bill 18.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper is rising to continue debate. I wonder if you would oblige

us by, at the same time, moving that debate on this Bill be adjourned.

MR. CHADI: Mr. Speaker, indeed that was my intention. I just wanted to rise to inform the House and the Assembly here today that in fact I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services has brought this Bill 21 forward.

At this time in light of the hour, I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 21 and come back another day.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper has moved that we adjourn debate. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, given the hour I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. so that we can move from here to celebrate the birthday of the Member for Calgary-Bow.

[At 5:28 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]