

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Tuesday, February 20, 1996 1:30 p.m.  
**Date:** 96/02/20  
 [The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Would members please remain standing after the prayer.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we confidently ask for Your strength and encouragement in our service of You through our service of others.

We ask for Your gift of wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and the future of Alberta.  
 Amen.

### Hon. Ernest C. Manning September 20, 1908, to February 19, 1996

THE SPEAKER: Yesterday, February 19, 1996, the Hon. Ernest Charles Manning passed away. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of his family, who shared the burdens of public office and public service. They are not with us this afternoon; however, our prayers are with them in this time of sorrow.

The hon. Mr. Manning was first elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the 1935 general election and served until 1968 representing the constituencies of Calgary, Edmonton, and Strathcona-East for the Social Credit Party. During his years of service he served as Provincial Secretary from 1935 to 1943 and as minister of trade and industry from 1935 to 1944.

On May 31, 1943, he was sworn in as Alberta's eighth Premier. During his term as Premier he also served as Provincial Treasurer from 1944 to '54, as minister of mines and minerals from 1952 to 1962, and as Attorney General from 1955 to 1968. In 1970 he was summoned to the Senate and served until 1983.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember the Hon. Ernest Manning as you have known him.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Amen.

You may be seated.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions I'm pleased to present this afternoon. The first one is a petition signed by 71 Albertans who express their concern about the application fee of \$25 under the freedom of information Act and who request that fees be brought "more in line with the other provinces."

The second petition is one signed by 323 Calgarians. It urges the government

to ensure that the Alberta Place District Office of Family and Social Services will not be closed as an SFI office until alternate service delivery points are established and accessible to all residents of downtown Calgary.

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 members of the Simons

Valley Elementary School ECS Parent Council urging for fully funded, mandated kindergarten in our province.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition with an additional 16 signatures following up on the petition I tabled earlier with respect to concern about changing the regulations regarding licensed practical nurses in Alberta.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give the Assembly oral notice that at the appropriate time today in the agenda and proceedings I will ask for the unanimous consent of the House under Standing Order 40 to allow us to debate and hopefully pass a motion congratulating the Fort McMurray hockey team on a most outstanding accomplishment.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

### Bill 6 Gaming and Liquor Act

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 6, Gaming and Liquor Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 6 amalgamates the former functions of the Alberta gaming control branch and the Alberta Liquor Control Board into the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and sets forth its status, powers, and duties as we go into a new mode surrounding both liquor distribution and privatization and new events that surround gaming in the province of Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 6 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

### Bill 4 Glenbow-Alberta Institute Amendment Act, 1996

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 4, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute Amendment Act, 1996. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised and recommends the same to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 4 will remove the Glenbow-Alberta Institute from Crown control making it autonomous and thereby giving the board of governors more freedom in its day-to-day decisions. The institute will continue to manage and exhibit the important collections for the benefit of all Albertans, and this government will continue to financially assist with that task as we have done in the past.

[Leave granted; Bill 4 read a first time]

**head: Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table with the Assembly this afternoon six copies of the answer to Question 206, six copies of answers to Motion 224, and six copies of answers to Motion 232.

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

MR. HENRY: Almost a Freudian slip there, Mr. Speaker.

I would beg your leave to table four copies of a letter authored by Mrs. Carol Vaage from Sherwood Park. Mrs. Vaage has been heavily involved in lobbying for fully funded, mandated kindergarten, and in her letter she expresses concern about the reaction to my tabling of the petition last week.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table with the Assembly today several copies of a brochure prepared by the College of Family Physicians of Canada, Alberta chapter, called Let's Keep Talking. The brochure details the importance of including general practice physicians in decision-making about health care.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling with the Assembly this afternoon four copies of correspondence from the Alberta Securities Commission indicating that they are reviewing several securities transactions involving Multi-Corp in 1993 for compliance with the Securities Act including insider trading between a director of Multi-Corp and members of the Premier's family.

**head: Introduction of Guests**

1:40

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

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you and to you a young lady that I had the pleasure of meeting. Her name is Stephanie Hachy, and she's one of my adopted daughters. She also happens to be the daughter of Linda Hood, who's employed with the minister of economic development. I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 30 visitors from Our Lady of Perpetual Help school in Sherwood Park. They're accompanied this afternoon by teacher Mr. Normand Dupont and parent helper Mme Shelley Gaudreau. I would ask them to rise in the public gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you 23 students from St. Bernadette school, which is located in my constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. L. Daubner and by parent and bus driver Mr. Al Sagert. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**head: Ministerial Statements**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

**Hon. Ernest C. Manning**

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with sadness that we mark the passing of an Alberta legend, Ernest C. Manning, at the age of 87 years. Mr. Manning was far and away the dominant provincial leader of his time. He served as Premier of Alberta for a quarter of a century, guiding our province from the last half of the Second World War to the late 1960s. His formidable strength of character and commitment to effective and responsible government led our province through great change to the modern era.

Albertans knew a good thing when they saw one, because they re-elected Mr. Manning seven consecutive times. Throughout his life he remained true to the basic family values which shaped both him and his adopted province. He stood for honesty, thrift, and good old-fashioned hard work and made sure that everyone around him did too. He had an unwavering commitment to public service in its purest sense. He oversaw the expansion of our health, education, and transportation facilities in a fiscally responsible manner. He was a humble, patient, and pragmatic Premier, a man whose successful policies helped create the energy industry that continues to this day to be a world leader.

When he retired as Premier, he chose to serve his country as a Senator for 13 years. He received scores of honours, including the Order of Canada, the National Humanitarian Award, and the first ever Alberta Order of Excellence, and a major awards program has been set up in his name.

Albertans will forever be proud of him and his legacy. Every day, Mr. Speaker, when I walk into my Legislature office, third floor, southeast corner, I'm reminded of those who came before me, none more so than Ernest C. Manning. He was simply, quietly, and honourably one of the greatest leaders this province and this country ever had. We were blessed and fortunate to have lived in his time.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sadness that my caucus colleagues and I heard the news yesterday of the passing of Ernest Charles Manning. Today it's right that we should all stop for a moment to celebrate his life, his career, and his contribution to the province of Alberta.

Ernest Manning was born of humble roots when the province of Alberta was a mere three years old. He ascended to the role of Premier some 35 years later and remained there for 25 years, a remarkable term, through a period of unprecedented growth and change in this province. His colleagues from that period remember him as someone who never forgot those humble roots, as a leader whose humility and common decency always prevailed. It has been said that Ernest Manning had a hard head and a soft heart. He understood the need for government to be there to help those who cannot help themselves. He understood the deep well

of compassion and shared values among the people of this province.

Ernest Manning saw Alberta through some of the darkest times in the Depression and the Second World War as a member of cabinet and later as Premier, and he saw Albertans through the building of what is now the modern, multifaceted community of Alberta. Throughout this remarkable reign Mr. Manning led by example. An unwavering symbol of honesty and integrity, he symbolized what is good and right about dedicating oneself and one's career to public service. We must never lose sight of his belief that sound public policy must always come before partisan politics.

Today Ernest Manning is being praised by friends and political opponents alike who saw him as a man who embodied so many of the values that Canadians and Albertans respect.

THE SPEAKER: The Minister of Community Development.

### Special Olympic Winter Games

MR. MAR: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in this House I talked about the Canadian Special Olympic Winter Games that were being held in Calgary and Canmore. The Special Olympic Games welcomed 700 participants from across Canada, including 44 athletes from Alberta. I must congratulate the host communities of Calgary and Canmore for their success in hosting these games, and I extend my thanks to the 1,200 volunteers, the sponsors, the coaches, the parents, and especially the athletes.

I want to acknowledge today the special athletes themselves and am proud to share with you some of the achievements of Team Alberta. Our 44-member Team Alberta won a total of 56 medals: 25 gold, 16 silver, 15 bronze. Our best showing was in speed skating, where Alberta won 11 gold, eight silver, and eight bronze. Mike Reitmeier from Red Deer won three gold medals. Fabian Wiwianka took home one gold and two silver medals.

In alpine skiing Andreas Walther from Calgary took home three medals: two gold and one silver. CFCN television selected him as its athlete of the week. In Nordic skiing Team Alberta won three gold, two silver, and two bronze. Special mention for skiing has to go to the Riddell trio – Jeffrey, Jennifer, and Tim Riddell – from the city of Calgary, who took home five medals among the three of them.

In snowshoeing Alberta athletes won two gold, two silver, and three bronze, and of these, Vicki Hennig from Stony Plain took home one gold and two silver.

In figure skating Robin Friesen from Calgary won gold in this her first national competition. Further in figure skating, Lonni Baird and Rick Pettifor from Calgary are the first and only pairs dance team to compete at the national games and are the only pairs training in the Special Olympics program. They turned in a gold medal performance.

I must congratulate the St. Albert hockey team for playing so well in floor hockey – substitute goalie John McVicar played strongly in the medal round – and female team members Paula Curran and Tracy Hayden for their contributions to the team. Unfortunately, they lost the bronze medal in overtime.

Mr. Speaker, while we're on the subject of athletic performance, I would also like to take this time to acknowledge the Fort McMurray peewee team for winning the international division championship at the 37th annual peewee hockey tournament in Quebec. This is the first time that an Alberta team has won in the history of this tournament.

Also, Kevin Martin won his fourth provincial men's curling title in this decade. Mr. Martin and his rink will represent Alberta at the Kamloops Brier in two weeks' time.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Kenneth Giroux of the Cougar boxing club of the city of Edmonton is the 1996 Golden Boy, and that means that he was the most outstanding fighter at the Alberta Golden Gloves tournament this past weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this afternoon to join with the hon. minister in congratulating the 44 Alberta athletes. I'd also go further and say that when I moved the motion that was unanimously supported by all members on February 14, we wanted to recognize not only the athletes but also the volunteers and the coaches. At that time I stressed two points. The first one was the emphasis on participation, involvement, and friendship, and I think everything that happened during the term of the games demonstrated that everybody participating was alive to those values. The second thing I attempted to stress was voluntarism, and I'm pleased to say that it was a wonderful effort by an awful lot of volunteers that made it as successful as it was.

I think I would just conclude by thanking everyone who in any way contributed to the success of the games for reminding us, firstly, of the value of athleticism but more importantly for reminding us of the value of participation.

Thank you very much.

*head:*  
1:50

### Oral Question Period

#### Health Care System

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, waiting lists for heart surgery have risen to 500, and nearly 2,000 Albertans are waiting for joint replacements. There aren't enough nurses to schedule emergency surgery, and red alerts are becoming the norm in our health care system. The explanation is simple: the cuts have been too deep and too fast. A study by the Western Centre for Economic Research shows that Alberta invests less in health care than any of the other five provinces that have already balanced their budgets. To the Premier: how can the Premier argue that his government values health care when it invests 28 percent less in per capita terms than New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, all of which have balanced budgets?

MR. KLEIN: It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that all of those provinces balanced their budgets with increases in revenue, particularly through taxation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have canceled some \$53 million in cuts that were earmarked for fiscal 1996-1997. We have put an additional \$51.4 million back into the system, \$40 million for community health services and \$11.4 million to address precisely the problems that the hon. member alluded to.

MR. MITCHELL: How can the Premier explain the fact that provinces like Newfoundland, like New Brunswick have balanced their budgets, New Brunswick before this province balanced its budget, and still invest more in health care than Alberta and without the windfall surpluses and without the rise in health care

premiums and without the vast number of user fees that this province has implemented? Mr. Speaker, what is he doing with our money?

THE SPEAKER: Order. That's plenty long enough for a supplemental question.

MR. KLEIN: I'm not sure what the question was, Mr. Speaker.

New Brunswick, as I understand it, is going through some very serious forms of restructuring. I know that just recently they not only closed a hospital down, but they imploded the hospital; in other words, they blew it up. As I understand, in New Brunswick also they're going through a process now of downscaling their health workforce by something like 2,500 personnel. So those provinces are going through some of the same kinds of things that we've gone through in terms of health care restructuring, because they understand, like Alberta, that if we kept on spending the way we were in the area of health care, we wouldn't have a health care system four or five years down the road.

MR. MITCHELL: There are those who are questioning whether we have a health care system now, Mr. Speaker.

How can the Premier justify investing the lowest per capita amount on health care in the country while continuing to collect the highest health care taxes – he calls them premiums – in this country?

MR. KLEIN: Well, they are premiums, Mr. Speaker, and we still subsidize to a great extent health care in this province. All I can say is that we had to go through that fundamental and basic restructuring of health care. If we hadn't done it and if we had continued to spend like we were, where health care costs were going up something like 10 or 12 percent each and every year, far beyond the rate of inflation, then quite simply we wouldn't have a system four or five years down the road. It would be in shambles.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, a young man was forced to wait for 17 hours in excruciating pain for emergency surgery in Edmonton this weekend. To the Premier: what responsibility does the Premier take when his cuts, clearly too fast and too deep, have resulted in only two operating rooms running at the Royal Alex, one of Canada's busiest emergency hospitals?

MR. KLEIN: According to the information that has been provided to me, this was an extremely, extremely busy weekend at the Royal Alex hospital. Mr. Speaker, the patient was looked after. He was attended to almost immediately when he arrived, and he was stabilized. According to the information that has been provided to me, there is no evidence that a 17-hour wait in a busy emergency room in a major city on a Friday night is the result of budget reductions. [interjections] Wait a minute. This is the preliminary information that has been provided. There are two sides to every story. Thank God that we aren't compelled to listen to and believe the Liberals.

The preliminary information I've received is that this individual was well cared for while he waited and that his need was prioritized against all other cases presenting themselves at that particular time. As well, I understand that the medical staff felt that the patient needed time to be fully stabilized after his accident and before performing major surgery on him. This was much more

than just setting the leg. This was major reconstruction, and that stabilization period needed to take place.

MR. MITCHELL: If it's not the cutback policies of this government, Mr. Speaker, then will the Premier please tell us exactly what is causing the surgery delays, the cancellations, the undue suffering? He is responsible. His policies are responsible. His Minister of Health is responsible. When do they take responsibility?

MR. KLEIN: We take responsibility for restructuring the system to make it better, to make it more effective, to make it more efficient, to make it more accountable. You know, what the Liberals would like to see is a continuation of the same old ways, where 36 metric tonnes of drugs that we know of are rounded up each year and are burned at the Swan Hills plant, where probably that amount again goes down the drain or in the garbage. They would support a system that promotes overuse and abuse. They would support a system that involves duplication and overlapping. That's the kind of system the Liberals would support, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, what does it take to make this Premier understand that when a young man lies in a bed for 17 hours in excruciating pain in this health care system due to his cuts, he is responsible? Instead of making excuses, he should do something about it to fix it.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely, totally, entirely unfair to blame the Premier of this province for an incident that occurred in one of the hospitals. What about the thousands of people who access our hospitals and health care facilities each and every day and go into those facilities and receive good health care? You don't hear about those because the Liberals don't want to talk about things that are good about the system.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Health supplement my answer relative to this specific question.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Royal Alex hospital did increase their operating time on the weekend because it was an uncommonly busy weekend. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus would agree that when emergencies come in, they should be dealt with according to the medical emergency. What I am concerned with is that the individual was well cared for during the time that he spent awaiting surgery. It is my information that that occurred. However, we are continuing to review this situation as we do all that are brought forward, and there will be a complete review with the hospital and certainly participating with the family, if they wish, to ensure that all the care that should have been delivered was delivered to that individual.

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

2:00

**Multi-Corp Inc.**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report of the Ethics Commissioner into the Multi-Corp issue, tabled in the House last week . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order, hon. members. Be quiet.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start again. The report of the Ethics Commissioner into the Multi-Corp issue, tabled in this House last week, states that Mr. Klein and the president of that corporation, Mr. Michael Lobsinger, had no private meeting since 1993. Yet now we know that there were substantial opportunities for the Premier and this president on numerous occasions to discuss this issue both in China and in Alberta. Mr. Clark, the Ethics Commissioner, provided a draft report to the Premier prior to the release of the final report asking for corrections of factual errors, yet the Premier chose not to correct those factual errors. My question to the Premier is simply this: why did the Premier not correct those errors in the report when he had the opportunity to do so?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, in my review of the situation with the Ethics Commissioner I found his findings to be quite appropriate, and so did my wife.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, my supplementary question then: is the Premier saying that there were no discussions between himself and the president of Multi-Corp in 1994 even though Multi-Corp was a major sponsor of the 1994 PC annual convention?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I just don't get involved in those kinds of things relative to the organization of the annual general meeting or how that meeting is run or who collects funds to offset the costs of those particular functions. I mean, the Liberals, I'm sure, canvass virtually all the companies they possibly can to get the funds they so desperately need to offset the costs of their conventions and other functions.

MR. BRUSEKER: Could the Premier, then, please explain his statement, and I'll quote: when you're sworn into cabinet you take a solemn oath to behave in a certain manner; if people don't understand that oath, then they ought not to be in cabinet? Why does that apply to the former transportation minister and not to the Premier?

THE SPEAKER: The Chair does not really believe that that question falls within the governmental responsibility.

#### **Protection for Persons in Care Act**

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, Bill 211, Protection for Persons in Care Act, was passed unanimously by this Assembly . . . [interjection]

THE SPEAKER: Order, hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Your colleague on the other side is trying to ask a question.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, Bill 211, Protection for Persons in Care Act, was passed unanimously in this Assembly last fall. Its provisions will impact many provincially funded caregiving institutions. A number of boards, members of staff, and administrators have been asking MLAs and myself questions about a consultative process. My first question, then, is to the Minister of Community Development, the minister responsible for handling abuse allegations. What consultative processes does the minister have in place to develop the regulations and guidelines to implement the provisions of this Act?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the hon. member my department has also received letters and inquiries from agencies and regional authorities and community associations seeking further clarification and information on the requirements of this particular Act. These groups certainly will have an opportunity for further input as we proceed to implementation.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, my department has established a working group of officials from Health, Family and Social Services, Municipal Affairs, and Justice to examine the information requirements for the 1-800 line and to consider other implementation issues. The working group will also be looking at mechanisms for recording abuse that is reported and protocols for referral to specific departments for further investigation.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question. The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question, then, is to the Minister of Health. Will the minister commit to a consultation process with the RHAs and with the staff and administration of long-term care facilities and to other institutions financed by her department?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, as was indicated, my department does sit on the co-ordinating committee, and certainly I will ensure that the regional health authorities, various agencies who are providing those services, facilities, et cetera, are included in the consultation. I think this is a very important Bill that was passed in this Legislature, and certainly the Department of Health and this minister are committed to ensuring that the principles in that Bill are carried forward.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental question, then, is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Will the minister commit to a consultation process with the boards and with the staff and administration of seniors' lodges in developing regulations and guidelines prior to the implementation of the Act?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very important that we do carry out a full and complete consultation process with the staff and the executive people to do with all of the lodges and the seniors' care centres that are in this province, and I'm committed to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

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

*(continued)*

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday you tabled in this Assembly the report of the Ethics Commissioner relating to the Premier's involvement in the Multi-Corp affair. In that report the Ethics Commissioner concludes: the Premier did not breach the Conflicts of Interest Act. The problem is that the Ethics Commissioner cannot make that conclusion because he has no authority to do so given his findings. My question to the Premier: why do you continue to hide behind the hollow and inappropriate conclusions of the Ethics Commissioner in the Multi-Corp affair?

MR. KLEIN: I think that clearly this member is questioning and calls into disrepute the good workings and the motives of the Ethics Commissioner. Perhaps he should explain himself to the Ethics Commissioner outside this Chamber.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: My supplementary question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: is the Premier prepared to acknowledge today that the Ethics Commissioner's conclusion is wrong and that the Premier did in fact breach the Conflicts of Interest Act?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I just find this line of questioning to be absolutely outrageous not to mention very, very rude.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary to the Premier as well: in light of the fact that Mr. Clark cannot clear you of wrongdoing in the Multi-Corp affair, how will you now respond to your commitment that you would resign if there was even the slightest hint of wrongdoing?

MR. KLEIN: The Ethics Commissioner found no wrongdoing. Mr. Speaker, I reiterate: found no wrongdoing.

Now, I will reiterate what I've said before. If this member or any of his buddies over there wants to step out of the Chamber and make an allegation of wrongdoing, which they're afraid to do – they don't have the courage to do it – then they will get an adjudication of this matter. That is not a threat; that is a promise. Mr. Speaker, let's call this what it is. Let's bell this cat once and for all. This is a smear campaign. It is vicious, it is reckless, and it is hurtful. This is the political equivalent of a drive-by shooting. They don't care who they hit, and they don't care who they hurt.

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

## 2:10 Child Poverty

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this day and age children living in poverty is unacceptable for any caring society such as ours. In this past week there have been several stories circulating about a report on child poverty. My question is directed to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Can the minister shed some light on this report and its findings?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, it is, like I said the other day, very unfortunate that anyone would live in poverty in this day and age, and I know we'll be dealing with that. There's no quick solution for it, but I know this government is dealing with it.

Mr. Speaker, specifically to the media stories last week, I had my officials in fact in Calgary attempt to get copies of the report. I was advised that there was no detailed report available but that a two-page brochure was available. A number of statistics appear in this brochure, but none of them have any credible source as to where they came from.

Mr. Speaker, my officials attempted to find recent poverty rates for children from Statistics Canada and were advised that they did not have such data. In fact, a number of years ago an Ottawa-based special interest group produced the one in five number used in the brochure. That one in five estimate was produced prior to 1993, prior to this government reforming the welfare system.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This brochure also discusses the UN convention on the rights of children. I request that the minister tell this House how this affects and impacts Alberta.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the UN convention on the rights of the child was signed by the federal government on behalf of all Canadians in December of 1991. The Alberta Child Welfare Act at this time exceeds standards stated in the international document. The Act does put those standards into action and even enhances them. The Child Welfare Act budget will grow from \$179 million this year to over \$195 million in the next three years. A new plan, of course, for children's services will involve community-based services, early intervention, enhanced services to aboriginal people, and integrated services with the community, the clientele, and also the various departments of government that are responsible for children's services.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Minister. This being such a serious subject, can the minister advise this Legislature on the state of poverty in this province?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the so-called poverty line in Alberta is actually the low-income cutoff developed by Statistics Canada. There are many questions about the data which states the same rate for Edmonton as for Toronto. In my opinion, they are completely different in the basic cost of living. In fact, the Fraser Institute has pointed out several interesting things about the so-called poverty line which was used, no doubt, by this group. More than 50 percent of the people that fall under this so-called poverty line have a car. More than 67 percent of people that fall below this so-called poverty line have cable TV. And this is the interesting one. More than 18 percent of the people that fall under this so-called poverty line have mortgage-free homes with some exceeding \$100,000 equity.

Of course if it were the Liberal way, Mr. Speaker, they'd put more welfare into the system. This government doesn't because we believe the only way to deal with poverty is training, jobs, and a healthy economy, not more welfare.

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

## Motion Picture Industry

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation, AMPDC, attracts millions of dollars of outside investment capital which generates huge economic benefits from films and television series produced in Alberta. Hundreds of jobs are also created. Productions like *North of 60*, *Jake and the Kid*, and *Lonesome Dove*, for example, contribute immensely to our economy and also ensure a highly respected film and television infrastructure, a talent pool, if you will, that attracts other major films such as *Unforgiven* and *Cool Runnings* to be filmed here. In fact, two weeks ago the minister of economic development himself said that every film or television project creates jobs with spin-off benefits for every service sector in Alberta. To the minister of economic development. I know he's been waiting patiently for this, not unlike some of the actors. Will the minister provide adequate transitional funds to AMPDC for one year to protect this industry and the over \$100 million annual impact that AMPDC projects have on Alberta?

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

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not asking for equal time on this one. I'll just say: details to be unfolded after Thursday.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Speaker, will the minister please tell this House why he's fudging on this commitment that he has to AMPDC since he knows full well that his own department oversaw at least five or six drafts for a sensible privatization model of AMPDC? What's he withholding?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, we will be moving forward and dealing with the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation in accordance with the business plans of the department and in accordance with the budget to come forward on Thursday.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Well, Mr. Speaker, dollars aside, will the minister please tell us what his plan is to ensure that millions of film and television investment dollars along with our talent pool do not leave this province through his haphazard and abrupt treatment of AMPDC?

MR. SMITH: Stay tuned, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### School Violence

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Education. Last week a 13-year-old girl was charged with aggravated assault and possession of a dangerous weapon after a stabbing incident at the front doors of a local high school. Violent crime involving weapons has become a major concern in Calgary schools, and part of the problem has been identified as a lack of information available to teachers about a student's past record, especially when that student is transferred from one school to another. Would the minister explain what steps can be taken to prevent a student from being victimized by students with a violent criminal history that have been transferred from school to school?

2:20

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this is an area of concern to me as minister and I'm sure to all of government. With respect to the particular incident and the issue of the availability of information, I would think that, first of all, the information in terms of transfer from school to school would be something that the Calgary board of education, if this is the board that we're speaking of, would have and would be able to convey to their respective schools.

I would like to acknowledge what I think is the major part of the question, Mr. Speaker. With respect to restrictions that might be imposed by virtue of the Young Offenders Act, we have made representation as a government through a task force of this government with respect to certain changes there and would continue to do so. I would invite the Minister of Justice to perhaps supplement my answer in that regard. Certainly the government would want to be able to support and facilitate school boards and the community coping with these kinds of situations.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The importance of having information about potentially serious and violent youth

offenders available in our schools was recognized by the federal government in certain of the amendments that they made to Bill C-37. I think that what the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross is talking about is an extension of some of the amendments that were made that came into effect on December 1, 1995.

I know from speaking to some of the school divisions in southern Alberta that there is a feeling that the amendments in C-37 are going to help to identify young people who have had some dealings with the criminal justice system and are posing a threat both to other students in the classrooms and teachers. I think that through the task force members of our department are working with the federal government. We'll see some extension of that initiative in further amendments to the Young Offenders Act which will address some of the concerns that have been raised.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is again to the Minister of Education. Will the minister commit to arranging a meeting with Calgary Chief of Police Christine Silverberg to discuss how law enforcement officials can work with the school system to develop solutions that stop violent crime involving weapons among students?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I've had one conversation at some length on this topic with an official of the Calgary police department. Certainly if the chief of police is interested in a meeting with myself, I would be very, very eager to receive whatever advice and help she could convey to me, and anything that she would be able to suggest, I will certainly take under consideration.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the minister is: when will the School Act be next evaluated and reviewed as to looking at how school educators can look at the bottleneck that is there in regards to expulsion of students that have had violent weapons and been transferred?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as long as two years ago at the two conferences we've had on student conduct and violence in schools, I provided an open invitation to school jurisdictions across this province, not just Calgary public – certainly that is a very large jurisdiction within this province – but all school jurisdictions, to provide recommendations to me as minister with respect to amendments that they would want to see in this regard relative to the School Act. Although I would like to acknowledge that in terms of working with their communities and developing their policies and applying firm discipline policies, school boards across the province have made a major effort in this regard, to this point in time I have not received any specific recommendations as to amendments to the legislation. Should they come forward, I would certainly on behalf of government be prepared to give them every consideration.

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

#### Education Funding

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 1994 the Department of Education released a business plan that indicated that for the '96-97 fiscal year there'd be an increase of \$12 million in general revenue fund expenditures in education. A year

later, in 1995, the second business plan came out, and it said that there would be a \$19 million decrease in general revenue fund expenditures in education. My question to the minister since we keep getting different reports: what is the plan for '96-97 with regard to the general revenue fund? Will there be an increase in general revenue fund expenditures in education or a decrease? A simple question.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the Member for Edmonton-Centre's question, and I would just like to indicate to him and all members of the Assembly that the hon. the Provincial Treasurer will be bringing down a budget on, as I understand it, Thursday of this week. The answer to his question and many others will be revealed at that time.

MR. HENRY: Okay. I appreciate the answer, Mr. Speaker, but the Minister has already announced that there will be \$40 million over the next three years for technology in education. My question, then, is: where is that money coming from? Is it reallocation of other education moneys already budgeted?

AN HON. MEMBER: Thursday. The budget is on Thursday.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, the bozos on the right keep saying "Thursday," but believe me, this announcement has already been made.

So again the question is . . . [interjections]

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

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. It's rather unfair for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to make the comment he did considering the noise that was coming from his left as well. I don't know how he would categorize that.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I daresay I'd make a comment about bozos on the left, but I wouldn't want to make that comment about the hon. leader of the NDP up in the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, if I can . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. Will the hon. member please try to ask his supplemental question and let us proceed.

#### **Education Funding (continued)**

MR. HENRY: Okay. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to ask my question, if the members would like to listen.

The question simply is: given that the minister has already made the announcement of the \$40 million in technology over the next three years, is that a reallocation of existing dollars, is that money coming from the general revenue fund, or where is that money going to come from?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is quite correct that I have announced that it is proposed that we will be spending over the next three years an amount of \$40 million in partnership with school boards across the province. Quite frankly I am somewhat at a loss here as to whether the hon. member across the way thinks that's a good idea or not. I take it by his tone that it must be a bad idea, but I don't think so quite frankly, because we do need to in a methodical and reasonable way upgrade our informa-

tion technology potential within the education system across the province.

As far as the specifics of this are concerned, Mr. Speaker, we have certainly gained certain efficiencies within the education system. As well we have looked as a government very carefully at some cautious reinvestment at this particular point in time. I think the most important point here is that the details of all of this are in the tradition of this Assembly part of the presentation of the hon. Provincial Treasurer, which, as I understand it, is scheduled for Thursday of this week.

MR. HENRY: Okay. Since the minister is not willing to answer that question, perhaps I can ask him the question: will the minister commit for as long as he is the Minister of Education that new expenditures in education, which I agree with, will come from the general revenue fund and not be off-loaded onto property tax payers in this province?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we are quite sensitive to this issue of off-loading, and to this point in time I don't believe we have off-loaded on the school boards of this province. That factor is certainly in our minds as we go forward with our plans for education expenditure in the future.

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

#### **2:30 Crop Insurance**

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers and ranchers in my constituency and in most parts of northeastern Alberta are very concerned about the weather problems that have occurred during the last number of years and especially during the past year. The number of farmers with crop insurance in this region is relatively low compared to the rest of the province because many of them just can't afford the premiums. My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Mr. Minister, what is the status of the current crop program in Alberta?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul has certainly identified an area of concern not just in Alberta but throughout all of Canada. As a result of this concern the ministers of all the provinces plus the federal minister have agreed to do a comprehensive review of the whole crop insurance program as it's delivered not only in Alberta but throughout all of Canada. After the review there'll be a coming together and an identification of ways of indeed enhancing the crop insurance program.

The member has also indicated and correctly identified that the northeast region hasn't had a very substantively high uptake of crop insurance in that particular area. Something like 35 percent is the uptake in that area. To date there have been local meetings held throughout the province to basically review the program as it stands today and new possible courses of action that can be taken. The meetings have been held in Fairview, Westlock, Vermilion, Red Deer, and Lethbridge to date, and we are now compiling the information that came forward from those meetings with the idea of having subsequent meetings.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.



MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: with the long-term drought cycle that we have experienced in northeastern Alberta, what is the minister prepared to do to help the farmers during these very, very difficult times?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, the item that we have been dealing with as far as substantive programming is concerned is the farm income stability program. This is the program that has been put together to indeed deal with ongoing disasters programs. This is not a subsidy program and can't be construed as a subsidy program. It's one that's GATT green. We've actually had our people from the department go to Geneva, Switzerland, as well as Washington, D.C., to measure the criteria of the program, whether indeed it met the criteria of trade agreements, and in both cases it was agreed that it did meet the criteria of the trade agreements. It only triggers in case of a disaster. It's whole farm, it's commodity neutral, and it's total income on a particular farm.

So we feel that this program will indeed go a long way to addressing the needs of the farmers not only in the northeast part of Alberta but in the area in the southwestern part of Alberta where the floods were and in the area in the far north part of the province where indeed there was a severe drought this past year. What we're looking at is an all-encompassing program that will deal with all disasters on a neutral basis.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Communicable Disease Control

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, the recent case of tuberculosis at the university highlights the importance of effective disease control in our province. Now over 30,000 people are at risk at the university, as just a single exposure to someone active with TB can result in illness. Yet screening for communicable diseases is down, and the control program is about to be contracted out. How will the Minister of Health ensure public health when only the highest risk contacts will be tested leaving thousands of Albertans to fend for themselves, left on their own to decide whether they'll be tested or not?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a very proud record of disease control, and through our public health system and through our provincial programs we have certainly, I think, led the country in the ability to control infectious diseases. To suggest that if you were to contract part of that service, it would somehow be diminished – I fail to draw the conclusion other than the leaning I seem to see coming more and more from the opposite benches that nobody can do anything correctly in the private sector. I certainly hope that's not what I am hearing from the preamble to this question.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to ensure that there is a provincial program in place that ensures that infectious disease control in this province is managed, as it has been, in a very quality way.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's about ministerial responsibility and accountability. I understand why the minister fails to understand it.

Given that minister's answer, how can the Minister of Health justify reductions in specimen testing and the lack of new

resources for tuberculin skin tests if we're going to maintain this leadership in the program?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess in contrast to the member opposite the Minister of Health relies very heavily on experts, professionals who give us advice as to what should be carried out in these areas, and I will continue to rely on the medical professionals and experts in this area.

MR. SAPERS: I'm happy to hear that, and I'm sure all Albertans are relieved that the minister will continue to rely on expert advice, because the experts are saying, Mr. Speaker, that you need central control. Will the minister cancel her plans, therefore, to contract TB control out to a regional health authority or to some unknown private-sector testing lab and maintain provincial responsibility and ministerial accountability for this vital area of public health?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I will continue to have ministerial responsibility and accountability, but I will not agree, as the hon. member has just suggested, that a private-sector laboratory is not competent or qualified to perform those services in this province.

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

#### Grain Marketing

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One year ago the Member for Taber-Warner brought forward a private member's motion urging a plebiscite on changing the mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board to allow our farmers the option of marketing their own grain when and if that market presented itself. The motion was successful, and so was the plebiscite, both of which were likely the topic of discussion at the Western Barley Growers Association annual meeting last weekend. My question therefore is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Mr. Minister, could you share the results of your meeting with the barley growers last weekend?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed it was an interesting opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of dual marketing. The portion that I was able to participate in – and I want to thank the organizers for the opportunity to participate in this well-attended and certainly well-organized meeting – was the bear-pit session, which included the agriculture minister from Saskatchewan, the ag critic from the opposition party in Ottawa, the secretary to the minister in Ottawa, as well as myself.

The discussions basically were the various positions of each particular participant at the session. We had an opportunity to indeed endorse the 66 percent of the people in the plebiscite that supported the option of dual marketing, and we brought forward our position very clearly and very strongly that we will continue to work with the producers to allow for the possibility of dual marketing of barley and wheat in Alberta.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Minister, as you are well aware, my constituency is the highest producer of barley in Alberta. Could you tell me where we go from here to achieve this goal that was set out to achieve?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Contrary to opinion we have taken several steps as to where we go from here. First of all, we assembled a group of industry people who have come together, and we've had a two-day meeting of all the industry players in Alberta as to their roles and where we should be going as far as the potential of achieving dual marketing in the province is concerned. They have made some recommendations, and indeed we're following up on those recommendations. It is our intention to explore every avenue that's possibly there to see that we can indeed allow the option to those who wish. This isn't saying that it's going to be doing away with the Wheat Board, which advocates are trying to suggest that we're saying. What we're saying is that indeed we're looking at market opportunities, including the Wheat Board.

2:40

MR. BRASSARD: In light of NAFTA and the acceptance of free trade agreements in general, could the minister indicate if he has given any thought to establishing Alberta as a free trade zone?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Indeed, one of the items that we are looking at is a constitutional reference, and we're having the Alberta Department of Justice explore the possibility of perhaps seeing if there is some way that Alberta producers would be able to market within the borders of Alberta. The option of a trade free zone for Alberta is certainly one that we would encourage and one that we have often explored. From agriculture's perspective at least certainly a trade free area is what ultimately, as far as trade is concerned, we would like to achieve. Regulations, boundaries simply inhibit the opportunity for trade. At the present time 65 percent of everything we produce in agriculture in the province leaves the province. Therefore, we have to continue to gear all our expansion programs for increase in export programs.

head: **Members' Statements**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

#### **Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome**

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to advance awareness of chronic fatigue immune dysfunction syndrome, better known as CFIDS or CFS in Canada. The letter I share with you is a letter that was dropped off at my constituency office several months ago by Pat Jenkins, a sufferer of CFIDS and also a friend. It reads:

"Confessions of a Former Workaholic and Now a CFIDS Sufferer."

I used to be able to work 16 hour days. I was able to do two or three things at once and seemingly know what I was doing with all of them. I was known as a positive, smiling, successful businessman.

Now I am a shadow of my former self. As with many of us, my self-worth (I now realize) has been tied up with my accomplishments. Now that I can do very little, it is hard not to feel worthless. I battle feeling that I'm letting my company, my family, and my church down. I am having to make the difficult transition from being the strong one and having people depend on me to being the weak one and having to depend on others. People tell me I am loved not for what I do but for what I am, but for someone with my personality this is hard to even comprehend, let alone accept. But I'm trying.

Going from being a very active person to having a chronic disease is a very difficult transition. In our society when you are sick, you are expected to either recover or die, but not remain ill indefinitely. As someone said, they formerly believed only in Heaven and Hell, but now that they have a chronic disease, they believe there also is

Purgatory! This disease takes away a good portion of your life. It also does the same for those closest to you.

Physically I am now able to walk . . . a maximum 20 minutes at a time before resting. But what I miss most is my mind. I constantly forget what I am supposed to be doing. And while I spend a lot of time reading, very little is comprehended or remembered. I've gone from doing financial planning for others to having [difficulty] balancing my own chequebook. Emotionally, I still try to be positive, but I do get frustrated and discouraged at times. It seems to take so long for recovery and the pain is hard to endure.

He goes on to indicate that in fact there's a positive to this, because certainly his relationships have drawn closer as a result of it.

I thank you for allowing me to share that with you.

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

#### **Eid Day**

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today in the Legislative Assembly on this very important day in the Islamic calendar. Today is Eid Day, and I would like to wish the Moslem community of Alberta a very happy Eid. Eid Day is the day that follows the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the month of love, the month of understanding, the month of worshipping, and the month of forgiveness. During the month of Ramadan all Moslems around the world fast from sunrise to sunset and pray religiously five times a day.

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans are celebrating today. In fact, the population of the Moslem community of Alberta is approximately 70,000 to 80,000 people. The community is well noted for its many contributions to the social, economic, religious, and political structure of this province.

Mr. Speaker, on this very special occasion I would like to once again wish the Moslem community of Alberta a very happy Eid. Eid Mubarak and Assalamu Alaikum, or peace be with you.

Thank you.

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

#### **Support for the Arts and Motion Picture Industry**

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to stop its ideological assault on arts, culture, and multiculturalism in this province. These sectors and their related industries provide 79,000 jobs for Albertans and contribute over \$1.3 billion annually to Alberta's GDP. This area is the third largest economic generator in Alberta after energy and agriculture, yet this government's statements in the lotteries report and elsewhere call for the collapse of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, for example, into one super foundation, thus demising the last government body in Alberta that still carries the word "arts" on its letterhead. This recommendation makes no cultural sense, and without a self-standing arts voice of advocacy within government it makes no economic sense either.

Similarly, the musings of the economic development minister and his department to abruptly end adequate support for the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation in this critical year make no sense whatsoever either. A sensible approach for the government in this area would include proper transitional funding to ensure the operation of AMPDC and its investments in film and television projects for at least one year. Thereafter AMPDC could see its way clear to privatization without putting the industry in jeopardy. They should also consider an endow-

ment provision which would allow AMPDC to at least use the interest; they wouldn't have to touch the principal amount.

Does the government honestly not understand that it's taken 15 years to develop this film and television industry in Alberta to the sophisticated point where we can now attract major out-of-province films with multimillion dollar projects to Alberta? We also attract major television series because of the initial start-up costs which AMPDC is able to provide to producers through its revolving account. To understand the film and television industry properly is to realize that it's a risky business because investment capital is required up-front, but so too is it a huge economic generator for our province, particularly for rural Alberta, Mr. Speaker. The government's risk however is minimal because through AMPDC we can take a first-equity position in the films we support and be paid back on day one of the projects' release. A sound investment for us to consider.

THE SPEAKER: Before proceeding to the point of order, might there be unanimous consent in the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to introduce to you today and to members of the Assembly a group of English language training students from the English Language Training Centre here in Edmonton. They are from all over the world – Mexico and Europe and Korea – and they are here today with their teacher Mr. Jack Bauman, who is well known in Sturgeon. He was a past school trustee and is well respected. I would ask Mr. Bauman and his group to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce a gentleman from Tulsa, Oklahoma, a true friend, a true Conservative, although he's sitting in the public gallery, and unfortunately a lousy golfer. I'm pleased to have Mr. Terry Law rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park on a point of order.

**Point of Order**  
**Provocative Language**

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order, I'm rising pursuant to Standing Order 23(j) and *Beauchesne* 417. My point of order is in response to a comment made by the Premier in his response to my question this afternoon.

I did not call upon the Premier to get his opinion on what he liked or didn't like about the question. I was simply asking him to respond to it. *Beauchesne* 417 clearly says that the member who is answering the questions must "deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." I did not sink to the level of the Premier when he called me rude. I simply asked my question and waited for the response. The Premier clearly crossed the line

when he suggested that my question was the "equivalent of a drive-by shooting."

2:50

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to suggest to you that for the Premier of the province to equate a question in question period to a criminal act is absolutely reprehensible and is clearly not demonstrating leadership in the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you and I submit to members opposite that that kind of statement by the Premier clearly crosses the line, is unparliamentary, lacks leadership, and is certainly not in order. I know that the Government House Leader is going to quickly rise to his feet to defend the Premier, who won't be defending himself in this point of order, but I think that suggesting that a question is a criminal act is clearly out of order.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, in response, the reference was clearly indicated by the Premier – if the member opposite had been listening – to indicate that the comparison to a drive-by shooting was that in which there was no care or caution given to who might be hurt by the particular question.

I would go further and say that indeed there has been a grave infraction of points of order, because what gave rise to the Premier's response was a very severe infraction delivered by the Member for Sherwood Park. In that particular infraction he violated *Beauchesne* 409(7), in which he imputed motives or cast aspersions upon persons outside of the House and . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I quietly but painfully sat and listened to the member opposite. I would expect at the very minimum the same courtesy.

Further to that, as the member opposite recoils in fear because he knows what's coming, I can tell you that the reference as I just cited – also, 493(3) talks about officials of "high official station" and talks about "public servants" and talks about the Speaker cautioning members "to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply."

I will be listening carefully for an apology from the member, because he actually was asking the Premier to say that the job done by the Ethics Commissioner was a bad job. That position is a position that is conferred upon an individual by this whole Assembly, and the Premier could not, even if he wanted to, make that. I will be looking for that because I think that what we are talking about here is very close to a question of privilege, especially when you look at the bits of paper which have been circulating.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, when you take the fact that this member has asked the Premier to cast aspersions . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Government House Leader is trying to make a point. It would be nice if you would allow him to make it.

MR. DAY: He has asked, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier make remarks reflecting on the task of the Ethics Commissioner. When you combine that with the trifling pieces of paper passed around by the Liberals which say that the Ethics Commissioner abused his power, we are in a very grave situation.

I will be listening to an apology. Not hearing it, I will be pursuing with your office the possibility of a question of privilege on that particular item. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order. The question of privilege, as the Chair understands it, raised by the hon. Member for Sherwood Park . . .

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Order, Mr. Speaker, not privilege.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. The point of order raised by the hon. Member for Sherwood Park arises out of the use of a term by the hon. the Premier about the political equivalency of what the hon. Member for Sherwood Park had alleged or was questioning about. The Chair has to say that it does not like to hear questions about officers of the Assembly who have made reports that are the subject matter later for debate by the Assembly. The Chair feels that the question asked by the hon. Member for Sherwood Park was rather provocative, and the hon. Member for Sherwood Park should not be surprised by some response by the other side. The Chair therefore rules that in the context of this whole exchange, there is no point of order.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray has given notice that he wishes to make an application to the Assembly for unanimous consent pursuant to Standing Order 40.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

#### **Quebec Hockey Tournament Championship**

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Dealing very quickly with the matter of urgency in this notice of motion. It has been, at least since I've been here, the practice of this Assembly to congratulate amateur sports teams from Alberta at national competitions at which they are successful. The event has just occurred this weekend past, which makes it timely and therefore urgent.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 40. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

Mr. Germain moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly congratulate the L. Robert Enterprises peewee double A Barons hockey team from Fort McMurray, Alberta, on their gold medal achievement at the Quebec international tournament in Quebec City on February 18, 1996.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By way of background let me tell you that this Quebec international tournament is in its 37th year of history and that it annually attracts teams from all over the world. This year over 100 such teams attended in Quebec City for the purpose of participating in this particular tournament.

Mr. Speaker, I know of nothing more exciting for a young group of men and women than to travel by plane from a northern

Alberta community to the capital city in the province of Quebec to participate in a hockey tournament except for one possible thing, and that is to return a week later also by plane, having succeeded and triumphed over all of the other teams at that tournament and won the gold medal in that particular tournament play. That has to be an exciting moment for those young men and women. For the first time in 37 years a western team was able to prevail and win a gold medal at this particular tournament, and I will ultimately ask for a unanimous vote of congratulations to this Fort McMurray team.

Now, if the Assembly will graciously allow me additional time, because it is not often that young men and women in the 12 to 14 age category get recognized in this Assembly and get referred to in *Hansard*, I would like to indicate to members in this Assembly the names of those young teenagers who traveled from Fort McMurray to Quebec to participate so graciously and so successfully for Fort McMurray and for this province. They are Scott Upshall, T.J. Campbell, Drew Campbell, Trevor Mortson, Patrick Dupuis, Michael Mellon, Bruce Gillis, Curtis Johnston, Mark Nolan, Dustin Doucet, George Power, Justin White, Dustin Sheaves, Andrew Gniadzowsky, Andrew Hoffman, Rick Deobald, Robert Law, and Miss Becky Sager. I should also tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this team is coached by well-known Fort McMurray-ites, including popular radio announcer Mark Stiles, the mayor of Fort McMurray, His Worship Guy Boutilier, Andrew Boutilier, Monty Dewey, and managed by a community leader Robert Campbell.

**3:00**

You know, Mr. Speaker, before a team like this can go successfully and compete on the ice, they have to have progressive and active sponsors. They have to have a work ethic to get out and fund-raise, and they have to enjoy the support of the community. I must say that for those of us living in the municipality of Wood Buffalo and the city of Fort McMurray today, none of us could be any prouder of these young men and women. I urge this Assembly to accordingly congratulate them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would join with the member to take time to acknowledge the accomplishments of this Fort McMurray peewee team for winning this world-renowned championship.

This year, Mr. Speaker, 109 teams participated from 14 different countries. I think it speaks well of this particular team to note that there were four third-period goals that carried Fort McMurray to the 5-4 win over Papineau, a Montreal district squad. As the hon. member has said, this is the first time that a western team, an Alberta team, has won this particular tournament, which is a well-known one indeed.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments, I stand here in favour and urge all members to stand in favour of this standing order.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

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

**Bill 202**  
**Lotteries (Video Lottery Schemes Elimination)**  
**Amendment Act, 1996**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's with a good deal of urgency that I rise to seek the support of members of this House for Bill 202, which is our video lottery schemes elimination Act. The Bill calls for the phasing out of video lottery terminals – I'd prefer to call them what they really are: video slot machines – over a three-year period, to be phased out entirely by 1999.

Government needs to provide the people of this province integrity. It needs to provide them fiscal responsibility. Mr. Speaker, it has to provide them a third thing, which is being forgotten by this government, and that is community. Government must reflect Albertans' values, build on those values to develop strong communities premised upon shared values. Instead, what we see is a government that is leading in a meanness that I haven't seen for as long as I have lived in this province up until about two or three years ago. I see a real punitiveness in the way that they relate to people. When they identify a problem, the first thing they do is find somebody to blame for that problem. When they come to solving the problem, they all too often pick on people who are vulnerable, people who are weaker in our society, in their effort to solve that problem, not understanding how short-sighted that is, not understanding how quickly that will lead to much more expensive, much more corrosive problems to our society, to our communities, to families and individuals within this province.

We are opposed to video slot machines, Mr. Speaker, because they erode this sense of community. As long as they exist, they take something out of each and every one of us: people in this province who have always valued support for their neighbours, who have never picked on people, who have not been mean about people. Video slot machines are damaging families and communities aggressively in our province. There are today 30,000 addicted gamblers; there are 125,000 problem gamblers. If you consider the family members who are related to those problem gamblers, we are beginning to see 300,000 or 400,000 Albertans who are directly and negatively affected by the impact of video slot machines. That is unacceptable.

We see that in many ways: story after story of people who lose their life savings, who fritter away a paycheque, who begin to mortgage family assets because they are addicted to video slot machines. It has been demonstrated over and over again. In fact, it has been reiterated and confirmed by this government's own AADAC that video slot machines are highly addictive. When asked for their opinion by British Columbia about video slot machines, AADAC, Alberta's own AADAC, said: "Don't do it. They are damaging to families and communities." So we see 30,000 individuals with addiction, 125,000 individuals with problems, many more family members damaged by that addiction.

The second reason, Mr. Speaker, that we want to do away with video slot machines is that they are now beginning to damage community groups and volunteer groups who have always been able to raise their funds successfully through nonprofit casinos and

bingos. There is clear evidence that video slot machine gambling is taking money away from nonprofit casinos and bingos to the detriment of those volunteer groups who have always used that as a source of funds. I'm not saying that nonprofit casinos and bingos are perfect either, but they are not liquor-driven. They are regulated. They are not nearly 24-hour establishments, and they have been a part of an accommodation in our society reached a number of years ago to give people choice in gambling but not at the same time to create social problems and erode our communities in the way that video slot machines clearly have done. We see case after case of volunteer groups whose funding has dramatically dropped off since the emergence of video slot machines.

Now we see a third area that has been damaged by these machines, and that is the horse industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. Any of us who are concerned about rural Alberta and the depth and breadth of that economy must be concerned about the effect of video slot machines on horse racing, because we see again interest in and attendance at horse-racing establishments dropping off. I'm not saying that's a perfect form of gambling either, but it is not in any way, shape, or form as addictive as video slot machines, and it does serve to support a broader base of industry, which supports and strengthens communities across this province.

There are, Mr. Speaker, clear consequences. We see it in increasing crime. We are now beginning to see more and more people approach AADAC for gambling counseling. It went up 50 percent last year over the previous year. That's going to go up at least 75 percent, it's predicted, this year over last year. These are people who have serious problems and are seeking what can only be described as very minimal help: the \$1 million that this government put into gambling addiction counseling, which is very, very little more than a salve to their conscience, which we hope would begin to fester when they see what they are doing with this policy to the people of this province, to the communities of this province.

As if this weren't bad enough, as if video slot machines weren't bad enough, growing as they have over the last three years to 6,000 machines, promoted by a government that is actively promoting gambling in many different places, certainly trying to promote more and more gambling through corner store bookies and absolving itself of responsibility through the setting up of arm's-length organizations to do that, we now see a government that is not taking a strong position against for-profit, Las Vegas-type casinos. We are opposed in this caucus to for-profit, Las Vegas-type casinos anywhere in this province, and if we saw problems created by video slot machines – and we are seeing them – we will see those problems only made worse by for-profit casinos.

It is clear that once they are allowed to proceed in certain areas of this province, the Premier will use that as an excuse to insist that they proceed in major centres like Edmonton and Calgary and – who knows? – Kananaskis, Canmore, perhaps Coutts because it's close to the border, perhaps Lethbridge because it's a centre in the south, perhaps Medicine Hat because it's a centre in the south. For-profit casinos, Mr. Speaker, will finally once and for all destroy not-for-profit casinos, which have supported our volunteer groups. As if video slot machines haven't been enough to do that, for-profit casinos will be the icing on the cake, as it were.

**3:10**

What we will begin to see is an erosion of values that we have held consistent as Albertans. We will begin to see the emergence

of a Las Vegas kind of gambling industry. Perhaps people from Alberta want to visit Las Vegas, but I have met very, very few Albertans who would want to move their families, their children, to live in Las Vegas. This is the kind of value that this government is promoting and reflecting in what it does. I know there are members over there who are very uneasy with it. I know that the Member for Olds-Didsbury is very uneasy. I know that the Member for Cardston-Chief Mountain is very uneasy. I applaud them in their uneasiness with this policy, and I know it is very, very difficult for them to support this government in that policy. Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, today they don't have to. They can rise in this Legislature and support this Bill and do away with video slot machines by 1999, a step in the right direction to protect families, to protect communities, and to reinstate some sense of value in what this government is doing on behalf of Albertans.

This is clearly a value-based issue, and while this government has been driven in a straight line to cut everything that they seem ideologically not to like in this province, they are in the process of squeezing something out of each and every Albertan: a decency and a dignity which has been part of what we are. Albertans should be able to depend upon a government to reflect that kind of decency and that kind of dignity. It is going, Mr. Speaker. This government has lost sight of that. They have lost the sense of what we value in this province, and it's time that enough of them stood up in that caucus and voted for a Bill like this to bring back a sense of value about what is important to our communities.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 202 states that video lottery terminals will be eliminated by December 31, 1999. Today is February 20, 1996. What happens in the interim? To aid in this process it is suggested that a committee be established that will "advise the Minister on [an] orderly phase out." Talk about putting the cart before the horse, eating dessert before the main course, or providing the would-be answer before asking the question. Obviously, this committee's mandate is questionable: to rubber stamp and rectify an unworkable decision. It's unfortunate that the members opposite do not believe that a committee made up of free-thinking, responsible Albertans could draw their own reasonable conclusions.

Hon. member, why are you and your colleagues talking out of both sides of your mouths? You can't have your cake and eat it too: eliminate VLTs or return a portion of VLT revenue back to local governments. What will it be? Will your position change next week or three months from now?

Please allow me to share the following with you, signed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The Alberta caucus believes lottery and gaming revenue in Alberta (including VLT revenue) should be first used to give local governments a \$30 per capita grant to fund community groups, and that the balance should be used to pay down our huge provincial debt.

Worth noting: the Liberal position, part of a survey done by their caucus; 327, or 64.5 percent, agreed with this statement.

While we're talking about the committee that is suggested be put in place, I would like to remind you about the Lotteries Review Committee. This committee was one such committee. The issues were identified, the questions were asked, but it was the people of Alberta who provided us with the answers, not a piece of legislation like Bill 202.

Please allow me to give you some background on what is a realistic approach to gaming and gambling in the future. Alberta has long been a pioneer amongst Canadian provinces both in introducing new forms of gambling and in fashioning strict but workable regulatory controls. Gambling in this province provides not only recreational entertainment but significant financial returns to both charities and government and employment for thousands of Albertans. Pull tickets, bingos, raffles, horse racing, ticket lotteries, sports betting, video lottery terminals, and casinos are forms of legalized gaming supported and enjoyed by many Albertans both as a form of entertainment and as an essential means of raising funds for volunteer and charitable organizations. Each year the proceeds from lotteries and gaming go to support everything from the local baseball team to up-and-coming artists to events such as the Canada Winter Games, held most successfully, I might add, in Grande Prairie last year. Albertans see lottery revenues as a means to add to our quality of life.

Having talked about the recipients of lottery dollars, we should look at who is gambling. Recent research indicates that only 7 percent of adult Albertans have never participated in any form of gambling in their lifetime. According to the report *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Alberta*, 4 percent of adult Albertans experience varying degrees of gambling problems. Eighty-four percent of the population gamble responsibly. Often when the issues surrounding gaming and gambling are discussed, these are the people that are never talked about or mentioned. These are responsible Albertans who gamble for entertainment, recreational, or social reasons and have never experienced problems related to this activity. These are people who enjoy betting on horse races, buying lottery tickets, and, yes, even playing VLTs.

While few Albertans have concerns about how the gaming industry operates, what has become a concern is the sheer volume of lottery revenue. The latest figures for 1995-96 show that the net lottery revenue now exceeds \$510 million. Admittedly, most of the increase is due to a single factor: video lottery terminals. With revenues at these levels, it was indeed time to ask some important questions: what should lottery funding be used for, how can we improve accountability, and what impact are video lottery terminals having on our communities and community organizations? As such, the Lotteries Review Committee established by the Premier in October of 1994 was charged with the task of consulting with Albertans on these important and critical issues, preparing recommendations designed to improve accountability, and setting a clear, new direction for lotteries and gaming in the future.

As chair of this committee I was extremely pleased with the tremendous response from Albertans. Thousands participated in this process. We received over 18,500 written responses to our initial discussion paper and, at 22 public meetings in 14 locations with 2,200 Albertans in attendance, heard a total of 462 very interesting but often diverse oral presentations. In fact, some nights it was standing room only, a far cry from the outcome of the review process implemented by the Official Opposition.

Some criticized our process, saying that the public hearings were dominated by special interest groups. Obviously, we didn't preclude anyone from making a presentation before our committee, and, yes, we did hear from many who did have a vested interest in preserving or improving upon the status quo. However, in fairness, our public consultation included a variety of opportunities to provide input in order to achieve a balance of views from all sectors. These included presentations at public meetings, written submissions, petitions, and holding parallel

focus group sessions in each of the communities where we held meetings.

3:20

I believe this process resulted in a good representation of views from Albertans, not specifically lottery fund recipients. In February 1995 the *Edmonton Journal* wrote, and I quote: if anyone wanted to see what real public consultation looks like, the Lotteries Review Committee makes a pretty good example; one way you could tell this was a real grassroots meeting was the equal time allowed for different viewpoints, unquote.

No other issue generated as much discussion at the public hearings as the VLT issue. Revenues generated from the machines, accessibility, the impact VLTs are having on communities and on the ability of volunteers to raise dollars, the possibility of returning a portion of VLT revenue back to communities, and the problems associated with addiction were often discussed at length. However, the greatest number one concern expressed was the possible expansion of the program. Eighty-seven percent of people said there should be no further expansion, while 10 percent supported expansion. In the focus groups opinion was not quite as strong, although 72 percent were opposed to expansion. Even though people acknowledged that limiting the number of VLTs would not eliminate problem gambling, they did acknowledge that the key problem lies in accessibility. Thus the committee considered alternate ways of limiting accessibility.

In the committee's view well-regulated, charitable casinos should be the primary location for gambling in Alberta, not bars and lounges. Typically people go to a casino as a destination, specifically to gamble, while people go to bars and lounges for a number of reasons, most often for a social drink. Casinos are not as readily available. Their hours of operation are carefully regulated, and nonprofit groups share directly in casino profits. With government agreeing to our recommendation that charitable casinos be allowed up to 50 VLTs, nonprofit organizations and charitable groups will now directly share in VLT revenue. Fifteen percent of the net revenue from VLTs and casinos will in the future be shared by the nonprofit groups and the casino operator.

Many nonprofit groups have commended us on our recommendations and, in speaking with them, support the introduction of VLTs to the charitable casino setting. They are pleased that in the future their groups and organizations will have access to additional dollars and will share directly in revenues from these machines. In addition, many have mentioned that they know there will be a fundamental change in the ways lotteries and gaming operate in Alberta in the future, yet they are encouraged and supportive of the recent recommendations endorsed and now being implemented by government whereby the primary beneficiaries of regulated gaming in Alberta will continue to be – please note, hon. Leader of the Opposition – charitable organizations.

Banning or eliminating VLTs over time is simply not an option. An effective, manageable cap is more to the point. We know, as evidenced through research and in discussions with other provinces, that the outright removal of VLTs does not solve the problem. It simply gives rise to illegal gambling using illegal or gray machines. No regulation. No controls. No revenues being returned to governments or communities for community good. The ultimate benefactor in those jurisdictions where governments do not operate and regulate VLTs is the criminal element. Is this what the opposition wants in Alberta?

Alberta has an excellent reputation for regulating its gaming industry, including VLTs. We want to maintain a well-regulated system rather than open the doors to illegal gambling. Meetings with representatives of the city police forces and the RCMP indicate that the current controls on VLTs have been very effective in limiting illegal gambling. In their view, eliminating VLTs or drastically limiting their availability will only open the doors to illegal gambling. Other provinces have taken this approach, and the results are clear: there is very little control over illegal machines, and the police in these jurisdictions are unable to stop it. Allow me to explain further.

Although VLTs are illegal in both British Columbia and Ontario, estimates are that 10,000 illegal machines are operating in bars, pool halls, restaurants, and laundromats in B.C., and 30,000 to 40,000 illegal machines are operating in Ontario. In Quebec there are 15,000 to 20,000 illegal machines; however, since Quebec has now begun to license VLTs, the number of illegal machines is expected to drop. Presently Quebec has 8,000 legal VLTs operating in over 3,000 locations.

The advice of police representatives is that maintaining controls is essential and that with the current number of about 6,000 machines in operation they are able to provide the necessary enforcement. I think Sergeant Bob McDonald, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, K Division, said it best when he met with our committee on June 2, 1995, and I quote: the prohibition era demonstrated that when people have an appetite for a commodity, they will go to great lengths to acquire it, even to the point of contravening laws; we believe it is a fair statement to say that if the government was to now eliminate gambling entirely, a greater underground criminal market would undoubtedly develop to satisfy the desires of those people who have experienced the thrill of gambling and demand accessibility to the activity, unquote.

Because of the foregoing, the committee's recommendations included: no expansion to the VLT program; that the current number of machines be capped at the existing numbers; and in an attempt to make the machines less appealing, less lucrative to the owners, that the current incentive bonus based on VLT revenues should be eliminated. Because we were told that problem gamblers were attracted, or enticed, by the speed of the game, changes should be made to the computership to slow down the speed of the game. Brian Kearns, executive director of program services for AADAC, said that most of his group's concerns were met by our report. I quote the September 2, 1995, *Calgary Sun*: "Some of the key things we recommended (like) a cap on VLTs and slowing down the speed of the games, were included."

As well, we felt it important that communities should be able to decide by plebiscite to prohibit VLTs in their community. As such, the Alberta government would honour the outcome of any such vote. All promotional statements regarding lotteries as a source of many benefits should be removed, and in future lottery funding should not be used to fund advertising and marketing initiatives.

How were our recommendations received? The *Calgary Sun*, September 2, 1995, in reference to our suggested cap on VLTs:

Moralists are wagging their fingers and sternly warning that the committee's recommendations are too weak, while bar owners, would-be casino operators and gamblers with itchy fingers are talking about discrimination.

But in our view – and we suggest the view of most Albertans – MLA Judy Gordon's committee has taken a sensible and sane middle of the road approach.

It's the only approach the committee could have taken. The *Edmonton Journal*, September 16, 1995, in reference to the same: "The Gordon report suggests a sensible crackdown." Nowhere, Mr. Speaker, in these editorials was the eventual elimination of VLTs, even over time, considered, given any ink, support, or credence. Why? Because simply it's unworkable.

Since I'm on a roll, the *Edmonton Journal*, September 17, 1995, in reference to our recommendations regarding distribution of lottery funds:

For years, the province distributed windfall gambling profits on a whim like a sugar daddy with certain preferences . . . Accountability was often suspect. The system was also too complicated.

The Klein government deserves credit for attempting to clean up the distribution of gambling revenue. In particular, MLA Judy Gordon and the nine members of the Lotteries Review Committee are to be congratulated for an honest appraisal of the problems and some excellent suggestions for improvement.

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

**head: Motions Other than Government Motions**  
3:30

### Health Care System

501. Mr. Sapers moved on behalf of Mr. Mitchell:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a health care system that is based upon the two fundamental principles of accountability and affordability and a system that ensures accessibility, continuity of care, and quality of care.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora on behalf of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to introduce on behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-McClung, the Leader of the Official Opposition, his motion.

MR. DAY: I am astounded.

MR. SAPERS: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader is astounded, and he hasn't even heard the motion yet. Maybe that means he'll vote for it.

Mr. Speaker, one does not have to look any further than today's headlines or journey any further than the emergency room of any hospital in any town, city, or village in this province to understand the importance of this motion at this point in time. This government has unleashed an unprecedented assault on the integrity of the health care system by cutting too fast and too far in terms of funding . . .

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DAY: The rules as indicated in *Beauchesne* allow a question to be put during debate, and I wonder if the member opposite would permit a very brief question.

MR. SAPERS: No, Mr. Speaker.

### Debate Continued

MR. SAPERS: As I was saying, one would have to look no further than the headlines or visit any emergency room in any hospital. The health care system is in total chaos. Doctors are talking about the collapse of the system. Nurses are talking about

the collapse of the system. Patients certainly are talking about the collapse of the system.

Mr. Speaker, when members of this government are confronted with this evidence, what do they say? Well, for example, when the Premier himself was asked about a young boy dying in a taxicab not so long ago, he said, and I quote, people fall through the cracks, as if that was a reasonable answer. In a radio interview the Premier, in talking about the declining quality of health care, said, and I quote: people are saying that people will die if they have to be taken to the regional hospital only 10 miles down the road; maybe some will; that would be unfortunate. Certainly not the words of somebody who is showing compassion for the concerns of Albertans or, for that matter, for the system that he has pledged to uphold. The Premier once again, speaking to an 11-year-old girl's surgery being delayed not once but twice, resulting in this young girl waiting for days and days not just with uncertainty but also of course with her suffering, said: these things will happen from time to time.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they're happening with increasing frequency. Just this last weekend in the city of Edmonton a young man hurt at a public event waited in agonizing pain for 17 hours not for a doctor, not for an operating room, but just because the system wasn't funded enough to be able to provide him with the kind of adequate care that he so urgently required.

And it's not just the Premier who has this cavalier attitude. The minister of transportation, on people complaining about the lack of ambulance services, has said: so what's wrong with that; we're not a taxi service. Mr. Speaker, these are wholly inadequate responses to some very serious problems. The need for accountability in health care starts right at the very top. It starts with ministerial accountability. It would be nice if in fact we had in the province of Alberta a minister responsible for health care. What we have instead is a group of individuals who sit around their cabinet table trying to figure out the number of ways they can shave a buck, the number of ways they can spend less money and less money and less money on health care, without paying any attention at all to the quality or the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, saving money and efficiency are very important, but this government isn't even concerned about efficiency and saving money. They want to spend less tax dollars. They want to get away with writing the smallest cheque they can out of the government's account, and they don't really care about the effect it has on the ordinary Albertan, on the individual taxpayer of this province, who already pays not once just through their income taxes for our health care system, not twice through the special health care tax, that this government has managed to crank up to the tune of an extra \$200 million since this current government has been sitting in the driver's seat, but again a third time through all of the additional user fees that are now being imposed as a result of certain procedures being delisted and uninsured, things like eye exams and, for people who are requiring orthopedic surgery, the necessity to have to pay for things like their own fibreglass casts if they can't deal with the extra weight and burden of the more clumsy plaster cast.

In addition, we have hundreds of families all over this province who are having to deal with the additional financial burden of paying for home intravenous drug therapy. As these Albertans are being moved from hospitals at an ever accelerating rate, the drug costs, which of course used to be part of the overall hospital operating budgets, are now being passed along to these individual Albertans. The costs, as well, are being passed on in some very



insidious ways. Changes in the Aids to Daily Living program have created new cost burdens for families of people who require catheters, for example. It may only be pennies per item, but multiply that by several items per day every day of the week, every week of the month for the rest of the user's life, Mr. Speaker, and you're dealing with a considerable cash burden. As I said, this is in addition to the money that Albertans are already being asked to contribute to the health care system through their income taxes and their health care premiums.

This is why we need this government to make a commitment to accountability, because Albertans want answers to these kinds of questions. They want these issues addressed. When it comes to accountability, we need a government that will provide us with concrete responses to real problems, not the kind of answers we get. For example, when the Premier was asked why some RHAs will have elected members and some appointed, his very, very complete response was: I don't know. When asked if there were any problems in the health care system just this past summer, unbelievably, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, what did our Minister of Health say? She said no, absolutely none. Just a month later, however, when the Premier was asked about the problems with the health care system and what direction the future would take, he said, and I quote: we don't have a clear picture now. Mr. Speaker, this isn't accountability; this is a mockery of accountability.

I would suggest that if this government wanted to regain some sense of support and some sense of security for the people of this province when it comes to health care, government members would leap to their feet and support this motion. This motion talks about accountability and affordability. This motion talks about a system that ensures accessible, quality care. How could you argue against these principles? Of course you can't, unless you are hell-bent and determined to erode the system to such a point that you will create an immutable demand for a parallel system, for a private health care system.

Of course, this is the fear of many Albertans: that without the kind of ministerial accountability that this motion calls for, without a system that is dedicated to ensuring access and continuity of care, what you end up with is the creation of a parallel system, a very expensive, American-style system that is controlled not by health care professionals but by insurance bureaucrats and insurance businesspeople, a system that is more concerned with the bottom line and profits than it is in terms of providing quality health care on an equitable and fair basis to all Albertans. What you end up with is a system as we see in the United States, where they spend up to three times as much of their national wealth on administering their health care system as we do in this province. It's the kind of system that Albertans don't want, but unfortunately it appears to be the kind of system that this government is driving us towards.

How do we know, Mr. Speaker? Well, there are numerous examples. One example that I will bring to your attention is the fact that when it comes to planned, per capita health care spending for fiscal year 1995-96, Alberta has sunk down to the bottom of the barrel, the very bottom. It's hard to be proud of that. Alberta is planning to spend slightly more than \$1,200 per capita on health care, the lowest in the country. British Columbia, our neighbour to the west, will spend over \$1,800, and Saskatchewan, our neighbour to the east, which is not considered to have the same depth of its bank account as Alberta, will still be spending more than \$1,500 per capita. It seems to me that in the contest our Premier has engaged in – that is, the contest for spending the

least possible, for giving Albertans the least return on their tax investment – the Premier certainly won that contest. But at what cost has he won it? He's won it, I would submit, at the cost of the integrity of our health care system.

3:40

We need a health care system, as the Alberta Liberal caucus has proposed, that will be based on accessibility, on continuity of service, and on quality of care. On November 16 of 1995 the Leader of the Official Opposition introduced a policy framework for health care, and it is a policy framework that I would commend to all members of the government to read. If they have any questions, Mr. Speaker, certainly members on the opposition side of the Assembly will be more than happy to answer their questions. Their questions could be easily answered if they demonstrated a commitment to these principles of accessibility, continuity, and quality. In the vision put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, we see a health care system that will be affordable, a health care system that will provide a guarantee of service for this generation and for generations of Albertans to come.

Mr. Speaker, there are current barriers to this kind of system. There are barriers to accessibility and continuity right now, and I submit that those barriers have been put in place by an absolute lack of vision for what a health care system needs to be. These are barriers that have been erected because we currently are dealing with a government that does not have a sense of where health care needs to be in the future, does not have a commitment to the Canada Health Act, does not have a commitment to the quality of services that all Albertans need. It wasn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker, that a Premier in this province by the name of Lougheed stood in this Assembly and committed this province to creating the best health care system in the country, to creating a system that would provide for generations to come the quality of care that we need for economic and community stability throughout this province. That system and that vision has been torn asunder by a government that has just been pursuing a single-minded fiscal agenda regardless of its impact on the services that Albertans need and demand.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of Motion 501 and therefore commit the government to getting back on track with health care. We cannot allow the Premier to continue to make the kinds of comments that he makes and go unchallenged – that health care spending has grown by over 220 percent, that health care spending goes up 10 to 12 percent per year, that health care spending is out of control – because the facts argue against that. Only this government, which really has very little idea about how to put together a business plan, would leave out of its business plan for health care any adjustment for inflation, any adjustment for population change, or any adjustment at all for the increasing costs of technology.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that if we leave this government unchecked, we will have a health care system that will not be accountable, will not be affordable, and will not guarantee us continuity or quality. Therefore it is imperative that this motion be put in place now so that it'll act as a buffer against this government's rather callous and cavalier attitude about our health care system.

I hope all members of the Assembly will join me in voting for Motion 501.

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

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Motion 501, but I must admit that I'm somewhat

confused by it. The hon. member is asking the government to commit to a set of principles that have been the foundation of our health system longer than the two of us have sat in this Assembly. This motion restates many of the principles of the Canada Health Act and essentially duplicates principles already articulated in federal legislation. In fact, the words affordability, accessibility, quality, continuity of care, and accountability permeate our business plan and are the basis upon which health reforms are indeed proceeding. These principles are also the basis for each and every regional business plan in this province. I would even add some other important principles not included in this motion such as contemporary, responsive, client-focused, efficient, cost-effective, integrated, and co-ordinated.

Our commitment to these principles is evident in our actions. Our new business plan, to be released on February 22, will outline in detail how we will continue to make these principles come to life over the next three years. We have created a more affordable health system by regionalizing the health system and replacing 150 facility health units with 17 regional health authorities. In their first year of operation they have reduced administrative costs by 20 percent. Shifting from an institution-based to a community-based health system is another way we have created a more affordable system, also by reorganizing services for greater efficiencies, by exploring new primary care models to encourage the delivery of appropriate services by a range of qualified health service providers, and finally by working with physicians, pharmacists, and consumers to reduce waste and minimize the health consequences of inappropriate usage of prescription drugs.

We are improving accessibility by establishing five rehabilitation services in each of the 17 health regions and by helping communities recruit physicians to rural areas through the rural physician action plan. We are improving continuity of care by ending the stovepipe approach to delivering health services and integrating programs and services, by developing single points of entry for rehabilitation services, and community support similar to that, which has worked so successfully in continuing care. We are improving accountability by establishing and reporting on performance measurements, such as client satisfaction with their health and health systems, by establishing a Provincial Health Council, which will issue a report card on Alberta's health system, by establishing community health councils at the regional level, and as the minister announced, we will be improving accountability by electing two-thirds of the RHA members, starting with the civic elections in the fall of 1998.

While we welcome advice and suggestions from the hon. member, this motion, like the series of health policy statements he and his colleagues have issued recently, bears a striking resemblance to the government's own policies and principles. Indeed, I am in perfect agreement with them, but it seems we've already moved beyond a discussion of basic principles. What is lacking in this motion is an understanding of the real issues or any proposed strategies for the future. We need to take the health care debate to the next level, to put forward plans, to identify solutions, to suggest new and better ways of delivering health services in view of the pressures bearing down on the health system today.

We are at an important juncture in the evolution of our health system. All provinces are bracing themselves for significant reductions in federal social transfers, reductions instigated by the current Liberal government, I might add. We must also keep in mind the fact that our population is aging, while we have huge

implications for our health and other social programs. This factor alone forces us to seriously and urgently explore alternatives to institutional care, to find ways to enable people to stay independent in their homes longer. Fortunately, we are able to report that because of health restructuring, Alberta is in a better position than most to deal with these pressures. But fiscal and demographic realities demand us to seriously assess what the principles in the Canada Health Act actually mean and what the provinces should provide.

Interprovincial comparisons reveal great diversity in terms of what health services are publicly funded. They also reveal that Alberta's health coverage is among the most comprehensive in the country. The Canada Health Act was written in a different era and basically applies to physicians and hospital services. Today's health system is far more expansive than this legislation would suggest. The Act's authors did not anticipate this shift to community-based health services or the growing emphasis on health promotion, yet we believe these areas represent the future of health care.

To subscribe to general principles is one thing. To go one step further and actually begin to define them is another, but it is a step we must take. Take the issue of accessibility, for example. In one of the opposition's recent health policy statements the hon. member suggested a return to annual benefit limits for physical therapy, which in our analysis would create fiscal barriers to high-needs clients. Is this the hon. member's definition of accessibility, that after a certain threshold has been reached, Albertans should be left to their own devices? One thing is for certain. We cannot reasonably expect the health system to do everything for us. It never did and it never can.

### 3:50

I don't think we've yet had a proper debate in this country about what services our publicly funded system really should embrace. Other jurisdictions, like the state of Oregon, have gone so far as to draw a line through a list of services. Everything above the line is funded; everything below the line is not. We think this is arbitrary and that there are better approaches, but we must be open to exploring them. We think factors like need and outcomes and appropriateness should drive the provisions of health services. The Alberta government is attempting to address these issues and to ask the questions that need asking. It has developed a core services document which outlines basic health services all regions must provide. It has also led the call for a national debate on the parameters of publicly funded health services. These should be the topics of debate in this House and in communities across this country and certainly this province. This government is providing leadership and fresh ideas, Mr. Speaker, and playing a major role in defining the future of health care at the provincial and national levels.

A 1982 quote from Tommy Douglas, who's the father of medicare, describes the challenges we face today.

When we began to plan medicare, we pointed out that it would be in two phases. The first phase would be to remove the financial barrier between those giving the service and those receiving it. The second phase would be to reorganize and revamp the delivery system -- and of course, that's the big item. It's the big thing we haven't done yet.

We're in that important and difficult second phase right now, and we need leadership and vision as we move through it, both of which this government has been providing in the process.

I'd like to assure members that the principles of accessibility, quality, affordability, and accountability are very much the

foundation of our health system, because these principles are already stated in the Canada Health Act. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I wish to amend this motion. My amendment is this: by striking out the word “establish” and substituting the word “maintain” and by striking out the word “two” and by striking out “and a system that ensures,” so that the motion would read:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to maintain a health care system that is based upon the fundamental principles of accountability and affordability, accessibility, continuity, and quality of care.

Mr. Speaker, I'll wait until the members have had a chance to look at this amendment.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair would inquire as to whether or not the proposed amendment is acceptable to the mover of the motion.

MR. SAPERS: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. You can't maintain what we don't have.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendment**

THE SPEAKER: Well, the Chair didn't want to jump into this if there was unanimous agreement in the Assembly. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury has moved an amendment to this Motion 501, and the Chair would refer all hon. members to citations 567, 578, and 579 of *Beauchesne*. The Chair has reviewed this amendment bearing those citations in mind.

*Beauchesne* 567 states that “the object of an amendment may be either to modify a question in such a way as to increase its acceptability,” parenthetically speaking, to the Assembly, or to present to the Assembly “a different proposition as an alternative to the original” proposition contained in the motion. According to *Beauchesne* citations 578 and 579, an amendment may not negate the motion or introduce foreign matter. An amendment proposes a negative if in essence the amendment nullifies the principle or intent of the motion.

It is the Chair's opinion that the first part of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury, where he proposes to replace the word “establish” with the word “maintain,” does in fact propose a negative, because the amendment changes the intent of the motion. The motion urges the government to establish a health care system with certain attributes.

In all fairness, the proposed amendment to replace “establish” with “maintain” affects the principle of the motion. The motion suggests that there isn't a health care system with the attributes the member is calling for in his motion. The amendment suggests that such a health care system presently exists. That is the debate that is before the Assembly.

The Chair would advise the hon. member that the remaining parts of his proposed amendments are in order, and the member is also reminded that he may wish to propose the remaining words to see if the Assembly is prepared to accept. Those are in order, but the word “maintain” in substitution for “establish”, that part of the amendment is not in order.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly not going to stand here and question your decision. I thank you very much for the interpretation, but may I at least explain why I proposed this.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. BRASSARD: I see that the intention of this motion is to accomplish the principles of accountability, affordability, accessibility, continuity, and quality of care. My amendment

had intended to accomplish exactly the same thing, so I felt that we were both very much in agreement on that. But given that the opposition feels that that is not already in place, contrary to, I'm certain, the understanding of everyone on this side of the Assembly and indeed most Albertans, certainly all of the ones that I have talked to, then I must stand and say that I cannot support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Motion 501, which is in essence a defence for the creation of a quality health care system which all Albertans can utilize when the need arises. I would like to just point out one of the comments made by the Premier of this province in response to an *Edmonton Sun* reporter back in September; September 21, 1995, to be specific. The Premier was questioned on the direction of health care in this province, and the Premier's response was that “We don't have a clear picture now.” That's what the Premier of this province said about the direction of health care in Alberta. If there's no better reason to give rise to a motion such as this, I would think that would suffice, and perhaps the Member for Olds-Didsbury would see it fit that his own Premier, his own party leader, was the one who was the prime motivator for this motion being introduced when he questioned the direction of the government for which he is the Premier.

#### **4:00**

Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that the Premier raised just recently – in fact, it was February 12, 1996 – in a speech titled A Pivotal Year on the Road to Health Reform in Alberta, which he gave to a health authorities forum, was: do we invest in key areas such as health and education? So we earlier have an admission, back in September, that he doesn't really have a clear picture of where health is going, and now he is asking if we need to invest in health and education, although this motion doesn't deal with education. I would say that the answer to the Premier's question, which he well knows because he has traveled the province, and which many of the members of this Assembly know, is: yes, we do have to invest in our health care system because the health care system, due to the lack of planning, the lack of insight, the lack of understanding as to what the problems were in health care, has begun to crumble.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I'll just give you an example of the types of concerns that I'm hearing. Family Day, which is a very special time – and last year in this very Assembly the majority supported that we maintain Family Day. So this past Monday, Family Day, I was in fact enjoying with my family. I have two telephone lines at home coincidentally, both of which I pay for out of my personal salary, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: How's your foot?

MR. SEKULIC: I'll get on to that story in a bit.

I have a business line which I pay for, and I don't request that the Assembly pay on my behalf. When I'm at home and I'm not working, I answer both of those lines. Well, the call I received at 7:32 a.m. on Monday from a constituent was pertaining to health care, Mr. Speaker, and it was about the treatment of

another constituent on whose behalf they were calling. They were describing some of the weaknesses, some of the cracks that had been engineered by this government.

MR. HERARD: Hearsay, hearsay.

MR. SEKULIC: The Member for Calgary-Egmont is saying that this is hearsay. He must be one of the members that hasn't received prepared notes to speak to this, so therefore he's chirping. He's chirping. I'll make sure that his constituents get a copy of some of his comments.

This concern that I received from a constituent, from a concerned Albertan who is caring for another Albertan who was a victim of the health care system who had fallen through the cracks, I consider legitimate, and in fact it would be wise for this government, in particular the backbenchers of this government, to listen so that they could provide some . . .

MRS. FORSYTH: We're not backbenchers; we're private members.

MR. SEKULIC: Private members on the government side, Mr. Speaker. I stand corrected. They would be wise to listen to some of these concerns from Albertans so that they could sit down in their caucus meetings and perhaps convey the concerns of Albertans to their Minister of Health, who seems to have turned away from these concerns and in fact maybe reflects the same opinions as the Member for Calgary-Egmont, who considers these to be hearsay.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when we stood up at some point, one or two or perhaps even three years ago, and this government identified that there was incredible waste in government and that we had to trim the budgets. One of the things that was in there was abuse, abuse of government programming. That was clearly stated, and the Premier himself, I know, has stood up many times and said that there is an incredible amount of abuse. Perhaps I shouldn't say "incredible." He just said abuse in the system that we must rid ourselves of.

Now, this apparently would have been the problem that was identified by this government. Then you'd assume that based on that analysis as to what the problem or the ailment in the system was, they would have defined a solution to resolve that and perhaps measured an outcome as a result of their plan, as a result of the solution or the implementation of a process, that they have somehow now curbed abuse in this system. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's running on three years, and I've yet to see the government in any way demonstrate that there is less abuse in the system now than the day they took over. I don't think there's one government member that can stand up and say: "We have concrete proof. Here it is. We've been doing measurement. There's less abuse." In fact, there is less service but there is not less abuse, if ever there was abuse, because they couldn't identify it to eliminate it.

One of the other things we look at – you're hearing about this and most Albertans are, about savings in health care. Where are these savings coming from? Is there an increased level of efficiency? Is it now through a new form of accountability? Is it through a decreased level of abuse? We've already said that that hasn't been the case. It seems that the savings are resulting from a bottlenecking. People are restricted from accessing the health care system. At some point as that critical mass grows, Mr. Speaker, those people will have to have their hips replaced. They will have to have their surgeries. You can also add into the

financial costs the personal costs, be they pain or duress, that Albertans underwent as a result of a government approaching a broader problem quite blindly.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that when we do discuss health care, there isn't as much hearsay as the government members would like to think. In fact, what we had in Alberta – and I said this before in the Assembly. Three years ago when there was a bad health story or an undesirable outcome, it was news in Alberta. But today in Alberta it's news when we have a good health outcome, and that's wrong.

At the same time they have put the finger, they have blamed health professionals as being the instigators of what's wrong in this system. I would say that if there would have been a consultation with Albertans and with health care professionals, we may not have had need for Motion 501, because then in fact the wishes of the Member for Olds-Didsbury that we maintain a good system – maybe that's a motion I could have supported. But in fact there is not a good health system to maintain. We must create it, Mr. Speaker, and at some point it must start.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader is rising on a point of order. You'd care to share the citation?

#### Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DAY: Yes. I am drawing on *Beauchesne* to see if the member opposite would entertain a very brief question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: A yes or no answer is all that's necessary.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, he'll have to wait until I'm the Minister of Health, and that shouldn't be too far away.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That would be interpreted as a no. Please continue.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Under different conditions I would have responded to any question from the government. But it's unfortunate that when you are opposition, it is your role to hold government accountable and not the other way around, and I'm trying my darndest. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Hon. House leader and other members, we do want to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. All you had to do was say yes or no, and that perhaps would have got us back into your talk on the motion. Would you please continue on the motion.

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I appreciate the words of wisdom that you offer.

#### Debate Continued

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, speaking of accountability, which is my role here in the Assembly, do you realize that in this province in 1994 the Auditor General had to write an almost paint-by-number guide for the government, a government which had governed for some 20 years? The title of this paint-by-number guide, in fact, is Government Accountability. Now, if there was the accountability that I hear was in place, then why would this guide have to be written? I'm sure the office of the

Auditor General has much better things to do, but, no, in fact this guide had to be written.

I just want to walk through a few of the key points in defining accountability that are offered to us by the office of the Auditor General. The first is "accountability is an obligation to answer for the execution of one's assigned responsibilities." Since coming to this Assembly, I have seen the creation of a number of boards and committees and regional health authorities. You know, when you ask a question of anyone, they're pointing the finger at the next one. You could almost form a circle. You'll have one pointing at the other, the other pointing at the next. So it doesn't seem that anyone is willing to answer questions regarding the ever growing cracks in our health care system. In fact, I looked at some of the headlines and letters in the newspapers in recent days and recent months, and you read headlines like: health authority not to blame. You hear the Minister of Health stand up and say that she's not to blame. You hear the Premier stand up and claim that he's not to blame. Well, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lack of accountability.

#### 4:10

The Auditor General's office states that the basic ingredients of successful accountability relationships are as follows – and I think it's important, particularly for the Member for Olds-Didsbury, to hear these. I think he would be better served and perhaps better serve the Minister of Health should he be aware of these. The first one that the Auditor General's office puts forward is "set measurable goals, and responsibilities." I'm just going to walk through these and bring you back to the first point, which I think has been overlooked. The second, Mr. Speaker, is "plan what needs to be done to achieve goals"; thirdly, "do the work and monitor progress"; fourthly, "report on results." Fifth is "evaluate results and provide feedback."

Now, I agree with the Auditor General's report and the comments that are made by his staff. However, I would go one further. I think they've overlooked one point, that point being – and I think it's the first point – identifying weaknesses or needs. That was clearly never done. That was clearly never done by this government. There was the sky is falling and the bogeyman, the creation of bogeymen. So, Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that I have is that there was never an identification . . .

#### Speaker's Ruling

##### Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, we're trying to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning continue his debate. We have discussions going back and forth, which is contrary to the rules of the House. I'm sure that Edmonton-Glenora needs no reminder, nor does the Government House Leader, on this point. We'd invite Edmonton-Manning to continue or conclude, whichever is his wish, on this motion.

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate your intervention and coming to my assistance to continue my responsibility in holding the government accountable, and I'll continue to do my best. [interjections] I appreciate the support from the members opposite in wanting me as Health minister. I do believe I could do a better job as the Health minister.

#### Debate Continued

MR. SEKULIC: Once again one of the critical concerns is that this government set out on a journey – a journey to change, to

restructure, to modify – without identifying the weaknesses or the needs within the system. Now we find ourselves – in fact, the Premier making comments like, "We don't have a clear picture now." Well, that's no surprise. You should have asked the question some three years ago, and maybe right now we would have been talking about maintaining a quality health care system, as opposed to exploring and looking for one. We're three years into an agenda, and it's too late for "Now's the time; now's the time to start."

We're talking about accountability. All health care decision-makers should be accountable to the committees they serve, Mr. Speaker. I think that whoever is charged on behalf of the minister, or the minister himself or herself, should be accountable to the taxpayers or to the committees they serve, regardless of how many committees. I'm not going to say that there is a right number of committees or a wrong number of committees. What I am saying is that whichever number of committees you choose to have, they must be accountable to someone. Ultimately, somebody must be accountable for the direction that Alberta's health care system is taking. I'm not convinced – in fact, Albertans are not convinced – that there is anyone.

Mr. Speaker, a good start would be an all-party committee. I once again, as I always do in this Assembly, would offer to work on any all-party committee without pay just to ensure that Albertans get what they should be getting for their tax dollars, that they get the best value, the highest possible value for each tax dollar that they provide to this Conservative government, and I'm willing to do that at no fee.

The second comment here, Mr. Speaker, is affordability. Health care must be provided within the means of the Alberta economy, without question. We have a financial context within which every decision that we in this Assembly make must be made, and that is a financial parameter. I think for close to 20 years decisions in this Assembly were not made within a financial context. Thus Alberta voters sent 50 new members to this Assembly, and hopefully we can change that trend.

In addition to that financial accountability, we have a social accountability, and that is once again going back to providing the top value for each dollar. We have to ensure that our constituents, when and if they need health care service, receive that health care service, because I, unlike the Premier and unlike the Minister of Health, am not convinced that what has brought this government into the net debt position that it's in is abuse of the health care system. It's mismanagement of the health care system. The mismanagers then are the mismanagers now. It's just that they're mismanaging something else within that health system.

Next, Mr. Speaker – and I've touched on it already – is accessibility. All medically necessary services must be publicly funded and available to all Albertans. One thing I'm hearing in my constituency, more so each and every day, is that my constituents can't access some of the required services. I'll draw particular focus to mental health because those are individuals many times that can't go and explore other resources as easily. We find that those individuals are now being placed into a community model, a model which I fully support. But that model, prior to becoming operationalized, must have all the resources within it so that people can access day programming, so that people have appropriate transportation, so that we're not just taking people out of institutions and putting them into a community model and in effect reducing the level of care they're receiving. In a way, we're starting to ignore a significant portion of Albertans who are suffering from illness, in particular mental illness.

The other thing that we have to pursue is continuity. As we go from an institutional model into a community model, we have to look to ensure that people continue to receive the proper services that they require when they require them, and health services must reflect evolving needs and guarantee timely, appropriate, and quality care. I think that's another component that has been rushed through and not been given due diligence.

Last, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of quality of care. Efficiency and service delivery must not compromise the quality of health care. In effect, when we speak of efficiency and effectiveness, a critical component of those definitions is that quality care is delivered, not just saying that people are being looked at, they're being reviewed, they're being dealt with. That's not good enough. We need to ensure that we're maintaining the top health care standards for Albertans, because Albertans are paying dearly in taxes. What they're not paying dearly for in taxes, they're paying through resource revenues, and like I said the other day, that's roughly 20 percent of this government's revenues. Revenues that no other government in Canada receives, we receive. If you want to know why Alberta has a lower form of taxation – it's not the good management of the Conservative government. They gave us the \$32 billion debt. The reason our taxes are lower than other provinces is that 20 percent of our revenues are natural resource based.

MR. STELMACH: Part of that is your pension.

MR. SEKULIC: The member across the way from Vegreville-Viking says, "Part of that is your pension." Well, he'll be surprised to know I don't receive a pension and in fact voted against having any kind of pension. Now, I'm not sure what his pension is, but, for the record, I don't have one and I'm not expecting one. I call them RRSPs, Mr. Speaker. That's what I call a pension. He's from the old school. He's from the old school. He doesn't know how to work unless his researcher has written his notes.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all members can support this motion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-East.

4:20

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to speak on Motion 501. The mission of Alberta Health is to protect, maintain, restore, and enhance the health of Albertans. We realize that to do this, we must restructure the way we deliver health services. We have based the restructuring process on the principles of accountability, affordability, accessibility, continuity of care, and quality of care, the very same principles contained in Motion 501. Not only are these principles legislated in the Canada Health Act and the Regional Health Authorities Act; they are also a part of the Alberta Health and regional health authorities' business plans and annual reports. This government does provide a health system based on these principles.

First I would like to address the issue of affordability. Mr. Speaker, we have increased the efficiency of our health system by shifting from an institution-based to a community-based health system. We have reduced administrative costs significantly by replacing 150 facility and health unit boards with 17 regional health authorities. Services have been streamlined and reorganized to reduce duplication and waste.

Mr. Speaker, to assist RHAs with the transition from institution-based to community-based services, this government

will not continue with further reductions to RHA budgets. In addition, the government will provide \$40 million to RHAs to continue their enhancement of community-based services.

Mr. Speaker, to further the affordability of services, the government announced that all seniors' health benefits will be maintained at current levels, and it will freeze health care premiums for all Albertans at current levels. Clearly, our actions show that we are continuing to provide affordable health services. We are working towards finding new ways to maintain an affordable and sustainable health care system.

Accessibility is one of the five principles of the Canada Health Act, and we are committed to upholding the principles of the Act. It is the role of the RHAs to provide reasonable access to quality health services.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health is currently working on a project to define reasonable access and to develop measures for determining whether Albertans have reasonable access to services. The government is working to ensure that RHAs have the resources necessary to provide reasonable access to the health system. In January the government announced that it will allocate \$11.4 million to relieve waiting list pressure points for cardiac and joint replacement surgeries.

Mr. Speaker, the principle of accountability is legislated by the Regional Health Authorities Act. The RHAs provide annual reports containing financial statements, and information on performance measures and outcomes is contained in the Alberta Health and the RHA business plans.

Alberta Health has implemented additional strategies to increase accountability in the health system. Most recently, Mr. Speaker, the Health minister announced that two-thirds of the RHA members will be elected, one-third will be appointed. Albertans will have the first opportunity to elect members during the 1998 municipal elections. The process will provide for appropriate accountability while creating a balance of expertise, skills, and demographic perspectives with elected members.

There are a number of agencies and organizations that provide appropriate accountability to the health system. The Mental Health Patient Advocate and the Health Facilities Review Committee both handle complaints and make investigations into the health system.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Health Council has also been established, and it has been established to act in an advisory capacity to the minister, focusing on issues of quality of care and achievement of performance measures. It is to evaluate the success of the health system in achieving Alberta's health goals, to identify the strength of the system and the areas that need greater attention, to make recommendations on the adequacy of existing performance measures and the development of additional performance measures, to act as a resource in reviewing health policy issues, and to act as a resource regarding matters affecting the regional delivery of health services. The Provincial Health Council will also issue an annual report card on the Alberta health system.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to these accountability measures, a provincial health officer has been appointed to monitor health services and advise the minister.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there are strategies in place to ensure that the Alberta health care system is accountable and that all Albertans are receiving the high-quality care that they deserve.

Part of the responsibilities of the RHAs is to determine continuity of care. How they will achieve the continuity of health services in conjunction with other RHAs, provincial boards,

Alberta Health, and other providers is laid out in their business plans. The Calgary regional health authority has developed an organizational structure centred around the core sectors of public health: continuing care, community acute care, tertiary, academic, extraregional acute care, and management and support services. To bring all members of the health care system together, the Calgary regional health authority organized the region's health system in a manner which meets the needs of the community and maximizes the use of services. This is the plan of just one RHA, but it is the goal of all RHAs to organize services to meet the needs of the community.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to this government and to all Albertans that we continue to provide health services based on the principles of accountability, accessibility, affordability, continuity of care, and quality care to ensure a sustainable health care system for the future. Since all of the principles in this motion have been dealt with by this government, I see no need to support Motion 501, because it is indeed outdated and redundant. I urge all my colleagues to vote against Motion 501.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc. There's only a moment left.

MR. KIRKLAND: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I think it's important to put it on the record that there seems to be a little division over there. When I skip through some of the headlines of the newspapers in the last few months, I see a headline such as: be cautious with health reforms, Langevin says. Shortage of long-term care beds a problem, says the St. Paul MLA. He's quoted as saying: I'm concerned that we may be going a little fast. I look a little further, and I see the Member for Highwood. He acknowledges that the government must be careful how it handles the cuts: many voters are afraid rural Albertans' small population of doctors will get worse. The good hon. member from Brooks there, who often stands and debates without written notes – and I applaud him for that – indicates that in fact there has to be more care taken with it.

Mr. Speaker, when I go through these, I see the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock: Kowalski slams province for poor health planning. I look around and I see the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat here: Tory MLA questions client health care cuts.

DR. L. TAYLOR: I deny it.

Oh, time, time, time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Leduc, but under Standing Order 8(4) I must put all questions to conclude debate on the motion under consideration.

On the motion, Motion 501, as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, all those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:29 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Germain	Sekulic
Bracko	Hanson	Soetaert
Bruseker	Kirkland	White
Carlson	Leibovici	Wickham
Collingwood	Nicol	Zwozdesky
Dickson	Sapers	

4:40

Against the motion:

Ady	Friedel	Mirosh
Amery	Fritz	Oberg
Black	Gordon	Paszukowski
Brassard	Havelock	Renner
Burgener	Herard	Severtson
Calahasen	Hierath	Shariff
Cardinal	Hlady	Stelmach
Coutts	Jacques	Taylor, L.
Day	Jonson	Thurber
Dinning	Langevin	Trynchy
Doerksen	Magnus	West
Evans	Mar	Woloshyn
Fischer	McFarland	Yankowsky
Forsyth		

Totals:	For – 17	Against – 40
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[Motion lost]

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.

[Adjourned debate February 15: Mrs. Burgener]

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to continue my conversation that we started last Thursday afternoon on the Speech from the Throne. As I mentioned in my opening comments, the issues that were related to seniors were of significant concern, and we heard them touched on a little bit earlier this afternoon with respect to health care reform. There is a commitment from this government to meet the needs of seniors in their community, and I was very pleased to see that the Premier had taken the time to put those thoughts before us all for consideration.

Mr. Speaker, a number of the other issues in the Speech from the Throne which are important to all of us have to do with the safety of our communities, and our communities, as we heard

earlier this afternoon in question period, include our very young children and their safety in schools. I think it's important that we continue to recognize that the security of our community is not something that just comes from government but actually has its roots in the communities as we know them.

I was very interested this weekend to read in the *Calgary Herald* the reports from our new Calgary police commissioner on the issue of student violence. While the police community was very, very committed to defending the laws of this land and to be as proactive as possibly they can – and certainly with their resource officers in the school system they were able to meet those needs within the community. However, Mr. Speaker, she made a very obvious comment that the safety of our communities is not something that the police are solely responsible for. I would extrapolate from that and say that it's also not the sole responsibility of government. The police chief goes on to say that there is a very difficult process in order to bring an understanding of our values and our families and the relationship between how our families work with our young children in order to make our communities continue to be safe.

I would just like to put those comments in front of the House. I'm very pleased and honoured to have been here over the last three years to listen to a number of our Premier's opening addresses to this Assembly. I know there are those who would think that there is no plan, that there's no light at the end of the tunnel, and that the focus is negative, on cuts and cuts alone. Fundamentally, there is restructuring that's going on in this community and in this government. I think, as all Albertans will see over the next few years, that restructuring, which goes right to the heart of how we treat our children and how we treat our families, is a very positive initiative. It will stand for many years, Mr. Speaker, after the deficit has been eliminated, and I'm pleased to have been a participant in that.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few comments in response to the Speech from the Throne during this fourth sitting of the 23rd Legislature. I'll be quoting from the highlights of that Speech from the Throne occasionally to clarify my comments or expound upon them.

I see the first title there is Quality and Accessible Health Care. The next statement goes on to indicate, "We will work to improve the quality, accessibility and accountability." Well, when we look at that quality, Mr. Speaker – and we have seen it constantly. There is not a day goes by where we don't see a newspaper article about the lack of health care provided on a timely basis or the difficulties with accessing health care. I would suggest that every week, in the city of Edmonton at least, we're seeing a crisis as far as the emergency treatments are concerned. I would suggest we've been on red alerts many, many times. I look and know full well that we have not yet completed the closing of hospital beds in this province. So I find that challenge to improve the quality somewhat hollow.

When we look at accessibility, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a very noble but I would suggest somewhat feeble comment. I would say that when I think of the \$1.2 million or \$1.4 million that was injected into the joint transplant program here as of late. Now, that is not going to make a significant dent. It's a step in the right direction, but it will not, of course, correct the problems that exist there.

My Leduc constituents continually ask me: if in fact we're serious about improving health care, why do we continue to take a \$422,000 hit from the federal government every month? They continue to wonder why that federal penalty is not set aside by dealing with the reason that causes it.

When I look at the accountability, we all know in this House that the regional health authorities are one of the few bodies that in fact are not subjected to the freedom of information guidelines in legislation that we passed. I would suggest that as a result of that, the accountability is not there. It's not there, Mr. Speaker, also because in fact the members of the regional health authority are appointed and not elected, and that is a large reason why we don't have that accountability. I would suggest that when you look at and listen to the comments of the residents of Leduc and also of Drayton Valley, who are having a great deal of difficulty getting accountability out of their Crossroads health region, my point is well made for that particular area.

Mr. Speaker, we speak of a pilot project using health smart cards. Now, certainly we have to move into modern technology, and I think under ideal conditions perhaps this is a very laudable move. However, in about the same week that this particular idea was floated, we also had a suggestion – well, not a suggestion. It was an entering of a partnership by this provincial government, where they're putting public dollars into a partnership with drug companies. That should cause all Albertans a very large concern.

When we look at some of the examples of Alberta Health sharing personal information with such agencies as the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Speaker, that should cause all Albertans a concern as well. If the Workers' Compensation Board worked at providing entitlement as hard as they work at disallowing entitlement, we'd move along the right direction there. My own experience is that some of that personal information that is shared by Alberta Health with the Workers' Compensation Board also is sent out erroneously to some files that it does not belong in. I've experienced that three times in my short stay here, dealing with the Workers' Compensation Board. So that smart card certainly has potential, but until such time as there are some very solid guidelines put in place, I would suggest we should be very wary as Albertans.

I look at the next comment there. It's bullet three under Quality and Accessible Health Care: "regular performance measurement and reporting by the regional health authorities." Well, reporting to whom, Mr. Speaker? To Albertans or to the minister? Because when we look at measurement of performance, if we were to take the example that we were subjected to here in the House some months ago where the Capital health care region surveyed 68 patients or users of their particular facility and then issued a glowing report card, I would suggest that's not a true indication. If that's what we mean by accountability, then I have concerns there.

When we look at the next bullet under that particular heading of Quality And Accessible Health Care, we see that in fact we'll have "an independent report card on the system from the Provincial Health Council." Well, it's been my experience that when we look at a Provincial Health Council, if it's going to take on the same approach and the same mandate as the health facility review, then I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, it's a waste of time and it's a waste of money. Those reviews are never shared with the public. They're never shared with the individuals that generally have filed the complaints. There's never any sort of resolution as to whether there was improvement or addressing of the particular difficulty that was brought to their attention.



## 4:50

I look at the next bullet under there, and it's "maintaining all seniors' health benefits at current levels." Mr. Speaker, I've dealt with several seniors in my constituency, and I have also offered and put forth appeals to access a mere \$500 of extra benefits because of need. Now, in my view the seniors I've dealt with are at the poverty level, and even though they are at the poverty level, there is no offering of that extra \$500 by this government. So I would suggest that "maintaining all seniors' health benefits at current levels" is inadequate. The dollars that they have defined are simply inadequate.

But move along, Mr. Speaker, to Effective and Equitable Education. Now, we've had some discussion in this House here very recently in question period about transportation dollars and the fact that there are great discrepancies in that particular area. Certainly that has to be addressed if you're going to talk about equitable education. There's no reason why somebody in West Yellowhead should have to pay \$400 or \$450 to send their child to school if other areas and regions aren't doing that. That first bullet under that, Effective and Equitable Education, reads: "meeting the demand for schools in high-growth areas of the province." I think that's commendable, and I certainly think it shows good foresight. What it fails to mention is that if you look at a constituency such as Leduc, we have, for example, one school that is some 57 years old and another that's somewhere near 40. There also has to be funds addressing the refurbishing of those particular schools. We cannot just leave them out of the equation. I would compliment the government for coming to the realization that early childhood services are very important, and I would offer my congratulations for restoring the funding for the 400 hours.

Now, we also speak under that particular headline of "a new funding mechanism for post-secondary institutions." As long as that's adequate, I would certainly compliment them. That "new technology to support classroom instruction and distance education" I would suggest is a laudable move. I would suggest that if we can bring our schools up to the 21st century, then that's desirable, and we're speaking here more of the Internet. I would think there has to be a caution here, Mr. Speaker, that if in fact we tie all the schools to the electronic media of today, we certainly have to have dollars follow that Internet to ensure dollars are not removed from the teaching component of the educational institutes to maintain it. So I would suggest that in fact we have to balance that very carefully.

When I look under the next heading, More Economic Growth and Jobs, I think this is all great in theory, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the Premier take credit for 103,000 jobs that were created in Alberta over the last two and a half years. I had two questions when in fact I listened to that particular claim. First of all, how many were really created as a result of this government's initiatives and not simply the economic growth of the province that private business and the small businesses encouraged and captured? And how many of those jobs are part-time? Those two questions are conveniently left out every time the claim is made. I only have to look to my own constituency to indicate that the job market is far harsher than we are expected to believe here. Recently Paul Samson, an entrepreneur, opened a new store in Beaumont, an IGA. In a matter of one day 600 people lined up and streamed through that store searching for employment. That to me is a more telling tale than in fact a claim that we've created 103,000 jobs in the province.

When I look at Responsible Financial and Program Management that the Premier spoke of, I'm somewhat amused, Mr. Speaker, at the opening comment there: "in the coming year, Alberta faces a 22 percent reduction in transfer payments from the federal government." This sounds conspicuously to me like a rather large whine, and I find that somewhat amusing because this is a taste of their very own medicine. They have for two and a half years unloaded on the municipalities and put some of those municipalities in a very precarious financial position. The fact that the feds are handing it down to them seems to cause them a great concern. I should hope they'd stop and reflect on their actions as well to the municipalities.

When we look at "legislation to limit government's authority to provide loans, guarantees and investments to businesses," I would have to state simply, Mr. Speaker, that it's too bad they forgot that it's a principle of governing in the last five or six years where we have wasted so many taxpayers' dollars pursuing businesses in this province. It's too bad, in fact, that this legislation wasn't in place when we offered Canadian a \$50 million loan guarantee and when we gave Bovar a \$147 million buyout. I would add that you can pass all that legislation you want, but it's not worth the paper that it in fact is written on if we're still to have such organizations as Alberta Treasury Branches, which are manipulated to provide loans to some favoured customers of government. That has to be addressed itself.

I was amused at the next bullet under that, where it says, "amalgamated road safety programs to offer one-window service." Mr. Speaker, it wasn't three months ago that we had an independent report come into this Legislature that indicated 30 percent of the trucks on the road were unsafe or unroadworthy. It would suggest to me that if we're going to amalgamate these road safety programs, we certainly have to have more policing on that particular road. I would suggest that what we've done at this point by turning the trucking industry over to the truckers themselves to monitor has proven not to be successful.

Now, I look at the next bullet, which refers to an Alberta human rights and citizenship commission and consolidation of these agencies. Well, in my mind consolidation means diminishing the impact of the service that they provide. I have a concern in that area.

We move on to the next, and we talk about "simplified and modernized employment standards." Now, I have many people call my constituency office that have difficulty with the Alberta Labour Relations Board. They don't speak very highly of that particular board, and they feel that the backlog, generally speaking, has a tendency to detract from real resolution.

I look at the "filing procedures at Alberta Registries." Now, I've on occasion had to write the minister asking for some tightening up of difficulties that are being experienced in my constituency. The example I would give is that one constituent had a licence plate stolen. Four months later that plate is still in service. The individual that actually stole it or was using it got picked up for impaired driving, but there seems to be a lack of communication between registries and the police, so in fact they didn't show that. The registry didn't show it as being stolen and reissued, likewise with a stolen driver's licence. There has to be a better way to address that so in fact when the driver's licence – it should be overcome with the new one piece to some degree because the picture is there. The old permitted the picture to be separated from the package and be manipulated. So I commend the government for closing that gap, but there's still the need to

address a concern when you lose your driver's licence and someone continues to use it.

I heard the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie speak at length about self-reliant communities. That opening statement, "Government services will reflect Albertans' desire to take more responsibility for their lives," I don't hear that. When I look at this particular heading, I would suggest this is really the area that government is involved in. This is an area of protection, in my view, for citizens. I would suggest that's the rightful place for government, not involved in businesses or the likes of that.

I look at the community health councils, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest that's another layer of bureaucracy. I have a concern that it's simply going to be another committee. We know that we've made lots of comments about the thousands of committees that exist in health. This will be one more committee to accept responsibility for anything that goes wrong in health care to give the minister the opportunity to distance herself from it.

I look at "a new way of choosing people to serve on the boards of regional health authorities." I've heard several members today stand up and indicate that we've done a great thing: we're going to open the regional health authorities to municipal election in '98. Well, to take democracy from Albertans and then restore it in two-thirds, Mr. Speaker, doesn't go far enough in my mind. Now, we should not be afraid of democracy, and we should not be afraid of having Albertans participate in the process. I think you'll recall that was based on some 216 people that replied to a written request for their input.

I look at "legislation to help communities play a greater role in planning as well as delivering integrated services to Albertans with disabilities." I read that very clearly to say: look out, municipalities; you're going to be burdened with more costs to do this.

I would suggest, when we go to the next bullet and look at "legislation to integrate children's services at the community level," Mr. Speaker, that the government did not do a good job, in my view, of protecting children in care in a lot of cases. This will, one more time, only distance the government if something goes wrong. I have a concern that in fact government should play a larger role in protecting the children of Alberta. I see this being offset to the community level, and again municipalities will have to pick up those costs.

When we look at a provincial strategy to educate Albertans about the abuse of elders under that same "secure and self-reliant communities" heading, I would commend the government for finally coming to the realization that there is elder abuse in the province of Alberta, and it is high time that they dealt with that.

**5:00**

When we look at safer communities with a focus on serious and violent offenders – and I heard the Member for Calgary-Currie refer to this bulletin – I think what we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is first acknowledge that we have a high level of poverty in Alberta's children. We have a tremendous increase in food bank usage. We have an increasing number of homeless. There's not a day goes by that we're not subjected to a news story about violence. We have liquor stores on every corner. The VLTs are impacting in a very destructive social aspect in our community. I would suggest that until we admit that, we really are doing nothing but wasting words by putting this down on paper. Those are key components, two catalysts as to why individuals have to become violent offenders or actually revert to crime.

I look at the last bullet in there. It's defining "a common vision and a conservation strategy for our forests." Mr. Speaker, I

found it amusing the other day when I listened to a newscast about the free trade discussions going on between the United States and Canada. One of the points that was made in that newscast was that the province of Alberta would have to increase their stumpage fees because in essence they are giving them away, so to speak, and they have not received due and proper reimbursement for one of our diminishing natural resources. I would suggest that certainly that's an applaudable and laudable goal. Unfortunately, it's much like counting trees after the forest fire has swept through.

Mr. Speaker, I look also at a great future. When we look at a great future for the province of Alberta, one of the things Canada is known for throughout the world is its health care. It's without question one of the best. It's delivered at the most efficient cost of any country that you can put figures to. I think that great future would be in jeopardy. Certainly when companies stop to look at Alberta and decide whether they're going to access the Alberta advantage, that very large enticing component will be missing.

Mr. Speaker, the real test, in my view, to manage the financial mess that the Progressive Conservative government created in Alberta is to handle that financial mess without creating a human deficit. I looked at the throne speech, and I did not see that we were going to solve it without causing a human deficit. It has left me with, I guess, some gloomy outlook for Albertans.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne is a special occasion in the lives of all members of this Assembly, but this year the speech was even more special for this particular member. I had the opportunity of hosting three of the most intelligent, well-spoken young people from my constituency that I've ever had the pleasure to spend the day with. I invited representatives from each of the three high schools in Medicine Hat to join me here in Edmonton. I was so pleased that with the co-operation of Canadian regional airlines they were able to join me here in Edmonton.

I would just like to reflect a little bit upon the Speech from the Throne from the eyes and the viewpoint of those young people. I think we all in this Assembly have to never forget the fact that the young people are the future of this province, the fact that those young people were able to be with us here in the Assembly to listen to the Speech from the Throne. We sat down afterwards and had some discussions about their impressions of the speech. I would like to take a few moments just to discuss that speech through the eyes of three young people from Medicine Hat.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, being from high schools in Medicine Hat, they were most interested in hearing what the government had to say about the future of education and pre-university education in particular. Also, one of the young ladies is in grade 12, the other two in grade 11, so they are obviously making some long-term plans with respect to postsecondary education as well. I can honestly say, Mr. Speaker, that they were pleased with what they heard about education, the fact that this government has recognized and continues to recognize the importance of education.

In our discussions we talked about the fact that throughout the entire restructuring that's gone on in all of government, and certainly recognizing the need for the restructuring, education has

been and continues to be a primary focus for this government. When you look at all of the various departments and you realize how much cost cutting has taken place and when you look at three-year business plans and how much cost cutting continues to be needed, the fact that education spending in this province has decreased in the last three years by as little as 5 percent I think is key.

I was so pleased to be able to sit down and talk with these students. We talked about the fact that these students are in school right now. We talked about how the government restructuring has affected them personally as students, and quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, they agreed with me that to a very large extent there has not been a significant change or impact on students in the classroom. The restructuring throughout education has been at the department level; it's been at the administrative level.

In the area surrounding Medicine Hat we went from roughly six different school boards to three school boards. In the city of Medicine Hat itself there really was not a significant change in that the Medicine Hat school board remains the same as it was prior to restructuring, but in the surrounding rural areas there has been a significant change, and Medicine Hat does serve the rural areas in education in that a number of rural students are bused to Medicine Hat.

They had to agree with me, and they had to compliment the government for ensuring that if restructuring needed to be made, it was not done at an impact on the school system. The impact was primarily at the administrative level.

We also talked about health care, and we talked about the need for a plan for long-term viability of health care. I was pleased to hear in the speech we had read to us by the Administrator that health care is and continues to be a primary focus in the upcoming months for the government. One of the key things that was mentioned in the speech and that I think warrants repeating now is the fact that there was a commitment to hold health care premiums at existing levels. Now, this may seem like an insignificant part of the overall health care plan, but when you're a young person, you're thinking about going out into the community and beginning to become part of society, you look at all of the overall costs that are involved, and health care premiums are a cost to individuals starting out in the workplace. Those costs now are something that they can depend upon because there has been a commitment that there will be a hold and those costs will be held constant.

The other part of health care of course that is critical, especially when you're from an area like Medicine Hat - I always have trouble getting involved in discussions regarding urban and rural when I come from a constituency such as I do, because contrary to popular belief, my constituency is completely urban. I do not have any of the traditional rural people in my constituency. However, from the point of view of someone who is in either Calgary or Edmonton, Medicine Hat is considered in the overall context to be a rural area, rural in the context that it's not within a commute of Calgary or Edmonton. So when we are looking at health care in Medicine Hat, one of the primary focuses that we have concern with is that we have to maintain an adequate supply of physicians in the Medicine Hat area.

#### 5:10

We have a regional hospital in Medicine Hat, and in order for that regional hospital to be efficient, to be able to serve the citizens of Medicine Hat, not only do we have to have a full complement of family physicians and general practitioners, but we

have to have reasonable access to a number of specialists. In recent times we have had some problems with specialists in particular in the Medicine Hat area, because for one reason or another we have been having difficulty attracting these specialists to move out of the Calgary and Edmonton areas into what they consider to be a rural area.

I think the commitment to health care, the commitment to continually review the plans in health care that were mentioned in the Speech from the Throne is good news for the people of Medicine Hat, because it shows the government's commitment to ensure that health care is on an equitable basis across the entire province.

Although not specifically within the speech but related to the Speech from the Throne is the agreement that government recently reached with the Alberta Medical Association. Part of that agreement deals with the physician allocation, physician availability throughout the province, and the people in Medicine Hat are certainly pleased that the Alberta Medical Association, as well as Alberta Health through the government of Alberta, is committed to ensuring that adequate health care is available to all people, all citizens in the province.

I'd like to deal a little bit with an interesting concept that came up. It was at the beginning of the speech where it talks about the fact that through good management and to a certain degree, to a large degree, through windfall revenues that have accrued to this government over the past couple of years, we are indeed ahead of our schedule with respect to deficit elimination and in fact the retirement of debt. If members would note, in the Speech from the Throne it's noted that in the past two years approximately 1 and a half billion dollars in net debt has been paid down through the application of two consecutive years of surpluses. That in itself is significant, but the more significant thing - and it's really what this government and this Assembly is going to be dealing with over the next little while - is that by paying down 1 and a half billion dollars in debt, the savings that accrue to the government through decreased interest costs are significant, and those are the kinds of dollars about which we can make some very important decisions.

I look forward to the Provincial Treasurer's address to this Assembly later on this week, because that in my opinion is a key to what this Assembly and what we as members of this Assembly will be debating over the next little while: how do we in a reasonable cost-effective manner and in a manner that is responsible to the citizens of Alberta deal with the impact of reduced interest on our accumulated debt? I look forward to the discussion that we will obviously be having after the Treasurer's address on Thursday. It certainly was alluded to in the Speech from the Throne.

Let me spend a little bit more time discussing some of the more future-driven aspects of the speech, and in that I make note of the fact that the government is getting involved in a much bigger way in electronic data. We talked about smart cards. Other members have talked about smart cards. I've recently been introduced to the Internet and am just beginning to understand the unbelievable opportunity the Internet provides not only to members of this Assembly but to all Albertans. My experience with the Internet unfortunately this past weekend was less than good in that I tried to download something onto my computer and overloaded the memory, and I'm not sure where I'm at at this point. I am learning, and I'm hoping that I like thousands of other Albertans will become much more literate with respect to the Internet, because I can see the tremendous potential that the Internet and the whole gamut of electronic data information will have.

I look forward to the next few years as something that is now really in its infancy begins to develop and the overall impact it will have not only on Albertans but really on a worldwide scheme. There really appears to be another revolution under way. When we talk about various stages of civilization, I think that the electronic revolution that is under way now will really change the way we as Canadians, Albertans, and the human race operate. I look forward to that.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the comments that were made regarding the need to continue to strive to remove barriers to interprovincial trade. In a province like Alberta, where we are dependent upon exports for our survival, we simply do not have enough people in the province of Alberta to consume everything that we are capable of producing. We have to have access not only to the international marketplace, where we have been making some real strong and striding improvements of late, but we also have to have access to the rest of the country. In many cases it's more difficult to trade nationally, interprovincially, than it is to trade internationally, across international borders. I'm pleased that the government will continue to lead the discussions with respect to the removal of interprovincial trade barriers, and I look forward to participating in those discussions in coming months.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat has moved that we adjourn debate. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

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