

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Monday, February 26, 1996      **8:00 p.m.**  
**Date:** 96/02/26

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd call this meeting to order.

Hon. members, before we begin with the proposed motion, I would remind you that at your desks you should have a copy from the hon. Leader of the Opposition following Standing Order 56(2)(a). The five designated departments are being designated here. The membership does not have to be designated at this time. It will be done, presumably, in the next day or so.

### Subcommittees of Supply

Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that:

1. Pursuant to Standing Order 57(1) four subcommittees of the Committee of Supply be established by the Committee of Supply with the following: subcommittee A, subcommittee B, subcommittee C, and subcommittee D.
2. The membership of the respective subcommittees be as follows:

Subcommittee A: Mr. Clegg, chairman; Mr. Magnus, deputy chairman; Mr. Ady; Mrs. Burgener; Ms Carlson; Mr. Doerksen; Mr. Havelock; Mr. Henry; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Jacques; Mr. Jonson; Dr. Massey; Mr. Mitchell; Dr. Percy; Mr. Pham; Mr. Renner; Mr. Rostad; Mr. Sekulic; Mr. Wickman; and Mr. Zariwny.

Subcommittee B: Mr. Tannas, chairman; Ms Haley, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Mr. Brassard; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Evans; Mrs. Forsyth; Mr. Germain; Ms Hanson; Mrs. Hewes; Mrs. Laing; Mr. Mar; Dr. Oberg; Mr. Sapers; Mr. Shariff; Mrs. Soetaert; Mr. Yankowsky; Mr. Zariwny; and Mr. Zwozdesky.

Subcommittee C: Mr. Tannas, chairman; Mr. McFarland, deputy chairman; Mrs. Abdurahman; Mr. Beniuk; Mr. Bracko; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Dunford; Mr. Fischer; Mrs. Fritz; Mrs. Gordon; Mr. Kowalski; Dr. Nicol; Mr. Paszkowski; Mr. Severtson; Mr. Thurber; Mr. Trynchy; Mr. Vas-seur; Dr. West; Mr. White; and Mr. Wickman.

Subcommittee D: Mr. Clegg, chairman; Ms Calahasen, deputy chairman; Mrs. Black; Mr. Bruseker; Mr. Chadi; Mr. Collingwood; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Dalla-Longa; Mr. Day; Mr. Friedel; Mr. Germain; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Kirkland; Mr. Langevin; Ms Leibovici; Mr. Lund; Mrs. Mirosh; Mr. Sekulic; Mr. Smith; and Dr. L. Taylor.

3. The following portions of the main estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997, unless previously designated by the Leader of the Opposition to be considered by the designated supply subcommittees, be referred to the subcommittees for their reports to the Committee of Supply as follows:

Subcommittee A: Advanced Education and Career Development; Education; Executive Council; Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs; and the Provincial Treasurer.

Subcommittee B: Community Development; Family and Social Services; Health; and Justice and the Attorney General.

Subcommittee C: Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Municipal Affairs; Public Works, Supply and Services; and Transportation and Utilities.

Subcommittee D: Economic Development and Tourism; Energy; Environmental Protection; Labour; and science and research.

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

### Privilege

#### Contempt of the Assembly

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is rising on a point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I would like to question and in fact prohibit what it is that the . . .

MRS. BLACK: What's your point of order?

MR. MITCHELL: I'm going to get to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition I'm sure is going to tell us the citation in due time, but let him say his piece.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I want to take very, very direct action against this motion. I believe that it is a contempt of this Legislative Assembly, and that has been very clearly outlined on page 196 of Maingot, *Parliamentary Privilege*. The fact of the matter is that this motion . . . [interjection] If the House leader on the other side understood contempt, he would understand that the moment at which it must be raised is the moment at which the contemptuous motion is presented, because in fact the motion is of itself contempt.

This motion directly and gravely inhibits the ability of this House, of the members of this House to do their job, and in fact it cannot be allowed to proceed. There are a number of reasons and bases upon which I am making this . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: You've cited your purported point of order, and rather than getting into the debate on that issue, if there's further comment on the point of order raised . . .

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: On the point of order, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to suggest that this is part of the debate that we are hearing, and in fact I will look forward in the debate to the logic of how a motion can be ruled in contempt when in fact it is in Standing Orders. Standing Order 57(1) says:

The Committee of Supply may establish subcommittees, in addition to the Designated Supply Subcommittees, consisting of members of the committee and, with respect to each subcommittee so established, shall designate its name, appoint its members and designate its chairman and deputy chairman.

Those are the Standing Orders of this House, which are the ruling authority in this House.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just give me a moment, please. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, are you really asking a question of privilege?

MR. DAY: No. He said it's contempt.

MR. MITCHELL: Yes, in a sense it's a question of privilege, but there are distinctions. [interjections]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. Contempt is another form of privilege, so that's really what you're saying. That's the question.

MR. MITCHELL: It's a contempt application brought by a point of order, but there is a relationship between privilege and contempt. In fact, previously in this Legislature when a privilege motion was moved – I believe it was against the minister for science and technology – the Speaker came back and ruled contempt. We have determined to proceed with a point of order which is calling for a contempt application. We believe that we have to leave Committee of Supply and go back to the Legislative Assembly as a whole to debate this contempt. We believe very strongly that you can't proceed with anything else until this application has been ruled upon, contrary to the House leader on that government side. The House leader doesn't understand that the point is that the motion itself can be and in this case is contempt and has to be dealt with by that. If he'd understand what goes on . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. Order. Don't go into the personalities of it, hon. leader, just the issue. [interjections] Order. [interjection] Order, hon. Government House Leader. The debate is not back and forth there; it is through the Chair.

On an issue of privilege the hon. Leader of the Opposition is in concurrence with the advice that the Chair is getting, and that is that we do now adjourn and settle the issue in Assembly.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to peruse the Blues. I distinctly heard the opposition leader rise on a point of order. He has now heard other words, which have given him new ideas. I heard him rise on a point of order, and I think we need a ruling on the point of order, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Government House Leader certainly raises an important point. The point is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition got up and made a point of order, and the point of order was contempt. Contempt is a form of privilege. Privilege is decided in the Assembly, not in committee. Standing Order 62(3): "When a question of privilege arises in a committee or when disorder persists . . ." – well, we haven't got disorder yet – we report to the Speaker, and then the debate may flow from there on the issue raised, at which time we can later either go back into committee or to whatever else may happen.

We are now adjourning. Standing Order 62(3) is the citation for that.

[The Committee of Supply adjourned at 8:10 p.m.]

[The Speaker in the Chair]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader has put forward a resolution. I'll send a copy up. Before any proceedings went on, the hon. Leader of the Opposition rose on a point of order. Basically, the citation was contempt, which after consultation with Table officers, the Chairman asked the question whether or not contempt is basically the same issue as privilege. According to the Standing Orders, a question of privilege cannot

be decided in committee, so we adjourned committee and now bring the issue before you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition on his question of privilege.

MR. MITCHELL: We're arguing contempt, Mr. Speaker, that this motion in and of itself, the motion that the House leader on the government side has presented to the Committee of Supply, is a contempt of this House. There are two steps to establish that. First of all, there is the clear indication under *Beauchesne* 106, that prescribes that privileges of members individually or collectively in the House extend to committees of the House, and therefore whatever would apply here should apply there. Secondly, the fact is that there is much parliamentary rules precedent to establish that this kind of motion is a contempt of this Legislative Assembly, that it is a contempt of this House.

I should point out that there has been a great deal of work done by Maingot, a great deal of work done by *Beauchesne* and by *May* outlining the importance and the significance of contempt. Contempt has a wider application than does privilege. Privilege is more a process of rules that can be in fact to some extent itemized. Contempt has broader application and leaves itself open, therefore, for broader debate. It is that kind of debate that we need to have here this evening and for as many evenings as we need, Mr. Speaker, before we allow this government under the direction of this House leader to begin to erode essential qualities of the democratic process as they are reflected in this Legislative Assembly and its subcommittees such as this Committee of Supply.

I want to point out what *May* points out. *May* says:

Each House also claims the right to punish . . . actions which, while not breaches of any specific privilege, . . . are offences against its authority or dignity.

MR. DAY: Which citation is that? What citation of *May*? What number in *Erskine May*?

MR. MITCHELL: *May*, 19th edition, page 69.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is a direct affront to the authority of the Legislative Assembly and to the authority of members within it and, in fact, to its dignity. I will deal first of all with its authority. There are a number of specific reasons why I believe very strongly that this is an affront to the authority of this Legislative Assembly. First of all, some of those reasons of course arise out of the role of MLAs and limitations on the ability of any MLA to represent their constituents, the people of their jurisdiction, more generally this province, adequately and properly. The fact of the matter is that there will be a series of subcommittees, and two of them will operate at the same time on any given day. That means that an MLA whose constituents are concerned about issues that are arising under each of those two subcommittee jurisdictions would not be able to represent their constituents properly because of that specific timing conflict. It goes beyond just the privileges of the member in that respect. Of course, it reflects upon the inability of members of the public at large to be able to be in two places at once as well.

So the role of the MLA, Mr. Speaker, and the role of this Legislative Assembly are grievously diminished by this arbitrary action of this House leader, which says that he can set up whatever committees he wants to set up at whatever time. They can conflict, and people cannot be in two places at once to represent their constituents.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where are they tonight?

MR. MITCHELL: Well, where are those ones tonight, Mr. Speaker?

It is also true that over the years and particularly recently a great deal of cynicism has arisen about the functioning of our democratic institutions. Part of that cynicism arises and is in fact exacerbated when a government begins to disregard the effect, the power, the respect of those institutions. What we see here is a process that will further diminish the significance and the power of this Legislative Assembly and in doing so will begin to further the cynicism that people will feel about it, because it will be reduced more and more towards being nothing more than a rubber stamp. That is a great affront to the dignity and to the authority of this Legislative Assembly.

We are also concerned that this is a contempt of the Legislative Assembly based upon the importance of budgetary debate. What this amounts to is the limitation of the number of days of debate from 20 to 14 in this Legislative Assembly. It limits the purview, the publicness of the debate in this Legislative Assembly. It reduces the importance and the significance that this Assembly places upon budgetary debate. In fact, were this to be passed – and we expect that you won't allow that to occur, Mr. Speaker – this would amount to \$700 million or \$800 million of Alberta taxpayers' money being authorized each and every day of a now truncated number of estimates debate days. That is not acceptable and is a direct affront to and a direct erosion of this Legislative Assembly.

I should also say that the manner in which these rules changes have been proposed is an affront to the dignity of the Legislative Assembly. I want to say that when I was House leader and dealt with the Member for Barrhead-Westlock, there was something that was always understood, and I always respected and greatly admired the Member for Barrhead-Westlock in the way that he approached that. [interjections] As hard-nosed a negotiator as he is, Mr. Speaker . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order please. The Leader of the Opposition has the right to make his case on the question of privilege, and the hon. Government House Leader will be called upon immediately thereafter.

MR. MITCHELL: As hard-nosed a politician as the Member for Barrhead-Westlock is, he always had and I always understood his implicit belief in and respect for this institution. Although we brought in one of the most comprehensive packages of rules changes in the history of this Legislature, negotiated between him and me on behalf of the members of this Legislature, he never once – never once – forced a rules change that wasn't unanimous and going to be unanimously accepted by this Legislative Assembly.

Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker, in our experience with this House leader. This House leader led people to believe that in fact we had agreed to these changes. We have never agreed to these changes, and we never will agree to these changes. He led his backbenchers to believe that they had been agreed to, and they have not been agreed to. Arbitrarily he lists and proposes people from our caucus to his committees. The arrogance of that is almost unprecedented. That he would force a rules change that is not agreed to unanimously by this Legislative Assembly is in itself an indignity to this Legislative Assembly. These rules are here for a purpose, Mr. Speaker. They have been developed and

evolved over decades and in some cases over centuries. They are to be respected. They are not to be changed on a whim or at the will of one strong-willed, partisan House leader who shows demonstrable disregard for the other members of this Legislature by doing that.

We will oppose this motion in any way we can, fundamentally because it is a contempt of this Legislative Assembly, its authority, its dignity, the respect that it should be able to deserve from the people of this province. It is an erosion of the democratic process. This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

8:20

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the most important point to note here is – with all the hysteria that we're hearing from across the way – that there is a constant reference to a rule change and forcing a change of rules. Now, that's the key point brought about by the Leader of the Opposition, who has taken over the chores of the House leader, who for whatever reason is allowing the opposition leader to assume this debate.

Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting to note – and I want to say that once more – that the accusation we're hearing is of a change of the rules. The motion I just proposed was that the Committee of Supply establish subcommittees. That's the motion. He calls that a change of the rules. I would refer all members to Standing Order 57(1), and I'll read it slowly this time.

The Committee of Supply may establish subcommittees, in addition to the Designated Supply Subcommittees, consisting of members of the committee and, with respect to each subcommittee so established, shall designate its name, appoint its members and designate its chairman and deputy chairman.

That is not a change of rules. That, as a matter of fact, is a rule, a standing order that was agreed to unanimously by both sides of this House, and that is central to the argument being presented by the Leader of the Opposition: that there has been a rule change. There has been no rule change. This is the existing rule: 57(1). I don't know how many times I have to say it, repeat it. That is the key element here and the only element worthy of consideration.

However, because of the red herrings thrown out by the member because he knew he has no foundation whatsoever, I am forced to address some other things which he stated – and I'll use the word as carefully as I can – in absolute, total, and complete error. That is the kindest description I can provide for how this process has unfolded.

The member also said that I led our private members – there are no backbenchers in our caucus, though there may be some in theirs – our caucus to believe that the Liberals supported this. At no time – and you can ask any member of this government – did I say that the Liberals liked this. From the very start of the discussions over a year ago I informed our members very clearly: the Liberals don't like the rule that's in the Standing Orders. I would be very interested in and will certainly be asking, not in this debate, because I don't want to prolong it, in writing for the opposition leader – and I use the technical words “the hon. Leader of the Opposition” and use that in its technical form only – to apply to me and show me in writing where he has any shred, the slightest hint that there's any backing for that accusation.

It's fascinating to see that at one moment he praises a certain member of this House, who I praise all the time, but he forgets the times he stood and shrieked for his resignation, showing what a flip and a flop this man is capable of.

I'd also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that there was another accusation about appointing members of their caucus to the

subcommittees. I made it very clear in writing to the Opposition House Leader that I would like in advance to have those names, as we do whenever committees are being formed. I have a letter from the House leader, who said that he was not interested in doing that. I wrote back and said: we will put the names down then. I also made it clear that at any time or if there's any problem here with the names on this list that members opposite don't like, we, as always, will be quick to agree unanimously to change the names. I made it very clear.

Also, I've done something that is unprecedented. Usually the opposition is allowed to designate only one department per week; they're allowed that designation. In writing I extended to the Opposition House Leader the ability to absolutely control the calendar, as it were, to designate every day which committees and which departments they would like. That has never been done before. Again a sultry and sulking letter back saying, no, they didn't like that. I sent another letter saying: our time is running out on this; we're going to have to designate and put down dates, because our own members have schedules and lives too. Our members were saying: go ahead and offer them the opportunity to have full designation.

Every day they wanted to designate was made available to them. They have chosen to do none of that. We had to proceed with the calendar. Even today I understand, Mr. Speaker, that when it was their opportunity to designate just one department, they failed to respond in time. They don't either understand or care about the rules enough. They didn't even designate for this week when we offered them that designation.

Mr. Speaker, some other misleading red herrings that were thrown out by the opposition leader talked about a lessening of ability of the opposition members to speak to and deal with estimates. This House was deciding to do something that is not new, that has been done for years in the past. This process is done in other jurisdictions, not just in estimates but in considering legislation. I tell you, I'm liking this so much, the thought of doing this, that I don't know why we don't also move into legislation with the same process. They do it in other jurisdictions.

This process – let's make it very plain – allows for more time in debate. It allows for more time in debate. [interjections] I'll say it once more because they're screaming so loud they probably didn't hear: it allows for more time in debate and allows for a reporting back process that was never there for every department before. Mr. Speaker, it was there for the designated supply committees. It was never there for every department. Now there is the potential to report back for every department. So not only do members have the opportunity in this room and in the other designated subcommittee room to explore the estimates, they have another opportunity when the estimates come back in the reporting process. The process has been expanded and enhanced but at a reduced cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, the members should also know that members can, if they don't like what's going on in estimates in one of the subcommittee rooms, freely go to the other and discuss and have input there. All estimate discussions are recorded in *Hansard*. All are public. All will have the ability for the media to be there. This is an enhanced process. This is in the Standing Orders now. There is no change. I repeat: there is no change.

When I first talked to the Opposition House Leader a year ago, he agreed: there is no change; it's in there. Do you know what he said? He went back to his caucus, and he came back and said to me: yeah, but we don't like it because maybe it would mean

less question periods for us. That's what he said, Mr. Speaker: maybe it would mean less question periods for us. All of us in this Assembly know that the length of a session depends on how much legislation there is. We know that. These people were squirming and squealing because they thought they were going to be robbed of some TV time. I don't know how this enhanced process of estimates fits into their thinking. That was the one reason, and the opposition leader said it to me eye to eye – and I respect his honesty, honesty which is not always reflected by those sitting near him. He said: the only reason we don't like this is because it could mean less TV time for us. That was his reason.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will say this. This is going to help us work harder because we know – and this is the part they don't like – there were many times in estimates in this House where there were only three or four Liberals present, only three or four present.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, in reminding the members: there is no change of rule here. This 57(1) is in the Standing Orders now. It was not in contempt of the Assembly when all members voted for it. It is not in contempt of the Assembly now when we enact it.

Thank you for your patience, Mr. Speaker.

**8:30**

THE SPEAKER: Order. On these questions of privilege it's up to the Speaker to allow as much and as many comments as he feels is necessary in order to be able to come to a proper conclusion. The Chair is going to rule that there'll be two additional speakers on each side to a maximum of three minutes each, and the Chair feels that that would ventilate the subject enough to allow it to come to a reasonable decision.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the three minutes that you've allowed me to respond to this thing, I want to concede that the allegation of contempt is not one that should be taken lightly, nor should it be advanced lightly. This opposition has not advanced it lightly.

Mr. Speaker, the House leader is correct when he says that the provision to divide into subcommittees – it “may”: not compellable but discretionary – exists in those rules. But what is not defined in those rules is the overriding issue of when that subcommittee will meet. Not defined in that rule is how the composition of the committee will take place. And not defined in his motion are the changes to procedure here that alter the status quo and the system that we have worked on since all the members were elected here in 1993. Since 1993 we have had one standard procedure that has allowed me and all Members of this Legislative Assembly to speak at each and every budget discussion on each and every subject.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: You weren't even here.

MR. GERMAIN: For those hon. members opposite that say, “You weren't even here,” they need only to listen to the *Hansard* debates and read them to see the contributions that I and others have made to the debates.

Now, the House leader says that this contempt can be eradicated by virtue of the fact that there is a Standing Order rule. The Standing Order rule, in my respectful submission to you, sir, does not take precedence over an allegation of contempt arising from a deprivation of the House's opportunity to question in this province close to \$14 billion of spending each and every year.

I heard earlier today, Mr. Speaker, one member, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, argue that the only reason he came into politics was so that he could deal with the issues concerning the budget. That's how important that member feels it is.

The Member for Calgary-Currie should not have to run from one room to the other in the middle of a debate. Now, how is that going to work? How is an individual going to be able to go from room A to room B and not have *Hansard*, because it is not an instantaneous transcription, not have any background material, not know who has spoken, what has been said, and attempt to carry on and pick up the threads of a debate? In my respectful estimation, Mr. Speaker, this does constitute a contempt of the Legislative Assembly. It is an important issue. It requires an important and reasoned debate.

I would conclude my three minutes, Mr. Speaker, by urging you to revisit both the time limit and the number of speakers that you will hear from on this very, very important issue, because to the extent that we are today changing the rules of how things have been put in practice here over the objections of the Official Opposition, it strikes me, with respect, to be a sad day for the democratic process and not, I believe, a good day for all Albertans.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I only want to add a few comments to the debate on this issue as to the motion. Clearly, this motion is just following the Standing Orders, as was laid out by our House leader. Further to that, I'm a little surprised that there were some innuendoes that were laid out that I believe were quite misleading when the hon. Leader of the Opposition indicated that our House leader had indicated to our caucus members that the Liberals were in favour of this. That was not the case at all. Clearly, according to Standing Order 57 we are just following the procedure.

I'd like to draw the attention of the House to changes in Committee of Supply, and I'd like to refer back to April 9th of 1991, when a former member of this Legislature – he has since passed away – in fact, one that was very well respected, the hon. Sheldon Chumir, placed a motion before this Legislature. It said, if I may, Mr. Speaker:

Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply strike four subcommittees comprised of not more than 21 members each, nominated by each caucus on a proportionate basis to membership; i.e. . . .

At that time there were New Democrats, Liberals, and Conservatives in the House.

Be it further resolved that each subcommittee be directed to examine in detail the following estimates,

and it then listed off the departments of the government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, all Liberal members revered Mr. Chumir as being one with a lot of foresight on how this Legislature should operate, and he was well respected by both sides of this House. So this is not a new idea. In fact, probably one of the reasons it has been in our Standing Orders and never been challenged before is because both sides of the House recognized that this would be something we should look at.

Also, I'd like to bring up that there have been a number of changes when we've dealt with Committee of Supply. You can go through the history of this House, where the committee met back in 1973 for 19 days to debate 21 portfolios; in 1974, 11 days to debate 20 portfolios. In 1979 it met for 16 days to debate 29 portfolios. So there have been changes that have occurred over time, again in keeping with the Standing Orders that have governed this Legislature. [interjections] I believe I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, not the Leader of the Opposition.

I'd like to close by saying that this debate has been crafted out very well within this House from both sides, that we need to have subcommittees, so I'd ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to rethink his position.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, to join the debate in response to the Minister of Energy, we do have designated subcommittees of supply, and it is by unanimous consent of this Legislature that we have designated subcommittees of supply. That is the procedure and that is the process that this Legislative Assembly uses in taking certain departments and establishing those subcommittees of supply. That's the way the rule has been interpreted. That's the way the rule under Standing Orders has been negotiated and agreed to by both sides of the House. This notion that the Government House Leader has in stretching to the limit Standing Orders 57 and 58 to unilaterally come up with so-called subcommittees is clearly, in my view, a contempt of this Legislature.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, that affects every member of this Legislative Assembly is the right to participate in those discussions and the right to enter the debate. Now, as I understand it, the Government House Leader has provided a list where he again has unilaterally determined what members sit on what committees. Well, I'm not prepared to have my name stand on any particular committee. I'm going to reserve my right and my entitlement as a member of this Assembly on behalf of my constituents to attend any that I want without being named or designated on any particular committee, because it's my right. More than that, it is not only my right; it is my duty and it is my obligation. Now, the Government House Leader will say, well, you know, the practicality of that is that not every member will have the opportunity to speak in any event because of the constrained and constricted and constipated process that the government requires of the budget estimates for \$12 billion, where time and energy are necessary to tease out information from this government that refuses to release any information.

I looked at the supplementary estimates which we were to be debating tonight, and the information provided on this is absolutely appalling. Well, of course I'm going to take my opportunity to come into this Legislature and tell the government how appalling it is that they come in asking for money as if they were a credit applicant to the Treasury Branch asking for money for a stock deal. I mean, it is my right. It is my obligation. It is my duty under the Standing Orders to have every opportunity to participate in every debate of every department in every ministry of this government. Without that right I cannot discharge my duty; I cannot discharge my obligation to my constituents to participate and enter into the debate on these estimates. That, Mr. Speaker, is why this is a contempt of the Legislature.

8:40

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't use the entire three minutes, but I think it's important to make it very clear that what has been said about the information that was conveyed to us in caucus with respect to the support from the opposition on this issue has not been well represented by the Leader of the Opposition. At every point of this discussion – and I can assure you it was a serious debate to proceed in this fashion – we were made aware of the fact that they had difficulty with it.

Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed the privilege of being on some of these subcommittees and found it a very meaningful way to

get . . . [interjections] To work in the committee structure . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member.

MRS. BURGNER: I'm optimistic that with the due diligence that's been expressed by both sides of this House, the proper work can be done under this structure.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the Chair proposes to take this matter under advisement. Would there be a motion, maybe, that there might be other work the Committee of Supply could do in the meantime? The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we move to Committee of Supply.

head: **Committee of Supply**  
(continued)

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. I'd call the committee to order.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 1995-96**

THE CHAIRMAN: Since we've indicated that we're going to do some form of business other than the first motion that was referred to the Assembly, we have before us supplementary estimates. What is the wish of the ministers that are here? Do they want to give an overview and then go through it?

It's been decided that we would go alphabetically by the last name of the minister or by the first letter of the department. In any event, we'd call on the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development to begin this evening's discussion.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would make reference to element 3.0.9, interest on nonbudgetary disbursements. The issue this evening is a supplementary estimate of \$500,000 that is required to reflect higher than budgeted interest costs on student loans issues in prior years.

Mr. Chairman, by way of a little bit of background, interest is paid on student loans as a means of controlling student debt on graduation. Interest is also paid on student loans by the province of Alberta while the borrower is in school and for six months thereafter. Interest is also paid under the interest relief program to students having difficulty repaying their loans for up to 18 months during a loan repayment period. Interest is paid under the interest relief program in situations where a student is temporarily unable to meet payments due to unemployment or underemployment, as a means of avoiding defaults.

The interest is paid to banks and is a floating rate of prime plus one-quarter of 1 percent, and actual interest rate paid is estimated to be 8 and a half percent. The budget level was 8 percent. Sixty thousand students will receive interest benefits in 1995-96.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that gives us the background and understanding of why we require this supplementary estimate of \$500,000. If there are questions coming from the Assembly, I'll endeavour to respond to them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Does the committee wish to go minister by minister or through them all? Okay. We'll call the next minister then. The Minister of Education.

MR. JONSON: Good evening, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure this evening to speak to the supplementary estimates. I follow those remarks that were made by the hon. minister of advanced education.

Mr. Chairman, it has another zero in terms of the estimates, but it is also quite a significant initiative. I think I could speak this evening at some length about the importance of information technology in our society and the importance through our education system to provide the basis of being able to gather information and exchange information across the system and relate that to providing a better education for students, better management of the education system, and overall being better able to get the various partners in the education system, be we talking about the institutions that the hon. minister of advanced education is responsible for or the school boards of the province or the various resources, the library resources that are available to school systems across this province.

In any case, the ability of schools to be connected to a network in this province is very important. It's something we've been pursuing through the development of our information technology policy and our implementation team, chaired by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. When it came to the overall issue of a network, we chose this as an item that we really needed to get going on, and the opportunity presents itself in terms of this year's fiscal situation as we end the year to move ahead with an initiative which will provide a network connection to every single school in this province in the public and separate school jurisdictions and in the accredited private schools should they be interested in accessing that particular opportunity.

I also quite candidly, Mr. Chairman, acknowledge that in many schools across the province they already do have network connections, but those particular schools within jurisdictions are not going to be penalized in this initiative in any way. They will still get the same dollar allocation per school, which will be in the neighbourhood of \$2,500 to \$2,700, to apply as they see best across their jurisdiction. It may mean more connections, more potential within schools that already have this service, or it may mean really building up the interconnectability in some schools within their jurisdiction.

8:50

The other thing, Mr. Chairman, that I think is important here is that we also plan through the office of Alberta Education and in conjunction with school districts in the province to develop certain criteria and a basis for what I understand in this particular area of operation is called a standing offer; that is, we would invite the various providers of this particular service to make their best offer, to publicize it. We'll make sure that it meets the standards and the criteria that we are expecting, and then the standing offers will be publicized across the province, and school jurisdictions will have an opportunity to select and to bargain and to get the best deal possible.

I'll just conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, by saying that this is the basis for, I think, a couple of very important tools or services to education in this province. First of all, but I don't think overall the most important, network connections are essential to the management, to the flow of information, whether it's with respect to budget reports, whether it's with respect to E-mail, all those good things that go with information technology. So there is a management factor here, and the linking of school jurisdictions and schools has the potential of really helping in terms of the management of the system.

More important from my point of view is the very fact that the whole information technology area, particularly connections with networks, has a tremendous potential in terms of improving student access to the libraries of the world, to the data banks of the world, to the information and the material which can be so helpful in our overall education system. There are some challenges, yes, with respect to making sure the information accessed is suitable and constructive for students in this province, but I think we can work our way through that, Mr. Chairman.

I would conclude with those brief remarks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

MRS. BLACK: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The supplementary estimates tonight for the Ministry of Energy focus on the additional funds required for the MRIS system, which is the mineral revenue information system. It pertains to a simplification program that we are going through as it pertains to the collection of natural gas royalties. What we have asked in the vote is to have a transfer of unexpended operating dollars from the Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority into the capital fund. So it's a matter of moving from the operational side of unexpended funds into the capital fund to go into this program. In addition to our request in the vote that we are asking for from the House is an additional \$2.7 million to complete this system.

This system started off actually in 1992 with a study between the industry and our ministry to put forward a new program. It became apparent in 1994, which was the actual startup year, that there were problems within the project. We did make some major changes to the project team and direction and the project leader within the department and within the contract as well for the project. However, the cost factors that are apparent today were not available for the budget inclusion when we were going into the budget because this change was made late in the year. As a result, we have these additional costs that have come forward to complete this project.

This project is very important for everyone because it is the mainstay of the collection of the royalties for the province. It's a very important program. It is the largest system within the entire government of Alberta systems group. So we are asking for this to come forward. We have made some tremendous progress on the backlog of processing information through this program. In fact, I am able to report today that we are now picking up the backlog and moving invoices out to the industry at the rate of between seven and 10 days a month to pick it up. So we should have the project completed as expected by this fall.

I will make one other comment. We have moved to a system where we are into fixed price contracts as opposed to time and material contracts, which was the way of the past. We're into fixed price, so we have a better ability to budget and forecast on what these costs will be.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since all of our supplementary estimate requests are to do with Bovar, I would request permission from the Chair to have the chair of the Special Waste Management Corporation answer those questions. [some applause]

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, hon. members and minister of the environment. I'll be very brief with respect to my comments. If

members will turn to page 32, there is an explanation as to the requirement for the supplementary estimate. With respect to the \$1.1 million which is being requested, that is primarily associated with severance packages for staff of ASWMC. There are legal expenses which have been incurred with respect to negotiating this arrangement. There's still some cleanup concerning some of the properties which were occupied by ASWMC. Basically it's to wrap up the corporation.

Concerning the majority of the amount which is requested, the \$2.1 million, if hon. members will recall, we basically froze the amount which was going to be committed to this arrangement at \$147,500,000 on July 1. There was some discussion and some negotiation with respect to when interest would accrue on that money. We also must keep in mind that as of July 1 any expenses or costs associated with the plant actually ran effective from that date, so the province was able to freeze the amount to be funded to the numbered company, yet be able to take advantage of the expenses which were being incurred in operating the facility.

As regards the interest charges, we basically settled a negotiated date of approximately September, because the position that Bovar took – and we had some sympathy for that position – is that if the costs being incurred by the plant were going to be charged against the \$147.5 million, why wasn't interest accruing on the money? We argued that rather strenuously and again sawed off at a September date.

So that's primarily the dollars we're looking at with respect to the supplementary estimate. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, anything further? Okay.

I'll call on the Minister of Health.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, as members are aware, the agreement reached between the Alberta government and the Alberta Medical Association in December of 1995 lays out a sound plan for partnership between government and Alberta physicians. This agreement, the first of its kind I believe in Canada, commits both sides to work together to make our health system better and to find savings through efficiencies rather than through budget reductions.

As a result of that agreement, our government chose to defer projected savings originally sought in the area of medical expenditures. We did so because we believe that under the new medical agreement we can achieve targeted savings without affecting quality of care. That's why we seek estimates of \$47.2 million for the current fiscal year. We will find those savings over the three years of the AMA contract, but we will not find them in this budget year. We were originally seeking up to \$50 million in savings in medical expenditures in 1995-96. However, Treasury Board has approved the use of \$2.8 million in higher than anticipated revenue to help offset this shortfall.

Another area that we are seeking supplementary estimates for is in the area of the Blue Cross expenditures. Unanticipated drug plan utilization accounts for this request, as well as our government's commitment not to reduce seniors' health benefits. Our agreement with the Alberta Medical Association also outlines a clear plan to find savings in drug expenditures. Again, though, these savings won't be found by reducing benefits to our client groups. They will be found through working with physicians, pharmacists, and regional health authorities.

9:00

The final item of \$11.4 million is requested to address pressure points in the health system. Alberta Health is committed to

continue to monitor changes and to take action when necessary to maintain high-quality health care. Ten million is therefore sought to address backlogs in cardiac and joint replacement surgeries and MRI, magnetic resonance imaging. We believe that ongoing improvements in the delivery of these services will help keep waiting lists at a reasonable level once these backlogs are eased. The remaining \$1.4 million will be used to establish a home nutritional therapy program. This program will help offset the costs of nutritional products administered intravenously or by stomach tube. These items are not drugs and therefore are not covered by drug programs. But this program does enable patients to receive treatment in the community, outside of an institution, and reduce overall health costs.

In total Alberta Health is seeking \$67.9 million in supplementary funds for 1995-96. We are committed to work with the regional health authorities to continue to restructure the health system so that it is affordable and sustainable over the long term.

Thank you.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to begin my questions on the supplementary estimates and pose them to the minister of advanced education.

The first question relates to the \$500,000 in incremental funding that has been requested. I guess I'm surprised at this request in light of the fact that when you look at the budget and the Treasury estimates, debt servicing costs are far lower than we'd anticipated because the interest rates that the government had projected were higher than otherwise materialized. So on one hand, we have the Provincial Treasurer overestimating the interest costs and at the same time, though, when they became lower last year, realizing this gain. On the other hand, we have the minister of advanced education, who now comes forward and requests an extra \$500,000 from underestimating interest rates, whereas the Treasurer on the basis of existing forecasts had overestimated the rates. So I guess my first question to the minister is: who was doing the projections? Weren't you relying on the projections provided by Treasury, or was it in fact projections by the CIBC? I mean, who made the projections and on what basis were the estimates constructed? One would have thought that there would have been some co-ordination with Treasury with regards to what would be required. So my questions to the hon. minister relate, then, to who did the estimates, why are they so out of whack with those of Treasury, and what are the consequences that are going to occur? Who in fact is going to be estimating the interest rates for the subsequent period, for the coming budget year?

My second set of questions is for the hon. Minister of Education. In pursuing the never-ending quest for discussions of performance measures and outcome indicators, my first question to the minister relates to the proportion of Alberta schools that presently is hardwired and how that compares to other provinces. To the extent that the minister in his opening remarks stressed the importance of this type of technological innovation and linking Alberta schools to the global economy, would he in fact comment on the fact that New Brunswick has each and every school hardwired? And this is a have-not province, Mr. Chairman. Could the hon. minister put Alberta's performance with regards to proportion of schools hardwired in context with what has occurred in other provinces in light of the fact that the ministry of state for technology, under the Hon. Dr. Gerrard, has had an active program in this regard? So the first question is: what is the

proportion currently in Alberta? What is the anticipated cost of getting us there? Is this estimate sufficient?

The third point is: given that we are going to hardwire, given that there are gains to centralization in the sense of common software, common access to the Net, is the Department of Education playing any form of leading role in terms of trying to standardize and provide a set of common rules of the game in terms of the software packages used for the Net and the like? There are significant economies to bulk buying, and this is one way that the Department of Education can realize some economies for the school system as a whole, since they're going to actively fund the process of getting the schools hardwired. So there is a potential for gain. Is that being explored?

The next question relates, then, to the issue of kindergarten and the financing of kindergarten for this current fiscal year, which is also in the supplementary estimates. [interjection] No?

MR. DINNING: Nice try.

DR. PERCY: I thought I'd just slip that in. Oh well. The Minister of Education was awake, as was the Treasurer.

Then going back to the issue of hardwiring, can the minister tell us why in fact it took so long to proceed with this initiative? A number of other school jurisdictions have in fact worked actively in this regard. Could the minister tell us whether or not there are differences between rural and urban schools in terms of the quality of access and the cost of providing access? Can the minister also in this regard tell us the process? I mean, will the Department of Education be in contact with each school board and the school boards then proceed to make their arrangements for each school? Will the Minister of Education then monitor the rate at which in fact schools within a school board jurisdiction are hooked up to the Net so that these earmarked funds in fact are used in an expeditious fashion to achieve this goal? The final question is: just how does this initiative directly relate to the committee that I believe the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont is involved with? In fact, is this a direct offshoot of the recommendations of that committee? Those are my questions for the Minister of Education.

My next set of questions is for the Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy anticipated many of my questions by noting that in fact her department, as I would hope many departments, has gone to a fixed-cost contract as opposed to a cost-plus contract, because cost-plus does provide a set of incentives that don't necessarily lead to efficient outcomes. The first question to the hon. minister is: who was the contractor? Does that contractor still do business with the government, and if so, what are the departments, in light of the problems that this particular program had in coming up to snuff?

The second question. The minister has said that the department is close, then, to getting the system working and getting caught up with the backlog. My question to the hon. minister is: what has been the cost of the backlog? Has there been a leakage of funds, or is this just a question of getting the billings out quicker? Is interest being charged, then, on those billings that have not in fact been sent out? The industry knows full well what they owe; I would anticipate they have a good ballpark estimate. In fact, who pays that? Is there an interest cost, and will the industry be paying that?

*9:10*

My questions for the hon. Minister of Health relate to the supplementary estimate of \$47,200,000 for unbudgeted payments



to physicians. In the various business plans for the Ministry of Health there was always a hundred million dollars that was going to come out of physician services. This has now disappeared into what one can only call a cost-savings distribution plan or, less charitably, a profit-sharing arrangement, by which the physicians reduce costs in various aspects of the system and it then accrues to the physicians as higher billings and the cap rises. My questions to the minister are in terms of payments under the cap.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

My first question to the hon. minister is: with this \$47,200,000, how could you be out so much? A simple question, but I'd like to know how you could be out that much. What is it in the system? In fact, did you have the same contractors for billing that the Minister of Energy did? The third question is: in light of the \$47,200,000 for unbudgeted payments what steps have been taken in terms of either the design of billing procedures or monitoring of . . . [interjection] Nothing to do with that. Unbudgeted payments to physicians strike one as having something to do with payments to physicians, at least according to the English language. So I would very much appreciate the minister, then, focusing on in fact what systems are in place, because supplementary estimates of these sums are worthy of a response in the sense that there's a monitoring mechanism put in place to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

The next question I have to the hon. minister regards the \$11,450,000 to the RHAs to reduce various waiting lists. I guess my questions are: what criteria were used to set out these sums, why just these five, and was it that these were the five with the most pronounced waiting lists? Is the fact that these waiting lists are so large indicative of the fact that other regional health authorities ship their patients to these regional health authorities, or is it some reflection of the demographics of the regional health authorities? What specifically led to these five? What mechanism does the minister have in place to ensure that the funds so allocated have in fact reduced the waiting lists so that at some point in subsequent business plans we'll see a distinct reduction in the waiting lists for cardiac surgery and joint replacement surgery?

The final questions. The most questions are for the minister of the environment or in fact the chairman of the special waste facility. My first question is on this \$3,211,000. Bovar has basically held a gun to the taxpayers of the province of Alberta, and we have in fact had to pay for the bullets. So my question is: why did we give into these people yet again? I mean, it's that simple.

The hon. member can talk about unbudgeted expenses. The issue of severance: my first question is there. I would appreciate a breakdown of the severance payments. Who gets what? If some of the people that gave us the high-cost structure of this facility are in fact getting a payout on the basis of their administrative expertise, I'd have to say to the hon. minister: I don't think that is value for money given the cost structure and given the subsidies that have gone to the Swan Hills facility. So I would appreciate it very much if the hon. member could in fact table a breakdown, not by name but just by position, of what the severance packages are.

My next question to him would be: how do the severance packages for these people, the people that helped give us Bovar, compare to the severance packages for the nurses, physiotherapists, and other people who have been chopped from the health

care system? I mean, how do they compare? Why did these people, in light of their performance, deserve a golden handshake if it's very generous? Everybody deserves severance if they're downsized or outsourced. I have no quibble. The real question is: how rich are the packages? In fact, are we looking here in this \$1.1 million at the ability of certain individuals to set up nice golden parachutes that pop open once this is privatized?

The second question I would raise with the hon. member. I note in the paper that Bovar has racked up nice, juicy profits. Why isn't Bovar eating some of these severance packages? In fact, the articles were quite specific in stating that these profits were large and that they were as a result of higher volumes. Why didn't in fact Bovar end up eating a larger portion of these severance packages? Or is this \$1.1 million that we're looking at here just the province's share, and Bovar kicked in their pro rata portion? I would hope in fact that that's the explanation. If it's not, then I would question the hon. member's toughness at the negotiating table.

The other questions I would ask the hon. member relate to the \$2.1 million to fund shared financing costs while the divestiture was being negotiated. Well, this gives new meaning, Mr. Chairman, to the expression: time is money. I think \$2.1 million is a lot of money for the time that was spent on this. Again the question is: why didn't this come out of the \$147 million? Why did we as taxpayers end up eating these costs?

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

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just some comments on two of the estimates tonight. First, to the Minister of Education on the supplementary estimates for Education. I listened intently to the recent announcement of hooking schools to the Internet and moving in that direction for all of the schools in Alberta and certainly concur in the comments of my colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud that we're probably a little behind the times in recognizing the importance of that education tool. We hopefully can catch up, although we're a little behind the times.

My question to the minister with respect to his supplementary estimate. First of all, while the Minister of Energy was fairly clear in her comments on where the funds for supplementary estimates are coming from, I didn't hear the Minister of Education indicate to us where the \$5 million requested in supplementary estimates is coming from, where it's being transferred from in the votes. The Minister of Education made some reference to the fact that where schools have already moved ahead of the government in seeing the importance of these kinds of hookups, they will not be penalized in any way for having had greater vision than the government, but he wasn't very clear in terms of how these funds will be required in terms of dedicated funds. The minister did make some comments that the schools or the jurisdiction will have some latitude in what they can use those funds for, all those schools receiving the same amount of funds, and I'm wondering if the minister can give us some clearer indication of how those funds are to be dedicated when they are indeed forwarded. The minister also made some reference to the level of standards and criteria that any private contractors would have to give consideration to in tendering or in bidding for the work, and I'm wondering if the minister can share with us what those criteria are.

With the hookup to the Internet and in moving to the future of that mode of communication, if other members in the Assembly

are like myself, the learning curve on the Internet is rather steep when one begins this process. In terms of the total estimates that the minister is asking for, I'm wondering if he could give us a breakdown: of those funds, what will be for the link, what will be for the hardware, what will be for the software, and indeed what will there be for support services once the schools are in fact hooked up? It's one thing to have the machine sitting there; it's another thing to be able to use it effectively. I'm wondering what support services are going to be available for that.

9:20

I'll move, Mr. Chairman, to the votes for Environmental Protection with respect to the request by the government for \$3,211,000 for the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. Again, the chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation did not indicate to us where the \$3.211 million is coming from, and I'd like him to advise the Assembly prior to the vote where this transfer is from or if it's new dollars that are being thrown again at the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

The chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation used some very interesting wording when he was describing what the funds were for. I think that with respect to the \$1.1 million, Mr. Chairman, the chairman used these words, if I heard him correctly: those funds were for the cleanup cost to wind up the corporation. Now, that's an interesting turn of phrase in light of the fact that we're talking about Bovar and in light of the fact that we're talking about the Special Waste Management Corporation. I'm wondering if the chairman can tell me whether he means those terms literally in terms of cleaning up sites that the Alberta taxpayers have been saddled with, or whether he means it figuratively – literally or figuratively – where he's talking about the winding up of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

The winding up of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation creates some interesting problems of its own. The legislative requirement at this point in time is that no one in the province of Alberta can do anything in the hazardous waste field – store hazardous waste, operate a facility for the collection of hazardous waste, treat hazardous waste, or dispose of hazardous waste – unless they have an agreement with the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. Now, if what the chairman is indicating is that this is the final stage in the winding up of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, how then will the industry continue to work in the future?

Now, Mr. Chairman, I know and the chairman knows and the Minister of Environmental Protection knows that the monopoly given to Bovar is so ironclad that it will never, ever, ever be broken. There will be no one in the province of Alberta who will have any opportunity whatsoever to participate in any meaningful way in the hazardous waste industry in the province of Alberta, because Bovar insisted on a monopoly and the government agreed heartily to roll over, play dead, and give Bovar absolutely everything it wanted. So the Bovar gift, once again, just keeps on giving.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the chairman of the Special Waste Management Corporation how the system will work, the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, with its other agreements and whether or not all the other agreements will simply be canceled given that Bovar has the entire monopoly in the province of Alberta. Now, there is an exemption. There is an exception in section 15.1(1) of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation Act, which is very, very narrow in

scope. According to the exclusivity clause, that the government heartily agreed to retain even with privatization, again the chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation will know that it will be virtually impossible to conduct business in this province in the hazardous waste field without the approval and consent of Bovar. Bovar has it all. So I'd like to ask the chairman that question.

Now, Mr. Chairman, it's very interesting, the wording used in the supplementary estimate request: "\$1.1 million is required to settle business commitments of the Corporation which remain from prior operation of the system." Now, when the chairman stood in his place and described to us what the \$1.1 million was for, he said that it was for severance packages. Well, settling business commitments is a rather curious way to describe severance packages. So my guess is that that's not all that's in that \$1.1 million, and I'd like the chairman of the Special Waste Management Corporation to provide a little bit more detail on what he means when he uses the words "settle business commitments of the Corporation," and why, if it's settling business commitments of the corporation, is it an unexpected expenditure at this point in time? If they were business commitments of the Special Waste Management Corporation, that's already been voted on. That's already been funded. Why is it so unexpected at this point in time?

With respect to the \$2.1 million that is being requested by the chairman and the minister, I'll repeat the question of my colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud: why are we paying for this? What's Bovar's contribution to this? When the chairman comes forward to this Assembly to ask for \$2.1 million, is the calculation of that amount after the negotiations take place, where the government simply agrees to whatever Bovar wants and then does the calculation of what the cost to the taxpayers is? [interjection] As my hon. colleague says, is that a negotiation? Or was the cost calculated prior to the arrangement with Bovar so that it was known at the time? I'd like to know from the chairman whether the \$2.1 million was determined prior to or determined subsequent to the arrangement with Bovar.

I'd also like to ask the chairman whether or not in terms of funding financing costs, the beneficiary of that through the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation is the Royal Bank of Canada, a shareholder of Bovar, the holder of the loan guarantee for Bovar given by the government of Alberta, and potentially continuing to be the beneficiary of the \$2.1 million that taxpayers are now paying so that this government with its gross mismanagement of special waste management in the province of Alberta finally got to a point where it simply had to bail out at any cost whatsoever.

Mr. Chairman, I will reiterate the statements and the questions by my colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud: who's getting the severance packages? How do they compare with other severance packages? Where are we now, and where will we be left ultimately with the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation? The chairman might also indicate to members of the Assembly what the current staffing level of the Special Waste Management Corporation is and throughout the year what the future holds for the Special Waste Management Corporation system.

Mr. Chairman, it's unfortunate that once again the Bovar deal comes back to the Legislative Assembly. We continue to give. We continue to give. We continue to give. The taxpayers of the province of Alberta have given to Bovar until they hurt, but the province, the government once again comes back and says: but

it's just another 3 and a half million that we're asking for of taxpayers' dollars again. It's one more indication of just how unplanned and how impossible this whole Swan Hills waste treatment system has been for the government of Alberta to manage.

The difficulty that the government of Alberta has had in managing this – and the chairman of the Special Waste Management Corporation has fully admitted this – is that Bovar got us where we have no choices, no options, no position to negotiate. They've got us over the barrel because the government of Alberta simply created the most obscene sweetheart deal in the history of this province. Our current Auditor General, a professional accountant himself, has said that he has never seen a deal the likes of that in his entire professional career.

Mr. Chairman, those are my questions to the chairman of the Special Waste Management Corporation.

**THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**DR. MASSEY:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start off with a couple of questions to the minister of advanced education. I guess my general question to the minister is: why in an era of declining interest rates do we have this Bill in front of us in the Legislature? I think that if the minister could provide a couple of concrete examples of how this program affects the loans of a couple of particular students – I don't mean this evening, because I don't expect the minister would have that information at his fingertips. Could we have some examples of how this fund, this \$500,000, actually operates in terms of some specific student loans so that we could see what had been projected and then what happened to the interest rates from the time that projection was made to lead us to the kind of vote that we're asked to approve at the present time.

**9:30**

The second set of questions I'd like to address to the Minister of Education. Part of that has been asked before. Is there a compatibility of equipment that will be assured? It's really most difficult, because given the history of how computer equipment and computer software have developed with schools and with different enthusiasms and school boards with different resources having put equipment in place, any move now to try to standardize or to make equipment across the system compatible is really very difficult. I guess my question is: is there any long-term planning being undertaken or considered that would lead us one day to eventually have, when computer equipment is being replaced, some compatibility in terms of the equipment that's available to students?

I guess I would extend that to not just the equipment that's available to students, but is there any intention to eventually get to the place where the software and the equipment that's used to maintain student records, financial records will be interchangeable across the province? It's an issue not only in the K to 12 system but in the advanced education system, where we have institutions not being able to exchange information with each other because the software they use doesn't match. So my question is: is there a long-term goal of trying to make that equipment and those records interchangeable, and what is the long-term planning that the government has in mind?

To the Minister of Energy. I listened to the explanation for the \$5.7 million, and I look at the request for \$5.7 million for Energy for the mineral revenues information system alongside \$5 million

for the K to 12 education system, and I wonder how those two sums compare. Is the money being primarily spent in people or in services being bought to update records, or is the money being spent to develop the information system itself? I wasn't quite clear exactly where it was being spent. I was trying to compare the two expenditures. They're similar, but maybe they aren't comparable, so I'd appreciate some further information.

To the Minister of Health. There are funds allocated to the home nutritional therapy program in Calgary and in Edmonton but not other regions, and I wondered why just those two regions. Following that question, how is nutritional home care deemed a priority in the face of the other home services that the community-based health system seems to be demanding? There's a tremendous demand for in-home help. What were the other priorities? How did nutritional home care end up at the top of the list and worthy of a supplementary estimate? So if the minister could share that information.

To the minister of environment with regard to the Alberta special waste treatment system: is this really the last money that this Legislature will vote on? Are we really winding it up? Is this the end of the money that this Legislature will be asked to approve for the Alberta special waste treatment system? I guess I'd like to be able to assure constituents that this is the end of it.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**MR. SAPERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make some comments first about the supplementary estimate vote we're being asked to consider for the Department of Education. I note that the \$5 million that we're being asked to vote on is primarily for the purchase of technology and the implementation of technology in our schools. That, of course, is a fine idea, but I'm wondering whether the minister can tell me what his department's plans are not only to wire the schools to the Internet but also in fact to prepare students to think about the implications of technology and the growth of technology and the changes that technology brings to any kind of a society. What kind of programming or course development is there that is being developed so that the students who will be taught how to access the Internet will also be taught what the implications of that kind of instantaneous global communication are? I'd be very happy to know whether some of the \$350,000 under vote 2.2.1 has got to do with that aspect of the implementation of technology in our schools.

I'd also like to know if he knows how many computers, for example, this vote would buy. He's saying no, Mr. Chairman, and I know we're supposed to be . . .

**MR. JONSON:** Zero.

**MR. SAPERS:** Oh. He knows, and it's zero.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's all Internet hookup.

**MR. SAPERS:** Oh. Okay. So he does know, Mr. Chairman. I know that this conversation is supposed to be going on through you, but it's hard at this point.

Also, now that the Minister of Education has clarified the fact that this will in fact purchase no hardware, can he tell me what provisions are being made to upgrade schools? I know of schools in my very own constituency where I'm told by the administrators in those schools that they don't have the physical capacity. The

upgrading that would be required in terms of electrical outlets and supply, the service to handle an increased bank of computers would overburden their current physical capacity, and I'm wondering if he can tell me what's being done to address that need. That information would be helpful to me as I consider the vote on this estimate.

I'd like to move to the Department of Energy just briefly. I note that the additional funds we're being asked for are for capital investment to help fund the mineral revenues information system, and this is for additional development costs. Those words "additional development costs" intrigue me. I'm wondering if the Minister of Energy could remind us what the original projected cost for development of this system was and what precisely has caused these additional costs and what penalties if any have been assessed to the contractor if in fact it was the contractor that was at fault in the development of these new costs. If it wasn't the contractor that was at fault in the development of these new costs, then perhaps it was some error within the Department of Energy which led – the minister is indicating that certain severance decisions have been made. [interjection] Or career opportunities. I would just like some additional information about this because I always find it intriguing when I see the words "additional development costs" in an estimate.

Now, for the supplementary estimate we're being asked to consider for environmental protection, Mr. Chairman: when will this ever end? In less than three minutes the chairman of the Special Waste Management Corporation asked this Legislature to consider a vote of more than \$3.2 million, another 3.2 million Bover bucks that this member is asking the Legislature to commit. I have to ask again: when will this ever end? We were told last time, when we voted nearly \$150 million in supplementary estimates, that it was over then. It clearly wasn't. We're being asked to commit in excess of \$3 million. Will it not stop?

**9:40**

MR. HAVELOCK: Never.

MR. SAPERS: I will note that the member responsible for Bover said, "Never." And that is what we're all afraid of, that we will continue to be bled and bled again for this mess.

What exact legal implications are there? Why these costs? What are the severance agreements that have been made for how many people? Does this set a standard for government policy now? Can all individuals or corporations or employees of the public service expect a similar kind of severance arrangement? Certainly I would like to know, and so would over 3,000 public service employees that will be laid off as a result of the most current budget like to know, and so would all the thousands of health care workers that have already lost their jobs like to know.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move to some questions for the Minister of Health regarding the vote we're being asked to consider for that department. The minister in her opening comments mentioned that a sound plan and a sound agreement had been reached with the Alberta Medical Association and that this agreement will see that savings, not budget reductions, will accrue to the Department of Health. I would like the Minister of Health to define for me the difference between savings and budget reductions. It seems to me that a saving is a saving only if it leads to a reduction in expense, hence a budget reduction. Now, I would like to know whether the minister is talking about these savings as opposed to budget reductions because they're perhaps onetime-only savings? If that's the case, I'd be interested to know.

I'd like the minister to tell me: when is a budget reduction not a saving? Or, conversely, when is a saving not a budget reduction? Could it be that one is achieved as a result of co-operation because of intense political pressure put on the government that was already reeling against a tide of public opinion, that was opposed to what was happening in health care, and that the other is something that is imposed by a government that is intent on meeting a fiscal bottom line through coercion as opposed to co-operation? Perhaps that's the difference between savings and budget reductions, but I'm sure that the Minister of Health will be able to educate us all on the specific difference between savings and budget reductions.

Mr. Chairman, I note also from the minister's opening comments that she referred to new efficiencies that will be found as a result of that agreement. That makes me wonder whether the other budget reductions were based on something other than a search for efficiencies. Were the budget reductions that have already been forced on health care based on something other than what was best for the health care system? Are these new savings, i.e. budget reductions, going to be based on newfound efficiencies? Intriguing language we see creeping into the debate about health care.

Now, the targeted savings was to be \$50 million at one point. Some would argue that it was \$100 million; others would argue that it was a different figure entirely. The minister tonight has said that it's less than the \$50 million but somehow flipped the targeted savings of \$50 million into a defence of a supplementary request for in excess of 47 million new dollars to be spent for practitioner services. So it would of course be beneficial to know prior to the vote on this estimate whether this is in fact \$47.2 million of new money coming into the health budget to pay for previously unbudgeted, therefore unanticipated, practitioners' fees and what relationship this has to the decisions that have been made to move to a managed care model or a regionalized model for medical laboratories and the transfer of funds between the line item in the budget for practitioner services that then flow to the regional health authorities within their budgets.

I'd also like to know what bearing, if any, this has on the new bottom line that was negotiated in the AMA agreement. The cap, according to that agreement, was a fixed cap that was going to be topped up with some \$17 million. It's one point in the agreement. Now we see \$47.2 million moving in. In fact, if this money can be moved in in supplementary estimates in this way, what guarantee does this Legislature and therefore the people of Alberta have that we won't be faced with another round of supplementary estimates with another \$50 million or \$40 million or \$60 million or whatever million dollars the minister feels is necessary to top up the physicians' pool in later years? So I'd like the minister just to reflect for a couple of moments in her comments about the relationship of this supplementary request for practitioners' fees to that cap in the negotiated agreement.

Now, turning my attention to the vote we're being asked to consider for Blue Cross nongroup benefits, I can't help but recall that just one quarter ago in this fiscal agenda of this government, we were asked to vote some \$35 million for this very same purpose, \$35 million primarily for unanticipated expenses flowing to the utilization of drug benefits by those Albertans who were covered by either the nongroup or the 66 or 66(a) benefits. Of course, there was some money, I think, thrown in as well to pay for ambulance service and maybe another couple of miscellaneous and sundry things, but in bulk it was to pay for drug costs.

We see that this \$9.3 million is probably also in bulk to pay for drug costs; \$35 million plus \$9 million is \$44.3 million in about half a year. That's a tremendous difference. My colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud said: how could you be so far out on practitioner services? That's a much larger budget area to begin with, and I can understand some of the variation there much better than I can understand the variation, quite frankly, in this area. The better part of \$50 million out leads me to question the methods that the minister is using when the main estimates are presented to the Legislature. This is a huge variance that I think demands some very detailed explanation.

The other problem with this, of course, is that if you go back to the business plan, we see that at one time it was the government's intent to take close to \$40 million out of basically this very same line item. Now, if we were still on track according to that business plan, in the third year of that business plan that \$40 million would have come out. We now see an additional \$44 million and change going in. That's a net difference, Mr. Chairman, of \$88 million. This is getting to be close to unbelievable, the difference, the gap between what was originally projected by the government and what in fact is required to make this benefit work for the people of this province.

Now, I also know that the minister has been very aggressive in her activities directed at reducing wasted drugs and dead drugs. I really don't want the minister to talk once more about those 36 metric tonnes of drugs. I think every member of the House and, I would daresay, every Albertan is familiar with the 36 metric tonnes of drugs that get disposed of. [interjection] It's 36 tonnes, hon. member. But the minister also knows that not all of those 36 metric tonnes of drugs are paid for with tax dollars through the Blue Cross program.

The minister also knows that a tremendous number of those drugs are drugs that become excess capacity because people's medical conditions change. Sometimes people who are taking prescriptions become deceased; they no longer need their drugs. Sometimes those drugs become stale-dated products. Sometimes they're manufacturers' samples. Many times they are dead products on the retail shelves of pharmacies. In fact, many pharmacies in my constituency that I've contacted have told me that much less than 5 percent of the drugs they send for disposal are actually returned prescription products that are paid for under Blue Cross benefits. Now, I don't know whether that 5 percent figure is accurate across the province. I know that the minister and I have talked about the need to do a proper audit on where those 36 metric tonnes of drugs come from, but certainly you cannot account for the close to \$100 million variance in the budget versus what's necessary by referring to that 36 metric tonnes.

9:50

The next set of questions I have of course relates to the 11 million plus dollars that's being allocated to the regional provincial health authorities in terms of dedicated program funding. Now, I would like to congratulate the minister for recognizing that new money had to be spent on some of these very, very critical areas. In fact, there was such critical underfunding and such critical lack of access to some services such as cardiac surgery and orthopedic surgery and some diagnostic imaging that the lack of access itself may have been grounds for a legal action against the province, Mr. Chairman, because of the violation of federal law in terms of access. The minister is shaking her head no. Perhaps she doesn't read the same legal notices that I do.

Mr. Chairman, the \$11,450,000 that's being allocated does address some of these critical access issues, but it barely addresses them. I'd like the minister to talk about the process that she went through that led her to conclude that this was the right amount of money. Why is it that we needed \$2,225,000 in the Edmonton area for cardiac surgery? Why is it that we needed coincidentally the exact same amount of money in the Calgary area for cardiac surgery? Is this some sense of fairness, or is this some sense of we only have a few little tidbits to hand out, so we'll try to hand them out with some degree of equality regardless of whether it's adequate to meet the need or not?

I'd like the minister to take us through the process that led to the decision that what was needed was exactly \$1.4 million for home nutritional therapy. Information is that that's not enough funding. What is the minister doing to monitor that concern? Perhaps the minister will take us through each one of the areas of cardiac surgery, joint replacement surgery, magnetic resonance imaging, and home nutritional therapy and through the process that led to the conclusions that we are now being asked to vote on by committing tax dollars.

It occurs to this hon. member that this is more by gosh and by golly budgeting, that we clearly don't have a sense from this government that they are in the know when it comes to the dollars that are necessary to make the system work to meet the needs of Albertans. Now, as I said, I have to commend the minister for recognizing the deficiencies in this area. I am sure that this money will benefit many, many Albertans who are currently on pronounced waiting lists for hip replacement, for example. Just in my own constituency several constituents have contacted my office regarding hip replacement and the delays and the painful waits. So, yes, this money will be of some benefit to these Albertans.

What about all of the other Albertans who will continue to wait? For example, with cardiac surgery, Mr. Chairman, my information is that this additional money will deal with about 10 percent of the waiting list. So does that mean that the other 90 percent of the waiting list, whatever those numbers are and whatever the time delay is, is now the new standard? If so, I guess I would like to see that reflected in the business plan. If it isn't, I'd like to know whether we'll be asked again in the next quarter to commit some other supplemental dollars. Just what is the intent of the Minister of Health to reduce these waiting lists to a safe level for all Albertans?

Mr. Chairman, those, for the time being, are my questions on the supplementary estimates.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before I call on the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, I wonder if the government Whip would like to take his seat. Would the Whip kindly sit down, please.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was very disconcerting, not the most attractive sight to see.

Addressing the supplementary estimates, general revenue fund. With regards to computerization, whether it be in Education or in Energy, the question that I have to ask is: are these computer systems going to be compatible for the turn of the century? Has the government of Alberta addressed that fact? Are they indeed compatible with the other systems that are presently in place? I'm talking about from government department to government department. Whether it be Treasury Branch, whether it be boards

and commissions, I'm talking about whether they're all going to be turn of the century friendly and whether the government seriously has addressed that so that when we're looking at these supplementary estimates, the systems that we're putting in place within the schools in the province of Alberta will meet the needs of the turn of the century and will be millennium friendly, in other words. I believe that a number of my colleagues have acknowledged that often the infrastructure will not meet the needs of the new computer systems that are going into our school systems. I commend the government for moving in that area, but we've got to have the dollars also to make sure that they can be put in place as early as possible.

With regards to health, my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora went into it in some detail, but I still go back to the questions that I've raised in this House before. I get even more concerned with the negotiated agreement with physicians as to how we're going to realize those funds. I get very disappointed and, quite frankly, very frustrated that there's not the level of accountability. It has to start with the physicians that indeed the outcome from the procedures is measured and that there is a level of accountability there. We can talk all we want to the medical profession to try and find the wastage, but until we actually can say that we're close to certain that the procedures the physicians are carrying out were necessary and that their outcomes were positive, I don't believe that you'll realize the kind of dollars that you're looking for.

You know, I can think back to about three years ago when I know that Dr. Wensel at the University of Alberta hospital was working with the physicians toward this. I said: well, why can't we get this moving along and get this level of accountability? His answer at that time was: well, you know, the doctors won't be pushed. Well, I'm sorry; those days are long gone. If a general surgeon's outcomes aren't appropriate, then we should do something about it. If an orthopedic surgeon's outcomes aren't appropriate, we should do something about it. If we're seeing unnecessary procedures being done, we should do something about it. We have had, for as long as I have lived in the province of Alberta, the ability to achieve that, and that is through privileging. One of the most costly systems is your hospital system. I would say that we've got to move and move quickly in that area.

**10:00**

Now, we can talk all we want about the glut, or whatever you want to call it, of drugs that are dumped, but the bottom line is: until you start looking at physicians' prescribing habits and looking at outcomes, you're not going to come up with the savings. It's as if you're beating a dead horse, because this isn't new; this is all old stuff.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

The minister's acknowledging what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that you've got to put the mechanism in place to make it happen. You're not going to negotiate with doctors to realize that kind of funds if you're just sitting across the table. You've got to use privileging; you've got to use accountability through the right to practise medicine in this province. Ah, you're all nodding your heads, agreeing with me. Put your money where your mouth is. You haven't done it yet. You've had many an opportunity, but you haven't done it. [interjection] They're listening, but I'm asking. You're the government; you act. I don't think the way you negotiated with the physicians was the answer at all. Sorry; through the Chair.

I'd like to go a step further. Whether it be addressing the reality of making this work, we had hospital boards that dealt with privileging of physicians in hospitals. They were close to the action. It didn't work then. It blows my mind how you're going to achieve it with 17 regional health authorities, how you're going to ensure that psychiatrists' prescribing habits are right up to date, that they're appropriate with the Provincial Mental Health Board. I know as a former board member and chairman of Alberta Hospital Edmonton how difficult it was to be able to scrutinize, to make sure that the privileging of physicians was appropriate, and that indeed Albertans could be assured that they were getting the best quality health care.

Now, it's not just Alberta. You could go across Canada and you'll find the same problems. You can go to the U.K. and find the same problems. A government has to have the courage to make sure that the people that drive the industry indeed are fully accountable, and I haven't seen it demonstrated by this government, whether it be through health or whether it be through the marketplace, that you've actually got the fortitude or the desire to make it work. So I say yes, these are all desirable outcomes as far as finances are concerned, but I haven't seen any demonstration that you've put a mechanism in place to realize it. As my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Glenora said, you know, to have such a variance of \$88 million – I mean it's mind-boggling to think that numbers could be so far out. I look at that and then I look at Bovar and what we're having to do now. It tells you that you're not managing, that you're not effective managers.

Now, probably a year from now I'll be standing up, Mr. Chairman, saying the same thing. I hope that I'll be proved wrong and that we will actually start to see some accountability and realizing, freeing up those dollars, that we can redirect them into other areas of health care that would be more beneficial and actually would start to develop a wellness system.

The other, through the Chair to the Minister of Health. You know, we've been talking about health care status for communities, and we're talking about containing or reducing physicians' costs. You won't be able to achieve that until we can take 17 health regions and truly show what the status of health is in those communities. We're nowhere near getting there. Now, until you do that, you won't be able to identify what program you need, and if you can't identify what program is needed in every community within the 17 health regions, you don't know how to budget for those programs. So you've got the cart before the horse. I'd ask once again: stop procrastinating; let's look at what a community's health status is, identify the programs, and budget to those programs. We might start to see some effective use of public funds, and the people in the province of Alberta might start to see an effective health care system that truly is a community-based wellness system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

**MR. ADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I received two questions on the supplementary estimates, both from my learned colleagues from across the way, the hon. professors, the members opposite. Both of them have to do with wanting clarification on why we would have a discrepancy on the level of interest that we had projected. Let me say that although forecasting interest rates is probably a science – and I know that both hon. members could understand that – it's not an exact science, and I daresay that

perhaps in their lifetimes even they have not forecast totally accurately on interest rates for their own purposes, whether it be on their mortgage or for whatever reason it might be, if they do in fact have a mortgage.

Let me say, Mr. Chairman, that when we're forecasting interest costs for a whole year on \$207 million, when we have banks that have floating rates, that don't have constant rates – and the bank can change the rate every week – it's very difficult to be 100 percent accurate. That's the explanation that I can give: we find ourselves having to predict interest rates one year in advance, and it is not an exact science. We do it in conjunction with the best information that we can access, whether it be from the department of Treasury or our own department people working with financial institutions, and then it comes down to that inexact science of endeavouring to forecast what that interest rate may be. This year we need \$500,000, and I'm anticipating that the committee will approve that supplementary estimate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Health wants to respond to some of the questions.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, I had a number of queries, and I thought it might be helpful to members if we went over a few of them. I also failed to acknowledge a member of Alberta Health in the gallery, Mr. Aslam Bhatti, who is the assistant deputy minister of corporate services as well as our financial wizard. I thank Aslam for spending an evening with us in the House.

There have been a lot of questions. In fact, most of the questions have dealt with the \$50 million, or the \$47.2 million, in the supplementary estimates in physician services. I'm sure that all members will recall that in the AMA agreement which was reached a year ago, there was a commitment to work towards finding \$100 million over two years in savings in physician services. It was never a request of Alberta Health that we reduce individual physicians' fees. The Premier of this province and the Minister of Health have recognized that physicians should be well compensated for, in most cases, their 10 years of education plus the heavy responsibilities that they carry when they go into practice. We think they should be compensated well and fairly for that. So we made a commitment with the Alberta Medical Association to look at ways that we could find efficiencies in the system that would find us additional savings, and I believe that both parties a year ago felt that we could do that. It is with a lot of regret that I have to say that we did not make much headway and in fact spent most of the year talking about what our next agreement would be.

The three-year agreement that has been reached at this point is an important agreement, Mr. Chairman. As I indicated, it is a first of its kind, I believe, in Canada. It does allow the opportunity, in fact puts the impetus on the physicians in this province and the Ministry of Health to work together with the regional health authorities to provide quality services and to look at ways that we can ensure we are providing those in the most cost-effective way.

The Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan talked about accountability and performance measures, and indeed that's extremely important, but one of the commitments that we also have is to the development of clinical practice guidelines. I'm pleased to announce today that although I've been disappointed in the progress in that area, they are coming along quite well now.

Clinical practice guidelines are not just for the physicians in the province; they're there for the patients as well. It's a two-way responsibility, as the hon. member has pointed out. I believe that by having those clinical practice guidelines, we will provide more accountability for the procedures that are performed and for the ability to judge whether there is a positive benefit to some of the interventions that we do have in the profession. That is another important part of the agreement that we have with the physicians.

#### 10:10

So we have agreed that we would look for the \$50 million next year, an additional 50, but we're going to still look for \$100 million. We're going to look for it over three years, and we're going to look for it in a number of ways. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora doesn't want to talk about the big drug roundup and waste, but he forgot to mention the study, which incidentally I saw accredited by one of your caucus in a local newspaper to the federal government. The study that was done on compliance, or the issue of noncompliance really, was commissioned by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. It suggested that there was up to a \$9 billion a year cost in Canada in drug utilization, centring mainly around compliance. Now, obviously that's not all in direct costs of drugs themselves. It has to deal with lost productivity and so on as well as the fact that we know that inappropriate utilization or prescribing of drugs – statistics have shown that one in three seniors' admissions to hospitals is related to that. So there's an additional cost. I know that the hon. members across the way, although they don't want me to talk about the drug roundup anymore – and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora went over all of the areas there anyway: 36 metric tonnes almost consistently each of the three years.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many freight cars?

MRS. McCLELLAN: That's a lot of them.

I think that what it does point out is that there is a lot of room for improvement in those programs. I am pleased that in my discussions – I must say more often privately than in the House – with the hon. members opposite, they are of the same opinion that we should work hard in this area.

The only way that we could have been, I guess, accurate in our drug budget would have been to have taken some rather harsh steps and reduced benefits. As the major users of this program are the seniors in our province, the group 66A program, we didn't feel that that was appropriate, so we have decided to ask this House for the indulgence of an additional \$9 million – we've noted in the estimates book that we did ask for additional dollars last fall – rather than reduce benefits, ask for those dollars and aggressively look at ways of saving money, not just by reducing benefits. In fact that's not an allowed way to do it. You will be hearing very shortly, I hope in the next short weeks, maybe in the next two weeks, the strategy for reduction of our drug budget by looking for better ways to do it.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan is absolutely right: you have got to do it with the persons who prescribe, the persons who dispense, the persons who manufacture, the persons who consume, and the persons who fund. That will be the makeup of the group who attack this issue of unacceptable rising costs and mainly waste in that area. I am confident that by drawing all of those people together – and we have the commitment in the AMA agreement; the physicians will work

with us in this area – we will accomplish that. Those are very important.

I was asked the question: why did we put forward money for home nutritional therapy and why just in Calgary and Edmonton? That is where the majority of that program is used. It is a relatively new program where people who have to have liquid nutrition, instead of having to lie confined in an institution, can now have that therapy at home. There is no insurance program for those products. They are not drugs, so they don't fit under our Blue Cross products. In talking to the regional health authorities, when discussing pressure points, they felt it would be extremely helpful to them if we would help with that program. They will be working that into their community program. You know that we have allotted \$110 million over three years. This coming budget year is the third year of that program for increased dollars for the community, and this will give them the opportunity to factor this program in. So why this one and not others? We have already allocated \$110 million to increase home care and new ways of delivering community services, so this was an exception.

On the why and how process of deciding on the \$11.4 million, I can tell you that it was with a lot of discussion with regional health authorities. In fact, I raised it with the authorities in November at our meeting, that we were very concerned about the rising waiting lists in cardiac surgeries and orthopedics. I personally met with the cardiac team. Why did we decide on sort of an even split between Calgary and Edmonton in the cardiac program? It is really a program that's managed by the two main areas. It is a provincial program. Calgary and Edmonton work very closely together on that program, so that is why the split is in that way. If there are better ways of allocating those funds, I can assure you that they will see that the persons who need those services will receive them. The same thing in orthopedic services. I met and discussed with orthopedic surgeons and talked to them about it. I've also had meetings with the regional health authorities, and they felt that these dollars would assist them in bringing their waiting lists to an acceptable level.

I challenge the hon. members to look at other provinces and see whether we are that out of sync in what is a Canadian system, publicly funded, not an open-ended system but a managed care system. What we have to ensure in Alberta is that we keep these waiting lists to acceptable levels. So it was not by gosh and by golly. I'm sure the hon. member would want to apologize to the experts who lent me their advice: the cardiac surgery team in Edmonton and the orthopedic surgeons that we talked to in the province.

Just for your information, to show you what good management the cardiac program has, in Edmonton alone the number of surgeries went from 596 in 1990-91 to 887 in '94-95. Now, while we did not reduce funding to the cardiac program, neither did we increase it. So it's very good management that has allowed them to do more. The fact is that our population is aging. The fact is that because of better ways of providing treatments, anesthetics, we can provide those surgeries on a much different clientele than we could a few years ago. So demand is growing, and we have to make sure that we can pace with that demand. The only way we can do that is if we have good health information and data that we can analyze and make sure that we have that forward planning. We're working on that.

Mr. Chairman, there are some other questions, but I think I've taken enough time. I will commit, as I always do, to write to the hon. members if I missed any. We're keeping notes. I've kept

notes. Aslam will certainly help me in keeping notes, and we'll write a more full response. I appreciate the interest and the questions that have been raised.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

10:20

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to say a few things about the supplementary estimates. First of all, I should express my sympathy to the Treasurer. My colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has already made the point that six of the Treasurer's colleagues have come back to the well for more because they are either overspent or underestimated or under-budgeted or just simply a victim of circumstances. The Treasurer must have been gnashing his teeth and tearing his clothes and sprinkling ash on his head when all these supplicants came back begging for more money, because after all he wanted to keep such a tight rein on the expenditures. Of course, this is the new Treasurer, who is now a born-again tightwad. In his former life he was a rather profligate spender, I think, who voted for and accepted many a deficit budget. So like a reformed smoker, I guess a reformed spender is probably just as tough on those who haven't yet kicked the habit.

Mr. Chairman, I have a few remarks on the estimates of some departments. If I can find the right page – here it is: Education, always a department that's dear to my heart. I'm sorry to the Minister of Energy. I wish I could say more on that particular department, but I simply haven't got it in me. So let me just concentrate on education. Much has been said already about hooking up all the schools to the network. It's a great idea. It's a little late of course, because we've come after New Brunswick and others. Nevertheless, it's better late than never.

I want to point out also to the Minister of Education that our neighbour on the other side, B.C., has an excellent plan which has come onstream where they will spend millions of dollars to outfit each school with a certain number of computers. I think, if I'm not mistaken, it will be one computer for each three students at the secondary level and one for each five at the elementary level. Now, that is really going at it in a big way.

While we're at it, what about a voice video means of long-distance instruction? I know there used to be in my old school division a plan to develop the fibre-optics approach, but I think that's already outdated. I think it would now be coming through the airwaves, so to speak. But certainly that is a means of providing courses, courses that are less popular yet are required in many cases, to students in even the smallest schools. I'm talking about courses such as physics 30, math 31, and so on, that one can only find now in the larger secondary schools. So, Mr. Minister, if you're listening, I hope you think about that idea and start developing it. That will truly go a long way to providing our students with equal chances.

There's no mention, of course, of any more funding for transportation. I was hoping that would happen because there are certain jurisdictions that have been hurt by the new funding formula. That, by the way, is a major irritant to many of those parents who are faced with bus transportation fees. It's no skin off my nose, but it sure is off those parents', and they don't like it. That's all I have to say, Mr. Chairman, about education.

I'd like to quickly go to Environmental Protection. I know everything that needs to be said I think has been said on the subject of Bovar, but how can we resist when we have our resident Bovarian expert in our midst here on the right-hand side? He does such a good job of explaining calmly, logically, and



collectively how all these moneys are going to be spent and why each time we talk about Bovar there is more money going down that sinkhole. I wonder how he does it.

Nevertheless, I think Bovar is doing a good job. They sure manage to waste dollars very well; don't they? Public dollars, of course. After all, it's a waste management plan. Now, what I don't understand, though, is why we are being asked constantly to authorize more funds to this Bovar. Now our resident expert is temporarily going to be out of earshot, unfortunately, and my pearls will then not be reaching his ears. Nevertheless, we haven't heard anything about the cleanup, and that is going to cost us more and more and more too. He himself had said that a hundred million dollars would be a minimum. We haven't heard anything about length of term, how long this thing is going to last once they have been suitably privatized. We also haven't heard anything about those profits that are popping up all of a sudden. As we all know, our Premier in his former life decided not to get out of this agreement or to renew it in such a way that if ever there was to be a profit we might profit from the profits. Nevertheless, it's a sinkhole, Mr. Chairman. I just want to go on record as saying that I know this thing is not going to go away, and it's going to cost us more and more and more. Am I not right, Mr. Bovar? Yes.

Then we go to Health. I really would like to just say a minute thing, because these expenditures are pretty straightforward. After all, it is just a case of underestimating a little. What bothers me, though, Mr. Chairman, is that there is no mention here of more funding for the WestView regional health authority. In fact, there is still no mention of a new funding formula. I think I'm going to have to wait until I'm carried out in a pine box before new funding will be made available. I hope, Madam Minister – and I know you're listening intently – that you can see your way clear to make sure that we are looked after and that we are being dealt with equitably in our area.

That, Mr. Chairman, I think concludes it all. Let me take one final look. Yes. At this particular moment I'm not quite sure that I will vote for these estimates, but I'm sure the Treasurer is not going to hold his breath about it.

Thank you.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I notice the Speaker out in the wing, so I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the Chair]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the 1995-96 supplementary estimates, number 2, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the report presented by the hon. Member for Highwood, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

## Privilege Contempt of the Assembly

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has raised a question of privilege in the Committee of Supply about the motion introduced by the Government House Leader to establish subcommittees. In accordance with Standing Order 62(3) the Chairman of the committee adjourned and reported to the Assembly. The Leader of the Official Opposition did not make clear how the motion to establish subcommittees of supply was a contempt of the House as distinct from a breach of privilege. It appears to the Chair that the contempt focused on the fact that two subcommittees may meet at the same time and that members may not be able to speak at both subcommittees. This situation appeared to be at the root of the Leader of the Official Opposition's question of privilege, as supported by the hon. members for Fort McMurray and Sherwood Park.

10:30

When a question of privilege is raised in the Assembly, it is the Chair's role to determine whether a prima facie question of privilege exists. After considering the matter, the Chair finds that there is not a prima facie case of privilege.

In addressing the substance of the motion, the Chair wants to make clear that the motion does not amend or any way alter the Standing Orders. Clearly the Committee of Supply has no jurisdiction to amend the Standing Orders. The Chair would also like to point out to members that Standing Order 57(4) expressly provides that any member who is not a member of a subcommittee is entitled to attend and participate in the meeting of that subcommittee although he or she may not vote.

It was suggested that as the provisions of the Standing Orders concerning subcommittees have not been used for some time, they have fallen into disuse. While it is true that subcommittees of supply have not been established since 1979, Standing Orders 57 and 58 are still valid parts of our Standing Orders. Indeed, it appears that when the Standing Orders were revised in 1993, those provisions were amended to account for the existence of designated supply subcommittees.

With respect to the arguments raised about there being two meetings in which members may wish to participate, the Chair refers to *Beauchesne* at paragraph 77, where it is stated:

Freedom of speech does not mean that Members have an unlimited or unrestrained right to speak on every issue. The rules of the House impose limits on the participation of Members and it is the duty of the Speaker to restrain those who abuse the rules.

In this instance, the House has given the power to the Committee of Supply to create subcommittees under Standing Order 57 to consider the estimates. There are no restrictions in the Standing Orders as to how many subcommittees may be established or when they may meet. The Chair's understanding is that the last time subcommittees were established in 1979, two subcommittees met at the same time.

While attention was devoted during the argument to the privileges of members, there was little mentioned of the corporate or collective privileges of the Assembly, one of which is to regulate its own internal affairs free from interference. *Beauchesne* states at paragraph 33, "The most fundamental privilege of the House as a whole is to establish rules of procedure for itself and to enforce them."

In this regard, members are referred to Maingot's book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* at page 15 and also chapter 11.

Furthermore, members are referred to the 21st edition of *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, where it is stated at page 90 with respect to the British Houses of Parliament:

Nevertheless, the right of both Houses to be sole judge of the lawfulness of their own proceedings, or to settle – and depart from – their own codes of procedure is fully established.

In this instance, if the Chair were to find that a prima facie question of privilege existed or that a contempt had been committed, the Chair would in effect have to find that the Standing Orders violated the privileges of the members. To make such a finding could cast doubt upon the House's ability to control its own proceedings, which the Chair is not about to do.

It is the Chair's view that the motion to establish the subcommittees is being done in accordance with the Standing Orders. Accordingly, there is no prima facie case of privilege or contempt.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move that the question be called on the subcommittee motion.

THE SPEAKER: That would not be in order at this time. This motion now is to proceed in the Committee of Supply, and it is a debatable motion. The proper procedure now if you wish to proceed with that matter would be to revert to Committee of Supply.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I now request that you leave the Chair and we go to Committee of Supply.

THE SPEAKER: Call Committee of Supply.

head: **Committee of Supply**  
(continued)

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: The committee is reminded that we have under consideration, then, the motion that was moved by the hon. Government House Leader. Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I oppose this motion. I would urge every Member of this Legislative Assembly to oppose this motion. The fact is that this initiative by that government erodes the ability of this Legislative Assembly and each member within it to properly debate the estimates of this government. It's pretty aggressive, pretty smug. I'd say that cocky would be the word that comes to me. When I view a government that in the course of – what was it? – seven years ran up \$33 billion in debt, it is in fact shameful. The fact of the matter is that much of the basis for that, much of the germination of that debt took place during the '70s and early '80s, when this government had very little opposition and wasn't held to account. In fact, it manipulated some of the rules back in the '70s in a way that eroded the ability of this House to hold this government to account.

Now, this is consistent. This government's desire to get away from accountability is consistent with a number of things that we've seen over the last little while and certainly for some good length of time in this government's predisposition to erode the quality, the strength of these democratic institutions. We saw Bill

41; we saw Bill 57, for example, both of which were initiatives that allowed this government to take huge power, huge authority without bringing it to the Legislative Assembly, authority to privatize, to establish de facto taxes without ever bringing this to the Legislative Assembly. We saw most recently the Premier of the province refusing to come to this Legislative Assembly for question period because he simply didn't feel like being held accountable to this House.

MRS. BLACK: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader is rising on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

MRS. BLACK: Twenty-three (h), (i), and (j), imputing motives.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has indicated objection under Standing Order 23(i) and (j) on imputing motives. Would the hon. Leader of the Opposition please make his comments on the point of order.

**10:40**

MR. MITCHELL: I'm not imputing the Premier's motives at all, Mr. Chairman. I'm merely referring to the very explicit statements made by his communications director, words I couldn't repeat in this Legislature, as you know, which were very, very clear in their explanation about why the Premier wasn't here to be held accountable for questions that are perfectly legitimate for us to ask. If he's now saying that his communications director was lying or wasn't indicating the truth about the Premier's absence, then let the assistant House leader stand and say that. My point was that the Premier wasn't here because he didn't want to answer questions. He therefore didn't want to be held accountable. I'm basing that not on any imputation of his motives but on a very explicit statement by his communications director, who was making it clear why the Premier didn't want to be here. If this member is saying that the communications director was lying, then maybe we've got a problem with the communications director.

Now I want to continue on this debate, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we're already on it.

MRS. BLACK: A point of order. Relevancy, 459, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you have something to add to the point of order?

MRS. BLACK: Relevancy, 459. What has that got to do with the debate of the motion at hand?

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh. Okay. The point of order is the one that you raised, hon. Deputy Government House Leader. It may well be that relevance is even more relevant than this point of order, but that isn't the point of order, and we can't have a point of order on the point of order.

So we are on the issue of imputing motives. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition has indicated that he was not imputing motives to the Premier, which presumably was the objection. So that part is clarified.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, on the motion that is before us.

### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: It's clear, Mr. Chairman, that this is only another step in a continual erosion of the strength, the credibility, the effectiveness of these democratic institutions. It is a tired government, it's an arrogant government, it's a smug government that launches itself on such a course of action.

As a Member of this Legislative Assembly, at a pragmatic level I am very disturbed by this process of subcommittees because I cannot possibly be in two places at once, so I cannot, nor can any other member, raise issues on two separate departments that would fall under two separate subcommittees. Not only that; even if I could be in two places at once, I'm not on two subcommittees. I'm not on all four subcommittees, so I don't have the opportunity to speak on the range of departments as I do now, before this motion would be passed.

Now any member can come to this Legislature, has the right at least – maybe can't always be recognized but certainly has the right – to speak on any number of departments that they want to speak on.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Stony Plain is rising on a point of order.

### Point of Order Clarification

MR. WOLOSHYN: Just a clarification so that we can get the debate focused. The Speaker made it very clear that any member can attend and participate in any subcommittee. The only thing is that that person cannot vote.

MR. SAPERS: It's not a point of order. It's entering debate. Sit down.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, then say the truth, and I won't stand up.

### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: Well, Mr. Chairman, let's talk about that. Let's talk about how members will participate in any subcommittee. How is the rotation? Is it going to go back and forth? I mean, there are all kinds of practical problems that have yet to be worked out. It's interesting that the Whip would refer to that. The fact of the matter is that this is so ill-conceived and so ill-prepared that the House leader over there hasn't even thought about the ramifications of who can appear in a committee, whether they can participate, how long they can participate, whether we'll have series of questions, whether we go back and forth. None of that's been worked out, Mr. Chairman. At the very least, we could say that this proposal has not been fully fleshed out and there are all kinds of rules and procedural matters that have to be established. Yet as I understand it, these are about to be called on a moment's notice.

More to the point, Mr. Chairman, the fact is that as of today or last spring, when a department – let's say the Department of Health – was called before this Legislature, every member had a chance, a proper chance, to stand in front of this Legislature and talk about those estimates. Now, that can occur for any department. If it doesn't occur for a department because we took the choice of putting it to a designated supply subcommittee, we still have the reporting procedure afterwards, where members can stand and talk in this Legislature, or we can make the determina-

tion not to so that more and more members can have the opportunity to stand and speak to a department's estimates. Now that will be limited, and members will not get the chance to stand and speak.

While the House leader can say, "Well, they're going to be public and they're going to be in rooms," the meeting rooms where these subcommittees will be held will generally be quite small, inaccessible. [interjection] Well, half of them will be. The fact of the matter is that they are limiting in that respect. If it's okay to conduct the business of this House in an ongoing and significant way in any number of rooms in this building, why don't we balkanize everything that we do? Why don't we just refer everything to subcommittees, Mr. Chairman, and diminish the importance of this House. This House has some intrinsic importance, and it shouldn't be diminished, and certainly it shouldn't be diminished when the consequence is that this government will not get the opportunity to be held adequately accountable and properly accountable for its budgetary estimates.

Another problem we have, Mr. Chairman, is the overlap now and the complication that will exist between these subcommittees and the designated supply subcommittees. How is it that those two sorts of models of committees are going to be reconciled? How is it that we're going to work between those two models of committees? Again, the House leader hasn't figured that out, hasn't spoken to it, hasn't discussed it with this side of the House. At the very least, this is a very, very poorly conceived, poorly thought out proposal.

Another point I want to make is: what would be the transformation of this government, who resisted any kind of subcommittees for so long, the transformation of the House leader, who resisted subcommittees for so long, that all of a sudden seems to have taken place, some mystical, miraculous experience? Now, why would that be? Well, we've heard a number of suggestions. One is that they're very unhappy with Multi-Corp, so they're not going to be co-operative in any way, shape, or form: not the right reason to make massive and significant rules changes to the operation of this Legislature.

Another is, Mr. Chairman, that they really do want to reduce the number of question periods. Through some convoluted logic the House leader says: well, the number of question periods is just based upon Bills. Well, that's clearly not the case. They're based upon the number of days in estimates as well. While the House leader can infer that we want to resist this because we want more question periods, the fact of the matter is that he wants to do it because he wants fewer question periods. There is no other explanation.

It certainly doesn't lead to more accountability; it leads to less accountability. It certainly doesn't make a particular difference to this government beyond fewer question periods whether we stand in here and talk to them or we stand in committee rooms and talk to them. It's certainly not an uprising that came from his backbench, his private members, saying: we want to have the ability to have more input. In fact, if he really believed that, he'd have subcommittees that allowed us to operate in a more aggressive way. Why wouldn't he suggest, for example, that the deputy minister and his assistant deputy ministers and any officials whom we want to call or his backbenchers want to call should be called to these supply subcommittees? Why wouldn't he? What conceivable improvement to the budgetary process does this provide over our standing in the Legislature and debating these as we did last spring and every spring for as long as I've been here and before that?

This is a surreptitious erosion of the legislative process. Because they're mad about Multi-Corp, they're petulant. Because they're petulantly mad about Multi-Corp and because they want fewer question periods, they're just not going to co-operate.

tMr. Clegg in the Chair]

I wonder how many people could have been supported by the money you wasted in Bovar. The fact is, Mr. Chairman, that they're not doing this to improve the accountability process. They're not doing this to make the budgetary process more detailed and more productive. They're not doing this to make sure that we're spending Albertans' money more effectively and less of it more effectively. They're doing this because they're mad. They're petulant. Their Premier is in a snit, and they're doing this because they want fewer question periods. That's why they're doing it.

**10:50**

I'll tell you why we're resisting it. We're resisting it because we are defending the legislative process. We're defending the sanctity of the democratic process. We are defending the right and the ability of Albertans and members of this Legislature to sit in, to listen, to observe, to hold this government accountable, Mr. Chairman. I will say that it is a sorry and a sad day when a House leader on the government side could stand up and unilaterally manipulate the rules of this House to get some desired political effect, to be punitive, to be mean. The irony is, of course, that those rules, beyond saying that he can set subcommittees, never said that he can replace the 20 days, never said that he can arbitrarily assign people to committees, never said what the membership on the committees would be, has never, ever indicated any of those details.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

I will say, because I enjoy saying this, that I never experienced that kind of arrogance when I dealt with the Member for Barrhead-Westlock as House leader. Absolutely. That member, Mr. Chairman, had a respect for this Legislative Assembly which is lost on his successor. He had a true respect. You can laugh, but the fact of the matter is that as hard-nosed as he is, as difficult as he can be in the political arena, as hard as he fights in that political arena, he has a true reverence and respect for this place, and I saw that when I dealt with him.

AN HON. MEMBER: He won't cross the floor.

MR. MITCHELL: He might just walk out.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, that there was some respect for this place when he was House leader. There isn't respect for it now, and if ever you had to know, just look at this proposal, because this proposal is the epitome of the erosion of this democratic institution. This is the epitome of this government running from accountability. The race was started last Wednesday by the Premier when he ran from accountability. It's in the second leg of the race right now with this particular proposal. It would behoove every Member of this Legislative Assembly to make darn sure that they vote against this proposal if they have any respect for this place that deserves their respect.

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration and reports progress on a certain resolution proposing to establish subcommittees of the Committee of Supply and reports progress thereon. I wish to table a copy of this resolution considered by the committee this day for the official records of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table copies of a letter from the Leader of the Official Opposition designating designated supply subcommittees pursuant to Standing Order 56(2)(a) for the official records of the Assembly.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

[At 10:56 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]