

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Thursday, February 15, 1996 1:30 p.m.  
**Date:** 96/02/15  
 [The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly my colleague from the province of Saskatchewan, the Hon. Robert Mitchell, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Mitchell today. Accompanying Mr. Mitchell are Dan Perrins, deputy minister, and Steven Bobiash, senior administrative ministerial assistant. They are seated in your gallery, and I'd ask the members to give them a warm welcome and have the gentlemen please stand.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I beg your leave to present a petition signed by 830 parents of five year olds in this province asking for two things: full funding of kindergarten in our province as well as a mandated program of kindergarten for every child. If I can pass those. These were decorated by 800 five year olds in the province and each signed by 800 different parents in the province.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, with your permission, would like to table a very unique petition. The petition urges

the Government of Alberta to mandate and fully fund the provision of Kindergarten programs with a minimum of 400 hours of instruction per child, per year.

The important new part of this petition is to mandate it. [interjections] If only they would listen.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also am presenting a petition from over 800 families who "urge the Government of Alberta to mandate and fully fund the provision of Kindergarten" for "400 hours per child, per year."

Thank you.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to present a petition of some 813 five year olds that have presented this most colourful exposé of artwork to the Assembly and urge the government to fully fund provision of kindergarten and mandate same for 400 hours in this province.

**Speaker's Ruling  
 Petition Format**

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Just before the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, whom the Chair expects would have a serious petition, the Chair would remind hon. members . . . [interjections] Hon. Leader of the Opposition, this Assembly has always considered petitions to be a serious part of the daily proceedings, and it is the Chair's opinion that encouraging this type of petition trivializes the process of petitions.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

head: **Presenting Petitions  
 (continued)**

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition on behalf of 166 members of my constituency who, as the others, want to petition the government to provide guidelines for the regional health authorities in allocating long-term care beds in the communities.

Thank you.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask that the petition I presented yesterday be read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to prohibit regional health authorities from moving elderly people against their will to long term care facilities in communities far from their families, churches and other community supports, thereby greatly lessening their quality of life.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise now to give notice that at the appropriate time following question period I will seek consent of the Assembly to proceed with the following motion.

Be it resolved that this Assembly recognize February 12 through February 18, 1996, as Random Acts of Kindness Week and congratulate Colleen Ring as the chair of the Random Acts of Kindness Week committee.

Thank you.

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

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give notice that immediately after question period I will seek unanimous consent under Standing Order 40 to propose the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the Grande Prairie Curling rink skipped by Heather Godberson for winning the Maple Leaf junior women's curling championship on February 10, 1996.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

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

**Bill 2**  
**Alberta Economic Development Authority Act**

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 2, the Alberta Economic Development Authority Act.

This Bill will formalize the creation of the Alberta Economic Development Authority, a private-sector advisory body which in partnership with our government assists in shaping strategies to achieve sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities in Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 2 read a first time]

**Bill 5**  
**Racing Corporation Act**

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce Bill 5, the Racing Corporation Act.

This Act establishes the Alberta racing corporation as a private, not-for-profit corporation and lays the foundation on which the horse racing industry will initiate its essential plans for renewal. While empowering the corporation to direct the industry's marketing and management functions, the legislation also ensures the health, safety, and welfare of race horses, racing participants, and the general public, which will all continue to be protected.

[Leave granted; Bill 5 read a first time]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 2, being the Alberta Economic Development Authority Act, be moved on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 3**  
**Lloydminster Hospital Act Repeal Act**

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Lloydminster Hospital Act Repeal Act.

This Bill would dissolve the Lloydminster hospital board so that a new board can be put in place for the governance of health care services in Lloydminster which will be compatible with the regional health authorities that we have put in place in Alberta. The province of Saskatchewan will co-ordinate a parallel change on its side, replacing a separate hospital board with a structure compatible with that province's health district system. In the future a new Lloydminster health district will be governed by a board composed of representatives from the two provinces.

[Leave granted; Bill 3 read a first time]

1:40

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move Bill that 3, as just introduced, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 203**  
**Family Dispute Resolution Act**

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Family Dispute Resolution Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 203 read a first time]

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

**Bill 204**  
**Protection of Personal Information**  
**in the Private Sector Act**

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being Protection of Personal Information in the Private Sector Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 204 read a first time]

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

**Bill 205**  
**Limitations Act**

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 205, Limitations Act.

This Bill will level the playing field with respect to legal actions by introducing discoverability periods and ultimate limitation periods for everyone.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 205 read a first time]

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

**Bill 206**  
**Recall Act**

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Recall Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 206 read a first time]

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

**Bill 207**  
**Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being Bill 207, the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill would introduce many of the amendments proposed by the panel that reviewed this issue.

[Leave granted; Bill 207 read a first time]

**Bill 208**  
**Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1996**

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1996.

This amendment would allow, where authorized, firefighters to carry on or in a vehicle a lamp that produces intermittent flashes of green light as a means of identification only.

[Leave granted; Bill 208 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: Now the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

**Bill 209**  
**Medical Profession Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being Bill 209, the Medical Profession Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill will acknowledge the use of complementary medical procedures.

[Leave granted; Bill 209 read a first time]

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

**Bill 210**  
**Citizen's Initiative Act**

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I wish leave to introduce a Bill being Bill 210, the Citizen's Initiative Act.  
Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 210 read a first time]

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

**Bill 211**  
**School (Age of Enrolment) Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would beg your leave to introduce Bill 211 being the School (Age of Enrolment) Amendment Act, 1996.

This Act would mandate a full 475 hours of kindergarten in legislation. It would make it a part of the School Act, so the boards could access full funding, including facility, et cetera, and it would allow parents to delay entrance into the program for one year. Mr. Speaker, I have consulted with our House leader, and I just want to let the Government House Leader know that there will be full support on this side of the House, if he would like to move that this be placed on the government Order Paper.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 211 read a first time]

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

**Bill 212**  
**Consumer Protection Act**

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Consumer Protection Act, Bill 212.

This Bill would establish a consumer service bureau, storage and supply of personal information, regulation of consumer reporting agencies, and deal with negative option strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Leave granted; Bill 212 read a first time]

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

**Bill 213**  
**Ombudsman Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill the Bill being the Ombudsman Amendment Act, 1996, Bill 213.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will expand the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman to have, amongst others, jurisdiction over regional health authorities.

[Leave granted; Bill 213 read a first time]

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

**1:50**  
**Bill 214**  
**Victims of Domestic Violence Act**

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 214, the Victims of Domestic Violence Act.

This Bill enhances the justice system's commitment to early intervention in domestic violence by enabling authorities to take action that focuses on the needs of the victims.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 214 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Bill 215**  
**Crown Grazing Lease Statutes Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 215, being the Crown Grazing Lease Statutes Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill will allow reasonable access by the public to public lands held under grazing leases and will provide reasonable protection for grazing lease holders.

[Leave granted; Bill 215 read a first time]

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

**Bill 216**  
**Crown Contracts Dispute Resolution Act**

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being Crown Contracts Dispute Resolution Act.

This is a most exciting Bill, Mr. Speaker, and will receive much debate in this Chamber.

[Leave granted; Bill 216 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

**Bill 217**  
**Law of Property Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being Bill 217, the Law of Property Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill will require that mortgage foreclosure proceedings be commenced and tried in the judicial district in which the land is situated.

[Leave granted; Bill 217 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Bill 218**  
**Judicial Elections Act**

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 218, being the Judicial Elections Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to allow Albertans to effect accountability in their judicial and legal system.

[Leave granted; Bill 218 read a first time]

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

**Bill 219**  
**Family Law Reform Act**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave this afternoon to introduce a Bill being the Family Law Reform Act.

This Bill will implement and augment a series of recommendations from the Alberta Law Reform Institute. It will consolidate a broad range of family law relief in a single statute to the advantage of children of this province, mothers, fathers, and extended family.

[Leave granted; Bill 219 read a first time]

**Bill 220**  
**Provincial Court Amendment Act, 1996**

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, last but not most important, I'd like to introduce the Provincial Court Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill will allow grandparents' rights of access to their grandchildren if and when they have been denied access through divorce proceedings.

[Leave granted; Bill 220 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am tabling today the annual reports of the Alberta Dental Association for the year ended June 30, 1995, the Alberta Registered Dietitians Association for the period ended March 31, 1995, and the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses for the year ended September 30, 1995. Copies will be distributed to all members. Also, the annual report of the Provincial Mental Health Board for the year ended March 31, 1995. Copies have already been distributed to MLAs.

I am also pleased to file for information a publication of the Alberta Cancer Board entitled Facing Cancer. Copies have also been previously provided to all members.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file today the Gaming in Alberta 1994-95 Review. This report was prepared by Alberta

Gaming and Liquor Commission and accounts for the activity within the charitable gaming sector for 1994-95 fiscal year.

I also would like to file the 1994-95 annual report of the Alberta Racing Commission.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table six copies of the response to Written Question 233.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased this afternoon to table copies of the report from Youth Symposium '95. This conference focused on the challenges facing immigrant youth in the city of Calgary. The conference itself was one of the recommendations from the Calgary Mayor's Task Force on Community and Family Violence.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table this afternoon four copies of correspondence to the Alberta Securities Commission requesting that they investigate why Larry Novak failed to report insider trading of his Multi-Corp stock to a member of the Premier's family in 1993 and also four copies of the correspondence from the Alberta Securities Commission indicating that they will indeed conduct an investigation into this matter.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I'd like to table 30 copies of letters from Albertans around the province, and the message that the letters contain is:

We urge the Government of Alberta to mandate and fully fund the provision of Kindergarten programs with a minimum of 400 hours of instruction per child per year.

Now, these letters have been illustrated so that members from the other side may better understand the meaning of the message.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four photocopies of a petition from parents in the gallery who are outraged and disappointed in the Speaker's lack of respect for the effort put in by the children who signed the petition tabled earlier today.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I table with the Assembly the report of the Ethics Commissioner dated November 10, 1995. The report is with respect to the investigation into allegations relating to the hon. the Premier. Copies of the report were distributed to members on November 10, 1995.

I would also like to table with the Assembly the report of The 1995/1996 Electoral Boundaries Commission of Alberta, entitled Proposed Electoral Division Areas, Boundaries and Names for Alberta. This report was made public on January 26, 1996, and provided to me under section 6 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. Copies have previously been distributed to members.

Finally, hon. members, I table with the Assembly the report of the Ethics Commissioner dated February 14, 1996. The report is with respect to the investigation involving the Member for

Cypress-Medicine Hat. A copy of the report is being distributed to all members.

Thank you.

**head: Introduction of Guests**  
2:00

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly Ms Charlotte Robb, who is co-chair of the Alberta Economic Development Authority. Ms Robb, regional vice-president of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, is one of a talented and experienced group of senior business executives who freely contribute in a private-sector/public-sector partnership created under the umbrella of the Alberta Economic Development Authority. The members of the authority provide invaluable strategic input to help shape this province's future economic growth. May I ask Ms Robb, who is seated in the members' gallery, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have another introduction. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce a bright young lady, Miss Sydney Young, who is a student at Vernon Barford junior high school. She is attending the Legislature today under a mentorship program. I would ask Miss Young to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do have, as well, two introductions to make. First I'd like to introduce three students from the University of Alberta, those being Shannon Affolter, Tracey Thompson, and Jocelyn Watson. They are the chairperson and members of the Early Childhood Council at the Faculty of Education. They're in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction. I'm very honoured to present to you and members of the Assembly Dr. Marjorie Affolter-McLeod. This remarkable woman knows the value of lifelong learning and indicated to me very recently that she was 60 years old when she received her doctorate in education from the University of Alberta. She also has a tremendous history of involvement with early childhood education, and she was the first associate director employed by the province for early childhood education in this province. She is here today to support her granddaughter, who is chairperson of the Early Childhood Education Council at the university, and all five year olds in this province in fighting for fully funded, mandated kindergarten. If she could rise and receive the warm welcome.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Mr. and Mrs. Kapjek and their daughter Maryanna. They are from the city of Calgary, where Maryanna is a student at Sir John A. Macdonald school. They live in the constituency of Calgary-Nose Creek, and I ask that they rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you two very dear friends that are from the city of Calgary: Mary and Bill Smith. Mr. Smith is also very involved in the World Police and Fire Games that will be going on in June of '97 in the city of Calgary. I'd like to ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a friend of mine who is working very hard to create positive change in Alberta. He teaches at NAIT, he is the former mayor of Stony Plain, and he's our candidate in Stony Plain as well. I would ask Peter Marchiel to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking as the current MLA for Stony Plain and indeed the future MLA for Stony Plain.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased and indeed honoured to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly four students who have come from afar to visit us today. They are Samuel Silva and Joao Martins from Brazil and Patricia Valdeveiso and Renata Decastro from Peru. They are accompanied today by Paulette Tieulie, Denise Lamoureux, and Wendy Wagner. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to acknowledge a resident of Calgary-Buffalo who has made it to Edmonton this afternoon to witness the Legislature in action. Mr. Dan Ouimet is a keen observer of the Alberta political scene. I'd invite him to stand and receive the customary warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two members of the Kindergarten Coalition. They are here today to assist in the presentation of the petition that you will remember, sir. They're both in the public gallery. I wish to ask Daria Gushaty and Bonnie Watson to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a keen observer of all things political and therefore a lifelong Liberal. Mr. Tony Holler has joined us today in the public gallery. I'd ask him to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to present to you educational leaders from the St. Albert Kindergarten-in-Crisis Committee. They are fighting for our greatest resource, our children. These leaders are Kim Haines and her one-year-old son, Carter; Kelly Curtis; Sheena and Fraser Fulton; Kerry, Michael, and Nicole Korowek; Terry, Nick, Malia, and Matthew Starko; Shelley Rowe; and Gwen Kohlruess. They are in the public gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**  
**Citizenship, Immigration, and Heritage Week**

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to stand and make some comments addressing citizenship, immigration, and heritage week, which is being celebrated across Canada February 12 through 19. As Alberta's minister responsible for immigration I especially want to acknowledge the contribution of immigrants to building and maintaining a strong and prosperous Alberta.

Immigration has played a central role in the province's history from the time of the early pioneers through to today. In pioneer days immigrants played a major role in settling the land and developing a foundation for our province. Today immigration is mainly to our urban centres. Edmonton and Calgary are destinations of more than 80 percent of Alberta immigrants.

Business immigrants bring business know-how and invest millions of dollars in our growing economy. Skilled immigrants bring experience and expertise to help our business and industries compete in a global economy. Immigrants from other immigration classes enter our labour force, become self-sufficient, and make positive contributions to our communities.

At the present time Alberta welcomes over 17,000 immigrants annually. We are the fourth largest immigrant-receiving province, after Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec. Currently nearly one in five Albertans was born outside of Canada. This has helped to create a cosmopolitan and forward-thinking Alberta.

Today I congratulate those individuals who will be taking their oath of citizenship in special ceremonies around the province this week in Lethbridge, Calgary, Banff, Red Deer, Edmonton, and St. Albert. I would also like to bring your attention to the citizenship and immigration achievement awards ceremony that was held last night at the Fantasyland Hotel at West Edmonton Mall.

Lastly, let me mention the Edmonton Career Development Centre Immigration Day, an event which is being hosted by the CDC on the morning of February 22. I encourage all Albertans to take the opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the exciting differences and contributions new Canadians and new Albertans bring to our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**2:10**

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

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Liberal caucus would also like to recognize the importance of citizenship and immigration week, as well as today, the 31st anniversary our Canadian flag. We recognize and appreciate the individual contributions that immigrants have made both culturally and economically.

Immigrants choose our country because they know that Canada still ranks as the most preferred place for people to live of all nations. In most cases these people have chosen Canada because

they are escaping religious persecution in their homeland, some form of political or social unrest, or racial discrimination or some other catastrophe. We welcome these people to make this great country with us and to extend to them a warm and heartfelt thanks.

Mr. Speaker, we frequently take for granted the rights and freedoms that come with citizenship, and this week we should reflect upon, appreciate, and celebrate the rights and freedoms of Canada.

Also, we have a number of organizations that are committed to promoting citizenship, and we champion their efforts and achievements. We must recognize their role in protecting and keeping our national spirit alive all year long. These organizations also help to maintain our identity as individuals and as individuals from different cultural heritages.

This week let us not forget the immigrants and us as a people, since we are immigrants of time that have come to this country, that have built this country, that have made valuable contributions to Canada. To all those who have come and continue to come to our great nation, we say: thank you for making Canada a rich, diverse, and prosperous nation.

Thank you.

head: **Oral Question Period**  
**Child Welfare**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, what we are as a community is reflected in how we treat our children. A coalition of Calgary social agencies has released this report card on the value that this government fails to place on Alberta's children. Their conclusion reaffirms that when it comes to developing policies and programs to help children, this government gets a failing grade. To the Premier: what is the Premier doing about the fact that Alberta has the third highest rate in Canada of children having children, one-third higher than the national average?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I haven't had the opportunity of reviewing that report. I'm sure that our Minister of Family and Social Services has had the opportunity to look at that report, and I'll ask the hon. minister to respond.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be glad to respond. First of all, I'd like to indicate that it is very unfortunate that anyone would live in poverty. We all know – and I've said it in this House – that more welfare does not deal with the issue of poverty. It's jobs for people. It's a healthy economy, training, self-sufficiency. I think that's exactly what this government has done. In fact, when you see the report today, the same report came up with the same stats over two and a half years ago in fact, in 1993.

This government is serious when we are dealing with children. In the next three years we will be spending over \$800 million directly on children's services, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, what is the Premier doing about the fact that the numbers of homeless children are increasing dramatically in this province, with 132 children, for example, having been seen in a single three-month period by a single Calgary agency in 1995?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. minister alluded to the tremendous amount of resources we're putting into the care of children, and again I will have the hon. minister supplement.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just recently, of course, released a three-phase report on welfare reforms in Alberta. First of all, on the issue of welfare, I have always said in this House that there is enough money in the welfare system. There is enough money in the welfare system, but it's how we managed to use the dollars in the past.

In the last two and a half years we've reduced the welfare caseload by 50 percent of healthy Albertans that want to work and should be working. It allowed us as a second phase of the welfare reforms, Mr. Speaker, to redirect an additional \$173 million to those particular high-needs areas. We are moving now to design a program that will encourage the community to be involved at the community level as to how programs should be designed for those services, and the program is very successful.

MR. MITCHELL: The one thing this minister is particularly good at is absolving himself of responsibility for everything.

How can the Premier – and this is to the Premier – refuse to adopt the UN convention on the rights of children when 20 percent of the children in this province live in poverty, when 40 percent of all the recipients of social assistance in this province are children, and when infant mortality rates for aboriginal children are more than twice the national average? Quite an accomplishment. Quite an Alberta advantage, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two sides to every story. Really I think that the hon. minister has to have time to examine these allegations, to examine these statistics, and bring out the facts, and I'll give him that opportunity once again.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, when you are dealing with children's services, it's a very complicated and sensitive issue. There is no quick answer. You can be assured the Liberals do not have a quick answer. They released their report, their principles on social policy, just a little while ago, and there's nothing in there that deals with this particular issue. In fact, three years ago I asked my critic to put forward their recommendations as to how services would be provided to children in Alberta. There's nothing in here that I can use. What they have outlined in here we have achieved and exceeded already.

In fact, in relation to the aboriginal people – and that's what the Official Opposition mentions – it is very unfortunate that of the 8,000 children in care or the 2,300 in foster homes, 50 percent are aboriginal children. The very unfortunate part of that, Mr. Speaker, is that it is related to poverty. This government is working very hard in many ways to make sure that poverty ends in those aboriginal communities, because that is the answer.

#### **Regional Health Authorities**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, our strength as a community is founded upon the strength of our commitment to democratic

principles. Unbelievably, when asked yesterday, the Premier couldn't explain why he is going to allow only two-thirds of our regional health authority members to be elected. Now that he has had time to think about it overnight, has he figured out some reason for placing this arbitrary limit on democracy?

**2:20**

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is not placing an arbitrary limit on democracy. This is what the people told us. As the hon. Member for Medicine Hat traveled around the province to hear from Albertans on this governance model, they suggested and made it quite clear that they wanted a blended board, appointed and elected. I will point out that the majority of the RHA members will be elected.

MR. MITCHELL: The Premier should read his own report.

Why did the Premier ignore his own government's report, which shows very clearly that the overwhelming majority of Albertans want their regional health authorities to be entirely elected?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to have the hon. Member for Medicine Hat, who prepared the report and heard from the people, respond and provide the leader of the Liberal opposition with the answers directly.

Thank you.

MR. RENNER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to respond to that question. First of all, let me point out that unlike the members opposite, when we are asked to consult with Albertans, we don't already have a predetermined plan in place and have the decision already made.

Mr. Speaker, we listened to Albertans, we read letters from Albertans, and we heard two distinct trains of thought. There were a number of individuals who indicated that they felt election was appropriate, and there was a very significant number of individuals who felt that an appointment process was appropriate. [interjections] I think it's perfectly appropriate for our committee to make the recommendation accordingly.

THE SPEAKER: The opposition has been questioning the competency of the hon. member to answer that question, but the hon. member was the head of a government task force. He's only answering questions about that task force. He's not answering any other policy questions of the government.

MR. MITCHELL: Given that the Premier is hedging his bet on democracy when it comes to regional health authorities, does this mean that he is now going to appoint one-third of our school boards and one-third of our municipal councils and maybe one-third of his own government caucus?

MR. KLEIN: I would love to appoint one-third of their caucus, Mr. Speaker, but I would have a very difficult time doing it, I'll tell you that for sure.

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

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

#### **Multi-Corp Inc.**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A year ago Hugh Dunne was just another one of the Premier's patronage appointments earning a six-figure salary. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, after his link to Multi-Corp has embarrassed the government, Dunne is done. Last month the Premier promised that we would get more information on this issue. My question today is to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm today in the House that Mr. Dunne breached his ethical duties to the government office that he was occupying in his dealings with Multi-Corp and therefore the Premier requested his resignation?

MR. KLEIN: I think it's entirely inappropriate that this member would refer to someone who is not in the House. It is outside the purview of this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to discuss internal personnel matters in this Legislature or anywhere else.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just trying to follow up on another broken promise of the Premier.

My supplementary question: will the Premier confirm that a severance package was paid in exchange for this resignation?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that I am not going to discuss internal personnel matters in this House, no more than I would expect the Liberals to tell me the grounds and the circumstances under which their top dog in Calgary was fired.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental, hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Minister of Health has provided us with the copy of the contract of the deputy minister, what is it that the Premier is trying to hide by refusing to disclose this information we're requesting?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, you know, he doesn't listen. I know he doesn't care, but he doesn't listen as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to discuss internal personnel matters in the Legislative Assembly or anywhere else, no more than I would expect the Liberals to discuss their internal personnel matters.

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

#### **Whistle-blowing Social Workers**

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the minister of social services. Constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek in a recent telephone poll were concerned about a gag order that has been imposed on social workers with regards to speaking out against the department's policy and regulations. These constituents are not opposed to a gag order if the proper channels have been accessed through their supervisor or manager, and they do not want the union involved. The social workers are afraid to speak out about their concerns for fear of losing their jobs. My first question is: will the minister ensure employees will not lose their jobs if legitimate concerns are raised with their supervisor or manager?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, of course I've always said that, you know, individuals in the department would not be fired if they use the proper processes in place to deal with departmental issues.

There is no gag order. Specific to that one issue, it was one employee out of 5,600 employees that had a difficulty in that particular area. That issue is being dealt with. In fact, it's in the courts, and a decision will be made within two or three weeks. I wouldn't, of course, discuss that further because it is an individual issue.

There are processes in place for all staff members to participate in the design of programs and policies in my department. In fact, the whole welfare reform process involved clientele, involved the public, involved the frontline workers, the managers. In fact, the union members were also involved in the process in designing the welfare reforms. I have always said that I'll continue doing that. There are proper processes in place to deal with those particular issues, but if it is to do with policies, I will not allow criticizing.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. If their concerns are legitimate and the supervisor or manager refuses to deal with it, what other avenues or options do they have?

MR. CARDINAL: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course I'd like to advise the House again that there is no gag order. That one specific issue is being dealt with now, and no doubt the decision will be made in two or three weeks.

There are processes in place, and all the staff out there know that there are processes in place to deal with issues, just like any other department. This department is no different than the other departments of the government, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

MRS. FORSYTH: Oh, no. Sorry.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

#### **2:30 School Transportation Fees**

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two nights ago over 400 parents of students in the Grande Yellowhead school division congregated in Edson to protest the levying, the imposing, of transportation user fees, that the division was forced to impose because of the underfunding of education by this government. These parents, because they refused to pay these user fees, are now facing collection agencies and ultimately even court action. The same thing happened a few weeks ago in the town of Bonnyville when parents were taken to court for refusing to pay these fees. In fact, this government is forcing school divisions to charge more and more fees. Parents feel they're getting less and less for their education taxes. So I have a question to the Minister of Education. Since free access to public education has always been considered an inalienable right for rural Albertans, how does he defend the charging, the levying, of transportation user fees?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, across this province there are a very large number of school jurisdictions which are not charging transportation fees for their basic school transportation within the parameters of the School Act. There is, I understand, an issue in the Grande Yellowhead school division with respect to this fee. The school division board requested of Alberta Education that we do an audit of their system to see where their rates of expenditure were higher than they may need to be. That investigation is going



on right now, and the report will be provided to the board in early March.

I would like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that our view of the transportation grants across this province is that they are adequate for the majority of school jurisdictions for the service of getting students to and from school.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, since the transportation charges now throughout the province range from zero to \$450 per student per year, what happened to equal access to education here?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the hon. member across the way acknowledges that they range from zero, and I would suggest that there are many, many cases where the zero is correct for the basic transportation service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with what example he's quoting at \$450, but of course when you have extracurricular programs, field trips to various locations in the province, and so on, it has been a practice for a long, long time, even back to the time that he and I were in the school system, to charge fees for that purpose.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I think I'm not getting anywhere. I'd like to go to the Premier, then, perhaps if I could. Mr. Premier, are you prepared to see all these parents of kids in rural Alberta being hauled into court because you underfunded transportation of students to schools?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I simply don't buy that.  
I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think that the members across the way should be a bit rational about this. They know that in many jurisdictions in this province, where they're operating an efficient transportation system, they are providing that service without any fees for the basic service to and from schools. They also know that where services such as field trips or busing within the 2.4 kilometre rate or additional services are provided, there are fees. They also know, I think, that depending on the jurisdiction in the province, there are probably cases where some help can be given and advice can be given to reorganize and make their transportation system more effective and efficient.

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

#### Licensed Practical Nurses

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The registered nurses in Alberta have a long tradition of providing safe, high-quality health care to Albertans. RNs cherish and protect that tradition. They're very concerned about proposed changes to the legislative scope of practice for licensed practical nurses. My question today is to the Minister of Labour: Is the minister considering any changes in practice guidelines for licensed practical nurses?

MR. DAY: No, Mr. Speaker. I am not advocating any changes; neither is the Minister of Health. What has happened is that the licensed practical nurses, their association, has sometime ago – as a matter of fact back in May of '95, I believe – submitted to the Health Disciplines Board a series of recommendations in terms of what they would like to see with some expanded practice. That's a common route for professional associations to go: wanting to

look at expanding their particular areas of practice. The Health Disciplines Board then takes the requests from the LPNs and circulates those to the various stakeholders that may be affected. Then when there's been full comment from the stakeholders, that part of the process being completed, that comes back to the Health Disciplines Board. They have a meeting and make some recommendations.

As a matter of fact, it was just yesterday, as I understand it, that the Health Disciplines Board looked at the review and the input from the stakeholders. At some point in the future they will be presenting, then, some recommendations to government for further open discussion. So it's not the government that initiated that process; it's the LPNs. It's gone through the acceptable route for associations who want those areas looked at.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is again to the Minister of Labour. The proposed changes to scope of practice will allow LPNs to administer narcotics and subcutaneous injections. Is the minister concerned that patient care and safety will be compromised?

MR. DAY: Again, Mr. Speaker, the LPNs have brought some proposals forward to the Health Disciplines Board, and that board is engaged in discussions with all people who would be affected. I do know that LPNs or their counterparts do in some cases give narcotics and injections in B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia. I don't believe there have been any deaths or ill effects as a result of that, but we will look at the whole question when those recommendations come forward. The very purpose of this very extensive process that any professional association or occupational association has to go through is to make sure that in no way would there be any risk to patient health, and that obviously would also be the prime consideration of the government.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Labour: will the minister commit to allowing all affected professional organizations and patients to have input prior to changes in the LPN scope of practice being implemented?

MR. DAY: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. That's part of the process, that all groups are consulted. Anybody who is to be affected would definitely have input. It's an interesting process to watch in the health care sector, where there are so many groups of providers. For instance, if you see the doctors as one group, the nurses themselves have suggested that they could be able to reach into the doctors' sphere of service delivery and that there are some things that they as nurses could do. The doctors at times have concerns about that. Then while the nurses are suggesting that there are some things they could be doing which doctors do, the LPNs suggest there may be some things that with adequate training and education they as LPNs could do. Then right behind the LPNs are assistant nurses who are suggesting that there may be some things that upon appropriate education and experience they could do. So this is an ongoing discussion, and the prime reason for the discussion on the stakeholders' circulation is for the care and service to the patient.

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

## 2:40 Treasury Branches

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mandate of the Alberta Treasury Branches was never meant to include financing sports teams fronted by smooth-talking individuals – permed hair, fancy shoes, the big-hair set – who seem to have special access to taxpayer dollars and who, when they get them, hold communities and taxpayers hostage. My questions are to the Provincial Treasurer. In light of the fact that \$54 million that was loaned to Norm Green ended up backstopping the Dallas Stars, that 3 and a half million dollars to Larry Ryckman backstopped the Calgary Stampeders, possibly in excess of \$60 million to Peter Pocklington and the Edmonton Oilers, can the Treasurer tell this Legislature why he allowed Alberta Treasury Branches to get out of control, backstop these teams, and move away from their mandate?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Treasurer did no such thing. As I read the irreverent Speech to the Throne from the Leader of the Opposition, they were talking about getting away from any notion of political direction, and that's exactly what this government has practised since late 1992. I have advised the member across the way that this Treasurer will not get involved in those day-to-day activities. I would remind the hon. member of what I had said actually just before I appeared before the heritage savings trust fund committee earlier on in 1996, when I noted that we were in the process of implementing the very legislation that this Legislature agreed to, which was to appoint a board of directors to oversee the policy governance side of the Treasury Branches. That, I hope, will be done in the next few days.

I also remind the hon. member that when I sat down, first of all, with the superintendent of the Treasury Branches, I was advised that a cap of \$25 million on new loans was in place – that cap, I am advised, has been adhered to – and that any loans over the \$25 million limit, Mr. Speaker, are being worked on to attempt to get those loans down below the \$25 million ceiling.

DR. PERCY: The Treasurer has just confirmed that for four years the Treasury Branches have been out of control.

Will the Treasurer confirm that Alberta Treasury Branches have an exposure with Mr. Pocklington in excess of \$60 million and that this exposure increased within the last two years despite the Alberta Treasury Branches' own policy of not having more than \$25 million tied up in any one account? Despite the cap, they still increased the exposure.

MR. DINNING: Just as I wouldn't want to reveal the deposits of any MLA that appear in the Treasury Branches, just as you admonished the Member for Redwater yesterday, Mr. Speaker, if a member across the way had deposits at the Treasury Branches, I will not and I should not and this government will not reveal that kind of deposit information. The member across the way may want to draw me across his magical line to talk about the dealings of a particular client of Treasury Branches; I will not.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Treasurer confirm that his office has sent Ryckman Financial a letter staking the province's claim to the Stampeders since the Alberta Securities Commission, the Alberta Treasury Branches are queuing up for ownership of the franchise and the CFL has given the team a nine-day ultimatum to get it cleaned up or the league is going to

take control? Will you confirm that a letter has gone to Ryckman Financial?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker.

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

## Rural Physicians

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are all to the Minister of Health. At the recent signing of the AMA contract there appeared to be little to encourage doctors to locate in rural Alberta. As there remains a shortage of doctors, both general practitioners and specialists, in rural Alberta, will the minister require a rural residency from newly graduated doctors since the Alberta taxpayer contributes a substantial portion to their education?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there was not a lot of mention in the AMA agreement that was signed recently; I will grant you that. But there was a lot of discussion in the past AMA agreement as to the commitment to set up a physician resource plan, and that indeed has been done.

On the issue of a mandatory rural residency for five years I would have to certainly take that suggestion and do some exploration of the merits of the idea. Just offhand, we have 200 graduates per year in the province of Alberta, and if each one of those was required to do a rural residency, I don't believe that would be very practical. However, I would think that the hon. member is talking about family physicians or general practice physicians that graduate.

I should just tell the hon. member and members opposite who may not be aware that we do have a program in Alberta which is a student loan remission program, and I gathered from some of the discussions that were held recently that this may not be well known. Under the student loan remission program we pay up to \$20,000 in medical students' loans if in exchange they agree to work in a rural practice for two years. This is a very good program. It's, I think, quite useful to students if money was the issue. In discussions with medical students they have not indicated to me that money was the issue. To reassure the hon. member, I met with the students at the University of Alberta about a month ago, and I asked them what the barriers to them practising in rural Alberta were? I got a lot of good ideas from them, a lot of good information, and we agreed that we would implement some of their suggestions, which were really useful, into a program that I believe you will probably have the details of in the next two weeks.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you. Another option would be to consider a differential pay schedule for doctors practising in rural and urban Alberta, as is done in some other provinces. Would the minister consider that option?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we do have a differential pay schedule in Alberta. It is generally for quite remote areas. However, again I have to say to the hon. member that in discussions with physicians, and with medical students in particular, money does not seem to be the issue. It is more a need for support from their peers, from a support network. Rural physicians, as those of us who live in rural areas know, are often on

call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. What a lot of people don't recognize is that rural physicians have to be trained more than they might to practise in other areas because rural physicians can have everything land at their door for treatment and may not have the backup. I think that is more the concern.

Mr. Speaker, there are some exciting initiatives that are coming forward to assist rural physicians and those people who choose to practise their skills of medicine in rural communities, and because of the consultation I've had with physicians and with the medical students, I believe that these are the programs that will really work.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you. Will the minister commit to providing a concrete action plan with actual projections of the numbers of doctors that will locate in rural Alberta?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Absolutely, because we're already involved and doing it. I'm very pleased that Dr. Larry Ohlhauser, the president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in the province of Alberta, has agreed to chair the Rural Physician Action Plan Co-ordinating Committee over the next 18 months, and I salute the college for their interest in this area and for their work. So definitely, Mr. Speaker, we will be coming forward with very concrete actions to address this issue.

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

#### **Licensed Practical Nurses** (continued)

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, not more than seven months ago, when this government backtracked from its first attempt to remove registered nurses from hospitals, the Health minister said: it's not intended to have people not qualified performing duties in health; registered nurses will continue to play a part in Alberta hospitals. The Premier and the minister both said that they would consult with the health care professionals before making any changes. Yet despite the assurances from the Minister of Labour that we've just heard, the understanding is that the government is still planning changes behind closed cabinet doors that will have a drastic impact on the role of registered nurses in this province. My first question is to the Minister of Labour. Why did it take at least four drafts and about eight months, from what you just said earlier in this Legislative Assembly, to inform the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses and the unions representing nurses in this province of the draft regulations for licensed practical nurses?

2:50

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was very clear just moments ago saying that in this particular case with the LPNs, with them making some suggestions in terms of scope of practice, that goes to the health disciplines board. That does not come to cabinet for consideration. The information that the member has just used I will just say is totally erroneous; I will not say that it's a total fabrication. Somebody gave it to her. I would suggest that she would want to challenge the credibility of the person feeding her this kind of information.

MS LEIBOVICI: My next question is to the chair of the Council on Professions and Occupations. What is the time frame for

consideration of the LPN proposals? Will it be before or will it be after the development of the restricted activities list?

MRS. FORSYTH: The process that the LPNs have gone through has been clearly outlined by the Minister of Labour. The LPNs have been working on the regulations, and they have consulted with some of the stakeholders involved. They have made a presentation before the health disciplines board, and they will continue to consult all of the stakeholders.

In regards to the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee and the advisory committee, we are meeting with people, and they will make the decisions on what controlled activities will be used.

MS LEIBOVICI: That consultation is a surprise to the stakeholders involved.

My last question, and this is also to the chair of the Council on Professions and Occupations: what is the point of having the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee when the government is prepared to change regulations behind closed doors?

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Speaker, I don't really know where the member of the opposition is getting her facts, but they're not true. We're not doing that.

#### **Casino Licensing**

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, over 400 extremely angry northeast residents packed a hall to say no, no, no to a casino being located in their backyard. These residents demanded to know why they were not consulted prior to the granting of a licence for a facility that would attract major problems such as increased crime and increased traffic into their neighbourhood. To the minister responsible for gambling: why were these residents not consulted prior to the granting of a casino permit in their backyard?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the question would indicate that my critic doesn't know much about the way casinos are licensed in the province of Alberta. First of all, there are several components. There is no legislation or anything in the rules and regulations of the Criminal Code and that to prevent anybody from establishing a casino. As a result, the issue of where that casino is located is a bylaw or a development permit or something to do with the local municipality.

Building a casino, though, means that you can't run it, because the licence is given to the charity. Therefore you must have a charity show up with a licence given by the province, and the Criminal Code spells out that the province is the deliverer of those licences. We have 16 casinos in the province today that are operating and have established a relationship with enough charities to operate the events on a daily basis. If they can't get enough charities – and I had one in my own constituency in Lloydminster – to show up with a licence, the casino closes. Therefore, the issue about establishing a physical facility in this neighbourhood is a municipal issue. The ability of that casino to function must be based on the fact that they have enough charities to come with licences to run enough events that year.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, then let me ask the same minister this particular question: why is the surrounding land use not a concern to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission prior to them granting the permission to operate that facility at that location?

DR. WEST: We don't grant that permission. We have to go by the development permits, I guess, given by the municipality. I have to repeat again: we give the licences to the charitable organizations, who then take them through to a person that is an operator of a casino. The establishment of that right comes under the Criminal Code delivered through to the provinces. Furthermore, we've had a whole group of people making applications, if you like, for these type of directions. We say: look; the only thing that we control now is the VLTs that a charitable casino is given and the licences. We have capped the number of VLTs going to the charitable casinos. So any new operation that's outside of the existing 16 will not be getting VLTs.

MR. WICKMAN: My last question to the minister: is the minister prepared to direct the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission to reverse that decision not to grant any permit for that facility at that location where the residents have said no, no, no, they don't want it?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, this member was a member of city council for a number of years, and I'm amazed at that question. It's no different than when we were giving out licences to people who have established credibility to have a liquor store. That didn't mean that that city or that municipality would give them a development permit for that location. This casino operator that runs this has been given acknowledgment that they are a credible operator, but moving to this location with their clientele, the charitable people that use the casino, can only be done if the city issues them a development permit for that location.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I ask your indulgence? Are we going to have two questions in a row? I noticed that you went from Edmonton-Meadowlark to Edmonton-Rutherford.

THE SPEAKER: Carry on with your question, hon. member. The Chair will decide the order of questions. Don't waste time on those things.

#### **Safety Code Enforcement**

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my question today deals with the Department of Labour. There appears to be some difference in permit fee structures between Alberta Labour and the newly created safety code commission, which causes a great deal of concern not only to the customers but to the gas contractors and the commissions as well. My question firstly to the minister is: what is the purpose of a fee being paid to Alberta Labour when that fee is in the safety code commission area when a private contractor is doing the actual inspection?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like an area which requires a little more detailed analysis. The intent of course either in moving this out to municipalities who would like to do this or allowing private contractors who are qualified to be involved in inspections is that then indeed they are able to charge for that particular fee. As a matter of fact, with the development of an entire classification of qualified journeymen who can meet certain qualifications, they are able under a heading of authorized contractor to deliver services and not have to exact in many cases the same or as high a fee as would have to be done if it was the

department doing it or in fact if it was an accredited agency delivering the service. So there's no intention for redundancy in any way. If there's a specific case here where that appears to have happened, then I'd like to take a look at it and see if we can resolve it.

**3:00**

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the minister: will you please explain the difference and the rationale for varying permit fees for new appliances and installations versus replacement appliances and installations?

MR. DAY: Again, Mr. Speaker, the regulation is quite specific, but it does go on for a number of pages, and rather than try and break down each appliance, I can make it clear that the list is specific, and for people needing information who don't have it at the particular time, there's been a development of a new communication line and an immediate fax service. So if people don't have the actual list with them or right before them, they can get that information.

I would also like to report that – not just to do with various gas installations but, in fact, right across the board of electrical and plumbing and building and the many other areas – something like 90 percent of all municipalities in one form or another have signed on to this particular process, indicating they'd like to be in the management of that. They can use accredited agencies or, in fact, their own people to deliver the service. Information bulletins have gone out extensively, and if there are some specific areas where people don't have the material, they will be able to get it either from the Department of Labour or from the Safety Codes Council.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister accelerate the final 10 percent process so that we actually have all these authorized contractors in place and eliminate the resulting confusion that seems to still be there?

MR. DAY: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's been very encouraging to see the amount and the number of agencies that have applied for and received certification. The 10 percent figure that the member is using: I have to surmise that he's referring to the fact I said that close to 90 percent of municipalities have in one form or another suggested that they will be accredited to deliver the service. However, in the case where a municipality is not delivering the service, the accredited agency is there to do it. So the service is being provided, and the market is responding quite well. Just a week and a half ago there was another extended list of agencies that applied to deliver those services.

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

#### **Dentists' Disciplinary Procedure**

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a Calgary dentist was found guilty on four charges of unprofessional conduct and was fined a total of \$22,000 by the Discipline Committee of the Alberta Dental Association. The reason I cannot refer to the dentist's name is that I don't know his or her name, nor do the citizens of Calgary. It has been suggested that

the Alberta Dental Association cannot release the name because of government legislation preventing it. My question is to the minister responsible for professions and occupations. Why are we preventing the release of this important information?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that there is no legislation whatsoever that prevents the Dental Association from releasing that name. Apparently, their Discipline Committee has recommended that it not be released, but there is nothing in legislation nor is this government in any way prohibiting the association from releasing that name.

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Speaker, if the Dental Association's Discipline Committee is preventing the release of this dentist's name, is there anything that can be done to reverse this decision?

MR. DAY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Actually the Dental Profession Act allows for the dental board in fact to review any recommendation from its committee and to ask that a recommendation be looked at again or reconsidered. So I would hope that people would contact the Dental Association and ask that their board indeed review that recommendation and release that name. That is perfectly open for any citizen of this province to make that request and for that board to look at that request.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there anything that the minister can do that would end the discretionary authority of the Discipline Committee and require the Dental Association to release the names of dentists found guilty of unprofessional conduct?

MR. DAY: Actually, Mr. Speaker, we're going even beyond that. It has long been a concern of mine and I think a concern of most Albertans that in a variety of these professions the disciplinary hearings in fact are done in private and not open and available to the public. Because that has been a concern of this government, we in fact are preparing, along with other information related to professions and occupations, some legislation that would effect some changes in that particular area. Obviously, anytime we're thinking of legislation, we want to consult with any groups affected, but that has been a clear recommendation, certainly a recommendation of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who chairs the Council on Professions and Occupations, and that will be forthcoming. This government is actively promoting and looking to see this whole area change so that indeed these disciplinary hearings can be public.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

### **Family Day**

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Monday, February 19, 1996, all Albertans will be celebrating Family Day. I want to take this opportunity to wish all of my colleagues, all Albertans, and their families a very happy Family Day.

This special day set aside to celebrate families is a time to reflect on the importance of our immediate families, extended families, friends, and communities. It is a day to celebrate the strengths and the meaning of family by spending time together.

Communities across the province are hosting family-oriented activities and celebrations. I know that my constituents of Calgary-McCall will be participating in a number of activities throughout Calgary and in other parts of Alberta.

On Monday, February 19, I encourage all Albertans to celebrate Alberta Family Day. Participate in one of the special activities in your community or start your own family tradition. However you spend the day, take time to reflect on the importance of the family, for it is the strength of the families on which we build strong communities. Strong families make strong communities, and strong communities make strong societies such as our beautiful Alberta.

Happy Family Day.

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

### **Calgary Winter Festival**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to spend a couple of moments this afternoon to acquaint members of the Assembly with a major event in the city of Calgary starting February 16 and running through until February 25. I'm speaking of course of the Calgary Winter Festival.

The Calgary opposition caucus recently had a very valuable opportunity to meet with the general manager and vice-president of the Calgary Winter Festival. One of the things that we undertook to do at that meeting was to inform all Members of the Legislative Assembly both inside and outside of the city of Calgary in terms of this event and the significance and importance of it to the province.

The festival of course was started after the 1988 Winter Olympics in that city, and it's rapidly grown so that the attendance in 1995 was 120,000. Over the course of the eight years, its history, over a million people have attended different events that are part of the Calgary Winter Festival. Last year some 1,000 volunteers were involved. The expectation is that that number will be larger this year. This is perhaps that classic example of leveraging a very modest number of dollars with a whole lot of community and volunteer support into an event of major significance. No city does it better, I'm proud to say, than Calgary, and no province does it better than this province.

The Winter Festival has been dedicated to encouraging community involvement and supporting winter sports and performing arts. It presented in the past approximately 50 events on an annual basis. This year I think it's something closer to 70 different events. It will host 25 regional, national, international sporting events. It sanctions – and this is particularly important – some 25 other community events that go on in different parts of the city of Calgary. The major events this year will be at Canada Olympic Park, the one part of Calgary where we're sure we'll have snow even at this time of the year. The festival will be in the Eau Claire market in beautiful downtown Calgary-*Buffalo*.

The goal of the Calgary Winter Festival is to promote Calgary as a prime tourist destination. I encourage all members and their families to make a point of participating in this worthwhile event.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

3:10

### **CP Rail Office Relocation**

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta advantage is more than an economic position. It's an attitude, it's

a process, and it's effective. When CP Rail announced its decision to relocate their corporate head offices in Calgary last November, the economic aspect of the Alberta advantage was a factor. The successful implementation of that relocation, establishing 730 positions in Calgary, required a major strategic effort which incorporated other aspects of our Alberta advantage.

Earlier this month, CP Rail co-ordinated with Royal LePage relocation services to present to its employees in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver a picture of Alberta and of Calgary. I was privileged to be asked to present an overview of our education system, including our postsecondary opportunities. The communities of Chestermere, Okotoks, Cochrane, Airdrie, and Strathmore together with Mayor Al Duerr of Calgary, representatives of the Calgary Economic Development Authority, Parks and Recreation, the Calgary Home Builders Association, both school districts, and our Francophone community presented a comprehensive overview of our community to approximately 1,100 attendees.

Given the sensitivity in Quebec of corporate relocation, serious attention was paid to informing the employees and their families and not comparing cities. As president and CEO Rob Ritchie expressed in his opening comments at each session: the strength of CP Rail is its employees, and their successful integration into Calgary and surrounding areas is the major focus for the company. Having recently attended the Edmonton and area orientation that was held at CFB Calgary for our troops moving north, I am convinced that the ability to focus on people and communities and not rivalries is a significant aspect of our Alberta advantage.

The Premier acknowledged in the video presentation to CP employees that the quality of life in Alberta is second to none. Calgary and all of Alberta will be enhanced by CP's presence.

Thank you.

#### head: **Projected Government Business**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Acting Opposition House Leader.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, we would ask the Government House Leader, pursuant to Standing Order 7, to provide us with information on the projected government business for next week.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I don't think we need a reminder, but on Monday obviously most of us will not be here. There will be no business. On Tuesday in the afternoon we'll be looking at the debate to continue on the Speech from the Throne. On Tuesday evening under Government Bills and Orders we'll be looking at the legislation as tabled and as per the Order Paper in numerical order. On Wednesday evening we will also be continuing the debate on the Speech from the Throne. On Thursday is the Budget Address at 4 o'clock. Following the pattern and precedent set last year, following question period we will adjourn briefly and return for the Budget Address at 4 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: Earlier during routine proceedings, the Leader of the Opposition indicated some difficulty with comments from the Chair. The Chair understood that he wished to raise a point of order. The Chair would point out that that is not possible, but the Leader of the Opposition may ask the Chair to explain further what the Chair had in mind, if he wishes to.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask you to explain further what you had in mind. Perhaps I could give you some background that would embellish and explain my request.

As you point out, earlier today several of my caucus colleagues presented portions of a petition. The petition was unique in its presentation, but it certainly wasn't inappropriate. It was a series of cutouts performed by five-year-old kindergarten children. Each cutout had the appropriate petition wording and was signed by individual parents in each case. The children went on from the cutting out and colouring of these figures to linking them together in a petition that amounts to about 1,800 feet in length.

Now, the Speaker, in reacting to the presentation of these petitions, indicated that he thought they were frivolous and trivial. Mr. Speaker, I would disagree. I know my colleagues would disagree vehemently that that was hardly frivolous and trivial. First of all, the petition is effectively worded about a very important, nontrivial issue; that is, these parents' and these children's interest in 400 hours of kindergarten mandated, not mandatory.

Secondly, it was properly signed by 3,200 parents and submitted, along with this proper wording, with addresses of each parent in each case. Thirdly, it happens to have been cut out and coloured by five-year-old children. This is hardly inappropriate and hardly frivolous, and it seems that it should not be a process that would be derided by any member of this Legislature and certainly not by the Speaker of this Legislature, backed up and encouraged by loud applause from members – every member, it would seem – of this government. Mr. Speaker, it is particularly ironic and somewhat sad although immensely revealing that the day after a Calgary coalition of social agencies gave the government a failing grade on its children's policies, the Speaker of this House would be backed up by government members for jeering the efforts of these parents and for jeering the first foray of these five year olds into the democratic process.

I think that an apology on behalf of the Chair and on behalf of somebody over here would be . . .

THE SPEAKER: The Chair has been patient listening to the Leader of the Opposition, but the Chair is certainly not impressed by the comments. If important business is to be put before this Assembly, it shouldn't be in the form of something that looks like it has been through the paper shredder.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, who's to say . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair listened patiently to you. [interjections] Hon. members, quiet.

As the Chair pointed out, petitions are an important part of our democratic proceedings, and they should be dealt with in an expeditious way if they're to receive serious attention. When you get a bundle of things that look like they've been through the paper shredder and when they were carried around, falling out of the thing, they didn't even look like they could possibly be dealt with in any intelligent manner. They also, in the Chair's view, looked like they were an attempt to use an exhibit, and there are clear rules against using exhibits. [interjection] All right, hon. member. The Chair will say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It's the Chair's obligation to maintain the decorum of this Assembly, and the Chair will make an honest attempt to do that.

That is the Chair's explanation for this, but the Chair would discourage any further attempts to encourage anything like this. And that will end that matter.

Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark have a point of order she wishes to raise?

**Point of Order  
Parliamentary Language**

MS LEIBOVICI: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. In the question that I had asked the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, she had indicated that I was not telling the truth. *Beauchesne* 489, page 146, outlines very specifically that the term "not telling the truth" is considered to be an unparliamentary expression. I would request that that member retract her comments.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair will give the hon. member an opportunity to reply although the Chair did not hear those words, but the hon. member will know what she said. If there's any dispute about this, we'll have to consult the record.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. [interjection]

MRS. FORSYTH: Go ahead.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I would hate to suggest the pattern is developing from the person of Edmonton-Meadowlark in, in fact, not bringing forward all the information. *Beauchesne* 490 is very clear: "Since 1958, it has been ruled parliamentary to use the following expressions." One of them is: "not telling the truth." It's right there on page 148, about halfway down. So whether the words were enunciated or not is irrelevant. It has been ruled parliamentary since 1958. Please try and bring out all the information. [interjection]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order please. Order. The Chair was afraid that that's what the situation was. There are several phrases and words that appear in both lists, and of course it all depends on the context in which they were made. Nevertheless, the Chair felt that the hon. member who was accused of making the remarks should have the opportunity of stating her position.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

3:20

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess one of the things is that I haven't seen a copy of the Blues, so it's put me in a difficult situation to say whether I did say "not telling the truth" or not. If I did say that she was "not telling the truth," I will take that back and just state that the facts were not true or the facts were at variance with the truth.

**Point of Order  
Reflections on the Speaker**

MR. DAY: On another point of order, if I may, Mr. Speaker. In Standing Orders, as early as Standing Order 2:

In all contingencies unprovided for, the question shall be decided by the Speaker and, in making a ruling, the Speaker shall base any decision on the usages and precedents of the Assembly and on parliamentary tradition.

I think there's been a grave infraction of parliamentary tradition today, Mr. Speaker. You have asked us not to raise the issue of the petition. I am not directing my comments to that.

In fact, the Opposition House Leader showed gross disrespect for the position of the Chair in not just insinuating but stating outright that the Chair made a decision based on certain noises heard from this side of the House. That would suggest a matter of bias in the ruling of the Chair. The record is very clear in this House that the Chair rules from the Chair's point of view. Many times I myself have felt the sting of the rebuke of the Chair. For anyone to suggest that you have made a ruling based upon some kind of cheering on from either side of the House is indeed a reflection on your ability to rule. I would ask for the benefit of all members of this House that the hon. Leader of the Opposition withdraw those insinuations.

THE SPEAKER: We will leave that to a later date, hon. Government House Leader.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40  
Random Acts of Kindness Week**

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the urgency of bringing this motion forward at this time and seeking the House's unanimous consent to allow it to proceed simply because this is of course our final official sitting day for this week and Random Acts of Kindness Week in fact runs from February 12 to February 18. So I would ask on that basis, since there wouldn't be an opportunity to celebrate it next week, that we in fact allow this motion to proceed with unanimous consent at this time.

THE SPEAKER: Is there unanimous consent in the Assembly for this application?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

Mr. Zwozdesky moved:

Be it resolved that this Assembly recognize February 12 through 18, 1996, as Random Acts of Kindness Week and congratulate Colleen Ring as the chair of the Random Acts of Kindness Week committee.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members of the House for allowing through their own kindness this particular Random Acts of Kindness Week motion to go through.

Mr. Speaker, last Monday I had the great pleasure and privilege to observe an extremely meaningful and uplifting event which took place at Edmonton's City Hall. I am of course referring to the official proclamation which His Worship Mayor Bill Smith made on behalf of a number of schools, students, teachers, parents, and others that were gathered there. The proclamation officially announced that for the second year in a row the dates February 12 to February 18 be officially recognized as Random Acts of Kindness Week.

This particular project, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, is being celebrated in Edmonton and elsewhere throughout our province for the second year in a row now. However, in fact there are over 200 communities that have been participating in this particular initiative for quite some time. So we have this same initiative taking place in Canada, in Australia, in the U.S.A., England, and Scotland. In the politest sense of the term, it really does give us a great sense of global warming to embrace the notion of being kind to one another.

I'm bringing it forward at this time, Mr. Speaker, for many reasons, but central to them is the reason that propelled its creation in the first place. One of my constituents, as you very well know, was brutally murdered nearly two years ago – and that particular individual was, of course, Barb Danelesko – and the community was very shocked by that particular brutal act. We spent many, many hours and days and now weeks and months, almost two years, deliberating what could be done to help this tragic situation be a mindful reminder of how unkind certain people can be. But a particularly enterprising constituent of mine, Colleen Ring, on her own initiative with her sister Debbie Riopel from St. Albert thought that in order to not let that incident go unmarked and in fact that it would be noticed for many, many years to come, they should bring forward an initiative such as this in order to encourage people to be kind to one another. It's a simple initiative that actually has taken root from the United States but has been embraced warmly here as well.

This particular committee, which is chaired by Colleen Ring, organized a wonderful event on Monday at City Hall that included several schools, among them Mary Hanley and St. James and La Perle elementary as well as Sacred Heart school. The children came there, Mr. Speaker, and through their own act of kindness took part in a beautiful candlelighting ceremony, which figuratively said: let us all see the light to a kinder way. They also took part in presentations as choir ensembles, as dancers, and as handbell choristers. A wonderful trio of individuals – Genevieve Riopel, Victoria, and Valerie – under the guidance of Paul Lamoureux provided some wonderful entertainment with a very meaningful message as well of being kind to one another. There were a number of poems read by the children, among them Jasmine Pullukatt and numerous others, who spoke about having not just one heart during this special week but two hearts so that we could be twice as kind to one another.

What the committee seeks to do, Mr. Speaker, is show people that we can have a very positive impact on our community and on people around us through the smallest of gestures and not necessarily through financial gestures. We can do this by extending a helping hand in a literal sense, in a physical sense. We can do this by showing some emotional support at times of need. We can do this by offering some spiritual guidance. We can do this by offering some hope to our fellowman or fellow woman. We can do a number of things that will be hard to immediately measure the benefits and the results of, but in the long run, if we are just a little bit kinder to one another through our families, through our communities, through our religious halls and elsewhere, we can surely arrive at some very positive benefits such as promoting greater respect for one another, a greater deeper sense of understanding and patience for each other in spite of many differences that we might carry and ultimately a greater degree of acceptance amongst all individuals that comprise this great province of Alberta.

It's also an important and significant time at which we can recognize each other as true equals even though we may not have

been blessed with equal attributes or equal talents or even equal tools to go through our daily chores. Nonetheless, this particular week gives us an opportunity, a marvelous opportunity, to be a little more friendly to our neighbours, to be a little more polite to one another in our daily dispensation of our business, and to be courteous at all times. It gives us an opportunity to look very positively at people even if it's sometimes hard to find something positive, but if you look deeply enough, surely, you can find something nice to say or something nice to do or some friendly gesture to pass on. People are what make the difference, Mr. Speaker. It's your attitude that really counts. It costs nothing to be kind, but it buys so much if you are.

In the words of Margaret Mead, we should, quote, never underestimate the power of a small group of citizens to change the world; in fact, that is the only way that change occurs, unquote. We're heading into a beautiful weekend, which culminates with Family Day on Monday. Surely it behooves us at this time to remember that and make that extra gesture and fulfill it to our greatest capabilities.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, we know there are a number of schools that have participated in this, and we want many, many more schools and other institutions and other communities to accept this particular week and celebrate it in their own way.

Just in closing here, I want to remind members of this House what some of the stakeholders, if I might say, or participants are doing so far in this regard to celebrate this special Random Acts of Kindness Week. We had one of the schools a couple of days ago that, instead of writing Valentine cards to themselves, thought: why not prepare a special Valentine for a veteran that we know? So they did. We had a number of other students who decided that their random act of kindness would be to go and visit a seniors' residence, show them what the joyful sound of youth is all about, remind them. They shoveled neighbours' walks. They offered words of praise. They even stopped and just smiled. Each of the students had their own special way of communicating his or her very special meaning. So the committee seeks those kinds of acts to be followed upon and acted upon not only this week, Mr. Speaker, but throughout all other days of the year.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other acts of kindness that were done, but in closing I will simply officially thank and reiterate my congratulations for the tremendous act of kindness which Colleen Ring, Debbie Riopel, Daphne Kuehn, who chaired the event on Monday, and numerous others who comprise a much larger, greater, caring committee in support of this Random Acts of Kindness Week performed as a reminder to all of us. They're being kind to others. They're being kind to animals. They're being kind to themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely urge the House to support this special motion. It's but a few words, but it really means so very, very much to us in the longer run. Thank you, and I look forward to the unanimous support of others in this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's sometimes difficult to realize that random acts of kindness are practised in the city of Edmonton all the time when sometimes we look only at our Legislature. It is a pleasure this week to look at newspapers and see so many good stories, and we can say that there are many stories of random acts of kindness practised by the people here in the city of Edmonton and throughout the area.



The idea is to practise random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty. That idea started in the United States over a decade ago when Anne Hebert coined this popular phrase. More recently, people feeling disheartened, as we all are, by the growth of violence in the world one by one decided to make a difference. Small pockets of people and then entire cities got into the act.

This government is pleased to offer congratulations to Colleen Ring and her sister Debbie Riopel, who started the kids for kindness program in their elementary classrooms two years ago. As the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore points out, they were responding to a need in this city to cope with the shocking death of a young mother, Barb Danelesko. Colleen and Debbie have proven that individuals can make a difference and that good ideas can snowball and have a positive effect on the entire community.

I think we also owe thanks to Doug McNally, executive director of the Edmonton Community Foundation, and Edmonton Mayor Bill Smith for supporting this great concept and helping make Random Acts of Kindness Week a reality in the city of Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of a story that my hon. colleague from Medicine Hat compels me to bring forward, and that is the story of *Horton Hears a Who!* In the story of *Horton Hears a Who!*, which takes place in the jungle of Nool, Horton is an elephant. He has an extraordinary sense of hearing because of his large ears, and he heard some people who were crying for help in a place called Whoville. Whoville was about to be boiled in the Beezle-Nut Oil by the Wickersham brothers, and Horton heard the voices of the people of Whoville and came forward and saved the people of Whoville from being boiled in the Beezle-Nut Oil. I'd be happy to elaborate on this story at some later juncture, but I am simply compelled at this time to say that random acts of kindness practised by elephants or people are appreciated not only this week but every day of the year. A kind word or a donation of time or funds to charities or a thank you note or even a smile can all qualify. In the words of Gandhi: be the change that you want to see in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Let the record show that the motion passes unanimously.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### Maple Leaf Junior Women's Curling Championship

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the issue of urgency, I would point out that the Maple Leaf junior women's curling championship was concluded in the city of Edmonton at the Granite Club last Saturday, February 10. Recognizing that today is the last sitting day of this week and also as an act of kindness, I would kindly request the unanimous consent of the Legislature to allow this motion to be proposed.

THE SPEAKER: Is there unanimous consent in the Assembly for the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti to propose his motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Jacques moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the Grande Prairie Curling Club rink skipped by Heather Godberson for winning the Maple Leaf junior women's curling championship on February 10, 1996.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that the Godberson team is the first Alberta team to win the Canadian title since 1988. The team is made up of a rather interesting geographical mix of young women who all curl together in Grande Prairie. The skip, Heather Godberson, is originally from Fort St. John and is currently studying physical education at the University of Alberta; the lead, Terelyn Bloor, is also from Fort St. John and is studying at the Grande Prairie Regional College; the second, Kirstie Moore, is a high school student in Grande Prairie; and the third, Carmen Whyte, is from Tofield and is also studying at the University of Alberta.

How they manage to co-ordinate their schedules and travel to curl with their coach, Brian Moore, in Grande Prairie is a testament to their determination, which combined with their talent won them the Canadian title. The team put on an outstanding show in the finals, beating the Saskatchewan rink 7 to 5. For those that saw it on television, it was a nail-biting game, which ended up in an extra end. Two rocks made the difference for the Alberta team. In playing against 13 teams representing all of Canada's provinces and territories, the Grande Prairie rink had an impressive 9-3 record. To add to their feat, Heather's team is the fifth Alberta rink to win a Canadian title in the 25-year history of the championship. The team now heads to Red Deer to represent Canada in the world championships from March 9 to 17.

I would like to ask the Assembly to join me in recognizing the outstanding feat of this team, expressing congratulations for not only their feat of last week but to wish them the best of luck as they prepare to compete at the world level next month.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, thanks. I'd like to add a few words to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti's commendation of the effort of Heather Godberson and her winning team. The member spoke before him about acts of kindness. Certainly this is one: when we stand up in the Legislature and acknowledge some of those Albertans that have pulled together as a team, worked as a team, and succeeded as a team. I think that's very critical, and I think it's very, very important.

Some of the hardships that in fact the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti brought to our attention as far as distance and coming together to work to that point of success I think shows a lot of what we have to do in this Legislature as well. I think it reflects very well when we stop to ponder and recognize those Albertans that achieve considerably. I would suggest that the very discipline and the very commitment that took them to becoming the winners of the Maple Leaf junior women's curling championship will in all probability propel them to win at the world's.

I would join the Member from Grande Prairie-Wapiti in offering the very best of luck and hope that they curl their best games in that particular tournament.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

**head:** **Orders of the Day**  
3:40

**head:** **Consideration of His Honour  
the Administrator's Speech**

Mr. Stelmach moved:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Administrator as follows:

To His Honour Mr. Justice J.W. McClung, the Administrator of the Province of Alberta:

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

[Debate adjourned February 14, 1996]

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

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjection] Thank you, my one supporter. [interjection] Oh, I've got two supporters. [interjections] Oh, even some opposition support.

I'm very pleased today to rise to encourage members to accept the Speech from the Throne. As we sat in this Assembly and listened, Mr. Speaker, we got a real sense of the direction that the government intends to go. I can honestly say that I was impressed with the direction in terms of fiscal responsibility because it's something I'm very concerned about. We must be and continue to be fiscally responsible to be in a position to look after and balance our budgets and pay down our debt.

At the same time, the Speech from the Throne very clearly indicated that along with fiscal responsibility goes the idea of tuning and fine-tuning essential programs and essential services that Albertans need. Sentiments expressed in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, are those of the people of Alberta, who are proud of a government which listens to its people, that consults with people. I know that this government will continue to listen. I know this government will continue to consult. It is obvious from the Speech from the Throne that this government is listening, is open, and is honest. We will continue to secure and make changes, renovate the house, as has been spoken, to secure the future for ourselves and our children. We will not use scare tactics, Mr. Speaker. We will not use personal attacks, as are done by unfortunately a few members on the opposite side.

MR. DINNING: Hey, what are you talking about?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Actually, I didn't mean on the opposite side of the House from me; I meant on the opposite side of the political spectrum from me, Mr. Treasurer.

We will not use scare tactics. We will not use futile tricks to attempt to scare Albertans into thinking that the government doesn't care or the government doesn't listen. Other people have tried it, and it hasn't worked and will not work. What is working is a solid, affordable, practical government, a government which

believes in getting out of people's faces, a government which gives Albertans a positive outlook for Alberta's future.

I believe that all of us in this House will say that Alberta is the best province in the country in which to live. Even Mr. Speaker, I can see, is nodding his head in the affirmative. We have our finances under control. We can provide essential programs that Albertans need. Moreover, we can afford these programs. We can afford these programs into the future. We are quite clearly, by all estimates, going to have the strongest economic growth in Canada. We have freed Albertans from the bonds of deficit budgets. We have freed Albertans by encouraging a healthy and educated workforce so that Albertans throughout this province can grow and prosper.

On Tuesday we began another chapter in Alberta's legislative history, one which will continue to see the return of a Conservative government to prepare this province for the second century. [interjections] For the year 2000. The Speech from the Throne was an opportunity for Albertans to see that their future is with the good hands people. Although the speech covered several topics, I would like to just talk about a couple of them today.

The first topic I wish to address, one I have recent personal experience with, is health care. We have to have an affordable health care system so that it will be there when Albertans need it. It is important that we continue to have health care we can trust, and we need to provide Albertans with that trust. We need to ensure that our health care remains top quality and affordable. I believe we have this, and I believe the Speech from the Throne indicates that this will continue for all Albertans. You know, the biggest danger to our past health care system was the past health care system. We could no longer afford the health care system that existed, so it was necessary to make changes to create a health care system that would provide quality service yet was one that we could afford, and that is what we have done.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

Our health care system is the envy of the world. We have top-notch doctors providing the best service available. We have new research. We have the best laboratories. We have new technology. We attract the world's attention through innovation. We attract the world's attention because of the healthy population that is in Alberta, and this is at a price we can afford, Mr. Speaker. We know all Albertans are being well served by our health care system and that Albertans can trust it. To that end, I'd like to table four copies of a letter that I just received dated February 14, and I will read that letter.

AN HON. MEMBER: Valentine's Day.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Yes, it is Valentine's Day.

Dear Dr. Taylor:

I want to share with you my recent experience at Medicine Hat Hospital. I was admitted January 19, 1996, and was a patient there a total of six days.

I received excellent care during that week. The lab work and x-rays were done quickly and without hassle, and the nurses were always available to help me and answer my questions.

My praise and thanks go to the Medicine Hat Hospital staff. The doctors, nurses, dieticians and technicians all worked together to ensure that I received good care.

Sincerely,

and it's signed.

DR. PERCY: Your mother.

DR. L. TAYLOR: No, it was not signed by my mother. It was actually signed by a young, 21-year-old lady.

I would point out that this health care is available for all Albertans. You know, we hear so much doom and gloom from the Liberal members, no good, positive stories. Here we have a good positive story. I'm sure the press won't pick up on this in tomorrow's paper and say, you know, here was a case in the Medicine Hat hospital: the patient is congratulating the nurses, the patient is congratulating the doctors, and the patient is telling us about the good care she received. We have many, many cases exactly like this, but the press and the Liberals don't want to hear it, as is obvious right now. They don't want to hear the good-news stories. They're doomsayers and Chicken Littles. You know, just in case they didn't get the allusion, Chicken Little was the guy that ran around saying, "The sky is falling; the sky is falling." It's just typical Liberal propaganda.

Now I'd provide you with another example of an elderly gentleman from Medicine Hat that was in Calgary on a brief vacation. He had an accident, Mr. Speaker, and he broke his arm. That gentleman was checked into – it used to be the General hospital, and I believe it's now called Bow Valley centre. He was rushed to that hospital. He was in that hospital three weeks, and they discovered through various kinds of testing that he received that he had cancer and that that was what caused the arm to break. He told me that he had the best care available. He told me that he received all the necessary medical tests when he needed them. There was no hesitation in getting the medical tests, and he no doubt had various kinds of medical tests. He had CAT scans, I believe. He had an MRI. He had everything that was available to him as well as receiving this excellent care. When it came time to receive the necessary treatment, he received the chemotherapy that he needed immediately. There was no delay; there was no holdup on this treatment. That happened in Calgary just within the last month, and I know that story to be true because that man was my father.

**3:50**

Not only is our health care system top-notch, our educational system is top-notch as well. This government is providing the basis for Albertans to grow and prosper. This government is doing that by providing and maintaining an innovative and top-quality educational system. The education in Alberta is affordable. We have avoided the collapse and crisis that could have threatened our educational system if the rampant, free spending had not stopped. If we had not been courageous as a government and attacked the big spenders within government – you know, as much as you want to reduce deficit, unless you attack the major spenders, there's not a thing you can do.

It's like in your own budget at home. If you go to a movie once a month and you need to make reductions in your budget, there's no use stopping going to a movie once a month. You may have to do that, but you have to look at where you are spending most of your money and say, "How can we reduce our expenditure in these major areas?" That's what we were forced to do as a government, Mr. Speaker. We had to look at the areas that were the big spenders, and that's where we had to make some reductions.

In Ontario they are now just discovering what problems and massive cuts they are going to have to go through to make their system affordable for people who live in Ontario. Fortunately for Ontario and the people of Ontario, they threw out the socialists.

They now have a Conservative government, which is determined to secure the future of education for the Ontario people. Fortunately, we have done that in Alberta. We have secured the future of education in Alberta. We have an efficient, high-quality education system in Alberta.

I talk to teachers regularly, Mr. Speaker. They phone me. They talk to me. I talk to assistant superintendents. I talked to a teacher as recently as last night on the phone. My question was: have you seen a difference in the classroom since the educational cuts? This teacher said, "No." I talked to an assistant superintendent. I said: have your teachers seen a difference in the classroom since the education budget was cut? He said, "No, teachers have not seen a difference in the classroom." That quite frankly is where the rubber hits the road. The rubber hits the road with kids in the classroom. This teacher told me last night that she has seen no difference in her classroom. In fact, she provided an example of how there was money in her school this week to split a class in half because that class was too large. That happened yesterday at a major school in Medicine Hat.

MRS. McCLELLAN: In the south.

DR. L. TAYLOR: In the south, exactly. Of course, we have a well-managed regional board down there, and I'm sure many others are just as well managed.

AN HON. MEMBER: And great MLAs.

DR. L. TAYLOR: And great MLAs, as just mentioned by another member.

So we need to recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there are good things happening, and that's what this throne speech does. We need to recognize that Albertans know there are good things happening, and the polls quite clearly show that.

Another area that was mentioned in the speech was responsible fiscal management. I must point out that this government started two and a half years ago, almost three years ago, when we were elected, to be responsible fiscally. It was a prudent action. We have done this. Because of that, we can absorb the 22 percent cut from these people's Liberal brothers. These people's Liberal brothers are cutting our government, cutting the people of Alberta by \$342 million. Do we hear any concerns from the members opposite about how the Liberals are attacking Alberta, how the Liberals in Ottawa, their federal cousins . . .

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

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

MR. HENRY: I wonder if the hon. member would entertain a question.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre would ask the hon. Member for Medicine Hat if he'd entertain a question.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Absolutely.

**Debate Continued**

MR. HENRY: I just wonder, given the comments about deficit reduction at the federal level, if the member has changed his

position and now all of a sudden doesn't believe in balancing budgets and cutting expenditures, or does he believe that the federal government should treat the provinces essentially differently from the way the provincial government has treated school boards, municipalities, hospital boards, community agencies, and individuals in this province?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I, of course, believe in a balanced budget, but I would point out that these federal Liberals, their cousins, have not cut from within. You must cut from within before you can start cutting from without. This is what we did as a government. Certainly they have not come to that recognition. They want to increase the bureaucracy. They want to build on government programs. They must cut from within.

The point of the matter is that it is their cousins that have raided and raped Alberta for the last 50 or 60 years. Every year Alberta contributes . . .

MR. SEKULIC: Point of order.

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

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against Members

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), and (j), and you can extract whichever, the most applicable. But certainly he points in our direction, in my direction here, and then says "these . . . Liberals" and "their cousins." First of all, I have no cousins in Ottawa, and if you wish to reflect in the directory, you will find that to be the case. That's the first point.

The second point is that using terms like "raped" and "pillaged" and attributing them to cousins of people over here in this Assembly is totally unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, and I wish you would have him retract those statements. In fact, I'm not sure they're his cousins – and I wouldn't use that sort of terminology – but it was the federal Conservatives that did a lot of damage in unison. In fact, GST, a new form of taxation, was introduced by Conservatives in Ottawa, and there's no reflection on that.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Obviously the Member for Edmonton-Manning doesn't like what the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is saying, and that is not unusual in the House. One member doesn't always have to agree with another member. I haven't seen anything wrong with what the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has said, so if he would continue, please.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Yes. Thank you for that wise ruling, Mr. Speaker. I stand by my comments. Anytime a province is contributing more than \$2 billion a year to the federal coffers, when that federal party refuses to cut their budget, then I must say, you know, there's a problem. These are cousins of these people. There's an incestuous relationship between these people sitting here in the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party in Edmonton. Incestuous, Mr. Speaker. There's not another word for it.

#### Debate Continued

DR. L. TAYLOR: Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government of Alberta has seen the light of fiscal responsibility. We can afford to take this hit. We can afford it because we started two and a half to three years ago balancing our budget. We can afford to take the hit, this \$342 million, this 22 percent

reduction. Other provinces are not so fortunate. They are not only trying just now to balance their budgets, but they are being attacked by the federal government as well. We can afford this because we have worked hard to get our finances in order. We continue to work to reduce the debt. We continue to work to keep our spending under control.

This government did it on the spending side, Mr. Speaker. We did not raise taxes. We have a promise to Albertans: we will not raise taxes. You know, other provinces are trying to balance their budgets. We can look at socialistic Saskatchewan, the next province. They balanced their budget by raising taxes. We can look at the socialist Liberals in New Brunswick, and they're balancing their budget by raising taxes. You can immediately see what happens when you balance the budget by raising taxes. I would encourage all these Liberals to come on Saturday to the shopping mall in Medicine Hat, which is about 60 miles from the Saskatchewan border. Come and see how many Saskatchewan cars are there, members. Come and talk to any merchant in that mall. People in the mall will tell you, "We do much of our business from Saskatchewan." Saskatchewan contributes 20 percent, 25 percent of the business in Medicine Hat, and that is because they have this huge sales tax.

They have a sales tax that is put on by a tax-and-spend government, a sales tax that has a Liberal philosophy about spending: don't cut spending; raise taxes. That's exactly what we heard in the speech to the throne, from the throne, in the throne, on the throne last night: raise taxes. We can no longer permit that attitude to exist in Alberta, and Albertans don't want that. Attacking the spending is our philosophy, not raiding Albertans' wallets. Attacking the spending helps business grow. It helps Alberta grow and prosper.

#### 4:00

The speech also indicated that the government would introduce legislation to limit loan guarantees. We will do that. We will limit loan guarantees to business. We will limit investment to business. Once again this is a very positive step. It's the first in Canada. This sends a resounding message to business. If you can't make it on your own, don't even think about coming to government. This makes for efficient business in Alberta. This makes for business that will effectively and aggressively compete internationally, and that's why our economy is growing so fast. That's why we have the best economy in the country.

Another way this government has and will continue to help Albertans is by streamlining programs that can best be delivered by the private sector. We need to get rid of government when the private sector can do it. Get government out of business. If the private sector can do it, create jobs in the private sector. I mean, we can have a real discussion on exactly the areas government should be in.

DR. PERCY: Let's go down to 65 MLAs, Lorne.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Good point. A comment was just made about reducing the number of MLAs. I am certainly one that would support that.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: And go to recall as well. Would you recall as well?

DR. L. TAYLOR: We have recall every 3.78 years in Alberta.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Oh, that's too long for people like you, Lorne.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Well, I guess we'll see that in the next election.

We need to continue to encourage business, and we will by streamlining programs in Alberta. We will by allowing the private sector to deliver programs. We will have less regulation. We have a valued member of our caucus working right now on getting rid of regulations, unnecessary government duplication. The fact is that efforts have been recognized, even in the left-wing press, as going ahead and going in the right direction. So we intend to continue moving towards less regulation. We will not force Albertans to jump through unnecessary hoops. [Mr. L. Taylor's speaking time expired] Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might ask for unanimous consent to continue my speech?

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has asked for unanimous consent to continue his remarks. All in favour, say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any, say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Sorry.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It's indeed sad to hear that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and his government want to lead us into the second century. Our government has looked forward to leading us into the 21st century. Albertans want to look to the future. They want us to plan for the future. The Speech from the Throne does not address that. As I go around the province, I'm asked by citizens of our province who say that their MLAs don't represent them or don't listen to them to make some points that the government could look at so the Legislative Assembly can make sure that we move ahead into the future and not go backwards, as is the case.

First of all, from several regions around Alberta we hear that the end of the municipal planning commissions is having a negative effect. They say, "Just look at B.C." B.C. eliminated them 10 years ago. Now what are they doing? They're reintroducing them and following what we had here in Alberta. B.C. has seen what happens when they don't have a commission so that they can have good planning: tar paper shacks beside mansions, developments all over the place. So we need to look at that, and I ask that we move forward here instead of moving backwards, as we have these past couple of years.

Again, very important, Albertans want to know outcomes, what is happening. The old system versus the new system. We look at the outputs of the old system and compare them to the new system, and no analysis has been done requesting that. Are we moving ahead or are we moving further behind?

Right around the province they're against two-tiered health care. I haven't talked to one person as I traveled around that strongly favours a two-tiered system. They want to be protected, and this is especially true in rural Alberta. They're afraid that there won't be health care for them in the future.

It's interesting to know that this government has had a problem with rural doctors. For 25 years there's been a problem. The problem gets worse, and this government does nothing. Hopefully

our Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has presented a proposal that'll lead us forward, if the government will listen, work together with us, and use our proposal. You can even say that it's your own, if you want to.

Again in rural Alberta I hear the question asked: the output of the old administrators compared to the new administrators. They say that there are more administrators now under different names than there used to be. They want figures, outcomes. What are the costs under the old system, the costs under the new system?

Again they're very concerned in rural Alberta about losing dental services, and they are looking at their children costing them a fortune more because these preventative services are not there. They're also losing speech therapy. As we all know, the sooner it's picked up in a child, the easier and the more cost-efficient it is.

The ambulance service. A report was supposed to have come down a long time ago. They're waiting and waiting and getting very frustrated. They also asked the question. You know, Edmonton and Calgary are minutes away from a hospital. They have paramedics. In rural Alberta they may need paramedics to an even greater extent because they want to get them to a health care centre so the doctors can look after them, and they don't have them. They can't perform some of the necessary procedures that we have in the cities. So they're very concerned. They feel left out of the medical system. They're not being listened to.

Again we see the distance in the countryside, long distances. The cities have cell phone technology; the country areas do not. In fact, they told me that one person in this area by the Saskatchewan border had died. Their death could've been prevented if they had been able to use cell phones, but they have to use Saskatchewan Tel to get assistance, not even an Alberta system, and this is as you move westward into Alberta.

Again we have Alberta Hospital Ponoka. Here we have an institution that's well set up and well used. Of course, the goal is to keep everyone in society, in the community, or re-enter them as soon as possible, but there is a need for an institution. For some people it may be a short time; for others it may be a long time. In the town of Ponoka they have it set up. They're used to dealing with patients and clients. They take them in, workers and that. Once they leave the institution, they take them into their homes, where they rent the basement suite or other areas, and work with them, and the government wants to eliminate all institutionalization of these patients. We have to rethink that, listen to what these people are telling us.

Again today we had kindergarten. In many countries in Asia and Europe they start at a much younger age. Three and four year olds were starting school in Asia when I was there, and that was 25 years ago. Here we're given the information that it's not needed, without the support of research. Finally, they reintroduced it. But, you know, it is our children, our most vulnerable, our greatest resource, that were penalized by this government. There's a saying in the New Testament that if you harm one of these little children, it is better that you put a millstone around your neck and jump in the sea, and this is what this government is doing. So again we look at the responsibility we have, and we want to mandate communities to be able to have kindergarten in the regular system. We're also looking at co-ordinating curriculums with B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, but Alberta's the only one that doesn't have mandated kindergarten. So we won't even be able to follow their curriculum.

#### 4:10

Again, technology in the classroom. We're catching up to New Brunswick, a have-not province on the east coast with this

technology. Albertans need to be leaders here. We have been in the past, but due to the lack of leadership in this government people are suffering.

I just want to read this quote. Chinook constituency to be eliminated: they, the commission members, don't understand our communities, they don't understand the uniqueness of special areas, and they don't understand the job, said the hon. minister. She was commenting on the interim report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. She added: they seem to have totally ignored the traditional patterns that exist in trade, communities, and municipal areas within the constituency; the commission has proposed a redistribution that splits up communities; any proposal needs to take that into account.

Now, this is very true. All of these things have to be taken into account, but twice I pleaded with the minister. I pleaded with the front bench and the backbenchers that when we redo boundaries, we should look at coterminous boundaries: coterminous boundaries for education, health, social services, justice, mental health, child welfare, planning regions, library boards, economics and trading patterns, transportation, seniors' housing, social housing, constituencies, tourism zones. Now we're having new handicap zones or areas that do not coincide. It's going to cost us more money in the long run because we have not addressed it properly. What the minister correctly is saying, that it needs to be taken into account, I pleaded and it fell on deaf ears. It shouldn't have, and this is going to cost the next generations, our generation more. It could have been done at the same if they would have listened.

I also want to mention here a school support form from the government that needs to be changed, and they even asked me to take it in to have it changed. It says: I am of the Catholic faith; I am of the Catholic faith; I am of the Catholic faith. Many parents may not be of the Catholic faith, but they want to send their children to a Catholic system. So this insults them. They want it changed. They want taken into account the fact that they may not be of the Catholic faith, but they still may want to attend the Catholic system.

Again we talk about free enterprise. Well, this government are socialists in capitalist's clothes. They try to pretend they know what they're doing. Let me give you an example of a letter I have.

As you are aware, Alberta Transportation and Utilities is currently outsourcing its highway maintenance activities. The equipment utilized by the department in a geographic area is being offered . . .

"Being offered." If you understood the free enterprise system, you know it would be tendered out so the best price would be gotten for it, but it hasn't been. It's being offered

. . . to the successful contractor for that area. Any equipment not purchased by the contractor will be considered surplus and disposed of at market value or through public auction.

The tender process. We're looking after taxpayers' dollars, but it's being offered. There's no value put on it. It's given. If they accept it, fine. If they don't . . . You know, free enterprise is where you get the highest price and look after taxpayers' money. Anyone, even a Junior Achievement student in grade 6, would understand that.

Again, we understand competition. They don't understand competition. Private, public sector. The minister of transportation would not allow the county of Barrhead to bid or tender for the highway clearance. They have the experience; they have the machinery. We know that many places in this province where we have the public sector and the private sector competing, the price goes down. In the city of St. Albert garbage services are done by

the private sector, also by the public sector, and when you compare apples to apples, you can see and keep the costs down. If you have one group or the other group doing it all, it may lead to additional burdens for the taxpayers' money. Again we need to look at that and make sure, but it's too late. It may cost us hundreds of millions of dollars in the future because we have not addressed it when we should have. Instead of looking at the present and planning for the future, this has not been done.

VLTs. Every community I've gone to in this province, except for Cardston, has said that the detriment of VLTs and the effect on Albertans is devastation: families destroyed, marriages breaking up, children feeling the tremendous effects of not eating, not having food because the money goes to the provincial lotteries. Again, Alberta is depending on gambling instead of the rich resources we have because we have misused, mismanaged our resources in the past.

We again want to promote and say that we should have recall so that if an MLA isn't doing their duty, their constituents can have recall and have them replaced.

Again we have seniors very concerned with what has happened. We know that a survey was done in the lodges, and it showed that in a lodge a senior's average income was \$700 a month. The government said that it was \$1,200 because they got some figures from the federal government saying this was the case, when many of the seniors that live in lodges did not do income taxes. Also, I have to commend the minister on the list for the repairing of lodges. They are listed. The year when it's going to happen is right there. There's no political expediency involved, and that is a big plus.

Also, moving to a per unit grant as opposed to whoever has a bigger deficit gets more money – if you have less deficit, you get less. The inefficient are penalized, and the ones who do it well are rewarded. This has been an excellent change, and we appreciate that.

Our debt. Again, we need a debt elimination program that is realistic, that tells the truth. Vision 2020 would get rid of ours by the year 2020, whereas the government will still owe \$28 billion after 25 years unless there are some windfalls that may pay it down.

The liquor industry. We're supposed to have a level playing field, and what we have are anchor stores who pay \$5 or \$6 a square foot competing with the small liquor owners who may pay \$15 to \$25 a square foot. This is not fair competition. This should have been taken into account when this happened. A fair, level playing field is what all Albertans expect, you know. That's what you're doing anyway.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude with those words. We have to move on into the future. We have to plan for the future. This isn't happening. Many Albertans are upset and should be listened to by both sides of the House so we can build a better Alberta.

**THE ACTING SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

**MS HALEY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity today to comment on the Speech from the Throne. I wholeheartedly agree, which won't come as a surprise to anybody, with our government's continuing efforts to restructure programs and pay down our debt. Not only is it our legal obligation, but in fact the benefits of this strategy are already being felt.

Because we have been able to reduce the debt, we are in fact ahead on our 25-year mortgage. Because of our strategy of prudent fiscal management we've not only reduced the number of years we'll have to pay on our mortgage, but we've also reduced what we'll have to pay in interest costs. This is money that can be put to better use on behalf of Albertans, rather than just debt servicing.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Three Hills-Airdrie want their tax dollars to be used for programs, not interest payments. This government has made great strides to see that that is exactly what is going to happen.

An example of how Albertans are benefiting from this is the recent announcement by the Minister of Health that the province will provide \$11.4 million to regional health authorities to help reduce pressure on priority surgical programs such as cardiac surgery and joint replacement. The savings that we've gained from the lower debt servicing costs in the past fiscal year have given us a little flexibility to make a onetime injection of funds to address a concern with health waiting lists. Co-ordinating resources at the regional level in the future will help keep the system in regular pace once we get it done.

Mr. Speaker, this is just an example of the benefits of sticking to a fiscal program. Albertans need to know that we're not just pulling dollars out of a hat or that we're not throwing money at problems. Albertans should know that it was with their help that we were able to spend less on interest costs and reinvest where Albertans feel that it's warranted.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech reaffirms the government's commitment to keep listening and consulting with Albertans. In doing so, we will be able to evaluate the effects of the changes that we've made in the province over the last three years. By consulting with the people of this province, we will be able to ensure that government services and programs meet their needs.

Albertans will be asked for their views on how to reinvest in our province and how the government should create a contemporary economic development strategy. They will be consulted on how to develop a new provincial science and research strategy and how we can define a common vision and conservation strategy for our forests.

Mr. Speaker, communication is not a one-way process. This government will also be reporting back to Albertans. In fact, the Speech from the Throne is one of those reports. It tells Albertans the direction that this government will be going so that they can be assured that their priorities are being met. Albertans will also be receiving an independent report card on the health care system, as well as regular reports from the regional health authorities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government which continues to listen to Albertans and one which responds to their concerns and their recommendations.

There was a lot of good news in our Speech from the Throne. The Alberta advantage is working, and over 100,000 jobs have been created by the private sector in this province in the past three years.

AN HON. MEMBER: A hundred thousand?

MS HALEY: Over 100,000. Is it not truly amazing what can happen when a government sets the climate rather than trying to do everything itself?

We must continue to create that climate for investment. In the upcoming year Albertans can expect major new investments in the

petrochemical, forest products, and food processing industries, as well as in light manufacturing and business services. For every billion dollars of new investment in this province at least \$30 million in annual provincial tax revenues will be generated through thousands of newly created jobs.

We in Alberta have it pretty good, Mr. Speaker, and the Speech from the Throne reflects that. For example, drilling activity in the oil and gas sector is at its second highest level in 10 years. Our oil and gas sector has developed into a knowledge-driven, technology-based world leader. Our equipment and services are now being sold in over 44 countries, and over 800 oil and gas related companies are involved in or pursuing international opportunities. To further enhance this sector, the government is bringing in a new royalty regime for the oil sands in the north. We're anticipating that this will open up \$2 billion in new projects, and that means new jobs for Albertans.

While my constituents already know it, I know that they're very proud when they hear that Alberta has one of the world's most productive agriculture economies, producing approximately 24 percent of Canada's total agriculture output. As well, total farm cash receipts for the province's 57,000 farms and ranches are expected to exceed \$5.6 billion for 1995, the highest ever recorded for Alberta. Albertans can look forward to the government's continuing commitment to look for new investment for the growing market and opportunities in food products. The value-added food and beverage industry continues to be the largest manufacturing industry in Alberta in terms of sales and employment. This government will also be pursuing with the federal government changes to our marketing options for wheat and barley in light of our farmers' vote to change the federal grain marketing regime. Legislation will be introduced to implement the farm income stability program, and the water Act will be introduced this spring with the goals of managing and conserving our water resources.

Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne lays the foundation for an even better Alberta than we have known in the past, an Alberta that provides the services Albertans need within a sustainable fiscal framework that will see them through good times and bad. It's a proud, positive Alberta for a proud, positive people.

Thank you.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to withhold the comment as to direction until the end of the talk, but I'm going to speak regarding the Speech from the Throne that was delivered the other day in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the financial direction of the government, I'm one who stands in support of getting our spending under control and living within our means. As someone who was elected as recently as 1993, I'm surprised that many of those ministers, particularly the now minister of transportation, took so long to figure out that we should get our spending under control. What I have to question is what possessed him prior to 1993. Who was he? What was he ideologically? Certainly I still consider that prior to 1993 one of the most socialist governments in Canada, perhaps in North America, was the Conservative government of Alberta.

We find in 1993 as a result of pressures put on the government to come into realization that they were spending well beyond their

means – and these are pressures that were brought upon them by the opposition, the Liberal opposition, which said that you have to look at your expenditure patterns and you have to take a look at your revenue patterns, and your revenue patterns are highly volatile. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look, since 1992 through 1996 our reliance as a province on nonrenewable resource revenue fluctuates anywhere from a high back in 1992 in the 25 percent range to currently around 21 percent. Here's a province that's been described as one of the wealthier provinces in Canada, and quite rightfully so, a province which has much promise, but much of that promise has come by virtue, by fact of our geography. We've been blessed with a wonderful geography with resources that contribute 21 percent of our revenues on an annual basis.

Mr. Speaker, I take a look at the comments found in the four pages of text pertaining to the Speech from the Throne, and it reminds me of another document I recently read which was six pages in total. It was put out by – I just want to make sure I provide the proper citation. The leaflet is called *Access*, January 1996, issue number 20, and it's published by the Canadian Bankers Association. They make some comments that I think are good for all consumers, be they economic consumers or be they political consumers. On page 7 of this document is a contribution from Corporal Michael Duncan of the RCMP's economic crime unit, and it's titled, "Classic Cons and Favourite Frauds." I think it's quite appropriate that I read some of the excerpts here, because he gives four or five tips which I believe every consumer in Alberta should be aware of, be they political or economic consumers.

Corporal Duncan of the economic crime unit says, "Classic cons still flourish like weeds in the wilderness because they appeal to the desire to make or save money." The first reference he makes is:

Misleading advertisements give the wrong impression by omitting crucial information. "That 9 by 12 rug is a bargain at only \$19.95 until you get it and find it's 9 by 12 inches, not the feet you're expecting."

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we've seen some of that. The bargain was for feet, and we find ourselves getting the inches. If one wanted to expand the debate into health care, which I hope to if I have the time, we'll see where some of the feet actually have come out to be inches.

Mr. Speaker, the second comment that Corporal Duncan makes is quite appropriate because it's in line – it's a parallel; it's very much congruent – with what the Premier of this province has been speaking about for the last three years. It refers to home renovations. Corporal Duncan goes on to say:

Home improvement schemes involve a convincing pitch from a door-to-door seller who just happens to notice your chimney (or siding or driveway) needs repair.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. DUNFORD: Would it help you to know that Corporal Duncan is the president of my constituency association?

4:30

MR. SEKULIC: Fantastic. Let me continue then. The Member from Lethbridge-West indicates that Corporal Duncan is in fact a member of his association. That's wonderful, and I would hope that he passes it on to his MLA, Mr. Speaker.

Nonetheless, Corporal Duncan goes on to say:

By coincidence, the seller, who claims to have been in your neighbourhood on another job, is willing to make the repair at a

rock-bottom price with materials left over from that other job.

The repairs may even be done.

And I think it's important here . . .

MR. DUNFORD: A point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has a point of order. Would you care to share this?

#### Point of Order Clarification

MR. DUNFORD: I don't believe it is, but I believe it's an apology to the House. *Hansard*, I'm sure, picked up my interjection. Of course, I was teasing. Corporal Duncan is not the president of my constituency association. I do not want to lie on the record here in this House.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm not sure what that qualifies under, but anyway a point of clarification, certainly, and retraction of what may be on *Hansard* as an ambient noise.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly I've come to recognize that there is a lot of ambient noise and on a significant regularity.

#### Debate Continued

MR. SEKULIC: So the good corporal goes on to say, "Just don't expect" – now he's referring to home improvement – "them to be done properly or worth anywhere near the money you've paid," despite your savings. Once again, I think it parallels quite closely the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Now, just for the sake of Albertans that will be going through *Hansard*, I think it's important to pass on more of the corporal's wise words. The third tip that he provides consumers, be they political or economic, is:

Tales by telephone remain popular. With the fake contest, you'll be told you've won a valuable prize, like a trip to an exotic destination.

I believe sometimes described as a vision within this very Speech from the Throne. An exotic destination, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the corporal was obviously thinking along the same political lines because he had the wisdom not to call it a tax, Mr. Speaker. So the corporal says: "To claim it, however, you have to pay some kind of fee. A more recent variation is the GST scam." Here, Mr. Speaker, once again I'd like, for the benefit of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, to inform him that the GST was in fact a creature of a former Conservative government, like the provincial debt of this province, all \$32 billion net, is a creature of a Conservative government. So this more recent variation is the GST scam.

DR. WEST: A point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities, responsible for gaming and lotteries, wants to make a point of order. Would you care to cite?

#### Point of Order Relevance

DR. WEST: Relevancy, as it relates to it. I appreciate – I've been here some 10 years, and I guess I do know that the throne speech allows a tremendous amount of latitude. But is there



nothing that brings the debate into focus at the throne speech level? Is there no relevancy? This is not relevant, as far as I can see, to the content of what was in the throne speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Manning, on the point of relevancy.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, as always, I will try to accommodate. I can see that if the minister's having difficulty following the analogy, I will do everything I can to address it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry that the Chair did not make it clearer. On a point of order, someone objects to what is being said, cites their case – relevancy, okay – states it, hopefully succinctly, and the person who has been called to task on the issue then speaks to whether or not it's relevant. Then the Chair may make a ruling. So we're at that stage of it. The ball is in your court.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, I do stand at odds with the good minister. I do believe there is extreme relevance here. In fact, I think that if he would pay better attention, as opposed to talking with the happy logger, there is relevance here. Like I say, if he were to pay closer attention – the home renovations is a perfect one. This province has undergone home renovations. The Premier's pure reference . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. The point of order is on whether it's relevant and that kind of thing, not to extend the debate. You'll have ample time to do that.

The hon. minister almost has answered his own question or his own point in that there is a wide scope. However, one can stray to the outer stratosphere and bring in what are items that may at first glance or at first listen be hard to relate to the Speech from the Throne. So if you'd be so gracious as to tie them in so that they are in fact relevant, then we wouldn't have this discussion.

#### Debate Continued

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, as always, I appreciate the wise guidance that you offer, and I'm going to refer to page 3 of the Speech from the Throne, which states "responsible financial and program management." Then I'm going to go back to Classic Cons and Favourite Frauds, because that's exactly what we're talking about. So responsible financial and program management.

We were on that GST scam, Mr. Speaker, and after this point, after this caution to consumers, I will go on to health. "Here, you're told you have to pay the GST before the prize can be released." And today we heard about busing fees, we've heard about health care premiums, and now we're told in this Speech from the Throne that they're going to put a temporary freeze on those until after the next election.

So, of course, Mr. Speaker, there is no prize, and I would refer everyone to this document that I cited earlier and to read the rest of it, because as you say, perhaps we should narrow our debate, bringing it in a little more.

I do want to go back to my support for the fiscal direction. Now, I'm not saying the ways in which the government has operationalized it is the same way that I as a member of the opposition would have supported it in the event that we had formed government in 1993, and I can say that it will be slightly

different when we do form government in 1996 or '97, Mr. Speaker.

I want to refer to a comment from generally an organization that supports the government, and it's the Alberta Taxpayers Association. Yet they went out to say, "This indicates they've put the brakes on [cutting] and are making a 180-degree turn." Mr. Speaker, that's an interesting analysis from a group who has generally supported this government. The way I look at it is: what happens if you're traveling and you happen to lose your way? Well, I suggest there are probably three or four different potential solutions to that problem. Some would stop, sit down, and wait for rescue. Definitely this government hasn't done that; they have not stopped moving. Some would argue that you should continue on your way, hoping to reach your destination, and I think the government hasn't done that. I really don't think so. I think there have been signals out there saying that you are lost and perhaps you should reassess your situation. And I think some would turn around, go back, and claim that they have never been lost. I would say that this Speech from the Throne is the third solution to that problem, one of being lost and meandering down the path of fiscal policy for the province of Alberta.

We've seen a lot over the past in terms of health care restructuring. In fact, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who spoke earlier, referred to a number of examples of success stories in our health care system. We should not be surprised by those; that is an expectation of our health care system.

#### 4:40

The sad thing, the way I see it, is that some time back when this government – let's say six years ago, seven years ago. The news in this province was a bad-news story. If something went wrong in the health care system, that was news. Mr. Speaker, in 1996 in Alberta if something good happens in health, it's news. It's news.

I receive many calls in my constituency office about the concerns from people, from constituents who have been through the health care system. I myself am a person who has been through the health care system, in December of last year. I was most unfortunate. While exercising, I tore my Achilles tendon and had to go in for surgery. The way it worked, Mr. Speaker, is that I went to one hospital and they had two people assess me. Very, very competent people assessed me. Very good staff in the hospital, very professional.

MR. DINNING: You said you wouldn't do this.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to share the story. I think it's very important to share the story, and the reason I'm sharing the story is to confirm what the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said. That theme was that we have some top-notch health professionals in Alberta which we as legislators should show a much higher level of respect for.

To continue on with my story, Mr. Speaker, I started off in one hospital . . .

MR. DINNING: Oh, you're going to now tell this story; are you?

MR. SEKULIC: The Treasurer is biting at the bit for me to tell this story because he wants me to get to the surgery point.

MR. DINNING: You promised you wouldn't. You said you didn't want to.

MR. SEKULIC: It's a very good story. [interjections] It's the ambiance, Mr. Speaker. It's the ambiance. I am trying to get the story out.

Nonetheless, I started off in one hospital, Mr. Speaker. As I say, I was assessed by competent and quality staff who correctly diagnosed my injury, citing that I required surgery. However, they went on to say, "We can't do it here." Despite this being one of the larger hospitals in Edmonton – it was the Misericordia hospital, in fact – they said, "We can't do the surgery." Okay; that's fine. I can live with that. So I got in my standard vehicle, which requires that you drive with both feet, which is a task that many in the Assembly couldn't undertake. Nonetheless, I drove over to where I'd been directed, and that was the Royal Alexandra hospital in the centre of Edmonton, one of the busier hospitals. This was with a torn Achilles. Very difficult to clutch, and I wouldn't recommend that people do that. However, recognizing that I could have been a burden on the health care budget by having hospital transport, I selected the other option, trying to save money.

I arrived at the Royal Alex somewhere around midnight. I went to where I was instructed, but unfortunately that was closed because there was of course no staff there. So I walked what would be the equivalent of maybe half a kilometre to the emergency admissions, and there I was admitted at roughly 1 o'clock in the morning. Once again, professional staff. Everybody was doing their very, very best, and everyone was very personable and trying to understand the situation. I was placed in a room. I was one of the fortunate Albertans who actually was admitted; they had a room for me. The next day I was wheeled down to get my surgery.

DR. WEST: At 1 o'clock in the morning.

MR. SEKULIC: It's a very important story to get through. I was wheeled down to get my surgery, which shouldn't take that long, and hopefully I'd be out within a day. Nonetheless, I came into the pre-op area, and the Royal Alexandra, for many who don't know, has 11 operating rooms. Well, the regional health authority in this area, under the direction of the government, I would believe, or at least through the direction of the government's budget cuts, can only operate one operating room on weekends. Now, this is despite volume. Volume has nothing to do with it. "You shall only operate one operating room." So I'm much like a bank line waiting for service. This isn't altogether a bad thing, because my injury isn't life threatening. But the injury that came in behind me was someone who required neurosurgery, as a result of a car accident I think, and that person was going to wait. Rightfully, that person was going to bump me out of the surgery room. I have no problem with that. But the fact was that that person had to wait and 10 surgery rooms weren't going to be opened. So after waiting there for some four hours I think it was, the surgeon that was waiting to do my surgery said, "Well, we can't do this." This is terribly, terribly inefficient. The system had actually constrained him from doing what he is paid to do.

So knowing that we're not going to get in there, he said, perhaps until 2 in the morning, at which point he might be a little too tired to operate, he said, "Well, maybe we can take you to the next hospital." And so it was. I was wheeled back up to my room. In my gown, actually, I was shipped, and the surgeon actually drove.

At no point did I disclose that I was a provincial politician, because I didn't think it was right. I didn't think it was right.

Mr. Speaker, if they would have heard that I was an opposition politician, I would perhaps have received preferential treatment. I think that would have been the wrong thing to do, so I didn't disclose the fact that I was a politician. I didn't try to promote any kind of bitter statements. These people were professional. The doctor said: "If I now call for interhospital transfer, it'll take two or three hours. By that time . . ."

DR. WEST: Tell the crowd what it was that you were in for.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, this is the minister of transportation, the minister who voted for nine consecutive deficit budgets. He has the gall to stand up and chirp at me. Please, if you've got something to say which is contrary to those budgets . . .

#### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. members on both sides. Hon. minister, hon. member that's addressing the Speech from the Throne, you speak by convention to the Chair, not to each other. If we could have some of the hon. members on the right of the Chair contain their exuberance for debate until their opportunity comes, we'll be glad to recognize them at that time. Right now we're listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Debate Continued

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I have yet to vote for a deficit budget. I never will. I'll quit politics before that because I have integrity and responsibility, and most of all I have an ideology which would prevent me from voting, ever, for a deficit budget. Never, never. They can look at all the records of *Hansard*, and they'll never see once that I would vote for a deficit budget. The evidence is quite to the contrary for some of my colleagues across the way.

Nonetheless, here I am, Mr. Speaker. A surgeon is transporting me from one hospital to the other. Why? Because this is a responsible Albertan. He thinks that if he waits for three hours for that interhospital transfer to occur . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let him tell his story, Provincial Treasurer.

MR. SEKULIC: So this surgeon, this responsible Albertan, figures that if it takes three hours to transfer me to the next hospital, that is going to be an additional financial burden on Alberta taxpayers. He's going there anyways. "If you'll step in the car, I'll give you a ride there." So, sure, we did. Once again, I'm in my hospital gown . . . [Mr. Sekulic's speaking time expired] It's a very good story.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address the Speech from the Throne. Normally, when you hear a Speech from the Throne and you read the Speech from the Throne, you look for a blueprint and a vision of where the province will be a year to two years down the road. You look to the budget for a specific fiscal plan, but in terms of an overview you look to the Speech from the Throne. You look, then, at what we face as a province over the next two to three years and ask: did the Speech from the Throne deal with those types of problems? I think the answer is that it was sadly lacking.

Let me run through a number of issues that I think ought to have been addressed in the Speech from the Throne. The first point is that if you look at the Alberta economy today and you compare it to what it was in '71 and '73, when this government was first elected – it was not first elected in 1993. It has been with us, Mr. Speaker, clinging like lichen to a rock, for at least 25 years.

MR. DINNING: Who won? Mike, who won?

4:50

DR. PERCY: The same old crew, Jim. The same old crew.

So you look and ask: is there a change in terms of the structure of the economy? Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. Basically, the economy is as little diversified today as it was then. We've seen the service sector grow – I mean, it's now two-thirds of the economic activity – but if you look at the drivers of the economy in terms of the composition of exports, what is it? It's the same. It's unprocessed and semiprocessed raw materials. So there has not been really any underlying structure, and that structure leaves the economy open to what it always has been open to: the vicissitudes of a very unstable international economy. It causes considerable problems for whomever is Provincial Treasurer in terms of a highly fluctuating and variable revenue base.

Have we really changed? We've restructured government, which is basically, from what I can see, that we have downsized government, but we have to a great extent just downsized the status quo without really restructuring government. We've got an economy that is still relatively undiversified and still highly vulnerable to external shocks. You ask: what will get us out of this type of dependence? I guess there's one basic solution. The basic solution is that you have to have an economy where you're exporting human skills: skills related to the resource base, skills related to applying new technologies to existing or new problems.

You look, then, at the Speech from the Throne and ask: what does it do in that regard? Well, it restores a cut that ought not to have occurred in the first place: kindergarten. There's talk of Internet. That's great. In New Brunswick every school is hardwired already. When you look at the actual initiatives that will ensure that we're highly competitive down the road, there are not many. It's a document that you can just see is kind of straddling. It's a government that's waiting to call an election. It has kept a lot of the goodies under the old vest jacket waiting for the election to occur. So we have a throne speech that just basically treads water. It does nothing to deal with the longer term problems facing the economy.

Again, education, continuing education, a focus on making the system more responsive. I would have liked to have seen that in the throne speech, and there wasn't much on that.

In terms of governance I would like to have seen a much greater focus on issues that have come to the fore lately. A Bill that's of interest to me, and I thought might have in fact been discussed in the Speech from the Throne, is lobbyist registration. I think people are entitled to know who is lobbying whom, for what, and how much they're getting to do it. To the extent, then, that you have pressure groups either directly lobbying government through standing policy committees or parked in a minister's office – I mean, you open the doors out there and you run into Jim Horsman. Why is he here? Well, maybe he's saying hello to old friends, but he may be doing that for pay. Albertans are entitled to know exactly to whom he's talking and why. What is the project? What is the issue? You have that federally. You have that in some other provinces. The issue is not whether he's

entitled to do it. He is absolutely, utterly entitled to do it. The issue is that Albertans are entitled to know why he's doing it, who he's speaking to, and how much he's getting paid for it. That's fair and we'd like to see that. It was recommended by the ethics panel. It makes sense, and it's actually not that costly.

Many of the large firms that are involved in lobbying are very reputable. You just look at GPC and a number of the other firms; they're reputable. What they do is they basically try and provide additional information on the particular issue at hand and try and disseminate the facts as widely as possible while focusing the argument and trying to anticipate what the nature of potential opposition is. That's legitimate. That's part of the political process, but individual Albertans are also entitled to know how government is influenced.

I think lobbyist registration makes eminent sense. I certainly would hope that this government would support it, because it exists already at the federal level, and it seems to work and it's not very costly.

The second issue I would like to have seen addressed in more detail is the issue of loan guarantees. This is a difficult problem for both sides of the House. When you look, Mr. Speaker, at this government and you look federally and you look at other provinces, the breadth of government involvement in providing loans and loan guarantees is staggering. The Member for Edmonton-Manning and I were staggered when we went through the list and saw just how many linkages there were. You can see over 200, I believe is the total, ways in which government can guarantee private or public enterprise through offering guarantees. So when you go about attempting to do that, how do you do it in such a way that you meet your social responsibility and at the same time you limit your exposure in the private sector?

I think this is an area where there is, I hope, the strong possibility of fruitful collaboration between both sides of a House that comes up with a Bill, mentioned again in the throne speech, that allows us to deal with this problem but at the same time makes the list of exclusions sufficiently small that it's not sort of *carte blanche* in terms of quantifying how much you can get, but it limits what you can get. It limits it clearly to social areas as opposed to areas which give private individuals gain at public expense. I think that's the litmus test for most individuals when they look at the role of government in providing guarantees. Is the private sector being subsidized at taxpayer expense, subsidized either directly or indirectly in terms of the public sector assuming a significant degree of risk?

The thorny issues there, the ones that'll cause us to knock heads in this Assembly, are of course AOC, Alberta Treasury Branches, Agricultural Financial Services Corporation. Also something I would like to have seen debated and discussed in the House and certainly I would like to have seen addressed in the Speech from the Throne is how we go about this process. Because if any Bill to limit loan guarantees simply says that ministers cannot authorize loan guarantees, we know that's a placebo, a political placebo, and election sloganeering dressed up as a Bill. So we naturally hope to see some form of legislation that's a little more comprehensive. As I say, it's an area where we can debate but also an area where we can collaborate to come up with an outcome that's mutually beneficial.

Another area I would have liked to see addressed in greater detail in the Speech from the Throne was the issue of the government budget process. We have tried going through the business plans and, in looking at the business plans, looking at outcomes and trying to link the outcomes that are specified in the business plans to specific votes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities is rising on a point of order and will share it with us.

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

DR. WEST: Yes. Would the hon. member entertain a question in debate under *Beauchesne 482*?

DR. PERCY: Oh, absolutely.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. You have the answer. Mr. Minister.

**Debate Continued**

DR. WEST: The member certainly in his questions today and on the throne speech has questioned the Treasury Branch. I would like to know his position on selling the Treasury Branches, privatizing and getting rid of them on behalf of Albertans.

DR. PERCY: Well, I think my position is going to be considerably more straightforward than the government's position, Mr. Speaker. The first point is that if you actually look at the numbers – and I hope the hon. minister has – you realize that in order to privatize the Treasury Branches, that's effectively saying that you're going to kill the Treasury Branches. Because if you look at the numbers, it's very clear that if you privatize the Treasury Branches, they would have to have Canada Deposit Insurance and they require a certain capital base, and in the capital base the deficiency that presently exists is close to \$600 million. So I take it that the hon. minister of privatization – excuse me; Transportation and Utilities – would like to privatize the Alberta Treasury Branches and in so doing extinguish them.

Now, we on this side actually believe in the mandate of Alberta Treasury Branches. I, along with many members of this caucus, have actually read the annual report of the Treasury Branches and looked at the legislation. You know, Mr. Speaker – and I'm getting to your point, hon. minister – the mandate of the Alberta Treasury Branches is very clear: to service outlying areas. That doesn't mean Dallas. I believe, Mr. Treasurer, it does not mean Dallas. Outlying, I do believe, has always meant within our borders. I believe that's correct.

To service "outlying areas," to service "agricultural" areas. I do realize that Peter Pocklington has dairy interests, but I don't believe that when they said "service agricultural interests" they implied Palm Dairies for Peter Pocklington. There was a \$100 million debenture in 1988. They certainly didn't mean that, Mr. Speaker. In terms of servicing consumer loans, I don't think they meant servicing the accounts of Larry Ryckman. So when I look at the mandate of Alberta Treasury Branches, which is to service outlying areas, to provide consumer services, to provide agricultural services, and to address the needs of small business, I don't see many of the issues that we've talked about in the House lately as being consistent with the mandate of Alberta Treasury Branches.

**5:00**

So when the hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities asks me for my view on Alberta Treasury Branches, I say: first, let's look at the mandate of Alberta Treasury Branches and ask if Alberta Treasury Branches has lived up to its mandate. I would say no. Second, I would ask: has Alberta Treasury Branches in

fact behaved in a responsible manner in terms of prudent lending practices? I would say: not at this time. Until, in fact, we have the opportunity to assess whether they can actually perform their mandate and do so in a cost-efficient manner, I believe it's too early to say what should be done with them.

At this stage I will say this to the hon. minister. There are \$9 billion in savings that Albertans self-insure. We collectively are on the hook for the decisions made by an unelected, unaccountable superintendent, and for those reasons it's very legitimate for us in this House to debate the lending practices of that institution.

If in fact the Alberta Treasury Branches cannot clean up their act, if a management cannot be put in place that ensures that we're not going to be liable for significant losses, then in fact I would say that the Alberta Treasury Branches should be privatized and canceled. If they can be rehabilitated, if they can have management in there that lives up to their mandate, then I think there perhaps is room for Alberta Treasury Branches in this province. But at this stage, since we have consolidated bookkeeping, since any profit or loss and any loss carry forwards or loan loss provisions that influence the bottom line of Treasury Branches influences their bottom line and thus the deficit or surplus of this province and hence our ability to finance core programs in education and health given the balanced budget legislation, I am concerned.

If they don't clean up their act, something has to be done. That's why I'm very willing and very supportive of the Provincial Treasurer putting in place this board. That board does two things: it buffers the Treasury Branches from the political process, and it gives them their single, last opportunity to get it right, because if they don't get it right, I think Albertans will say: why do we have the Alberta Treasury Branches when they're just out there loaning money to the people who can get it from any other set of financial institutions?

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to speak this afternoon . . .

DR. PERCY: Excuse me. I was just answering the question.

**Speaker's Ruling  
Recognizing a Member**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: When one answers the question in the midst of one's speech, then you don't sit down. You say, "Therefore, I have succinctly answered the question," if that be true, and then you say, "And in continuance of my speech" and go on. So by sitting down, you have fooled the whole House into believing that you had concluded, so the Speaker has recognized the Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Debate Continued**

MRS. BURGNER: If the hon. member wants to ask me a question, I'd be more than happy to entertain one.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and speak this afternoon to the very historic Speech from the Throne that was delivered just earlier this week. There are a few points I'd like to focus on. While we do touch on the fiscal issues and the deficit reduction and the plan that's in place, I think it's important to understand the historic significance of that debt reduction process that we're now involved with, because it does deal with the ability for this province to speak to the quality of life of our students, our

seniors, our poor, our ability to adapt and respond to programs. We will have some flexibilities that will be unprecedented in any other jurisdiction in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the stability in the funding of education and the equitable funding of education that now exists across our province for all students is a milestone in delivering our promise to Albertans but also guaranteeing a future where our children will be able to work within our communities as well-educated and productive citizens without the disadvantage of regionalization or inequities in funding. The fact that we have financial stability in that area, a planning process, and indeed a series of legislative initiatives, including the role of our parents in school councils, is fundamental to the delivery of a quality education system in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to speak briefly about the effect and the impact on our postsecondary students. As I mentioned earlier this afternoon, when I was in Toronto and Montreal, it was over the period of some of the student demonstrations that caught national attention, most notably the disgrace that occurred in the Ontario Legislature but also 4,500 students protesting in the streets of Montreal with respect to the cuts to postsecondary transfer payments. As you may be aware, when the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development held a recent financial forum in Edmonton with postsecondary institutions, he was able to advise the CEOs, the chairmen of the boards, and the student representatives from across this province that the government of Alberta would be able to absorb those transfer payments over the next three years and not impact our students, their planning, or the institutions' planning to restructure into the 21st century. That is a privilege and an opportunity that will not be available to many other provinces, and it's significant that we note that.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just speak briefly on the issue of the recognition of seniors' needs that has been addressed in the Speech from the Throne, and I'm sure that we're all waiting for further elaboration on this both from the minister and in the budget speech. Therefore, I know seniors will be pleased to be watching for those comments.

With that, Mr. Speaker, given the hour, I'd like to adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has moved that we do now adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

[At 5:10 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

