

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, October 31, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/10/31

[The Speaker in the Chair]

### head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving both our province and our country.

Amen.

### head: Presenting Petitions

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition signed by 29 Calgarians urging the government of Alberta to ensure that each eligible child receives a minimum of 400 hours of early childhood services instruction per year.

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

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present two petitions today. The first is on behalf of the Hon. Ty Lund, signed by 56 parishioners of the St. Matthew's Roman Catholic parish in Rocky Mountain House, which asks the government to deinsure induced abortion under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act and to use community-based resources to promote positive alternatives to abortion.

The second petition, on the same subject, I present on behalf of the Hon. Ken Rostad . . .

THE SPEAKER: The Chair would remind the hon. member that names are not used; it's positions. The Minister of Environmental Protection. The hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock.

MR. STELMACH: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. The second petition, on the same subject, I present on behalf of the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It's signed by 180 parishioners of the Sacred Heart parish in Wetaskiwin.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be presenting petitions on my behalf and also on a couple of my colleagues'. The first one is a petition from Our Lady of Perpetual Help, with 125 signatures. The second one is from St. Joseph's, with 47 signatures. These petitions ask that the performance of induced abortion under the Alberta health care insurance plan be deinsured and that community-based resources that are already in place be used to offer positive alternatives to abortion.

On the same topic, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services and MLA for Wainwright: it's from 134 Albertans from the Catholic communities of Killam, Hardisty, Strome, and Galahad again petitioning the Legislature to deinsure abortion.

Also, on behalf of my colleague for Calgary-Varsity, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, two petitions: one from St. Pius X parish and the other from the Canadian Martyrs parish in Calgary, both on the same topic of deinsuring abortions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition signed by 227 individuals from the constituency of Dunvegan urging the government 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 Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wish to present a petition on behalf of the parishioners of St. Bernadette Catholic church: 87 signatures with respect to the deinsurance of abortion.

Thank you.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a colleague on the far right of me said, "How could you miss me?"

I have a couple of petitions I'd like to table today, with your leave, on a very serious matter. One asks the Legislative Assembly to support the Liberal Party Bill requiring a minimum of 400 hours of kindergarten per school year. That's signed by individuals from various parts of the province, including Coronation and Didsbury, as well as from the Rocky Mountain House area.

The second petition, Mr. Speaker, calls upon the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to provide for full funding of kindergarten to 400 hours per year per child. That's signed by individuals from the Edmonton area, from the Peace River area, Vauxhall, as well as from the Drayton Valley area.

Thank you very much, sir.

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

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions on behalf of some of my constituents, and then on behalf of two other members. The petition from my constituents is signed by 344 residents of Bow Island, and they are asking that doctors' care and coverage be kept the same as they have been used to.

I wish to present a petition on behalf of the Member for Taber-Warner. It is signed by 451 parishioners from various parishes in his constituency. They are asking the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to deinsure abortions and ensure that community-based services exist.

As well, I present a petition on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. It is signed by 35 parishioners from the Blood Indian reserve, Immaculate Conception parish, asking the Legislative Assembly to urge government to deinsure abortions and ensure that community-based services exist.

Thank you.

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

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce, firstly, a petition on behalf of 33 parishioners from St. Mary's parish in Beaverlodge, which states that it urges the provincial government 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.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present two petitions on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The first is from 97 residents in northwestern Alberta, again urging the government 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 second petition, Mr. Speaker, is:

We, the undersigned . . . petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to make sexual orientation a part of the Individual's Rights Protection Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for saving the best for the last. I'm tabling a petition from the parishioners of St. Albert Catholic parish urging the government

to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the little village of Bon Accord, that jewel of the northeast, urging the government

to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

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

MR. COUTTS: It's reassuring to know that you have saved the best for the last, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition on behalf of the Member for Banff-Cochrane. This petition is signed by 170 parishioners from St. Mary's Catholic church in Cochrane, Sacred Heart Catholic church in Canmore, and St. Bernard Catholic church in Exshaw. They are urging the government to deinsure abortion and to use community-based resources to promote positive alternatives to abortion.

I'd also like to present a petition on behalf of myself and my constituents, the Holy Cross church in Fort Macleod, 21 parishioners, who urge the government to deinsure the performance of induced abortions under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**1:40**

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table three petitions on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health, the MLA from Chinook: one from the parishioners of Our Lady of Grace church, the other from the parishioners of St. Anthony's, and the

third from the parishioners of St. Paul's in Youngstown, Alberta. These petitions also urge the government 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.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table a petition on behalf of my own constituents in Calgary-Currie, with the same motion.

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-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission today I would like to table a petition signed by hundreds of Albertans. These petitions were collected in Edmonton, Hinton, Morinville, Spruce Grove, and some other locations in the province. They petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to place a moratorium on any further reductions to the budget for health, and to immediately commence a process to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of health care services presently available.

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

MR. COUTTS: I forgot one, Mr. Speaker.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: He just wants to be last.

MR. COUTTS: I did want to be last. That's exactly right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of St. Paul's parish in Brouck I'd like to present a petition with 18 signatures urging the government to deinsure the performance of induced abortions under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act.

Thank you.

### **head: Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to have the petition that I presented yesterday read and received, please.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, presented a petition yesterday and would ask that it be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like the petition I presented yesterday regarding the banning of VLTs to be read and received.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask at this time that the two petitions I tabled yesterday be now read and received, please.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to rescind the changes implemented by the Alberta Health Drug Benefit List in the Alberta Family and Social Services Drug Benefit Supplement, effective November 1, 1993, and thereby reduce the expenditures imposed by this change.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented yesterday regarding the devastation caused by video lottery terminals be now read and received.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, I request that the petition I submitted yesterday concerning the elimination of VLTs be now read and received.

Thank you.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to ask that the petition I presented yesterday on behalf of 505 Redwater, Barrhead, and Westlock residents regarding the decimation of families by video lottery terminals now be read.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask that the petition I tabled yesterday be read and received.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the petition I tabled yesterday asking for the elimination of slot machines be now read and received.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if I might ask that the petition I tabled yesterday in this Assembly now be read to the Assembly.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would now request that the petition I presented yesterday regarding the elimination of video lottery terminals in Alberta be read and received.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the two petitions I presented yesterday be read and received this afternoon.

## THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta re-affirm our support for the five basic principles upon which Medicare was built: accessibility, universality, portability, comprehensiveness, and public administration; and urge the Government of Alberta to uphold these principles.

We also oppose two-tier health care which moves us toward an American-style system.

We also call for national standards for Medicare to be maintained.

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate all Video Lottery Terminals in Alberta and thereby prevent the devastation they are causing to the lives of people, families and communities.

## head:

**Notices of Motions**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I give notice that tomorrow I will be moving that written questions

stand and retain their places on the Order Paper with the exception of questions 249, 250, and 251.

I also give notice that I will move that motions for returns stand and retain their places except for motions 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, and 276.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of the following motion.

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns . . . Whenever that may be.

. . . to recess the fall sitting of the Third Session of the 23rd Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until the time and date for the spring sitting as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

THE SPEAKER: The Minister of Transportation . . . [interjections]

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the work will continue whether they think it or not.

I wish to give oral notice that tomorrow, Wednesday, November 1, 1995, I intend to introduce Bill 52, the Gaming and Liquor Act, and we'll work thereon.

**head:                    Tabling Returns and Reports**  
**1:50**

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table five copies of a report entitled The Commercialization of Biotechnology in Alberta, which is authorized by the Alberta Science and Research Authority's biotechnology committee. The report is intended to encourage a discussion regarding how to maximize our province's biotechnology industry.

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

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take the opportunity to table the statement of expenditures for the Alberta young offenders task force consultation with Albertans, which took place prior to the preparation of our report.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table today with the Legislative Assembly four copies of a six-page letter which was sent to the Premier and a copy to myself. The letter says in part:

The recent altercation between you and your Minister of Health . . . prompted me to ponder if you and your P.C. associates would ever get your act together regarding health reform.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In an effort to help the government with open and accountable government I'm today filing four copies of a report entitled Team Alberta Mission: Final Report on the London, Middle East, and New York trade mission. Further, I'm filing four copies of another report also entitled Team Alberta Mission: Final Report of the London, Middle East, and New York trade mission.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table this afternoon copies of two reports. The first is the summary investigation report by Alberta Labour of an occupational injury that occurred at Northgate Industries in March of this year. The second is an independent workplace audit that was done of Northgate Industries that was also conducted this year.

Thank you.

**head:                    Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members some very important people. One is a prominent Albertan, prominent Edmontonian, former businessman of Spruce Grove, and also the father of our Premier: Mr. Phil Klein. He is accompanied by Melanie and Sue Regier. I ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take a great deal of pleasure in introducing to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly Leanne Yohemas. Leanne is a staff member with the Alberta Liberal caucus, has been since 1993, and before that a summer student, but that's not why I want her recognized today by the Members of the Legislative Assembly. She is also a dedicated, committed, and successful triathlete. She has placed first overall twice this year for women in two important races. She ranked fifth in her age group at the Canadian nationals held in Fort McMurray earlier this year. She is an Alberta elite team member. She is a national triathlon team member for her age group. She's also been nominated for women's age group athlete of the year for 1995. What is especially significant and important is that on November 11, 1995, Leanne Yohemas will compete in the world triathlon competition in Cancún, Mexico, on behalf of Alberta and on behalf of Canada. I would like to recognize that and ask that the Members of the Legislative Assembly join me in doing so.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly grades 5 and 6 students from the Word of Life school in Red Deer, which is an independent school. They are accompanied by their teacher Ms Carol Abt and parent helpers Marilyn Buettner, Colleen Taylor, Lynne Gardner, Pat Sanderson, and Sylvia Gill. I would ask if they would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, it's with pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two members of the oil industry who are visiting our office today: Mr. Jim Tufford and Mr. Rick Watkins. They are from Gulf Canada Resources. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged today to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of 21 students from the Gold Bar school in Gold Bar. They're accompanied by their teacher Ms Holroyd and by parents and helpers Gloria Pelech, Lorna Abramic, and Cherie Hydzik. I understand they're in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce 11 students in grades 7 and 8 from the Progressive Academy school in my riding. The Progressive Academy is an independent, academically oriented school. They're accompanied by their teacher Ms Gaetz. I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce through you to the members of the Assembly Michael McGloin and his wife, Patricia Violette.\* Michael was seriously injured this year at an Edmonton area jobsite as a result of that company's inadequate health and safety standards and the lack of follow-up by the Department of Labour to remedy those standards. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly this afternoon 50 students from the Father Kenneth Kearns school in Sherwood Park. They're accompanied this afternoon by teachers Mr. Jim Schiebelbein and Mrs. Melody Kostiuk; a student teacher who's also a good friend and golfer extraordinaire, Miss Fiona McManus; and parent helpers Mrs. Tammy Conacher, Mrs. Shirley Ahearn, and Mr. Walter Busko. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**head: Oral Question Period**  
**Health Services Restructuring**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, while making a speech paid for in part by major drug companies, Jane Fulton, the Deputy Minister of Health, stated, and I quote: government is now an ancillary player, a regulator, a funder, not a decision maker; the government no longer has the authority to say yes or no. Given that a good portion of the front bench has fled this House, my question is to the chair of the new standing policy committee on health. Does he agree with the deputy minister that government is just an ancillary player in health care, and if so, what's the point of his new committee?

**Speaker's Ruling**  
**Caucus Policy Committees**

THE SPEAKER: Order. The Chair believes the roles of the standing policy committees have been well defined in the House already, and it really isn't up to the chairmen to decide what their roles are. This would appear to the Chair that it should be

answered by the Acting Minister of Health on behalf of the government.

The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Health Services Restructuring**  
*(continued)*

MR. DAY: Thank you for the ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I will be pleased to advise the minister of that particular question.

MR. MITCHELL: I will say, Mr. Speaker, that given that that committee probably has absolutely no mandate and the chairman has no vision, it's understandable that he wouldn't be able to answer the question.

To somebody over there who's acting: now that the government has abdicated authority over health care, how exactly will it establish consistent standards for health care across this province so we don't end up with 17 different health care systems across this province?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is lengthy because of the number of initiatives that are going on in terms of standard setting, so I won't risk being ruled out of order. I will advise the Minister of Health, who is one of a very few who – I can't comment on absences here, but the member did make a reference to the front bench, most of whom are here today. The Minister of Health will be happy to send to the opposition leader an extensive report of the variety of initiatives related to standard setting that are going on in the province.

**2:00**

MR. MITCHELL: Will the acting deputy to the acting deputy to the acting deputy Premier tell the Assembly why the government has abdicated its responsibility for the expenditure of no less than 2 and one-half billion dollars on health care to nonelected regional health authorities that are not in any way accountable to the communities they serve?

MR. DAY: Well, the opposition leader is really struggling with questions today. Again, Mr. Speaker, the list is very extensive in terms of the initiatives being taken by a wide variety of RHAs in terms of how they are getting information to people. There always is the necessity to improve and co-ordinate communication. That message is going from this government to the RHAs, and that'll continue.

**Catholic School System**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is attacking the foundations of Catholic education in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: He's here.

MR. MITCHELL: But he's here.

He is consciously trying to reverse critical provisions extended to Catholic education in the 1988 School Act. [interjections]

MR. HENRY: The Provincial Treasurer's laughing. He thinks it's funny.

**Speaker's Ruling**  
**Decorum**

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. It can't be because of anything he heard so far in relation to that question,

\*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

with the noise that's emanating from the Leader of the Opposition's supporters over there.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: You'd think health care and education . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. You don't have the floor. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor for the second main question.

MR. MITCHELL: Half a million Catholics aren't laughing about this, Mr. Treasurer.

### **Catholic School System** (continued)

MR. MITCHELL: In doing this, in undermining and reversing provisions extended to Catholic education in his 1988 School Act, the Minister of Education is undermining the essence of Catholic education as described by the president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association: "Our schools are to be the training ground and models of the Catholic faith community." To the Minister of Education: is he punishing Catholics for having had the courage to stand up to the minister's previous attempts to undermine Catholic education in this province?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader's introduction to this question is dead wrong. He is completely inaccurate. The Catholic separate school system of this province is operating well today. They are better funded, more equitably funded than they ever have been before. They are also recognized in the School Act during the term of this minister, and that legislation was changed in that regard to recognize the two dimensions of the public school system in this province, the public and the separate.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no attack. There's been no diminishing of the value of Catholic education in this province. The premise of his question is wrong. There has been no attack on that system.

MR. MITCHELL: Once the minister has limited the Catholic school system to the Lord's Prayer and an optional one-half hour religious instruction at the end of the day, will he please explain what exactly is going to be left to make it Catholic education?

MR. JONSON: This minister has quite clearly indicated that there is respect of this government and of this minister for the atmosphere and focus of Catholic schools in this province, Mr. Speaker. What the hon. member across the way is talking about here – and I just wonder what the Liberal position is on this – is that, yes, recently I wrote a letter to the president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association in which I outlined the constitutional provisions which were put in place in 1905, when the Northwest Territories joined Confederation, and which have been respected by this government and by this minister ever since. The president of the ACSTA is not above that law. The Leader of the Opposition is not above that law. We certainly don't think we are either, and we're interpreting it correctly.

MR. MITCHELL: The minister is prepared to forget the development of 90 years of Catholic education in this province, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Supplemental question without preamble.

MR. MITCHELL: Will the minister make a commitment, an unequivocal commitment here and now that his government will not move to merge public and separate school boards into one system in this province?

MR. JONSON: There never was, there is not, and there never will be any intention of this government to violate the foundation of the separate and public school systems in this particular province. To even raise the issue here, Mr. Speaker, is ridiculous. I think he ran out of questions, so he went reaching. We are quite prepared to indicate our support to respecting the constitutional provisions in the existence of these two systems.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, given that a letter has been referred to and that it might be helpful to members of the Assembly to read it, particularly those across the way, I would like to table five copies of the letter that I sent to the president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association.

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

### **Trade Missions**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's unannounced and unscheduled stop at the offices of Multi-Corp in Hong Kong and his subsequent promotion of this company raises some questions about trade missions and the purpose of trade missions by this government. My questions today are to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. When he boasted of this corporation, he talked about drawing the attention of the media to companies like Multi-Corp. Is it the policy of the government to use these trade missions to promote the fortunes and stocks of corporations like Multi-Corp?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

MR. SMITH: Thank you.

MR. MITCHELL: How do you get on that list?

MR. SMITH: By being a businessman.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're trying to do. We're trying to take the companies that add to the Alberta advantage, that take advantage of the environment created by this government, and build international trade and subsequent investment in this province.

MR. BRUSEKER: I appreciate the answer.

My supplementary question: is it the department's policy, then, to schedule stops for the Premier at taxpayers' expense to visit corporations like this, in which the Premier's brother-in-law owns a quarter of a million shares worth \$2 million?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're back onto the topic of scheduling unscheduled stops. In fact we will make unscheduled stops. We will make scheduled stops. We will do whatever we can in this department to promote trade development and to promote investment in this province.

2:10

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the same minister: so when the scheduled stop at the annual general meeting of Multi-Corp was introduced by the . . .

**Speaker's Ruling  
Sub Judice Rule**

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order please. The hon. member originally cloaked this question as being generic in terms. The Chair wants to remind the hon. member that the Chair has received notice from the Ethics Commissioner that he is conducting an investigation into the role of the Premier with regard to Multi-Corp Inc. The rules are clear that when an investigation by the Ethics Commissioner is on, there shouldn't be questions asked about that company.

Now, if the hon. member has a question.

**Trade Missions  
(continued)**

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, then, I'll rephrase the question, Mr. Speaker. Is it the policy of the government to direct the Premier to attend annual general meetings of corporations like the one in question? Because he did.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I have to go on record to say that the policy of this department is to move towards trade development and move towards garnering investment in this province. In fact, despite in many cases loud efforts by the opposition, faxes and other type of information, following people on trade missions, we still believe that there is an ability for investment to occur in Alberta and for trade to occur in Alberta. With the support of this government we'll continue to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Career Development Centres**

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. While we hear much of the waste generated by different levels of government duplicating similar services and programs, I know that in Lethbridge and a few other urban centres the Alberta government and the federal government have been establishing centres in career development and training. These are pilot projects to show that sharing resources and staff can be very efficient and effective. My question to the minister: will the minister explain the current status of this project?

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Essentially we have projects by which our two provincial departments, Advanced Education and Career Development and Family and Social Services, and the federal Department of Human Resource Development are collocating offices in Calgary and Lethbridge and Edmonton. These offices are designed to improve labour market and income support services to Albertans through a one-window approach. The concept is to access training and employ-

ment and income assistance services. These initiatives grew out of a successful experience we had in Athabasca at that regional career service in 1991, where a collocation of services proved to be very successful and a beneficial exercise. These new centres will be ready for service next spring for those who require those services.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you. To the same minister. I wonder if he might advise what other provincial and federal partnerships might currently be under way or planned for the near future.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the two levels of government believe that by merging income support and labour market services, efficiencies will be gained through these initiatives and effectiveness for Alberta clients will be increased. Although the project is just at its beginning stage, I'm confident that we will see this initiative have a positive impact not only on the clients that we serve by providing them with a whole array of government services and a one-window setting but also on the taxpayers, because we will have made major progress in reducing duplication and overlap in government bureaucracies in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

**Trade Mission to Asia**

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Speaker, this summer Hollywood released its blockbuster movie called *Pulp Fiction*. Not to be outdone, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism released his report on the Asian trade mission of the Premier. Despite the fact that the minister read and authorized this report for release, it contained 48 exaggerations and overstatements. My question, then, to the government through that minister is: was that release a deliberate attempt to overstate the success of the mission or mere negligence?

MR. SMITH: No, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question. [interjections] Supplemental question. [interjections] Would the hon. member's colleagues please give him a chance to ask his supplemental question?

MR. GERMAIN: In light of that last answer, Mr. Speaker, will the minister, then, tell us why he corrected those errors by issuing a whole new final report as opposed to putting out an admission of the errors?

MR. SMITH: The errors were openly admitted to, Mr. Speaker, and in fact we just took the correct course of action and issued the revised version that accurately reflected what in fact occurred.

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Speaker, in light of that last answer I wonder if the minister could tell us why the hosting tab on this trip went from \$977 to \$3,856.25 without changing the bottom line of the trip by a penny.

MR. SMITH: No.

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

### Crow Benefit

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last federal budget the government of Canada announced the cancellation of the Western Grain Transportation Act. On August 1, 1995, the historic subsidy known as the Crow rate, paid to the railways to subsidize the movement of prairie grain to the east and west, was eliminated. In the announced repeal of the WGTA the federal government made provisions for a one-time payout of \$1.6 billion to prairie landowners as compensation, a far cry from the \$8 billion that was on the table a few years before that. Would the minister explain to the Assembly what Alberta farmers need to do to take full advantage of this program?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking. Indeed this is a very timely question. Even though the Liberals aren't interested, today is the cut-off day for the application for this particular program. This, as far as agriculture is concerned, is a very, very important part of their operations.

2:20

For years and years and years the Crow benefit was used to subsidize product movement to export position. As of the spring budget the hon. member has correctly identified that there was to be a complete payout that indeed would remove any further subsidy to the transportation of grain for exports. Today is the cutoff day. Today is the last day. Originally September 30 was to be the last day. This was extended to October 31 by the federal minister because of late harvest, and I would urge all farmers to sit down immediately and bring forward their applications if they have not yet done so.

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, what actions are being taken to ensure that farmers who have rotated forage and grain will be paid what they are entitled to?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Alberta produces 51 percent of all forage that's produced in Canada. Unfortunately, under this program there was no accommodation made for the payout of forages. Recognizing this and recognizing the importance that forage plays in the ongoing rotation within the agricultural community of Alberta, the Alberta government has lobbied the federal government very strongly to see that there is some accommodation made for the payout of forages. We have been locked in the process because the federal government has indicated that this should be part of the safety net program. We have had ongoing discussions, and it is our hope, Mr. Speaker, that indeed we're going to be able to come forward with a process that will allow for some sort of payment to be made for forage production in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of fairness what is the minister of agriculture's plan to compensate Alberta farmers for the loss of the Crow benefit? [interjections]

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, it's interesting why the Liberals aren't paying attention to some of this, because it does involve agriculture, a clear indication that there is no interest and a clear

indication that there is no support whatsoever for agriculture. I think that's very, very evident, and it's unfortunate. I'm sure the farmers of Alberta will recognize that. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to recognize . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: He's been studying the question for a week, so give him a chance. Give him a chance. It's taken him a week to learn the answer.

THE SPEAKER: Please give him a chance.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it'll be another three months before the hon. Member for Redwater knows the answer. A week isn't sufficient for him.

Mr. Speaker, this is something of great importance to the agricultural community, and it's unfortunate that we have people taking this so lightly. Indeed, agriculture is our future and not our past, and perhaps you should recognize that.

We as a government are not taking a direct involvement, because we as a government are no longer in the business of being in business. We as a government are simply going to be facilitating. With the new mode that's happening because of the removal of the Crow benefit, processing, jobs, value added will be happening right here in the province of Alberta, and it's time that people recognized that. There's a savings alone of 50 cents a bushel on average in Alberta by doing that value adding right here in this province, not to mention the additional jobs and the revenue from the value added that comes forward. It is, indeed, our strong position to continue to work with the farmers to see that the value added, that the final processing is done right here in the province of Alberta and we as Albertans are benefactors of this.

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

### Work Site Safety

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Michael McGloin, whom I introduced earlier, was injured this year on a jobsite that manufactures portable trailers. He suffered second and third degree burns to his hands, first and second degree burns to his neck, and second degree burns to his ears. Despite two previous complaints to occupational health and safety prior to Mr. McGloin's accident, no action was taken. After his accident, when an independent safety audit was finally conducted, it was discovered that on average 95 percent of the company's safety procedures and equipment standards were unacceptable. This is appalling, especially as this company continues to operate. Mr. McGloin has requested that I ask the Minister of Labour why the department of occupational health and safety has failed him and other injured workers regarding the enforcement of occupational health and safety regulations in this province.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I don't often give credit to the *Edmonton Journal*, but in this particular case, with the story that was published in the *Journal*, from which the member got some of her information, there was an extensive list showing the decline in injury rates over the last few years. There was a comment by a professor of occupational health and safety who observed that the approach being taken by occupational health and safety, which is one in which you work as far as possible at least in co-ordination and at times somewhat forced co-operation with industry to



develop standards, yields better results and more protection for workers than strictly on the prosecution side.

MR. MITCHELL: What about what happened to that individual?

MR. DAY: I think, Mr. Speaker, we need to address also a further report of occupational health and safety which said in fact . . .

MR. MITCHELL: All the reports won't help him.

MR. DAY: You know, the Leader of the Opposition is obviously nervous about the upcoming convention he's facing this weekend. If he would be quiet for a few minutes, we'd be able to get some information out. We have an injured worker here today who this means something to, and the leader of the Liberals keeps shrieking, and I can't hardly communicate the facts here.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the report indicates clearly that the two previous investigations by occupational health and safety, one specifically on I believe July 6, 1994, had nothing to do with this particular incident at all or the particular tank which was involved. However, the occupational health and safety officer who did leave a report for follow-up for that particular company did not follow up to see if in fact the procedures that he had observed, not related to this accident, were going to be corrected. In fact we have taken steps internally to deal with that particular overlooking of duties by an occupational health and safety officer, although that was not related to this particular incident.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the minister can explain why employers in this province are no longer held accountable for injuries that occur at their work sites. With five major safety regulations being infringed in this particular incident, the employer has not had one single fine or penalization against him.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat concerned with the approach here because overall the statistics are very clear that industry associations and employers in general are being very aggressive about health and safety. In fact they are finding the results from that through a decline in injury rates.

MR. HENRY: Answer the question.

MR. DAY: That guy should listen to his mother-in-law and follow her example of good order in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, what continues to happen is that overall there has been great improvement in industries and in companies, but here we have a situation, as I've already said, one incident in which unfortunately procedures were not followed. A report indicates that procedures were not followed by the company and by the worker, and we had a very unfortunate incident. I think both worker and company are thankful today that the worker in fact is even alive.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is unfair to take one incident and then use the phrase the member did: all employers.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Isn't it time that the minister recognizes that the Safety Codes Act, the minister's attempt at deregulation and privatization of safety and health regulations in this province, is not working and is jeopardizing the health of workers in this province?

MR. DAY: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, if the member would just turn to the *Edmonton Journal* research, if she doesn't believe mine, overall health and safety is improving in this province. As I've said, the OHS report showed that there were things that were overlooked by the worker in bringing a explosiveproof halogen lamp into a nonventilated tank. There were also oversights by the company in terms of not having clear procedures. That has been very aggressively followed up.

I might add, for the purpose of total accuracy and truthfulness in this Assembly – the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark filed an audit report here in the Assembly today, and I would suggest that when this is done, so that we are not misled, the entire report be filed. There were a number of positives in this report. Every second page from this report is missing.

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

2:30

#### Fine Collection

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent Auditor General's report states that the Department of Justice's procedures for collecting fines imposed on out-of-province residents are ineffective. The Auditor General's report also indicates that a number of fines imposed on young offenders are not collected. The Auditor General in fact was indirectly hinting that the whole fines collection system needs an overhaul. My questions are all to the hon. Minister of Justice. Would the minister advise this Assembly what action he is planning for collecting fines imposed on out-of-province residents?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is rather difficult at times to collect out-of-province fines. We can put restrictions on services available, on motor vehicles for people who live in this province when they're fined. We can't do that at the present for those who are fined from outside of the province of Alberta.

What I would like to do, certainly, is work with other provinces to have a uniform database and reciprocal enforcement of judgments and fines so that if someone is fined in this province and is picked up in another jurisdiction, that fine will be enforced and reciprocally the same if people are here in our province. It also must be remembered, Mr. Speaker, that oftentimes these fines are rather low in sum, and we have to look at the cost-benefit analysis of expending public funds going after an individual in another jurisdiction. So I think the most practical way to deal with it, really, is to have a reciprocal agreement with other provinces and territories, and we're certainly working on that.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, what are you going to do regarding collecting more fines imposed on young offenders?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of young offenders I think the hon. member would recognize that currently under the Young Offenders Act we're not allowed to pass on the names of young offenders who have been convicted, and that's something that I think should be dealt with and should be amended in the federal legislation. That'll give us more authority to act. I think it's probably pretty obvious as well that oftentimes young offenders don't have too many resources available to them, so proceeding against them to try to collect a fine is not always going to be successful.

I would also point out to hon. members that the young offenders task force made some recommendations about parental accountability and said that if there's evidence before a court that parents have not been carrying out their responsibilities in terms of dealing with their young people and giving them the kinds of discipline that we would normally associate with a parent/child relationship, then there should be an opportunity to make those parents responsible in the sense of restitution and in terms of payment of fine, and I think that's very positive as well.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister please tell this Assembly if he indeed intends to revamp his system, obtain a new system for fines collection?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, my department has reviewed carefully the Auditor General's recommendations, and we've set up a task force to look at all of the aspects of our fines collection. Quite frankly, there was a recommendation that perhaps we could set up a brand-new system. Because of limited resources in the department and the focuses that we have, we're looking instead at trying to improve the existing system and doing it in a cost-effective manner. If that's not successful, then we'll certainly be looking at a new and improved system.

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

### Crown Prosecutors

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans concerned about public safety, better treatment of crime victims, and also family violence understand that the job of the Crown prosecutor is absolutely critical, but many of our Crown prosecutors have seen their workloads increase up to 300 percent. They no longer have adequate time to prepare court cases, and to add insult to injury, our prosecutors are the lowest paid prosecutors in Canada. The minister talks about being tough on crime, but his inaction tells us much more than his rhetoric. My question is to the hon. Minister of Justice. How does the minister expect his Crown prosecutors to combat crime in the courtroom when he refuses to give them the tools they need to do the job?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I recently met in Red Deer with our Crown prosecutors in central Alberta to talk about the practical concerns that these hardworking people have about how they can deal with caseloads, how they can utilize technology more effectively so that they will be able to concentrate their efforts on the job before them.

The hon. member opposite has made a good point. We are losing some very, very competent, well-trained, and in my humble opinion some of the best prosecutors in Canada from our department. They are going out into the private sector. Now, that's

happening in other areas of government as well, and it does happen on a regular basis with our Crown prosecutors, who do go into private practice.

I undertook when I met with our prosecutors to do everything within the budget constraints that we're operating in, when we're talking about reducing the number of courtrooms that we have, taking care of utilization issues to try to make sure that we are as efficient as possible, to make their lot better. I do agree with the hon. member that having competent, well-paid, well-remunerated, and dedicated people in the courtrooms to look after criminal prosecutions is extremely important to the system.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, my supplemental question to the minister would be this. What specifically is this minister planning on doing to ensure that we don't have underpaid, inexperienced prosecutors being eaten up and spit out by senior, highly paid defence counsel?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have the statistics in front of me today, but I would put our prosecutors up against prosecutors anywhere in Canada in terms of their success rate in getting after criminal activity when they get into a courtroom, and that's going to remain.

Serious and violent crime is one of the focuses of this department, and certainly reduction in criminal activity is paramount in our three-year business plan and in our mission and vision about creating safer communities in this province. So we are prepared to analyze on an ongoing basis the budget that's allocated to prosecutors and again, as I mentioned earlier, to attempt to upgrade our technology as quickly as possible so that our prosecutors can take advantage of that technological improvement.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. While the minister is looking at upgrading his equipment, would he tell us specifically how he plans to ensure that Crown prosecutors in Calgary, who already have the highest caseloads in the province, deal with what's been a significant haemorrhage of some of the most senior Crown counsel? [interjections]

MR. EVANS: They're certainly noisy across there today, Mr. Speaker. Must be a full moon or something.

DR. WEST: Halloween.

MR. EVANS: Good comment. It is Halloween.

Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do in Calgary is no different than what we're trying to do across the province. We've had a reduction in the number of courthouses, we've had a reduction in the number of Provincial Court judges, and we've had a reduction in the number of Crown prosecutors. We're analyzing that on an ongoing basis to try to deal with the pressure points and make sure that the people who are delivering the service to us are not overworked, are paid at a reasonable rate, and are able to get the kinds of results that society in this great province of Alberta demands.

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

### 2:40 Access by Noncustodial Parents

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the Minister of Justice's day today. All my questions are to the Minister of

Justice. Many Albertans honour the terms of their child maintenance agreements faithfully every month, yet many of these noncustodial parents are denied access to the children they love and support. If the province of Alberta can take steps to enforce maintenance arrangements, what actions can be taken to ensure the rights of noncustodial parents in upholding the terms of access agreements?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, firstly, we can make every effort to ensure that parents who have decided they are not going to continue living in the same household recognize, when they have children, the great negative impact that can occur with respect to those children if they don't come to a consensus on the best interests of the children. I don't think that's happening right now. There are a number of initiatives that are trying to analyze how we can deal with this more productively. I myself have suggested that we consider a mandatory three- or four-hour term of dispute resolution with competent individuals sitting down with both parents and trying to make them focus not on their own issues, not on their emotions but rather on the impact on their children. I know that the Alberta law reform commission is looking at this issue. As I've stated earlier in the House, there is a federal, provincial, and territorial task force that is looking at this, and the Women's Secretariat is looking at it as well.

MS CALAHASEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, knowing that these parents that are denied access don't have any recourse, instead of doing that kind of a mandatory item, is there anything else we can do to ensure that these parents can have access?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to speed up the process of getting back into court if there is a lack of following of a court order relative to access. Now, it's a little more complicated than a matter dealing with maintenance, because with maintenance it's very easy to check into a bank account and see whether a payment has been made. Access is a little more subjective, and obviously there are two sides to every story. I think it's important, hon. member, that what we do is try to speed up the process so that those parents who have been denied access or allege that they've been denied access pursuant to a court order have easy access back into court and that judges are there ready, willing, and able to listen to the applications and to make the appropriate findings on the facts given.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recognizing that the legal process is expensive, intimidating, and often ineffective in civil matters, can the minister give us any indication of steps he is prepared to take to address the concern of these children and their parents to remedy this situation?

MR. EVANS: I think that the member is really just asking for clarification of what we are going to do. Now, there has been a very good and positive private member's Bill that actually passed as a government Bill in this House back in 1993 that had as its premise a quicker and more effective way of getting back into the court. It also dealt with mediation to try to ensure that the parties did not just focus on themselves and the animosity that they felt

for each other but rather on what the implications are of their conduct.

I would certainly welcome the hon. member making any other suggestions as to ways of dealing with this. The federal task force has put out a paper and is asking for input on that paper. Certainly, hon. member, you'll have an opportunity to input into that. As I think I said last week in this House, Mr. Speaker, I met with over 75 concerned parents during the summertime to try to get some suggestions from them as well. These are people who've been impacted by the process. We'd like to hear back from them.

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

### Treasury Branches

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Norman Green owes the Treasury Branches at least \$150 million, probably closer to \$180 million. Scrutiny of the financial statements of the Dallas Stars shows that on those financial statements, the Alberta Treasury Branches are listed as being owed \$39 million. This is the Dallas Stars, which were the Minnesota North Stars, which are an American hockey team. Furthermore, over and above the \$39 million to the Alberta Treasury Branches there's \$10 million owing to the Pittsburgh Penguins, \$6.4 million owed to the National Hockey League, and miscellaneous other debt. My first question is to the Provincial Treasurer. What in God's name are the Alberta Treasury Branches doing lending money to an American hockey team, up to 40 million bucks? What are we doing there?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, some 57 years ago when William Aberhart was the Premier of Alberta, he moved a motion in this Assembly creating the Alberta Treasury Branches. Since that day it's been a practice of the Provincial Treasurer of the day not to discuss on the floor of the Assembly or anywhere in a public forum or anywhere at all the matters that were privileged information between a client of the Treasury Branches and Treasury Branches. I as the Provincial Treasurer of Alberta will not break that custom. I don't think it is appropriate that I would talk about the financial relationship between Treasury Branches and one of its clients. It's a practice that I follow, and I know, sir, that you would support me in not breaking that practice.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, the acting superintendent of the Alberta Treasury Branches reports to that minister, and in terms of ministerial accountability that minister is responsible.

We want to close the barn door before the horses escape. My question again is: exactly what is that minister going to do to ensure that Alberta taxpayers don't end up losing \$40 million backstopping an American hockey team?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, not speaking specifically about a client of the Treasury Branches – I would not want to do that, to break that tradition, break that custom, because I don't think it's appropriate. Treasury Branches is in the business of taking deposits from Albertans and investing them so that depositors will get a return on their money. At the same time, it's also in the business of loaning money to its customers, and it's in the practice of hopefully getting that money back with interest. Clearly, if banking were a business where there was a hundred percent guarantee of getting your money back, even the hon.

member would probably set up his own bank. He has not. He's chosen, probably quite wisely, not to do so.

In this case, with the Treasury Branches being the ninth largest financial institution in the country, Mr. Speaker, one of its jobs of course is to make sure that it gets its money back. One of the things I have to rely on is that the Auditor General reviews the Treasury Branches' financial statements. If there is some doubt that that money will not be repaid, there is adequate and proper provision on the accounts, in the financial statements of Treasury Branches, to reflect that. I have been advised by the Auditor General personally but as well when he signs the opinion on his financial statements in here that adequate provision has been made in the event that any money may not be paid back to Treasury Branches.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, why are there two sets of rules? As I have constituents, I know people in Calgary who are having their homes sold because they owe \$30,000 to the Treasury Branches, and they're being sold under auction. Yet Norm Green can stick it to the Alberta Treasury Branches for \$150 million and walk away laughing. Why are there two sets of rules?

MR. DINNING: There are not two sets of rules, Mr. Speaker.

#### head: Members' Statements

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

#### 2:50 School Fees

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some years ago I had the fortune to spend some time in the Third World, and I visited a primary school just outside Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. When the school operators told me that education was free in their country, I wondered why I did see countless children who were clearly not attending school. While there were no tuition fees, each family was responsible for providing a prescribed desk worth 90 kwacha and a uniform worth another 40, about two months' salary for the average worker. Some public education.

So, now, what about Alberta today? Is our public education system really fully publicly funded? Imagine a single parent raising two children by earning about \$9 per hour, which is a lot more than a lot of people make in this province. After buying school clothes, winter coats, inside and outside shoes, that parent could easily face such fees as \$720 for transportation, a \$30 mailing fee, a \$120 materials fee, \$80 for field trips, a \$14 locker rental, \$25 for arts and crafts. In addition, if the children, like most, fully want to participate, the fees for two children for band would be about \$400, home ec or industrial arts, another \$75, and outdoor education, another \$55. So before buying any school supplies or paper or pencils, this parent could face a bill of over \$1,500 for the school year. That's 10 percent of this person's income before taxes, assuming they don't have an ECS child with additional fees of up to 400 dollars plus per year.

I ask: what's the difference between what I saw in the Third World country and Alberta today? Both profess to support public education, yet both have significant user fees for participation in that system. This government's gone too far in off-loading the cost of education onto the backs of parents regardless of their personal income. Full access to public education should not mean full access if your parents can afford to pay \$1,500 for the year. We're moving fast to a widening gap between haves and have-nots

in this province, and the responsibility for this lies with the Premier, with his ministers, and with every member of this government.

Thank you.

#### Canadian Unity

MR. LANGEVIN: M. le Président de l'Assemblée, le Canada, c'est mon pays; c'est ma patrie. Il s'étend d'une mer à l'autre, avec ses belles montagnes et ses beaux lacs, with its beautiful forests and wonderful prairies, avec le grand nord et ses océans. Mais mon pays, c'est encore plus. It is its people, son peuple, all those who live within its boundaries, the two founding nations and all the immigrants who came from all over the world. It has a colourful history. It is the best country in the world, the greatest country. Let us all commit ourselves to preserving it.

The Canadian federation was formed in the years leading up to 1867. A Constitution was adopted, and it served us well for many, many years. Le pays s'est agrandi et s'est épanoui. We celebrated our centennial with pride, avec honneur et dignité, avec joie et fierté, fier d'être Canadien, proud to be Albertans, fier d'être Québécois et Québécoises. But during the last 30 years or so discontent set in. Le Québec demandait d'être reconnu comme peuple distinct. L'Alberta était très offensée par le fameux NEP, the national energy program, and most Canadians were totally opposed to the GST. All provinces are still having areas of concern.

The federal system is no longer working. Three attempts were made to resolve the differences and address the concerns: first, the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, then Meech Lake, and the Charlottetown accord. All attempts failed miserably. They failed because the feds had a vested interest in protecting their central power. Hier le peuple de la Belle Province a voté pour rester avec nous, mais c'est clair qu'il faut un changement. Le message est fort. Let us try a new avenue and ask the feds to step aside this time. We should say: "Please, do not phone us; we will call you." I am convinced that the provinces and the territories can negotiate a new deal, like they did in 1867, without the presence of the feds. With a renewed federalism, decentralization of power, and recognition of the provinces, we would be on the road to success again.

Vive le Canada. Vive les Canadiens et les Canadiennes. Vive le plus beau pays du monde. Vive la différence.

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

#### Schoolteachers

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta educators comprise a very special group of professionals charged with the very serious responsibility of helping to diagnose and meet the learning needs of our young people. Teachers work tirelessly to help shape and prepare our youth for the many challenges that await them in the real world.

Teachers spend an enormous amount of time in this pursuit. In fact, during an average workweek teachers can spend more time with our children than do some parents. In many instances teachers are even viewed as mother and/or father figures by some students. Teachers are indeed very influential role models in the classroom as well as in the community at large. Their work never ends at 3:30, nor are they exempt from evening work or from work on weekends. Countless hours are spent privately tutoring students in need of extra assistance or helping students with

personal problems or leading extracurricular activities in the arts, sports, or vocational areas, for example.

Yet as higher and higher expectations are being thrust upon teachers, we see lower and lower commitments from this government toward education. How can teachers be expected to meet those expectations and to maintain the high standards they set for themselves and for their students when in many instances this government is operating against them? In spite of ever increasing challenges, such as overcrowded classrooms, unacceptably high student/teacher ratios, and stepped-up demands to do things like fund-raising, Alberta teachers continue to do their excellent work to educate our youth to become responsible learners, informed adults, and an enlightened public overall.

We owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to those who dedicate themselves daily to these challenges, the outcome of which so dramatically impacts our future as a society. As legislators let us be very careful to never allow the role or importance of teachers in this province to be demeaned. Let us not try and make teachers into salespeople and fund-raisers. Their time is far better spent teaching our most precious resource, our students.

Mr. Speaker, teachers are trying to teach. Let's let them teach, that students may learn, that we as a society may truly benefit overall from their collective endeavours. As a former school-teacher I, along with many of my colleagues on this side of the House who are also former school teachers, salute the dedication and commitment to educational excellence exhibited by our Alberta teachers.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader has indicated, along with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, that there are points of order.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Questions outside Government Responsibility

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order deals with the question raised by the Member for Vermilion-Viking, and in particular I'd like to cite *Beauchesne* 409(6). The question that was directed at that time was directed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The citation that I'm raising is: "A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government." Now, using the words "competence" and "government" in the same sentence is kind of an oxymoron, like jumbo shrimp. In this particular case the question asked about the issue of a federal program and what farmers in Alberta could do to access this federal program. Clearly the provincial minister of agriculture has no indication or has no knowledge of what can be done about a federal program. Therefore, in my opinion both the original question and the first supplementary question should indeed have been ruled out of order.

I'd also like to draw the Speaker's attention to *Beauchesne* 410(7): "Brevity both in questions and answers [should be] of great importance." The minister could use the time in ministerial statements for standing up and talking about value added and so on, which had absolutely nothing to do with the topic of accessing a federal program, which was a question that was out of order. So we had a long answer to an inappropriate question that consumed more time in the House than it should have.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking on the point of order.

3:00

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the hon. Opposition House Leader referred to Vermilion-Viking. I don't believe there's a member in the House that represents Vermilion-Viking.

In response to the hon. Opposition House Leader's point of order, there is a very strong relationship between the provincial minister of agriculture and the federal minister of agriculture in terms of sponsoring and setting policy in terms of a lot of these programs. One of them was the elimination of the WGTA, and part of the question was: what happened to the \$8 billion that was on the table in the early '90s, and how was it arbitrarily, unilaterally reduced to \$1.6 billion? That's all we want to know. Where is it?

THE SPEAKER: When the Chair heard the question – and the hon. Opposition House Leader is correct that it is inappropriate to ask questions where another jurisdiction has competence – the Chair thought that the hon. member was also asking about the response of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to the cancellation of that program, what the provincial response would be, and in that sense the question was in order. I would probably agree with the hon. member that it was sort of crafted in very wide terms, and the Chair would remind all hon. members that they should keep their questions focused in the area where there is governmental accountability.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### Point of Order

#### Imputing Motives

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h) and (i) I'd like to address the comments that the Minister of Labour made on the questions that I had asked him. I think that the minister, caught up in the spirit of the moment, alleged that I deliberately left out every second page of a report and that on every second page it would just so happen that there would be the positive elements of the report on that. Rather, in the spirit of open and accountable and co-operative opposition, what I did was I tabled the report to refresh the minister's memory of an incident that the minister himself has the report of.

In the attempt to save paper – and I'm sure the minister of the environment, were he here, would be able to acknowledge and praise the opposition for doing that – it appears that we missed every second page of the report. The minister, in an attempt to deflect the questions that were asked of him, which focused on the abrogation of his responsibility and the responsibility of the occupational health and safety branch of the department with regards to workers in this province, seems to have tried to deflect it by indicating that we were trying to hide something by the report that was tabled.

I'd like to assure the minister that as soon as the report makes the long trek from the Annex over to the Legislative Assembly, both sides of the report will be presented, or the minister could just as well ask for that report from his department within this building. We can present both sides as well.

Thank you.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, a couple of points. There was no abrogation of responsibility. As a matter of fact, I responded very specifically to the incident, giving details to statistics as far as injury rates and to the admission that within the department there

had been an oversight in terms of an occupational health and safety worker not returning to follow up on a report. There was no deflection whatsoever. I merely suggested, not accused, that when someone files a report and leaves out every second page of the report – did I suggest the member opposite was doing something dishonest? No. I said: in the interest of honesty and accuracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, the precedent of this House is very clear that we take members at their word, even though members opposite did not take our Premier at his word when he left one little word off a letter, a three-letter word. They carried on for days. They did not follow the precedent of the House, which is to take members at their word. However, I will not stoop to that level. I will take the member at her word that this was an honest oversight and would ask in the future that she be more careful in working with her own staff to make sure these reports get tabled in their entirety.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the Chair would thank both hon. members for clarifying this incident in question period.

### Point of Order

#### Questions about Treasury Branch Clients

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw to your attention and ask for your ruling to do with a matter that has concerned me actually for some time, and that is the matter of dealing with the relationship between the Treasury Branch and its client. In a normal banking relationship between a banker and their client, it's a matter of trust and confidence.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's concern with the particular account, and I don't question his motives in answering the question, but I think there's an important principle here. If I can raise the matter between the Treasury Branch and Mary Smith down the street, who maybe only has a \$5,000 car loan, or the matter between a Treasury Branch and farmer Brown, who gets financing for his land, or even further, if we could even draw in the Alberta Agriculture Financial Services Corporation and talk about each one of their clients, I think we're setting a dangerous precedent. Now, I know that these two, the Treasury Branch and Agriculture Financial Services, have a unique relationship to this government, and that's why I'm asking you at this time if you would take that under consideration and ask whether it is appropriate to raise those kinds of questions on the floor of this Legislature.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reply to the point of order. I mean, it's very clear when you look at the reporting relationship of the Alberta Treasury Branches that the acting superintendent reports to the Provincial Treasurer. It is also very clear that there is absolutely no other mechanism. I in fact have on my desk three rejections under the freedom of information Act for material that I requested from the Alberta Treasury Branches. So I've tried every channel that is open and possible. We get no answers in Public Accounts when we bring these issues up.

The fundamental issue here: this is not a commercial bank, Mr. Speaker, in the normal sense. It is backstopped by Alberta taxpayers; \$9 billion in savings deposits are self-insured by the Alberta Treasury Branches. We collectively have an obligation to watch how that so-called bank operates in a prudent fashion, and when it appears that the Peter Pocklington of the world, the

Norman Greens of the world, the Ghermezians of the world, the Hal Walkers, probably even the Ryckmans of the world get a nice ride from the Treasury Branches, I think it is our responsibility in this House to bring it up because it is taxpayers' dollars that are at risk.

There is not a board in place yet for the Alberta Treasury Branches, though one is going to perhaps emerge sometime in the winter or the spring. Even then there's nothing equivalent to an annual general meeting of shareholders where I as a shareholder could go in and say: "How is this bank being operated? Why did you make those loans? Why are your administrative costs so high, and why is your performance so mediocre relative to every other commercial institution of comparable size?" Those are questions that I think it is appropriate for us to raise both in question period and in debate on the estimates.

I would just bring home two points, Mr. Speaker. Since it is an agency of the government, it impinges on the bottom line. Since we are on a consolidated bookkeeping basis for the province, any change in the fiscal position of the Alberta Treasury Branches shows up as a change both in the deficit of the province, on the consolidated basis, as well as the debt. It's clear, then, that once it directly impinges on those types of fiscal variables, we have every right, I think, to bring it up and discuss it in the House.

The government can't have it both ways in this. If they want it to be viewed as a commercial bank, then they ought to privatize it, because after all they did undertake studies through Treasury Branches to assess the privatization. As it is right now, it's neither fish nor fowl, though, you know, some of the portfolio I think is decidedly foul. So I think that the government has to get off the proverbial pot and decide what they're going to do with the Treasury Branches. Are they going to privatize them, or are they going to put them at arm's length? Are they going to have some professional managers in there so that we don't end up having the Dallas Stars owing \$40 million to the Alberta Treasury Branches?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### 3:10

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, further to the point of order, I'll await your ruling as far as what was raised by Red Deer-South.

I would also ask on this point of order – the member opposite who just completed his statements I think is treading dangerously close to the brink of impropriety when he just casually throws out the names of citizens. I have no idea who some of these individuals are, but he throws these names out. I have no idea what association it is. The fact of the matter is that this public arena does get reported on, and *Beauchesne* is very clear about these casual reflections, that unfortunately fall like dandruff on the public perception and can be damaging to the reputation and name of others. I would request a word of guidance from you on that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South I think certainly is entitled to raise his concerns in this area, but the Chair doesn't really believe it can make a definitive ruling. The Chair can only point out to hon. members that particularly on the first point about the propriety of the general question, the Chair really is loath to do anything that restricts the freedom of speech of all hon. members, because if we can't have reasonable latitudes here, we're greatly inhibited in dealing with the people's business. But on the other side of that, there are responsibilities not to abuse that situation.

The Chair feels that the hon. Provincial Treasurer is certainly capable of standing his ground with respect to what has apparently become a tradition in this House about answering questions about specific loans. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud will no doubt continue to attempt to raise concerns about the lending policies of the Alberta Treasury Branches. That, I guess, is going to be sort of a cost of doing business in this area.

Certainly the Government House Leader raises a good point, and the Chair would like to caution the hon. member about the casual dropping of names and would refer all hon. members to citation 493(4) of *Beauchesne* that covers that. When people who are not here cannot in any way defend themselves, it's not really appropriate, I don't think, for us members to just casually sprinkle their names throughout the deliberations of the House. The Chair would leave this matter at that for all members to make themselves familiar with those things and to govern themselves accordingly.

**head: Orders of the Day**  
**head: Public Bills and Orders Other than**  
**head: Government Bills and Orders**  
**head: Third Reading**

**Bill 212**

**Motor Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 1995**

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm ready to close debate. I will yield the floor if anybody wishes to speak before my closing remarks.

THE SPEAKER: Does the hon. member wish to move third reading of this Bill?

MR. DOERKSEN: Sorry. Yes, I would be pleased to move third reading of Bill 212.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

MR. DOERKSEN: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. As I understood it – again I need your clarification – I had time to speak in general debate, and then I also had time, five minutes at the end, to close debate. I wish to yield the floor for anybody who wanted to speak before I close debate, because I do have some words that I'd like to say but only upon closing debate.

THE SPEAKER: Well, they were given the opportunity. If nobody wishes to rise, then you may close debate.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Mr. Speaker, on Bill 212 I just wish to remind the members here that we've had a good debate. We've had some exciting times in the House on the vote in committee.

I just want to remind the members that the object of this Bill is to reduce the number of injury accidents and fatalities on our highways and on our streets. Many of us have witnessed firsthand – I know I have – accidents that should not have happened, and we've sat and held the heads of people who have been injured in these accidents. What this Bill proposes to do is to try to reduce the number of times that that happens so that all of us can live safer and healthier lives in this province. In that sense, Mr. Speaker, I will classify this Bill as a nonhealth health Bill. Governments all across Canada are struggling to control health

care costs, and many of the efforts have been directed at the supply side of the equation in the health care field. What this Bill proposes to do or could do is serve to reduce the demand through the reduced number of injury accidents that happen on our streets and on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, there's been an issue that's come to my attention. The minister has indicated in his speech that he will conduct a consultation with stakeholders on matters of testing provisions prior to implementation. I'm going to encourage him, in his examination of the issues, to consider the fact of older new drivers and immigrant new drivers, because it is a concern particularly for immigrants coming to Canada who wish to work and who need to drive to do so and for those who have never driven before. While the evidence is clear that older new drivers are also a higher risk, the other side we do have to consider is whether there should be some provisions made that could accommodate these drivers in obtaining their licences sooner so that they can also obtain and maintain meaningful employment. So I'm asking the minister in his consultation to consider that aspect prior to proclamation. I'd also ask that prior to proclamation the minister examine the current testing provisions that are now in place in Alberta so that we can make sure that prior to gaining an unrestricted driver's licence, drivers would have a sufficient test that would examine their ability to be on the road.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recommend this Bill to the House. I would ask the members to vote in accordance with what I think are good principles of the Bill, principles that have been supported at second reading, principles that I think make common sense.

I therefore now move third reading of Bill 212.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: The question having been called on the motion for third reading of Bill 212, Motor Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 1995, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:20 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Black	Fritz	McFarland
Brassard	Gordon	Oberg
Burgener	Hanson	Percy
Clegg	Havelock	Pham
Day	Hlady	Sekulic
Dinning	Jacques	Tannas
Doerksen	Laing	Taylor, N.
Fischer	Langevin	White
Forsyth	Leibovici	Yankowsky
Friedel	Massey	

Against the motion:

Abdurahman	Germain	Sapers
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Ady	Haley	Shariff
Amery	Hierath	Smith
Bracko	Kirkland	Soetaert
Bruseker	Kowalski	Stelmach
Calahasen	Mirosh	Thurber
Chadi	Nicol	Van Binsbergen
Collingwood	Paszkowski	Vasseur
Dickson	Renner	Zwozdesky
Dunford		
Totals:	For - 29	Against - 28

[Motion carried; Bill 212 read a third time]

## head: Motions Other than Government Motions

### Child Poverty

515. Ms Hanson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate steps to reduce the number of Alberta children living in poverty by implementing and funding a Head Start program, providing funding for a provincewide school snack and hot lunch program where need is demonstrated, ensuring that child care is accessible and affordable, providing public health nurses in schools, ensuring accessibility to comprehensive counseling in schools, and improving enforcement of maintenance payments.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking to Motion 515 on poverty among children in Alberta. For many years now Alberta has come close to leading the nation in terms of the number of families living in poverty. Our meagre assistance rates, slashed even lower when the present government took over, leave many Albertans, especially children, languishing in a dead-end cycle of poverty. The latest counts show that there are approximately 124,000 Alberta children living in poverty. The largest group of people on social assistance are children, and 40 percent of the total caseloads are single mothers.

Among the more obvious problems caused by poverty - and there are many - are a higher death rate from birth defects and infectious disease and accidents, a higher rate of premature birth and low birth weight, decreased school performance, and a greater risk of adult social problems including unemployment, disability, and criminal behaviour. Those are only a few of the indicators that have shown up in studies.

When Alberta Liberals have repeatedly proposed solutions to combat the child poverty figures, both within and outside the Assembly, our calls for action have received little attention from the Conservative government. Perhaps it's because many government members have no understanding of what it means in 1995 to be poor. Some may claim that they came from impoverished roots, but that was a different era, often based on a rural farming economy, where there was often a garden or a trapline to keep a family fed and nourished. There is no such trapline and no such garden for children living in the inner city of Calgary or Edmonton. For a poor child today life is a completely different struggle than for those adults who believe that if they could survive a childhood of poverty, then so can today's child.

To help educate the government on what it means to be growing up poor, Alberta Liberals want to take government members through a typical day in the life of a 12-year-old boy named Michael. Michael lives with his 28-year-old mother and 14-month-old baby sister. Michael's father has not lived at home for the past two years. Child support is so sporadic that Michael's mother has given up looking for the proverbial cheque in the mail. Michael's mother makes minimum wage cleaning offices, with social assistance supplementing her income. She averages an income of \$1,200 a month. While her name is on the waiting list for subsidized apartments, she currently pays just over \$600 a month for rent and utilities.

Often Michael's day begins in a panic. On this day his mother, who worked until 4 in the morning, Michael, who was up most of the night caring for his baby sister, who was sick with the flu, and the family slept in. Groggy with sleep, the mother tries to scrounge something up for breakfast. Since it's a few days before payday, the little bit of milk that is left goes to Michael's baby sister. Insisting that her son have some semblance of breakfast, Michael's mother coaxes him to eat a piece of toast and weak tea. Butter, jam, even peanut butter are luxuries they can't afford.

Michael walks the short distance to school despite the cooler weather. He has outgrown his winter coat and, instead, tries to keep warm in a sweatshirt and a nylon ball jacket. He takes no lunch, choosing instead to save the bread for tonight's supper.

For as long as Michael can remember, school has been a struggle. He remembers with embarrassment how he was the only one in his grade 1 class who could not read. With each year the schoolwork gets tougher, and Michael's frustration grows. On this particular day, Michael particularly dreads going to school. This afternoon, his class is going on a field trip to the local dinosaur exhibit. His mother couldn't afford the \$5 fee, so instead he will spend the afternoon, as he always does when the class goes on trips, helping out in the school library. It is humiliating, and on days like this Michael wishes his mother would let him stay home from school.

He remembers with embarrassment how his mother had to strike a special deal with the school principal to make monthly installments on his school and gym fees. Every month Michael's mother makes a small payment to the school. She refuses to let the school cover the costs, as the principal did suggest. Special gym equipment or running shoes are not a reality for Michael, and when the gym class goes swimming or on ski trips, Michael stays home. Michael stays home most weekends, caring for his sister. He goes to few birthday parties, because he cannot bring a present. Outings to the mall, the swimming pool, or the movies are out of the question. He is beginning to think about getting a job, but he knows that he needs to stay home and care for his sister.

As Michael's morning progresses, his long sleepless night and poor breakfast take effect, and he falls asleep in class. He is awakened by his homeroom teacher. An understanding woman, she offers him a piece of fruit. She keeps these things in her desk for mornings like this. Michael takes the apple with embarrassment, but he's grateful, remembering he has no lunch. As he watches his classmates board the school bus, he begins to feel a growing anger that he is always left behind, missing out on all the fun parts of school.

3:40

On his way home from school he stops by the new baby-sitter. Since his mother's working a swing shift, he has to pick up the baby on his way home. He hates going there. Because of his



mother's varied shifts, she can't find a day care in the neighbourhood, so she is forced to leave the baby with a neighbour down the road. He cringes when he walks into the livingroom crowded with kids, some crying, others watching TV. The room reeks of cigarette smoke. The sitter is focused on this TV soap opera and barely nods when Michael enters the room. He finds his sister in a playpen in the corner, bundles her up, and takes her home.

After settling the baby, he fixes supper, the few remaining slices of bread and a box of macaroni, which he carefully mashes up to share with his sister. He can barely wait for the end of the week, when his mother gets paid. Then they go shopping. When the weather's mild, they usually walk the several blocks to the local grocer. His mother tells him the prices aren't as great as in the big super stores, but this one is closer, and they can avoid paying cab fare.

He worries about his sister's cough and runny nose. She's sick a lot, and he makes a note to tell his mother today. She gets sick often, and mother takes her to the clinic as often as she can for medication, but many times the doctor suggests over-the-counter medication like children's Tylenol or cough syrup, things that aren't covered on assistance. She tries not to skimp on the medication. Instead, she passes sometimes on her bus pass or her lunch, but often there is just no money, and she turns to the local druggist for help. Last month the druggist stopped giving the family credit, and now mother is forced to face paying off another bill.

Mr. Speaker, while this child's school friends rush off after dinner to hockey practice at the local rink, Michael longs for a pair of skates. He had a pair when he was younger and his feet were smaller, but he hasn't been on skates now for years, and he wonders if he would still know how to skate. Michael puts the baby to bed. He tries to do his homework, but he can't focus, so he turns on the world's worst babysitter: the TV set. There he spends the rest of his evening, trying to escape the stark existence.

Mr. Speaker, members may scoff or look incredulous at this story, but the reality is that there are literally thousands of Michaels in the province who have the potential to grow up into very angry, very resentful adults. How else can we expect them to react, when the government refuses to take steps to alleviate their poverty and opts instead to blow over a billion dollars on fiascos like NovAtel and Bovar?

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Assembly to vote in favour of this motion.

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

**MRS. BURGNER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to rise this afternoon to speak against this motion because I don't feel comfortable in any way diminishing the comments that my colleague for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly has made with respect to child poverty and its effects in our community.

Unfortunately I have some difficulty with the motion. I think it's important that we read it into the record, because while the sentiments of dealing with poverty and the impact on children are important, we also have a responsibility to craft legislation and direct the arguments and discussions in a way that is productive. The motion reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate steps to reduce the number of Alberta children living in poverty by implementing and funding a Head Start program, providing funding for a provincewide school snack and hot lunch program where need is demonstrated, ensuring that child care is accessible and affordable, providing public health

nurses in schools, ensuring accessibility to comprehensive counseling in schools, and improving enforcement of maintenance payments.

Mr. Speaker, as I go through this motion, I'm aware of the fact that under the title of "Child Poverty" there are about six distinct yet related policy areas, each of which probably could have been a motion on its own. The consequence of such a complicated motion is that the message and the intent are almost lost among the details.

I have a concern that the issue of child poverty could not be resolved by simply one of these, nor can it be resolved by bundling them all together. So I'd like to focus a little bit on the recognition that this concern does exist in our community and that we have an attempt here to craft a motion that would reflect that child poverty is a serious factor within our community and that failure to address child poverty at any number of policy levels will have long-term implications for our community, not the least of which is the fiscal impact, which, as you know, is a concern for this government.

Mr. Speaker, despite the member's honourable intentions, I think it's important that we tell Albertans what programs we currently do have in place, because what is sad about the story that was just related to us is that this mother and that school community and that child are not able to access programs that are available that could meet their needs. I do understand the recognition that what happens in a rural community with respect to poverty has a different implication to a city community, and that's why I have a concern about the way the motion is crafted.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has not only one Head Start program; it has several. For the member's information and that of the rest of the House I'd like to provide some of these details on these programs. The first program I would like to discuss is the Success by Six program. This is funded by three levels of government as well as through corporate and community sponsorship. In addition to their current funding support for Head Start programs, this is part of the FCSS initiative to reach out to children at risk before the age of six. In the case of the story told to us, this is certainly something that could be available to Michael's sister.

The needs of aboriginal children living in urban centres and large northern communities have been addressed by the federal government's aboriginal Head Start initiative. This project is to be designed and controlled by local aboriginal people. The federal government has promised to contribute \$100 million across Canada over a four-year period to establish this program. Mr. Speaker, we do not know, in the scenario that was related to us, whether this family is aboriginal, but we do know that close to 50 percent of all the children in care in Alberta are aboriginal children and require some support such as this particular initiative.

The federal/provincial initiative community action program for children, or CAPC, is part of the federal government's Brighter Futures program. This program provides funding for children at risk up to six years of age and their families. I focus on "and their families." This initiative helps communities and organizations to develop and maintain programs or services which are designed to address conditions of risk during the earliest years of a child's life to provide education and intervention activities. The federal Department of Health is providing \$18.7 million through 1997-98 for these programs managed in Alberta. The program is managed through a co-operative relationship between Health Canada and Alberta Health, and a total of 26 projects have been awarded funding and contain components of community develop-

ment, Head Start, parenting, pregnant and parenting team, rural outreach, and urban outreach project categories.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to my initial comments about the motion where it reflects that we need to have a provincewide approach. It's important to realize that some of these initiatives need local interpretation, and this particular initiative addresses that concern.

ECS operators in our province can also access assistance through Alberta Education. The department's funding for program enhancement projects, or PEP, assists ECS operators to provide special programs and services to meet the learning requirements of children who are economically disadvantaged. All ECS operators are able to receive regular program enhancement project funding for 15 percent of their eligible enrollment. Eligibility for PEP funding is to be determined on a priority basis, based on primary and secondary factors.

Another program offered by Alberta Education is the enhanced opportunity funding, which assists school jurisdictions to meet the educational needs of students who are economically disadvantaged. Through this program the school jurisdiction may receive enhanced opportunity funding for projects assisting with exceptional education, social and economic needs of students ranging from grades 1 through grade 12.

Mr. Speaker, I would also just like to mention at this time that a number of local school communities have developed hands-on programs which draw on the resources within their community. Certainly when I was a trustee I participated and was aware of some of these local initiatives. There's no doubt in my mind that there's a direct relationship between a child being able to eat and be fed and their ability to learn and be productive in the classroom. I think that in the scenario that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly spoke to us about that issue was alluded to. But it is also the responsibility of the local community to have some sense of the children who attend their school community. I think we'll find as the local school councils take their initiative and their responsibilities more fully in the roles and responsibilities and as businesses determine that they want to become involved in the school communities, we will see some support at the local level to deal with some of these issues.

**3:50**

Jacket racket is another program in place, Mr. Speaker, that's been developed from a local initiative, that meets some of the basic needs of students, not necessarily because there's poverty but often because there's blatant neglect on behalf of the parents of these children. It's not appropriate to assign blame or responsibility in the issue of this particular debate, but I don't think we can exclude children who have access to more resources but whose parents neglect their responsibilities.

To complement these programs the government has established a four-department committee to improve the co-ordination of services delivery at the provincial and local levels so that Alberta's children and youth in need and their families will be better served. The committee is composed of the departments of Family and Social Services, Health, Education, and Justice, and it is working co-operatively with local community groups and stakeholders to develop and implement local action plans that use available resources to meet those needs.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in November of 1994 the minister announced that children's services would be delivered by the communities of Alberta within the next three years. Block funding for programs such as Head Start will fall under the jurisdiction of community-based working groups who will

determine the specific needs of the children in their area. Nine new programs have been announced of which the majority have also been based on the Head Start model. These working groups at the community level will determine both the specific needs of local children and what programs and services will best meet those needs, including early intervention programs.

There's a fundamental shift that is occurring within our communities, and I think that the ability to have this motion in front of us does continue to focus on the need for society at large to deal with the issues of our neglected children. Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the children of Alberta have the services available to them, and I would encourage the sponsoring member of this motion to have that in mind, because in crafting the motion, as I said, it's made it very difficult to support the motion as it stands. To implement Head Start programs, that the motion calls for, would only result in the unnecessary duplication of services at an unwarranted cost to taxpayers.

We have heard time and time again within the House the issue of maintenance enforcement and child support, and as recently as this afternoon we had questions on that issue. We need initiatives in that respect that embrace the federal position so that we do not leave these children disadvantaged. I don't think the counseling aspect of this particular motion, as an example, Mr. Speaker, as a stand-alone item, will necessarily deal with child poverty. We're talking about the neglect and abuse of our children, and that is a much broader issue than has been spoken to in the motion.

In conclusion, I would like to compliment the member for the initiative that has been brought forward, and I think we will have from the debate that continues over the next hour the responsibility to recognize the impact of poverty on our children, to become more aware of the issues of poverty and neglect, to engage the community at large to look at their children and the social needs that they may have, and to support those who are disadvantaged in their ability to be able to support them. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not able to support the motion in its structured form at this time.

Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**MR. VAN BINSBERGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking in support of this motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Government to take immediate steps to reduce the number of Alberta children living in poverty by implementing [a series of programs].

I've just listened to the last speaker here very well, the Member for Calgary-Currie, and in my view she made a compelling argument in favour of the motion, even though she intends to oppose it. She outlined all the programs that the federal government is running and is financing and all of those that are taking place at the local level, but she also by omission indicated the glaring gap in this roster of programs at the provincial level. I think it's particularly important that we do have these programs, because it is only then that we can be assured of provincewide standards, and they're very much needed in order to provide our kids with equal opportunity as they start on this life.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps it needs to be stated to what extent we do find many kids in poverty in Alberta. In fact, Alberta has led Canada in the last few years in terms of the number of families living in poverty, and I don't think that's a statistic that we ought to be proud of. Approximately 124,000 Alberta children live in poverty. We also know that the largest group of people on social assistance are children, 40 percent of all those who are on

welfare. The question arises: how has our government, the Alberta government of which Calgary-Currie is a member, reacted to those kinds of data? What has happened ever since this government took office in 1993?

By the way, at no time during the election issue did they indicate that they would cut, for instance, such programs as early childhood education. I think it's important, too, to mention that, because I still maintain that that would have lost them the election, that particular item alone.

Mr. Speaker, they have in fact introduced and made a whole bunch of decisions that have actually hurt children. In addition to the halving of the funding for ECS programs, they've also slashed social assistance rates and reduced benefits. They've cut the day care subsidy by 20 percent and refused full-time day care for parents on assistance looking for work or in need of respite. They've cut education budgets so that there are no more public health nurses in schools, and counsellors are being cut right now as well, because they're not deemed to be important anymore, I think, by this Department of Education. They've refused consistently to apply all of the penalties under the Maintenance Enforcement Act, and they've let repeated offenders avoid stiff punishments like jail.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in spite of all the studies that have indicated that it was not a wise move to cut kindergarten, it was not a wise move to slash social assistance rates to that point, in spite of all that, they've done it, and we're paying the price. We're paying the price in the sense that it is quite evident through all sorts of studies that in the future those people who are now being harmed by those kinds of cuts will far more likely end up offending, and I'm talking about criminal offences.

Mr. Speaker, I started teaching in the Grande Prairie area, in the small village of Hythe to be specific, over 30 years ago. At that time my wife was instrumental in getting a Head Start program going in that area, which benefited many of the rural children who were in many cases wallowing in poverty, if I can call it that. We were back there less than a year ago, and we found out to our great disappointment that the funding had been cut for that particular program. It was no longer available, and it hadn't been for a while. Consequently that really affected the children there. Needless to say, my wife was disappointed that her good work had gone astray.

4:00

I think it's important to take a quick look at some of the problems that are caused by these easy measures of cutting, cutting without really much thinking. Some of the more obvious problems that are caused by poverty are – and again, this is all documented very, very far and wide – higher death rate from birth defects, infectious disease, and accidents. There's a higher rate of premature birth and low birth weight, increased child abuse and emotional neglect, decreased school performance – and I could certainly speak at length on that particular subject alone – shorter life expectancy, higher incidence of depression, higher risk of chronic health problems, greater risk of adult social problems including unemployment, disability, and criminal behaviour. All that, all the likelihood of all of those things, has increased greatly by simple cuts at the early level. Of course, it is a shortsighted move, Mr. Speaker, because in the long run the taxpayer ends up having to fork out lots of dollars simply because so many more people end up committing crimes, end up on social welfare, and so on and so forth.

You know, we've had studies done that indicate that if the daily cost for a low birth weight baby in a neonatal unit is fifteen

hundred bucks and the average length of stay is 40 days, the cost to taxpayers is a whopping \$60,000 per infant. Now, if on the other hand the chances of that child not being underweight by better feeding – I think we're avoiding a real drain on the taxpayers' money here, not to mention the social and psychological costs. There used to be a very good neonatal unit at the U of A hospital. I'm not sure where it is now, but I think it has been cut. I hope it is somewhere, still.

Mr. Speaker, a national study on disability and children revealed that poor children had twice the rate of mental and physical disabilities as children from high income families, and for severe disabilities the rate was 2.7 times higher. Researchers conclude that the number of disabled children in Canada could be cut by some 89,000 if low income were not a factor. There are more actions taken by this government that are in fact aggravating these situations. I'm thinking of the reduction, perhaps I should say, of educational funding for the moderately handicapped. I've seen the effect it has had already at the classroom level, where teacher aides have been cut left, right, and centre. All of that will make the problem even more acute, and I can't emphasize enough how much it is needed that this government do something positive in that sense. The Senate report on child poverty stated that the Canadian taxpayers would save almost \$10 billion over the next two decades if more help were given to low-income children, who are likely to drop out of school.

So the evidence is all around us and it's overwhelming, but instead this government continues to fork out the money to its pals like Bovar, like Multi-Corp, like NovAtel and so on, and the friends of the government. I won't mention any names because the Speaker has ruled that sort of out of order. They continue to heap lavishly all that money on their friends, yet our kids in poverty are just suffering the brunt of all this. It is vastly misplaced what is happening right now, Mr. Speaker, and it also, in addition to that – I'm now speaking to businessmen on the other side – does not make any business sense to do that, because in the long run you are not getting the money back out of the investment that you could have had.

DR. WEST: Who started Atomic Energy of Canada, a Liberal or a Conservative?

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm mindful of the minister of transportation. He will no doubt rise to the occasion shortly and defend all the money that's been given to Bovar and that's been given to NovAtel and that's been given to Pocklington and so on. Right? The minister of transportation is a man of principle. He sat around the table when they approved all of those deals. So he will stand by those deals. He will defend them. [interjections]

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

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead to the motion, please.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm tempted to engage in the debate as to what happened before the *Mayflower* arrived here. I think that's as far as the minister is prepared to go. He's back in time.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Wrong country. The *Mayflower* never even arrived here, and you call yourself a teacher?

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, that's an interesting comment coming from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

MR. GERMAIN: That's right. He's probably never read a book.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: No, probably not.

Mr. Speaker, it's all good fun, but I want to get back to the business at hand. After all, we're talking about our kids. We always say: our kids are our future. But it seems that this government has decided that it doesn't really matter all that much. They are carefully avoiding taking those measures that are necessary to make sure that our kids get an equal opportunity, a fair opportunity, to make something of themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore urge the members opposite, those with the saner heads – and there are some; I've seen some evidence at times – to reflect upon this motion and to consider it very carefully and in the long run to say, “Yes, perhaps this motion is what is needed to kick start this government into doing what it's supposed to do,” and that is to look after our kids.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House to speak to Motion 515. I'd like to begin by first acknowledging and commending the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly for this motion. I support the principles of the motion. Poverty is an issue that affects many Canadians, and it deserves our attention. It is a problem that's associated with all facets of our lives.

The hon. member spoke in this House a year ago, May 30, 1994, and alluded to the same facts again today. The points that the hon. member raised are very important, and let's reconsider them. I quote her statement:

Some of the more obvious problems caused by poverty are a higher death rate from birth defects, infectious disease, and accidents; a higher rate of premature birth weight and low birth weights; increased child abuse and emotional neglect; decreased school performance; a shorter life expectancy; a higher incidence of depression; a higher risk of chronic health problems; and a greater risk of adult social problems including unemployment, disability, and criminal behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, this clearly tells us that poverty is a problem that affects people from the womb to the tomb. I therefore urge my colleagues, members in the government to work towards eradicating poverty in this province. I also encourage that we continue with the agenda of fiscal responsibility, that we continue to maintain and create an environment that promotes economic prosperity.

**4:10**

Mr. Speaker, today in this province there exist programs that are co-ordinated by departments within our government, such as Family and Social Services, Health, Education, and Justice. We also participate in programs with municipal governments and with the federal government. One such example is the opening doors program in Huntington Hills in Calgary, which has been running quite successfully now for three years. It is one of 12 pilot programs across the province co-ordinated by the Education, Social Services, Health, and Justice departments. Opening doors is a one-step, one-stop shop for help from community agencies in that community. If a family is in need of assistance from more than one agency, then it is eligible for the opening doors program. It uses a single confidential referral form which allows agencies to work together. The family meets with a professional resource group to discuss its needs, and a case manager is assigned. The

professional resource group is made up of members from child protection, mental health, social services, school boards, income security, native child welfare, police, and the centre for family resources. The referrals come from community members as well as from the school. This is a good example of partnership between stakeholders and communities.

Another good example, Mr. Speaker, is that service provided by the Northland school division. They serve 3,300 lunches per day at 34 sites in 31 communities in northern Alberta. These lunches are provided at no charge to the student. This is consistent with the government's policy of allowing those involved to make decisions appropriate to the situations in their part of the province. If a local school deems it to be necessary to provide hot lunches in their schools, then it is welcome to allocate resources to support such programs. Boards may also explore creative alternatives, as was done in New Brunswick, and perhaps work together with charitable organizations or local businesses in their communities to assist in the support of student lunch programs.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of this House the experience of the New Brunswick government, which did initiate the Head Start program in the 1970s. They have since opted against it and have moved towards a community-based early childhood initiative program. They, too, see the value of putting decision-making power back into the community and away from the Legislature.

The motion calls for the implementation and funding of a Head Start program. It proposes introduction of hot lunches in the school. The hon. member specifies in the motion that a hot lunch program be provided “where need is demonstrated.” To me that means income testing and raises two questions: what will be defined as need, and how will that need be demonstrated? Will we be requiring parents to bring income tax return forms to school to determine if their children get a hot lunch program? Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty with that. A system of income testing to determine who's eligible for a meal at school is not acceptable. However, if a school board deems it necessary, then it should be accessible to all children.

There's another provision that I am somewhat surprised to see in the motion, and that is that child care be “accessible and affordable.” Mr. Speaker, the minister of social services has pointed out to this House that our province has the second lowest day care cost in Canada and parent fees are among the lowest in this country.

As far as accessibility goes, the department's day care program provides assistance through a child care subsidy for parents with low incomes. In fact, through the reforms and the deficit reduction plans that this government has put into place, the day care programs have decreased the expenditures and have redirected some of the savings back into child care subsidies. As a result, Mr. Speaker, over \$30 million of the day care program budget is allocated to subsidies. When it comes to accessibility to child care, of the 28,300 children enrolled in a day care or family day home program in a month, 13,200 of them receive assistance with fees. Hon. members, that is 46.6 percent of the children receiving assistance.

Another fact about day care that may come as a surprise to some of the members is that the vacancy rate in day cares in our province presently stands at 34 percent. Mr. Speaker, we have plenty of room in our day cares. This is especially so when you consider that we have the most day care services available in the

country with over 31,000 licensed spaces. Child care in our province is quite definitely accessible and affordable.

Mr. Speaker, it is regrettable that my colleague on the other side of the House believes in the assumption that more means better, that government should create more programs and provide more services to meet the needs of children and families. This results in a growing dependence on government when what parents and children really need is help in developing their capacity to help themselves, not handouts but hand up.

Although the hon. member had best intentions in mind when drafting this motion, it appears that the intentions were tainted by this assumption. Mr. Speaker, I believe that decisions about which services are provided in a community should be made by the community. As a former social worker who has been exposed to the effects of poverty, someone who has been in the homes of families and shared in the pains and sorrows experienced by them, I am convinced that we need to address the issues of poverty. I am convinced that the best solution to deal with poverty is to help all Albertans obtain gainful and meaningful jobs, not to create artificial jobs through handouts but to create an environment that is conducive to promoting economic prosperity for all Albertans.

Let me also state that I believe in free enterprise. However, free enterprise without a social conscience is not acceptable. Therefore I once again urge all government members to pay special attention to the needs of those Albertans who fall through the cracks. I have faith in the ability of our communities to respond to the needs of the community, and I would like to empower our communities to respond to those needs.

As well as this motion is, I remain unconvinced that the measures that the member has laid out in the motion will in fact accomplish the goal of reducing the level of child poverty in our province. I fail to see some of the arguments that have been presented. The subject of the matter unfortunately is being lost in the arguments that have been presented, and therefore I cannot support the motion as it is worded, though it has many noble causes. Mr. Speaker, I once again urge this government to do its utmost to address the issue of poverty.

Thank you.

4:20

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, you know, at different times I think every member in this Assembly has experienced some frustration with the partisanship and the way the Legislature operates. I think after listening to the speech provided by the Member for Calgary-McCall and earlier the speech from the Member for Calgary-Currie, it brings into dramatic relief why partisanship gets in the way of sound decision-making. We're here to talk about children in this province. That's the thrust of the motion.

As hard as one may look at Motion 515, I think it's apparent, after listening to the two people who've spoken against it, there is no compelling reason to vote against this motion. In fact, when we heard the arguments advanced by both of those two government members, we listened to this sort of tortured, difficult effort to try and present a logical theme or thread of opposition to the motion, and of course there was none.

As the Member for West Yellowhead has already pointed out, when the Member for Calgary-Currie spoke, she really made the case that the mover of this motion attempted to set out in the first place, and she obviously wanted to indicate that she had a problem with the motion. So she went through a cumbersome way of trying to come up with a reason why this wasn't going to do the job. I know that she was straining to do this for two

reasons. The first one is that there was simply no logic to her argument, and the second reason is that I know from her experience as a trustee on the Calgary Catholic school board that she knows what kinds of problems exist, certainly in the city of Calgary and inner-city communities. The Member for Calgary-McCall also by training knows that what Motion 515 sets out is a very basic recognition of the kinds of needs to make our communities stronger and to provide for and protect children.

Both members who spoke against the motion flip-flopped between saying that this is sort of a federal responsibility and the federal government will deal with it and then going to the other extreme and saying: well, this is a municipal responsibility; local people can deal with this.

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

MR. GERMAIN: Citation?

#### Point of Order Clarification

MR. SHARIFF: Section 23(h) and (i). Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify here that I never alluded to any of the statements that the hon. member made pertaining to the federal government.

MR. DICKSON: Well, I'm happy to let *Hansard* speak for itself. I want to be clear. If this member thinks that the responsibility is one of the provincial government rather than the federal government, I'm happy to accept that, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Well, there seems to be a disagreement amongst the members.

#### Debate Continued

MR. DICKSON: When the Member for Calgary-Currie started out saying that the federal government is dealing with a number of these things and then proceeded to list a number of federal government initiatives, I was sitting here thinking that we should go back and read the British North America Act all over again, because the last time I looked health wasn't a federal responsibility. Health is a provincial responsibility. Family and Social Services isn't a federal constitutional responsibility. That's a provincial responsibility. Why don't we acknowledge that this is the place for those kinds of decisions to be made, not in the House of Commons in Ottawa? I'm embarrassed and ashamed as an Albertan that children in this province have to rely on federal government initiatives, have to rely on good sense from legislators and governors in Ottawa to be able to provide for children in our province, in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard the Member for Calgary-Currie start off saying that no one single thing is going to address child poverty and then went on to say that this is a whole bundle of things and that somehow we have to isolate a single factor. The reality is – and I think this was made clear by my colleague who moved this motion – that poverty isn't attributable to a single factor. I think what this motion does, in an able and effective way, is it brings together a number of the causal factors that create a situation where children live in poverty and tries to address them in a comprehensive fashion. Surely that's what any responsible government should be doing.

I can hardly believe my ears when I hear the Member for Calgary-Currie talking about: programs already exist for children

in need. I represent an inner-city community. Of the 38,000 people in Calgary-Buffalo, 11,000 of them live in what are described as low-income households. You don't have to go any further than Sacred Heart elementary school, St. Monica's elementary school, Connaught community school, and what you find there are children who come to school without proper winter clothing, children who don't have proper nutritional meals at home.

You know something, Mr. Speaker? Despite the list of programs enumerated by the two people who spoke against it, what we know is: those children's needs are not being fully addressed by the programs that exist. That's the problem. The enhanced opportunity funding that the Member for Calgary-Currie spoke of in fact has all kinds of arbitrary constraints. It's only available to 10 percent of the schools in a district. The reality is that in many cases there are more than 10 percent of the schools that require this funding, so we have an arbitrary limit that prevents children who need assistance from getting it.

We had comments also, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that the need is already being met. I can simply tell you from my experience in my constituency that there are simply too many children whose needs are not being addressed by the programs that exist. It's fine to say that children who come from low-income families and can't afford to take early childhood services can find ways of coming up with the funding. The reality in too many cases is that those parents, maybe because of pride, maybe because they don't know about ways that fees can be waived, simply don't register their children for early childhood services, and those are the very children that most need that kind of a head start.

Mr. Speaker, there's been talk about work being done by four provincial government departments, but we'd be much further ahead if we were to have those consolidated into a single department of children's services, because what we find is that the co-ordination is too little and simply doesn't go far enough.

I'd also just say that when the Member for Calgary-Currie said that the community can look after it, and she talked about parent councils . . .

THE SPEAKER: The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, but the time according to the clock has elapsed for dealing with this order of business, and we must now move on to the next one.

Before calling that though, the Chair would recognize the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On reading *Hansard* today, I would like to withdraw my unparliamentary language as of yesterday at the end of my question.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

Before proceeding to the next order of business as is indicated for discussion, we really do require unanimous consent of the Assembly because our Standing Orders don't provide for dealing with Private Bills at this time. Is there unanimous consent in the Chamber to deal with third reading of Bill Pr. 7?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

**head: Private Bills**  
**head: Third Reading**  
**4:30**

**Bill Pr. 7**

**Concordia College Amendment Act, 1995**

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

MS HANSON: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill Pr. 7.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 7 read a third time]

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

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Would the committee come to order.

**Bill 49**

**Racing Corporation Act**

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. minister like to make a few opening remarks?

DR. WEST: Well, yes, Mr. Chairman, a few comments. Yesterday during second reading there were some questions brought up. Now, I don't know what the pleasure of the House is: whether I could answer some of those leading into committee or wait until more debate takes place in committee and then try to zero in on the same questions. But I think it might help if I explained a couple of areas, and then it might put off some of the questions on some of the sections. There were various individuals – and I took *Hansard* and broke out the questions, but I haven't got the individual member that had asked them beside these questions. I think they vary from the Member for Fort McMurray right through to the member from Lethbridge.

Why doesn't this Bill ask the corporation to comply with the Financial Administration Act and file annual reports with the Provincial Treasurer? That was a question that was brought up. I believe the Member for Fort McMurray there. The Alberta racing corporation will be established as a private, not-for-profit corporation, not a Crown-controlled organization. As such, it can determine its own distribution of annual reports and financial statements. However, it is anticipated that through the corporation's bylaws an annual report and financial statement will be annually transmitted to the minister responsible for lotteries, gaming, and racing.

Now, why doesn't this Bill call for the corporation to comply with the Regulations Act? Will the corporation's regulations, rules, and bylaws be made public? As the Alberta racing corporation will be a private, again not-for-profit corporation, the Regulations Act does not apply. Remember this is not an agent of the Crown; this is a private, not-for-profit corporation. The rules and regulations that will be established by the corporation will require extensive industry consultation. The only way for the corporation to encourage industry compliance with these rules will be to publish them and distribute them throughout the industry. Of course, then there's a free market type compulsion on behalf of the different parts of the industry to comply, because after all, if the rules and regulations of racing and organized racing aren't

obeyed, then individuals and the public will not support racing and it will collapse. So it's in the best interest of the corporation to make rules and bylaws that are agreed upon and obeyed by the industry. The corporation will ensure that such consultation and public reporting will occur. It will only be in the corporation's best interest to do so.

Now, here's another question that the Member for Fort McMurray waxed eloquently and went on and on about, his deepest concern: why does failure to comply with the Act not constitute an offence? I think I can remember him saying that I should keep quiet. Simply stated, the federal government regulates gambling. Now, just so you understand that we don't just regulate gambling here in the province of Alberta, the federal government regulates gambling, including the horse racing industry, through the authority of the Criminal Code. The corporation regulates horse racing activities but is subject to the Criminal Code and of course any licensing that the province must do in order to comply with the Criminal Code. I mean, it's the same issue if somebody says, "Why can't the aboriginals set up a casino on their reserve right now?" Because the Criminal Code says that you must have a licence from the province. Therefore you just can't *carte blanche* walk in and say, "I will set up a casino," no more than you can go in and say, "We're going to run horse racing subject to our own rules and not subject to the rules set out by the Criminal Code."

The breaking of laws, criminal offences, with respect to gaming and racing is adequately and completely governed by the Criminal Code of Canada and will continue to be so. However, for the industry to maintain its own integrity regarding the running of racing, it must be governed by a set of rules that industry members can themselves abide by which are clearly separate from criminal offences. Section 20, which there was reference to here, speaks to the need for such industry sanctions that are other than criminal in nature. Rest assured that criminal offences will be dealt with through the Criminal Code. The public will make complaints if that's the case in that sense, and they will be dealt with accordingly. [Dr. West's glasses fell apart] I'm going to have to get a monocle out of this. Fiscal restraint has gone too far here.

Will this Bill allow the proliferation of illegal gambling parlours? Now, that was a big thing. I think there was a news conference where the Leader of the Official Opposition was going on about this Bill allowing betting parlours. That is absolutely false. Under no circumstances is this Act paving the way for the establishment of neighbourhood sports betting parlours. Section 11 of the Act clearly states, "The Corporation shall operate in accordance with the laws governing gaming" in the province. Neighbourhood sports betting parlours could only be established with the consent of the provincial government, and that would have to be like any other gaming activity, which is the same today whether it's casinos or whether it's a casino on native lands or whether it's bingo or whether it's raffles or whether it's lottery licences. That has to be established on the consent of the provincial government and comply, as I said before, with the Criminal Code. So will the Bill allow for the proliferation of illegal gambling parlours? No, we have stated, absolutely not.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said that the minister, when he introduced the Bill, had made some reference to this and now he's contradicting himself. I did not make reference to it. It got out in the media that the betting parlours of England were something that might be proliferated on. We never said that. That got a life of its own in the media. We had said that if there

was any expansion, it would be something like Sports Select, which is tickets that are based on our football games and on basketball and different things. We have the outlets now, and they're the lotteries outlets throughout the province. There are some 1,100 of those licences out there. It would be no different than those and no such thing as the total expansion of betting parlours as in England.

4:40

Question 5: why doesn't the Act mention the corporation's responsibility with respect to problem gambling? That was another issue brought up by Edmonton-Rutherford, about problem gambling. In 1994 the government gave AADAC the mandate to co-ordinate research, training, prevention, and treatment as it related to gambling. Are you listening? Because I don't want to hear this again in your debate. AADAC will receive \$3.2 million over a three-year period from the Alberta lottery fund. The racing industry has already established a liaison with AADAC and is prepared to assist them with problem gambling initiatives as deemed necessary and appropriate.

Might I say that the report on gambling in the province has made reference to this, and when I sat in when we met with AADAC, they said: "We don't want you to specifically target a sum of money that you're going to put out. Although we have \$3.2 million here, the recommendation says that if the need comes up and we have programs, we want to be guaranteed that you will fund them." I think the report made a recommendation that that would be so, rather than saying that you should put 2 percent of total gambling away for treatment, just ensure that whatever level of treatment is needed you will meet that with dollars. Otherwise you set a target of funds, \$5 million, and everybody goes and spends it, whether it's needed or not. You set up a bureaucracy, you set up programs, whereas if you let the people go and help citizens who have problems, not looking for clients but helping citizens, then they normally, if you don't put a target out there, will spend the money needed for the day rather than go and find clients. I have seen that so many times, that if you find the clients, you know, we'll fund it up to this level, and sure enough they'll find 100 clients to meet that requirement.

I think that's pretty well covered off some of the details of the questions so far brought forward, Mr. Chairman, and I await further questions.

MR. GERMAIN: You know, Mr. Chairman, I don't know what is more scary: for the minister to say that because something is not a Crown corporation it requires no control or regulation whatsoever in the province or for the minister to simply delegate completely gambling to an uncontrolled, unregulated, self-perpetuating, unappointed gambling board that will determine the outcome of a major segment of gambling in the province of Alberta.

Now, since this is the so-called committee stage of this particular legislation, I want to draw to the attention of all members – the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock, the hon. member from Brooks, Alberta, the hon. Member for Medicine Hat – how far down the road of no control this particular Bill takes this government. With respect to the minister of transportation and with his zeal to privatize, this Bill is, I say with the greatest of respect, odious even for him. It is an unbelievable attack on what the function of government has always been in the province of Alberta, and that is to control gambling and institutions that in fact permit people to wager and gamble.

Now, I want to make one comment in the context of the minister's answers to some of the questions. He points out correctly that gambling infractions are covered in the Criminal Code, but if that was an absolute bar against having corresponding and more detailed penalization in provincial legislation, would he kindly tell us why we just voted on a Bill that makes it against the law provincially for underage drivers to have any alcohol whatsoever in their bloodstreams when that is also covered in the Criminal Code? Saying that the Criminal Code, which deals with hard-core, pathological gambling, is enough protection . . .

DR. WEST: Did we pass that?

MR. GERMAIN: Yeah, it passed. The minister wants an update on Bill 212.

DR. WEST: Once in a while lawyers want to codify.

MR. GERMAIN: Yeah. Well, you know, I sat quietly while the hon. minister responded to the questions that were raised yesterday, and now in committee stage I hope that he will sit quietly while I outline the defects, the flaws, the imperfections, and the warts on this Bill 49. The hon. members from Calgary have to go back to their ridings and explain these warts, explain why we're going to have gambling legislation in the province of Alberta without a single solitary criminal sanction, explain how an organization that is going to handle pari-mutuel money, countless millions of dollars, is not even obliged to file in this Assembly their annual return, and what the minister says is that they don't have to do it because they're not a Crown corporation.

Well, you know, the oil industry are not Crown corporations, and they've got to file every one of their regulatory returns. They've got to file every one of their royalty returns and all of their royalty calculations, and you know what? If they don't do it, they're subject to fines and penalties. But in this particular scheme, if you dope a horse or fix a race, the government of this province is going to say, "Oh, well, the federal government will catch you in the Criminal Code" or "It's not of any concern to us." I say to the minister of transportation that he ought to be ashamed of that shameful conduct and he ought to beg his backbenchers to vote against this Bill to avoid a colossal embarrassment for the government of the province of Alberta.

Let me go through those sections of this Bill that lead to potential colossal embarrassment for the government. First of all, let us always remember that this is a Bill to enhance and encourage gambling in the province of Alberta. Against that backdrop let's look at section 1(1)(vii). Remember, we're at the committee stage and we're analyzing the Bill on a piecemeal basis. What that subsection says is that the corporation, this now not-Crown corporation, can do this: can prescribe as a licensed gambling activity any activity not referred to in the list above that. Now, does this mean that if this racing commission in fact prints the picture of a horse on the side of a ticket, they can start selling Florida lottery tickets here at corner grocery stores? Does it mean they can start selling Irish sweepstake tickets in the province of Alberta? What exactly does that mean? If it was indeed the minister's true intention to create an independent organization to study and look after pari-mutuel betting in the province of Alberta and horse race gambling, why do we need that extra, all-encompassing, catchall, do-anything clause? I mean, that is like saying to the government, "Well, we'll pass a Bill on closing hospitals," and then we'll say in the Bill, "Oh, but you can close any school

that you want at the same time." That subsection is wrongly placed if it is the minister's intention to have a Bill restricted only to horse racing in this province.

I do not believe that the hon. members of this Assembly can go back to their individual ridings and sell and market this Bill. This does nothing to further and advance pari-mutuel racing in the province of Alberta. It does nothing to protect the racing industry. What it does is give a private corporation *carte blanche* ability to describe as a licensed activity any other activity not referred to in the list. I want to suggest to the minister that he would not have harmed this Bill and in fact would have enhanced it greatly if he would simply have struck that subsection out of the definition, and I urge the minister that when later in this debate on this particular Bill similar amendments urging the House to do that come forward, he will vote for those amendments that will strike that *carte blanche*, do-anything-you-want clause out of this particular Bill.

I want to urge all members to view with caution as well subsection (f) of these definitions under 1(1). That is the section that seems to indicate that the minister can delegate his authority under the Government Organization Act. I would be very cautious about what exactly that particular subsection means. Others may speak about that issue.

Now, under this Act, in giving it legislative authority, the minister also provides that the rules of the Act become part of the definition of the Act for the purpose of control, enforcement, and further deregulation of gambling in this province. Why would that section have been necessary in that Act if it was not intended that substantive positive gambling rights could be gained by the rules and not the Act itself?

I want to also draw the hon. members' attention to the mish-mash of definitions and convoluted appointments that are set out in paragraph 2 of this legislation. First of all, I want to remind all members that we are talking about a Bill that deals with the control of vast sums of money through pari-mutuel betting.

Would it have been useful in this Bill to insert a provision that people with criminal records and indictable offences cannot sit as directors of this gaming commission, the Alberta racing corporation? I would have thought that that would have been useful. I would have thought that the hon. members for Peace River and Grande Prairie would have wanted to see in this legislation that you can't have a criminal record and sit on a corporate board directorship that controls pari-mutuel betting and gambling in the province of Alberta. Did the minister put that in this particular Bill? No, he did not, and I want to urge all the members that when amendments urging that kind of clause come forward in this Assembly, you vote yes to include those amendments, and what you are saying is no to people with criminal records, that you cannot be on this racing commission if you have a criminal record. I would have thought that that would have been the bare minimum that the minister might have been interested in if he truly cared about the Alberta public and if he truly cared about protection of the Alberta public.

#### 4:50

Now, what we have here with the creation of this board is a self-perpetuating board that can in fact appoint their own successors. Can that be the case? Now, the minister is going to say, "Whoa, it's not a Crown corporation," but this is an organization that is going to keep money from pari-mutuel betting. The amount of money they keep, the percentage they keep, the way in which they spend the money, the number of trips they take, the directors' fees and honorariums are all going to be paid for by whom? They're going to be paid for by the little ladies and little



gentlemen and adults and people who go to the pari-mutuel betting and lay their money down on horse racing in the province of Alberta.

DR. WEST: Voluntarily.

MR. GERMAIN: The minister says that it is voluntary. So because it's voluntary do we turn our back on protection of them? Do we turn our back on protection of people who gamble on horse races because they do it voluntarily? The minister ought to be ashamed of that comment that he makes sitting down, that people gamble on horse races voluntarily so they're not entitled to any protection. I would say that the way you protect people who bet on horse races is you encourage financial responsibility. The minister's department keeps an eye on this corporation, and in fact they are obliged to comply with Acts like the Financial Administration Act, the sole purpose of which is getting regulatory financial information.

So I would urge all members, when they come to discuss amendments to subsection 2, that they consider whether an amendment preventing people from indictable offences from sitting on this board is important and also whether there should be some mechanism to break up the self-perpetuation of these board appointments. What we have here is that this commission handling and taking Alberta money is going to in fact be appointing their own successors.

I also want to draw to the Assembly's attention that successors are appointed by a two-thirds majority of the number of remaining board members that exist from time to time. There's a maximum of seven board members. So let's suppose that you have two vacancies and you're down to five. You must have two-thirds. Even by the minister's own reckoning, you need two-thirds to be appointed. Suppose that you can't have unanimous support for a new director, then you won't be able to fill that directorship. So the minister, even in his attempt to delegate completely to industry the control of this important area of public recreation, creates a program that is unmanageable, unmarketable, and unwieldy.

I also want to draw to the attention of the Members of the Legislative Assembly section 7 of this particular Act, which says that the Financial Administration Act does not apply at all to this organization. The minister answers that by saying that it is not a Crown corporation. What is this racing commission going to be doing? Well, it is going to be collecting all of the money that was previously collected as pari-mutuel betting taxes in the province of Alberta. It is going to be controlling and regulating the amount of money that is wagered, the amount of payoff that occurs, and it is going to control the regulatory scheme completely of this particular field of endeavour. The minister did not have to fully incorporate the Financial Administration Act into this Bill, but he should have at least incorporated the section that obliged this particular commission to file their annual report at least with this Legislative Assembly so that we could see how much of the money was being returned to pari-mutuel bettors and how much was going to administration fees and trips and travel and that sort of thing. After all, people go to the racetrack and wager money expecting that the dice are at least not stacked against them in terms of the payoffs.

Now, I also want to draw to the Assembly's attention that section 10 of this particular Act allows the government to delegate to this particular corporation other gambling agreements. Now, the minister says that this is not the thin edge of the gambling wedge. Well, if this was an Act only to control pari-mutuel betting and racing in the province of Alberta, still with no financial control, no financial record keeping, why would the

government retain onto itself this ability to contract and delegate to this commission further endeavours in the field of gambling? I want to suggest that if the minister was sincere in his legislation, which was to create pari-mutuel betting control, he did not need and ought not to have had that section in the legislation. It is my hope that when amendments deleting or amending that section come forward, the minister himself will support those particular amendments.

I also want to draw to the attention of the minister and to the Assembly that to the best of my knowledge this is the first time that legislation controlling gambling has come forward in the province of Alberta where to breach the legislation will not constitute a criminal activity or constitute an offence. Now, I want to tell all Members of the Legislative Assembly that when individuals involved in pari-mutuel racing travel from province to province and from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, they are often asked to complete questionnaires that indicate whether they have ever been convicted of an offence under any of the provincial or state legislation that governs pari-mutuel betting. In this particular case we have made it possible for the bad apples of the industry to hide behind the fact that they were not convicted of an offence.

How does the government, the hon. minister, that great supporter of law and order in the province of Alberta, how does he control law and order in the province of Alberta? He brings forward a Bill that does not constitute improper conduct as a criminal offence. I want to suggest to all Members of the Legislative Assembly that that will not sell back in the constituencies. It will not sell in rural Alberta; it will not sell in urban Alberta. There is no reason that people who breach this law should escape without criminal activity. If you dope a horse, if you put improper footgear or improper bridles on a horse, it is not likely that you're going to be convicted of a criminal offence, but now it is clear that you will not be convicted of a provincial offence either. This is simply wrong, and I would urge all Members of this Legislative Assembly that when opportunity comes up to speak out on this Bill or to vote for amendments on this Bill, you vote to return to this legislation the fact that a breach of this Act will constitute criminal activity and will be punished and sanctioned accordingly.

I want to also point out to the Members of this Legislative Assembly that this organization will be making many rules. In this Act alone there are lists of the types of rules that the association can make that go on for two or three pages. All of those rules have to be published somewhere. I do not think that the public should be at the mercy of a racing commission to phone them and say, "Give me the rules." They should be able to go to the *Alberta Gazette* and obtain a full, published record of all the rules that this corporation has placed. Now, the minister again will answer that by saying, "This is not a Crown corporation," but I say to the minister: so what. This is a corporation that will handle, in the course of its lifetime, millions and millions if not billions and billions of dollars. I would like to see published somewhere the rules . . .

DR. WEST: How about the Alberta Wheat Pool?

MR. GERMAIN: The Alberta Wheat Pool is controlled and owned by its members, who get to vote for the directors year after year and get to attend an open general meeting. This minister has not even required this association to have an open annual meeting.

5:00

AN HON. MEMBER: That was a bad example.

MR. GERMAIN: That was a bad example. You used the example of the Alberta Wheat Pool. You used the example. We have a corporation . . .

DR. WEST: Ask the members if they think they control it.

MR. GERMAIN: You go ask the members of the Wheat Pool if they control the Wheat Pool or not. I think the members believe they do. The hon. members in this Assembly that are members probably do. Nowhere in the history of Alberta legislation have we enabled one group to handle so much money from so many people with so little accountability, and I think it should stop right here and right now. [interjections]

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order.

MR. GERMAIN: Let me . . .

DR. WEST: "Let me ramble."

MR. GERMAIN: No, I'm not rambling. I'm going through my speaking notes in order. I'm not reading a speech, as the hon. minister will notice. I'm going through my speaking notes in careful order to cover each and every section of the Bill, but now the minister's upset me. I'm going to take my place and let other people carry on this fight for good laws in Alberta. This fight begins by stopping this Bill that would completely decontrol and deregulate gambling at the racetrack in Alberta and bring that gambling from the racetrack to the corner stores and small shopping centres in your neighbourhoods.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. After that spirited assault on the detailed element of Bill 49, I wanted to come back and attempt to focus on a couple of things that give me enormous difficulty. What we've got here is maybe the perfectly logical extension of where this government started in the fall of 1994 with - what was it? Bill 57?

DR. PERCY: Yeah, Bill 57.

MR. DICKSON: With Bill 57 where the government came along and basically wanted to get out of the business of governing. All members will remember then that after opposition in this House, the government said, "Well, we're not going to go ahead and proceed with it." Of course, what they decided to do was proceed with it sector by sector. We've seen a whole series of other steps taken by this government to deregulate, but what we are presented with now in Bill 49 is something that is truly unique.

At least when the government proposed to privatize the bailiff service, they said: it'll still be subject to the Regulations Act; it'll still be subject to the freedom of information Act; it'll still ultimately be subject to the will of the Legislative Assembly because there will be a designated minister who comes into this House and has to respond and answer questions on behalf of it. What we have now is a perverse kind of beast, and we've got these provisions. Section 7 says, "The Financial Administration Act does not apply." Section 6(2) says, "The Regulations Act does not apply." Section 8 is at pains to say that this new

creature is not going to be an agent of the provincial Crown. Yet if you turn around and look at sections 10 and 11, what you've got is a back-in type of regulation by the provincial government in the least satisfactory way.

What section 10 provides - and my colleague from Fort McMurray is quite right. This is an astonishing provision to find in parliamentary democracy. What you've got is, despite all those other sections I'd mentioned where the government of Alberta distances itself from this new corporation, in section 10 you allow the corporation to enter into agreements on behalf of the government with "any other government, person or agency with respect to horse racing." There's no other limitation on it.

So what you've done is you've allowed this corporation to go out and create an element of agency, not through any public decision by Executive Council, Lieutenant Governor in Council, Members of the Legislative Assembly, or a committee of the Legislative Assembly. You allow that to be done simply because the corporation chooses to become an agent. You know, the most basic law of agency is that it's the principal that creates the agency relationship, not the agent. It's the principal that creates the agency relationship. So this is completely perverse, and not only offends all the basic laws of agency but also for the reason I mentioned before, offends any kind of parliamentary democracy.

What you then have in section 11 - notwithstanding the fact that this can go out and create an agency relationship whenever the corporation chooses to do so - there's a provision that the corporation shall be bound by "the policies and directions of the Government." Well, what's a policy? I turn to the definition section in 1(1), and I go through there to see: how is a government policy defined? Is that the whim of the minister when he gets up on a Tuesday morning and announces that this is now going to be a policy of the government? Is it a statement that somehow is authorized by the cabinet? It seems to me that there is absolutely no provision for it, and left with the ambit as broad as it is in section 11, I know of no possible way that members could support it. This member certainly can't support it.

Then, as you move on, you look at sections 17 and 20. Section 17 I have great difficulty with. The power of search and seizure is the thing that gets civil libertarians always anxious and concerned. That's why it's dealt with in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Search and seizure is indeed one of the most powerful kinds of tools that a government ever has against its citizens. You know, to members in this Assembly, who have in the past on the government side championed a right of property to be a constitutional right protected along with all those other rights of assembly and free speech and so on, surely none of those members have read the Bill, particularly section 17, and if they had, they would be on their feet expressing their concern and opposition.

Now, I know that many of the members over there have expressed that concern about search and seizure being done in an arbitrary fashion, being done in a way where it's not properly accountable. Yet I see those members sitting mutely, sitting quietly while their government brings forward a section that goes far beyond anything the provincial government can do now. When members said before that we need a right of property to be enshrined in a constitution, what they were concerned about was the provincial government or the federal government abusing their executive power to trample on the rights of an individual citizen, to seize records and property and so on.

But I refer members to section 17, in particular 17(1)(j) that allows a racing official - this isn't a bailiff, it's not somebody who in any way is accountable to the Legislative Assembly. It's

somebody who is in the employ of a for-profit corporation. What can that person do? Well, that person can

seize any document, record, object or thing that relates to any matter referred to in clauses (a) to (g) or that is used in respect of a race horse or a horse race.

Now, I was prepared to argue with members opposite that the provincial government in cases needs the power to search and seize, but I make common cause with them when we're going to give somebody who is not in any sense accountable through the hierarchy, through a government minister – when we're going to give that individual the power to enter private residences, offices and seize records that relate to any of these first eight subheads, that's a fundamental problem because it attacks and addresses a basic right, an expectation to enjoy one's property. If basic rights are going to be curtailed . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: We appear, hon. members of the committee, to have more than one person standing and talking at a time, so if we could just reduce it to one person standing and talking.

Calgary-Buffalo.

5:10

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Just to sum up for the benefit of the Government House Leader then, I think the point I was trying to make is that what we have got in section 17 is the potential for an enormous kind of encroachment on the individual freedom of Albertans to have their own property, to enjoy their own property, and to not have that property removed, seized without due process. That's exactly what's provided for in section 17.

What's interesting is that the minister who champions Bill 49 is the one member I constantly hear talking about the importance of individual freedoms, reigning in the role of government. It's that same hon. minister who will speak in this House day after day, evening after evening, talking about how important it is that we curtail the powers of government, that we reduce the powers of government. Yet this very same minister brings in a Bill with a section that gives somebody who is not even a member of government, not even subject to the kind of accountability processes built into the Legislative Assembly that most draconian of powers. I think that's astonishing.

I have difficulty with this Bill because there's no object clause. As I've said before, I think every Bill that's brought into the Legislative Assembly ought to spell out an object clause. It seems to me that I can see at least five purposes in Bill 49, and three of them are conflicting. It would be helpful if the government were to have that kind of a specific provision.

I guess the other problem that immediately jumps out at me, sir, is the definitions section, section 1(1)(d). What that says in effect is that a licensed activity includes certain obvious things like

- (i) the operation of a race track;
- (ii) the conduct of a horse race.

But then we have down at the bottom in (vii):

any activity not referred to in subclauses (i) to (vi) that is prescribed by the rules as a licensed activity.

Well, what rules? Presumably the rules of the corporation, that same corporation that isn't accountable to the Legislative Assembly, that's not subject even to the skeletal requirements of the provincial Regulations Act.

I think that now that we've set up this body which is not accountable in the Legislative Assembly, that we've given it the power to search and seize, we're giving it the power to expand its own mandate. Now, even if the argument could be made – and

I have yet to hear it from the hon. minister of transportation – that there was a role for this kind of a hybrid organization that was independent of government, at minimum you have to circumscribe the kinds of powers that this organization will have and what kinds of activities it can engage in. But to allow it to define its own mandate is absurd. It just makes absolutely no sense, Mr. Chairman.

The other thing that jumped out at me also – and this has been raised before – is the fact that notwithstanding all the other ways that we're diluting accountability in terms of this Act, the provision to find out which minister is going to be responsible for it, we have to make inquiries. If I'm an individual Albertan and I want to know what minister to raise my concern with, I'm not going to have a clue, and I'm going to have to go through all kinds of hoops and hurdles to get that information.

The other point that I have difficulty with in this Bill is how ordinary Albertans are going to be able to find out what the rules are with respect to this. Because it's not subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, an Albertan can't access documents through that process. Because it's independent of government, presumably when a citizen goes to a minister's office and says, "I'd like a set of the up-to-date rules," they're not going to be able to get satisfaction there. There's no provision in here that recognizes that there's a bigger public responsibility beyond the stakeholders. I'll assume that the stakeholders will have a copy of the rules because of their involvement through the corporation itself, but how does any other ordinary Albertan find out what those rules are?

I guess that leads me to the next point I wanted to make, and that is that the minister of transportation continues to perpetuate the myth and misunderstanding that we've seen manifest in a lot of other Bills that we've dealt with so far, and that has to do with the fact that the public interest is not synonymous with the interests of so-called stakeholders.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to move adjournment of debate on this motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, do you wish to rise and report progress?

MR. DICKSON: That's precisely what I wanted to do, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The Committee reports progress on Bill 49.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:19 p.m.]

