

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Thursday, March 14, 1996 1:30 p.m.  
Date: 96/03/14  
[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our divine Father, as we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our thanks and ask that we may continue our work under Your guidance.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today is a founding member of the Reform Party of Canada and the Member of Parliament for the Alberta constituency of Yellowhead, Mr. Cliff Breitkreuz. On a personal note, Mr. Breitkreuz maintains very high visibility and contact with his constituents. He's also one of the Reform Party's agriculture critics in the Canadian House of Commons. I'd ask Mr. Breitkreuz to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

### Bill 17

#### Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1996

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill being the Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1996. I move first reading of this Bill.

[Leave granted; Bill 17 read a first time]

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

### Bill 16

#### Economic Development and Tourism Statutes Repeal Act

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Economic Development and Tourism Statutes Repeal Act.

These two items in this Bill will truly represent the government getting out of the business of being in business.

[Leave granted; Bill 16 read a first time]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 16, as just introduced, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I rise to table four copies of a letter dated September 11, 1995, that I received from the Ethics Commissioner after a personal discussion with the Ethics Commissioner and correspondence with the Ethics Com-

missioner, that says that my involvement as a consultant in dealing with CFB Calgary or any federal government lands with respect to "rental, planning, and disposal" of those lands is not a breach of the Conflicts of Interest Act. Because of the comments made by the hon. Premier and the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, I thought it important that the letter be filed.

Mr. Speaker, my last comment is that the issue is a simple issue: is it bureaucracy in Ottawa that should be doing this work, or should it be the private sector and Calgarians and Albertans? I look to the latter.

Thank you, sir.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a proposal to lease Islay and Galahad medical facilities prepared by the Hotel de Health. There are four copies of it. And do you know what? They don't amount to very much.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to file with the Assembly today four copies of the settlement agreement between the Alberta Securities Commission and the principals of Hotel de Health in which the principals were barred from trading on the Alberta Stock Exchange.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table copies of several letters indicating and underlining the difficulty of our caucus and of the federal government in getting any information on proposals like Hotel de Health's proposal when they have to be public so that they can be reviewed and it can be demonstrated just exactly what they're going to do to erode the publicly funded health care system.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Rostyslav Mykheienko, who is seated in your gallery. Mr. Mykheienko is a lawyer from Ukraine. He's here under an intern program sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency studying international law and human rights. Part of his internship is being served in the Alberta Ombudsman's office. Accompanying Mr. Mykheienko is the Alberta Ombudsman, Mr. Harley Johnson. I'd ask these two gentlemen to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and to members of the Legislature Laura Joslin. Laura is a student at Grant MacEwan Community College in her first year of social services, and she's been doing her practicum in my constituency office. She's an excellent student and will be a fine social worker. She's sitting in the public gallery. I'd ask her to stand and receive the welcome of the House.

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

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to be able to introduce to you and through you 42 people from the wonderful community of Linden. [some applause] Thank

you, Victor. They are 30 students from the grades 5 and 6 classes, and they are accompanied by two teachers and 10 parents. The two teachers are Elaine Boese and Laurie Reed. The parents are Cordell Swain, Brenda Schroeder, Karen Waldick, Benedicte Hegedys, Gloria Savill, Jeannie Taylor, Janice Klassen, Murray Woods, Ken Enns, and Linda Pauls. I'd like you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly a very fine young lady, a constituent from the city of Fort Saskatchewan, Diane Yanch. She is an incredible volunteer – a Sunday school teacher, a volunteer for the Job Action Team – and is presently a student. I'd ask Diane to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a fine young lady from the very beautiful and the very breathtaking municipality of Crowsnest Pass, particularly the community of Blairmore. Her name is Wendy Bigcharles. She will be going to Mount Royal College in Calgary in the fall, and she will be residing in the constituency of Calgary-Elbow, the one that our Premier represents. She's seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask her to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

1:40

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to once again introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly students that come all the way from Hokkaido, Japan, for a short stay to learn a little bit about our culture and to understand what is happening in our great province. Their leader, LeeAnne Pawluski, brings them here every time to further understand how this Chamber works and further their knowledge to take home with them. I should also remind you that this government has twinned with the government of the province of Hokkaido, and therefore we should give them an extra special welcome. I'd like to ask them to rise in the public gallery and receive the warm welcome of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly an outstanding community leader from the city of Medicine Hat and the constituency of Medicine Hat. I would like to introduce Mr. Ryan Marshall, who is the president of the Medicine Hat College Students' Association and visiting with us in the Legislature this afternoon. I'd ask Ryan to rise and all members to give him a very warm welcome.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly students from our schools. Today visiting us from the Maryview school in Red Deer are a number of great students seated in the members'

gallery. With them are their teachers Mr. Brad Diduch and Mr. James McNamara and parents Mrs. Denise Loughlin, Mrs. Kathy Evancz, and Mrs. Lois Peressini. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House two very fine constituents who are here to observe the legislative process. They are Josephine Slipchuk and Nestor Slipchuk. I'm given to understand that they are in the building and I hope are now seated in the members' gallery. If they are, I would ask them to rise.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Chamber 25 very bright and enthusiastic students from the New Sarepta elementary school. They are accompanied this afternoon by their teacher Ms Lynne Chalmers and nine parents, which shows the tremendous enthusiasm and the tremendous support of those parents for their school system in New Sarepta. Those parents are Mrs. Linda Sharr, Mrs. Paula Grundy, Mrs. Ruby Lampkin, Mr. Rod Faragini, Mrs. Gladys Sealy, Mrs. Zenovia Lane, Mr. Armand Berube, Mrs. Terry Bouschard, and Mrs. Dawn Aumuller. They were transported here this afternoon by their bus driver Ms Kelly Grams. I would ask all the students, the parents, and the teacher to stand and receive a very warm welcome of this Assembly this afternoon.

head: **Oral Question Period**  
**Hospital Privatization**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, last night residents of the Galahad area, desperate to keep their long-term care beds open in their community because this government won't provide that service, voted to support the privatization of their hospital. To the Premier: how can Hotel de Health possibly provide this service less expensively than our publicly funded health care system when they are going to subcontract the service to a Toronto-based firm and still make a profit?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that would be a question that would more appropriately be addressed to the principals of Hotel de Health. We have not yet to my knowledge received a proposal, and the Minister of Health has nothing in her possession to examine relative to this proposal.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to send him a copy of the proposal. It's not very thick. It's quite thin actually and doesn't amount to much, but maybe the Premier would like to have a copy of it.

If the long-term care facilities, the long-term care beds are needed in those communities, why doesn't the government simply live up to its obligation and fund them?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we do in fact subsidize all long-term care facilities, whether they are under private management or public management. I mean, that is the policy of this govern-

ment. What we see here is a proposal by a private operator to run a long-term care facility. You know, it's being done throughout the province.

MR. MITCHELL: He's subsidizing private business yet again, Mr. Speaker. It never stops.

Why does the Premier . . . [interjection] Mr. Speaker, will you tell him to be quiet? I'm trying to ask my question. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

Why does the Premier force residents of small towns to choose these kinds of options when it's clearly his responsibility to provide publicly funded health care to all residents of this province when they need it and where they need it?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is a decision of the regional health authority to rationalize health care. I would take the leader of the Liberal opposition back to a statement he made on February 9, 1995, relative to acute care hospitals and the need for hospitals: Alberta has too many high-tech hospitals and may have more sick beds than it needs, says Liberal leader Grant Mitchell. Mitchell says that he agrees with the ruling Tories that some of the health care fat has to go.

That's what the regional health authority is trying to come to grips with, rationalizing health care in that particular region, and if it can be more appropriately managed through a private contractor, then so be it. Is the hon. member saying that we should close down St. Michael's? You know, right here in the city of Edmonton? I mean, that's a privately contracted operation. Is he saying that we should close that down, that that is wrong, that that wonderful facility is wrong, that it's being improperly operated? Is that what he's saying?

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Health have repeatedly told Albertans that it is up to Ottawa to decide whether Hotel de Health is complying with the Canada Health Act. Given this statement, you would at least figure that the Premier would be willing to assist Health Canada to make this determination. Apparently not, because it's clear in these letters that they have provided Health Canada with no information about this particular project. Health Canada has asked the Alberta government and has asked Hotel de Health for information, but the government, the minister, the Premier claim they know nothing about this very significant project. Alberta Liberals have also asked, and we haven't gotten the information until just recently either. Why is it that the Premier . . .

MR. DINNING: What is an Alberta Liberal, Grant? What is an Alberta Liberal?

MR. MITCHELL: Could you please ask the Treasurer to be quiet, Mr. Speaker? It's not funny, Jim. It is not funny. This is not funny.

Why is it that the Premier has no information about a private company that will, not could but will, have a major negative impact on our publicly funded health care system?

MR. KLEIN: Well, we don't know that for sure. That is an

absolutely outrageous assumption. I'll have the hon. Minister of Health reply.

MRS. McCLELLAN: If the Minister of Health for Canada wrote me and asked me for information that I would have on this particular proposal, I would have to respond to the hon. minister, as I have in this House, that I do not have that. To table a proposal which has been presented to whom we're not sure and say, "This is a proposal that this government has received," is absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. members were here in this House when Bill 20 was passed. They understand that the regional health authorities have the responsibility for delivery of services. The regional health authorities understand that. They understand that when they have a proposal to bring forward on the utilization of public institutions, they will bring it to this government and we will respond. Mr. Speaker, that is what I'm going to do.

I did not respond to any of the other queries that were out there, whether it was in the hon. Member for Leduc's area or in region 8, because that region was dealing with those, making a decision at a community level whether to bring that forward or not. That's the process that's occurring. I wish the hon. members would be more caring about the health needs of the persons in Galahad and Islay. That's what the regional health authorities are concerned about, and that's what they're trying to solve.

1:50

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, why hasn't the Premier made it a priority to find out exactly how and why a private, for-profit health care company can offer health care services like emergency services, like essential emergency services, where the government says it can't or it won't?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, something is being totally misunderstood here. Maybe the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition hasn't traveled around the province enough, you know, to see what is happening in this province. For years and years and years long-term care centres have been privately run. Has he had a problem? Like St. Michael's. You know, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is closely associated with that and has applauded and lauded that centre on many, many occasions. That is a privately run centre. Is this member, the Leader of the Opposition, saying to the people of this province and the people of this city that St. Michael's should be closed down? Is that what he's saying?

MR. MITCHELL: I'm saying that the publicly funded health care system has to be defended, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier now commit to ask Hotel de Health to share with Health Canada all the information that they require to make a decision on whether or not they violate the Canada Health Act? [interjection] Yeah. Why not? It's your hospital. Maybe you should make sure it's dealt with properly.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, Health Canada, under the leadership of the hon. Minister of Health for Canada, is quite capable of contacting a private-sector company and asking them for details. The Minister of Health for Canada is a competent gentleman who can do that. If the Minister of Health for Canada contacts the Minister of Health for Alberta and asks for information that I might have in my possession, I will be quite pleased to

deal with the hon. minister. That hon. gentleman from Health Canada has a department that has some 6,400 people at least in it, and I think they're quite capable of following up with a private company. I don't believe it is my responsibility, when I have not received a proposal, when I have not ruled on a proposal whether they can operate in Alberta, to provide that information nor, to my knowledge, has the minister asked me to do so.

#### **Hotel de Health Inc.**

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, health care is not a commodity; it is a sacred trust. Now, in Alberta health care is supposed to be provided without financial barrier to everyone that needs it. This requires professional providers operating with unquestioned integrity. Mr. Premier, why would you allow our health care system to fall into the hands of a company who has been barred from trading on the Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia stock exchanges?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we haven't. No decision on this proposal has been made. The only proponent that I know of, the only person who has ever said publicly that he could be the best salesman for Hotel de Health is the hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Premier, is it now the policy of the government to allow regional health authorities to do business with companies like Hotel de Health, whose directors have been penalized by the Alberta Securities Commission for illegal distribution of shares?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it – I believe the meeting was in Forestburg – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora attended that meeting. He obviously got up to express his opinion, and the citizens, by a vote of I think about 3 to 1, told him exactly where to go.

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

I've got a message for the Premier. Maybe the Premier didn't hear the question about the bar from trading, but maybe if he'll listen closely, he'll answer this question. How will Alberta taxpayers be protected from financial liability for Hotel de Health's operations if they go bankrupt?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, obviously I wasn't at the meeting. He was at the meeting. Right? You know, I would like to ponder and maybe ask out loud the question: did the hon. member address the meeting, did he tell the people his thoughts on Hotel de Health, and what was the vote? They said: Mr. Sapers, go back to Glenora. That's what they said.

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to supplement that a little bit.

THE SPEAKER: I hope the hon. minister is not going to relate what happened at the meeting last night.

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify a couple of things. I'd like to begin just by saying that the hospital district of Galahad and the villages of Alliance and Heisler and Forestburg believe that they deserve health care in that region, and, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

#### **Property Taxes on Oil and Gas Leases**

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rural Alberta farmland is sacred for the production of food. Many farmers and landowners are concerned that the assessment of oil and gas surface leases will be added to their property assessment. If this happens, they could be paying industrial tax on farmland. This would create a financial burden for rural property owners. My question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What are the present arrangements for assessment and taxation of oil and gas surface leases?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. THURBER: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the new Municipal Government Act, which came into effect on January 1, 1995, property taxes for farmland are based on that land's agriculture use. Oil and gas well leases located on that farmland are being assessed at market value, the same as other property.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LANGEVIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what changes are being proposed to deal with the concern raised by property owners?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, it was never the intention of this government to have the owner of the farmland pay the taxes on oil and gas well leases that happen to be on that property. I will be introducing amendments to the Municipal Government Act this spring to ensure that the property taxes on oil and gas leases are the responsibility of the operating company.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. LANGEVIN: Yes. My last question again to the same minister: how will these amendments affect the farmers that have surface leases on their properties now?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, these legislative changes will ensure that starting in the taxation year 1996, these taxes will be passed on through the linear assessment process to the owners of the leases. There's a further convolution to this in that some people that actually have oil wells and gas wells on their property do not get the revenue from them, so it makes it doubly bad, and it's something that we have to deal with immediately.

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

2:00

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As global markets become more integrated, competition between jurisdictions and companies for capital, jobs, and economic development is becoming more and more intense. Now, the Premier has taken an active role in promoting Alberta companies and has even said: it's so important for our government to support the efforts of Alberta companies in the global market because these Albertans are laying the groundwork for our future, creating the jobs of tomorrow. My question is to the Premier. What criteria does the Premier and the government use in deciding to promote companies abroad? Is it jobs, is it capital investment, or something else?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's to promote Alberta companies, to promote the economic growth and prosperity of this province, and to create a great future for our children and our grandchildren. That's what it's all about.

MR. BRUSEKER: My supplemental question is to the Provincial Treasurer. What effect is there on the amount of corporate income tax paid when companies that are headquartered in Alberta do the majority of their business out of corporate tax havens such as Barbados?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a choice made by those companies.

MR. BRUSEKER: My final supplementary question, then, is to the Premier again. Why would the Premier promote a corporation like Multi-Corp, that brings no jobs to Alberta, has its employees in Miami, San Francisco, Hong Kong, et cetera, and operates through a holding company in Barbados?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I cut a ribbon for this particular company in Hong Kong, as I spoke on behalf of a number of companies. I don't get into where they are headquartered, what their financial position is. If they have the moxie and the will to participate in a trade mission, then I will participate on their behalf. You know, there might be some companies that - well, I mean, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is involved in a company, and if it's going to bring jobs and goodwill and so on, I'll cut a ribbon for Laurence as well.

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

#### **World Figure Skating Championships**

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are just a few short days away from the opening ceremonies of the world figure skating championships to be held right here in the city of Edmonton. It is unprecedented for an event of this stature to be held in Edmonton, and it will certainly do Edmontonians proud. My questions are all to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, if he has his figure skates strapped on. Can the minister tell this Assembly what this event will mean for economic development in the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I am sure I could figure eight economic impacts. Let's begin. The world figure skating championships in Edmonton are an extraordinary opportunity to showcase Edmonton and in fact Alberta to the world. The total number of registered participants is approximately 2,000 from over 48 countries. It's anticipated that over a hundred thousand people in total are expected to attend. The prestigious and high-profile event contributes \$42 million as defined by the economic impact model. It's the same as the Olympics, the Commonwealth Games, the student games, all adding to Alberta's reputation in the world marketplace, Mr. Speaker, and they're one of many world-class events.

Other significant events, Mr. Speaker: the Ladies Professional Golf Association tournament, National Petroleum Show, Rotary International committee . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The minister digresses. Supplemental question.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister please inform this Assembly of what other activities are planned around this event that people can participate in as understandably not everyone will be able to get tickets?

MR. SMITH: It's so easy to digress, Mr. Speaker, when one talks about benefits to all of Alberta in economic development.

In fact over 22 hotels are completely filled for the event: the Greater Edmonton Visitors and Convention Association. Most importantly, this event will be seen by over 147 million people. None of it could have happened without volunteers and without the volunteer effort in this city of Edmonton. In fact, Cliff Chapman, one of the security guards here, is a volunteer and is doing a great job to help out Edmonton.

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

#### **Electoral Boundaries**

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier's answers to the electoral boundaries questions were curious to me, to say the least. The Electoral Boundaries Commission was set up by this Legislature as an arm's-length body to develop a report, receive public input, and make recommendations regarding the province's electoral boundaries. The goal of the commission, as I understand it, is to create new boundaries that are fair and that conform with the directions of the Alberta Court of Appeal. My questions are to the Premier. Does the Premier intend to respect the process and the people who participate in that process and put the recommendations of the boundaries commission in legislation prior to an election?

MR. KLEIN: Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member didn't hear my answer to almost the same question yesterday. Yes. The answer is yes, including all the people who participate: the elected officials, the town councillors, the mayors, the reeves, the ordinary citizens, and Liberal MLAs. Yes.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Premier has said yes without equivocation in answer to my question, and I have no further questions.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

#### **Alberta Capital Bonds**

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Agenda '96 includes a discussion regarding the government's debt management policy. It outlines in detail the province's current and forecasted position with respect to outstanding debt held by various types of creditors. I note that the Alberta capital bonds, the bonds sold only to Alberta residents, have decreased this year over last and are expected to further decrease next year. My questions are to the Provincial Treasurer. Is Alberta offering a competitive enough rate of return on Alberta bonds to encourage Albertans to invest in their own province?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a good point as it relates to Alberta capital bonds. Our number one objective, remember, in the department of the Treasury when we need to go out and borrow money and raise money in the markets, whether it's in Alberta, whether it's in Toronto, whether it's in New York or Tokyo, is to borrow money at the lowest possible

cost. We don't try to pretend that these are war bonds, that there's some sort of patriotic gesture here. What we're trying to do is borrow money at the lowest possible cost but in the case of Alberta capital bonds to make them available only to Albertans and give them an exclusive opportunity to lend this money effectively to the provincial government. So we set our rate according to what the market is dictating at that particular time with our eye on the lowest possible price.

MR. RENNER: My supplementary question to the same minister: has the department considered the impact of offering a higher rate of return on Alberta bonds, given that a portion of that rate of return is returned to the province in the form of taxation?

2:10

MR. DINNING: My colleague the minister of advanced education is advocating that we raise the rate so that many Albertans could benefit from a higher rate of return. Our number one objective – and I know the minister of advanced education would not want me to be wasting money by paying interest on borrowed money, when in fact those dollars could be better spent on our universities and our colleges in this province. That's what Albertans would want us to be spending that money on. So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we have thought about the tax income benefit to the Treasury and indeed to Albertans.

I would remind the hon. member that perhaps if he or his constituents want to loan money to somebody who will pay a higher rate of interest and still have Her Majesty back it up, he might loan it to the government of Saskatchewan or the government of Newfoundland or even the government of Ontario, who is bound to pay a higher rate of interest because they have to in the market. We don't have to, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that our dollars go not to bankers, not to the lenders, but those sacred dollars should go to people programs, priority programs, and that's why we'll be borrowing our money at the lowest possible cost in the market.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. RENNER: Thank you. Finally, does the Provincial Treasurer have any other plans to encourage Albertans to purchase Alberta capital bonds?

MR. DINNING: Well, I know my colleagues well enough to know that they would not want us to borrow money at a higher rate than the market would dictate for us. As I say, Saskatchewan and Ontario and Newfoundland may pay higher rates. We don't need to, Mr. Speaker, and we wouldn't want to.

Clearly, as we move into the June campaign for Alberta capital bonds, we're looking at how we could make it more attractive for Albertans. Right now our rate is set every six months, so it's on a floating basis. We have not ever done a compounded bond, and we're considering that. We're also considering a fixed investment bond, say, over a period of three years, that would pay perhaps a higher rate but you'd lock in that rate and you'd lock in your dollars for as long as 36 months. So we're looking at a variety of instruments that meet our needs to borrow money at the lowest possible cost but also make it more attractive for Albertans to lend those dollars to the government.

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

### School Fund-raising

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The parents and teachers and students and other staff of six schools in Airdrie felt they needed to raise extra funds so they could provide a well-rounded education in their schools. To do this, they embarked on a house lottery, but unfortunately with the proliferation of gambling in our province, they ran into some problems, needed a couple of extensions, and barely broke even on the project, not to speak of the kind of stress and pressure it put on staff, parents, and students. My question to the Minister of Education is simply: wouldn't we all be better off if the 10,000 hours that went into this fund-raising project actually went into the classrooms and extra curricular activities, volunteers participating, through parents, rather than being spent on fund-raising activities?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think really one important thing I'd like to say first of all is that one of the major initiatives that we've taken in Education is to provide for school councils which have a meaningful advisory capacity and can deal with local realities and local priorities in terms of everything from the overall program of the school to fund-raising activities.

With respect to this whole issue, Mr. Speaker, of lotteries and so forth, I am generally familiar with at least one of the lotteries that took place in the Airdrie area. Through the provisions for capital funding of this province some years ago and the priorities that were set by the local school board, they decided that one of their high schools should feature fine arts. This province, through its school building program, provided a significant amount, the overwhelming majority of capital support for that project, including equipment. It was the judgment of those involved, as I understand it, in the city of Airdrie that they would go forth with a lottery to raise money for equipment, lighting and so forth, to bring this up to a higher level, to make this a magnet school.

Mr. Speaker, let's be real about this. We cannot have that all across the province. If a local community feels that they want to put money into that through a lottery procedure, I guess that's something they should be allowed to do. This is not something that we should be expected to provide all across this province. We're providing for essential core subjects, we're providing for a good program across this province, and that's where our money should be going.

MR. HENRY: Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I could ask the minister a policy question with regard to school councils. If school councils choose to embark on a fund-raising project and end up losing a significant amount of money, is that then the responsibility of the school council to make that up, the school jurisdiction, or is the province prepared to move in when a school council runs into problems?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member across the way already knows, because one of the people in committee the other day raised this question when we were discussing the budget estimates. School councils are established to be part of the advisory structure for the operation of schools in this province. There is a provision for parents, if they wish, or members of the community to set up a fund-raising structure under the Societies Act, and then in that particular case all of the requirements about gains and losses and so on apply. To connect the establishment of school councils and their important role with fund-raising obligations and liabilities is not a correct way to approach this.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister's right. I have asked these questions or similar questions in committee, and I'm asking them because there isn't clarity.

Would the minister be really clear? Are school councils permitted to be involved in and sponsor fund-raising activities or not? Yes or no?

MR. JONSON: I think, Mr. Speaker, that the regulations are quite clear in this regard, and that is that school councils are not set up for the purpose of raising funds. They are set up for the purpose of being supportive, being advisory, being constructive, which I'm sure they will be across this province in the operation of their local schools, and also to be in an advisory role on policy with respect to their local schools flowing through to their school boards.

The matter of fund-raising is quite clear in the regulations. If a school, the parents or community members, wishes to set up a society under the Societies Act and go ahead with fund-raising, that's been there for a long time.

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

#### Canada/Alberta Service Centres

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government talks a lot about partnerships and co-operation with the federal government in the area of providing programs to the unemployed and those seeking employment. My constituents are concerned that the term partnership really means duplication and that co-operation really means overlap. To the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. I understand that the first Canada/Alberta service centre was opened yesterday in south Edmonton. What is the purpose of these centres? How will they benefit clients?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Canada/Alberta service centres represent a new approach in providing and delivering government services to Albertans. These centres bring together under one roof a range of training and employment and income-related services offered by three different government departments. These departments are namely Advanced Education and Career Development, Alberta Family and Social Services, and the federal Department of Human Resources Development. Four Canada/Alberta service centres are opening in Alberta this year: one in south Edmonton, one in Calgary, one in Lethbridge, and at Edmonton's Youth Employment Services Centre. The centres are meant to improve service to clients. They are meant to reduce overlap and duplication in the delivery of employment and income support services and, most importantly, make more effective use of public funds.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The minister states that these centres will reduce duplication and overlap. Can the minister be a little more specific, please?

2:20

MR. ADY: Yes, I'd like to be specific on that. These centres are a little bit like one-stop shopping centres. Individuals will get services in employment insurance, career training, student

finance, social assistance, career counseling, and other programs all in one location, Mr. Speaker, rather than wandering around the city to different government buildings, taking numbers and filling out forms. As a matter of fact, at the new centre that was opened yesterday, many clients are going to be able to access their program by coming in and using the computers that are there for them to use to fill out forms, and they won't even have to necessarily spend time with anyone.

Alberta is a leader in Canada in efficiently getting resources and services to individuals. But the member's point is a good one. The full benefits of integrating federal and provincial services in the labour market areas will not be realized until the governments of Alberta and Canada have negotiated the devolution of that responsibility to the provinces.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. How do the Canada/Alberta service centres fit in with the province's welfare reform strategy?

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, collocation in order to provide one-stop shopping service for clientele is really something that's very familiar to the Department of Family and Social Services. In fact, back in 1991 the first pilot project that opened was Athabasca regional career services, and since then we've expanded I believe to four or five other pilot projects across the north. They've worked very well. They do play a key role in the success of the welfare reforms. Through this process in the past two and a half years we've managed to place over 35,000 welfare clients in training programs.

DR. WEST: How many?

MR. CARDINAL: Thirty-five thousand. And we've managed to also transfer \$83 million to those areas.

#### Gaming by Nonprofit Organizations

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, VLTs are killing local charities. Slot machines are siphoning away much needed money from casinos, bingos, lotteries, and other gaming activities that charities rely on for fund-raising. While spending on VLTs continues to climb and government's profits soar, net profits from charitable gaming have fallen by nearly \$9 million. To the minister responsible for gambling: is the government so desperate for the half a billion dollars revenue in profit that it receives from VLTs that it does not care about the survival of nonprofit charitable groups?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the Gordon report very concisely outlined a program in which we would renew the charitable organizations and their incomes. There's no doubt that the basis for the question has been indicated by those charitable groups. They did indicate that they felt their revenues had dropped over the last few years since VLTs had come in, so I acknowledge the question.

What we have done since the report is we've started out on a

renewal for the charitable and volunteer groups for them to get a bigger share of the dollars that are gambled in the province of Alberta. We have started satellite bingos, and the first initiative that we've seen has increased the per capita amount of those operating at the bingos over \$10, and the return to the various organizations through pooling looks to be rewarding.

We have put VLTs into the casinos themselves, and of the original 15 percent that was going to operators, we took 10 percent and gave it directly to the charitable groups. Now by the looks of it, those revenues are starting to flow through into a pooling mechanism to help those charitable operations. We are going to deregulate raffles under \$10,000 and have them available come April 1 through the registry operation so that there isn't a huge audit requirement and process put on small charities that want to raffle \$300 afghans or what have you.

So as we go forth in looking at these various operations, we too acknowledge what the question's been, and we're going to change. We have done some changes at the table games at the casinos so that the operators again don't get as much money but the charities do. We have also looked at the percentages that are paid to the operators of the casinos versus the charitable group that takes it on a night-to-night basis. We're looking at first out, so the charitable group gets their cut on a percentage out of the pool before the casino operators get theirs. We're going to make it more equitable than it has been in the past.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, let me try my next question to the Premier. How can this government even dare ask volunteers and charitable groups to do more when his government is pushing charitable groups out of business with VLTs?

MRS. SOETAERT: Pass him an answer. Pass him an answer.

MR. KLEIN: No, no, no. This is not the answer to a question. This is simply a letter that points out the inconsistencies within the Liberal caucus. Here's a letter from Adam Germain, QC, MLA, Fort McMurray. To the hon. minister, it says, "Could you advise me as to what immediate steps you will be taking to provide some VLT machines to those people who want them?" That's just a small part of the letter. This person is there actively lobbying on behalf of one of his constituents to get more VLTs into the city of Fort McMurray.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, let me ask my last question of the Premier. Will the Premier do the right thing and remove the VLTs, not only from Fort McMurray but from throughout the province?

MR. KLEIN: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to get the concurrence of the MLA for Fort McMurray, who was speaking on behalf of his constituent, that indeed he wants those machines removed. He was lobbying to get more machines.

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

DR. WEST: Supplemental . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair has already recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly.

#### Public Service Severance Policy

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The treatment a

government employee receives prior to privatization all depends on the department that they work for. Despite what the Premier claims in the papers, there is no such thing as fairness or consistency for employees in the government. My first question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. How can you decide that the information systems staff will not get severance, Mr. Minister, when you claim that the compensation packages are under review? Why would you make your decision before the review is finished?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing the benefits in the whole department right now. I've said that before. The decision to privatize that particular portion of our department hasn't been decided. We just announced that we are going to review it. Therefore, the question that has been asked twice now in the House in two days is not a question that should be asked. We have just announced the review process.

MS HANSON: Mr. Speaker, the staff believe they've been denied severance. They were told that a year ago.

This question is to the Premier. Why have these staff been told they were denied severance when several similar permanent government employees in the departments of transportation and Municipal Affairs have received severance packages? These are not contract or union positions in Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: Any time a position of my department is abolished, Mr. Speaker, the benefits are there, but as an example we cannot offer benefits to employees we need to continue working for us. If an employee chooses to leave on their own, then they are not eligible for the benefits because we have to replace the position. Therefore, nothing has changed.

Again, the question that is asked is not a valid question because we just announced a review of the possible privatization of a portion of a department. In fact, that could save over \$4 million to the taxpayers per year.

2:30

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, if the decision has not been made, then why were these staff told a year ago that they were being outsourced and getting no benefit package and only one year of employment? They were told that specifically.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, we've been planning the welfare reforms for two and half years. We've discussed with staff the various ways that we are proposing a restructuring of the department. If the staff were advised that it was possible that this portion may be restructured, is that wrong? I don't believe it's wrong. It's good to advise staff well in advance.

We are now, Mr. Speaker, just moving forward with a review of that particular portion, and this review will not be completed till July of 1996. Therefore, how can I answer a question of that nature?

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

#### Alberta Opportunity Company

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and the Minister of Transportation and Utilities have raised the issue of



consistency and consistency in policy. My questions are to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. How can the minister justify loans, loan guarantees – I've just picked up randomly the *Alberta Gazette* – of \$650,000 dollars to Bernard Callebaut, a chocolate manufacturer, for debt refinancing. How is that consistent with a free market attitude and a level playing field for businesses in the industry?

MR. SMITH: Firstly, Mr. Speaker, it's great that there's public record around that lets open information be seen by all members of the Assembly.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, what that member has and what he's talked about is an arm's-length, private-sector board that makes decisions on final lending practices for the Alberta Opportunity Company, that has been around since 1971. Once you get a loan from that Alberta Opportunity Company through that private-sector, arm's-length board, you have to make your own personal guarantees. You are responsible for the repayment of that loan.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, he's been taking lessons from the Treasurer on how to duck his responsibility.

The second question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. Again, how can the minister justify AOC being involved in debt refinancing, \$650,000 here, \$800,000 there, when all the AOC is doing is backstopping the chartered banks and having the taxpayer assume the risk that the banks should?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, it's so evident that this member has never been in business for himself, has never had to meet the tyranny of a payroll. In fact, this member wants to get involved in the loans when he says in the *Edmonton Journal* that a legislative committee should back the loans. This government is out of the loan business, and politicians are not in the loan business in this government.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that he hasn't read what the AOC is loaning, what they're doing.

How can the minister justify million dollar loan guarantees to window manufacturers, \$650,000 loans to chocolate manufacturers, and \$800,000 to a dude ranch outside of Cochrane as being consistent with the government getting out of the business of being in business?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Opportunity Company runs under a revolving loan. It has a clear and open financial statement. It's accountable to all Albertans. It is supported by a small business revenue grant for running their operations. There are fundamental and conventional banking practices that that company must follow in order to meet its loan criteria.

THE SPEAKER: Before proceeding to Members' Statements, might there be consent in the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

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

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great

deal of pleasure that I introduce to you and Members of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Trevor Gladue, a hardworking constituent of mine from Slave Lake, Alberta. He is very active in the community and is also involved with the Métis Nation of Alberta. He is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature 25 visitors from the Forestburg elementary school. They are accompanied by the teacher Rae McClure, parents Brenda Athanas, Barb Roth. They are here today to watch democracy in action. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

### World TB Day

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A hundred years ago mankind was suffering from a deadly disease called tuberculosis. Had it not been for Dr. Robert Koch's discovery of the TB germ, thousands of people would be dead and continue to die today. To commemorate this 100th anniversary, in 1982 the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease proclaimed March 24, 1996, as World TB Day.

World TB Day serves to remind us that TB is still out of control in many parts of the world, and it is time to refocus our commitment to the global elimination of this disease. It also reminds us of the continuing threat that it could re-emerge in developed countries like North America and Europe.

TB is a highly infectious disease spread by airborne germs. The disease mainly affects the lungs, but the germ can travel to other parts of the body as well. Commitment to curbing infectious diseases is very strong, and we will be strengthening the central expert support for regional communicable disease control. But recent high-profile cases underscore the importance of constant vigilance and quick responses by public health officials to stem the spread of infection. While Alberta has the lowest TB case rate in the western provinces, we are far from eliminating this disease, which is the ultimate goal. In 1994, 178 cases were reported, 29 of which were from the aboriginal population, approximately 16 percent. As a legislative representative of a constituency with a high native population, this is a concern for me personally. Alberta Health is committed to maintaining a strong program and is striving to reach the goal of three cases per 100,000 by the year 2000 and one case per million by 2010, but we still have a lot of work to do.

Among some of the activities planned around the province for this day is a workshop on tuberculosis, the sleeping giant, which will be presented from March 21 to 22, 1996, at Grant MacEwan Community College. It will focus on the risk of TB transmission in health care settings.

I would ask my colleagues in this Assembly to join me in recognizing the importance of observing World TB Day on March 24, 1996, and urge them to be a part of the international effort to eliminate tuberculosis.

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

### Effects of Budget Cuts

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While it is true that this province's deficit has been eliminated, the changes wrought by this government have had a major impact on many Albertans. I'd like to outline some of the changes that have affected my constituents in Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Edmonton-Meadowlark constituents rallied in favour of maintaining the Misericordia hospital as a full active treatment centre. Their proactive attempts fell on deaf ears, and people have had to resign themselves to an unacceptable situation. In addition, laboratory services have been reduced by 40 percent in the west end of Edmonton.

The newest government terminology, Mr. Speaker, is to process people. Well, let's look more closely at some of the human beings who are being processed. Let's look at the human face of deficit cutting. In my constituency office alone during the last year the numbers of health care, social services, and labour-related complaints have dramatically increased. Every senior citizen our office deals with is out of pocket for medical services that were once covered by our health care system. A survey asked seniors how much extra they were paying out of pocket for medical services and daily living. The number is astounding: \$3,000 per year. Eighty percent indicated that they had to dip into their personal savings in order to meet their needs. Now, that's the real face behind deficit cutting.

On a regular basis our office receives complaints from individuals who have received substandard health care. That's the real face behind deficit cutting.

Unemployment in my constituency is also a real concern. There are many private- and public-sector workers who have received pink slips, some with severance and many without. People are unable sometimes to get the dollars owing to them from their employers. This government says that there's no problem obtaining employment, yet the reality is that Alberta leads the country in bankruptcies. I can't imagine what it must feel like to have been gainfully employed for many years and then have to contact an MLA's office for the number for the Edmonton Food Bank. That's the real face behind deficit cutting.

This government did meet its objective and early at that, but it's been obsessed with numbers and facts. There is a human face behind the math. This government needs to wake up and see the real face of deficit cutting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### 2:40 Hosting of Ukrainian Figure Skaters

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating the community of Vegreville for hosting so royally eight figure skaters, seven coaches, and the president of the Ukrainian figure skating federation who arrived from Ukraine last week.

Mr. Speaker, immediately after receiving the call from the Canadian Friends of the Olympic Committee of Ukraine for support, the committee mobilized a planning committee. Families came forward to billet our guests. The town of Vegreville donated the ice for practice, and clubs and organizations sponsored civic dinners and tours of many of the sites in the area. Businesses decorated their front windows welcoming the skaters, and school students created welcome posters and greeting cards for them.

The highlight was a skating performance Saturday evening. Mr. Speaker, never before has the community witnessed such performance: triple axels landed perfectly, performed by some of the world's best figure skaters. Possibly a once in a lifetime opportunity for Vegreville.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to also advise the House that the offering of the ice was very much appreciated by the skaters, as presently there's no surplus energy in Ukraine to power the ice plants necessary.

Please join me in thanking and congratulating the mayor and his council, the parks and recreation department of Vegreville, the Vegreville Figure Skating Club, the organizing and planning committee of enthusiastic volunteers, chaired by Mr. Orest Olineck, the billeting families, the caterers, and the clubs and organizations who have participated in hosting our guests.

Mr. Speaker, just moments ago I received notice that the figure skating team, upon completing their world's champions participation here in Edmonton, will be coming back to Vegreville March 25 to again put on an ice show for the community, just prior to their departure to Ukraine.

So once again on behalf of the government of Alberta let me thank the community of Vegreville for their compassion, their caring, and their tremendous spirit of co-operation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### head: Projected Government Business

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 7(5) I'd like to ask the Government House Leader what it is he plans for next week.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on Monday in the afternoon under government business we will consider under second reading Bills 12, 13, 14, and 15, and depending how those move along, if we have time, we'll move into Committee of the Whole, Bills 1 to 5 inclusive. In the evening we'll be in Committee of Supply on the reports of the designated supply subcommittees. Four of those committees will be considered on that evening, which will be Health, Environmental Protection, Education, Family and Social Services. We will also be in consideration of third reading of Bill 11.

On Tuesday in the afternoon we will look at second readings or Committee of the Whole, depending on the progress that was made on the Monday night, and again, in communication with the Opposition House Leader to establish an order, on Tuesday. Then in the evening we will be doing Royal Assent, Bills 10 and 11, and Committee of Supply, designated supply subcommittee of Economic Development and Tourism, and then looking at the regular supply reporting process of public works and Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

On Wednesday in the evening we'll be in Committee of Supply again, reporting on the Provincial Treasurer and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Then on Thursday we will be in Committee of Supply, and at this time, not having received a specific designation, we are projecting supply consideration of the Department of Labour and Justice, although if the Opposition House Leader would like some input on that, he could inform me of that. Then, given time, we would look at second reading or Committee of the Whole or third reading again, as per the Order Paper and following discussions on that day with the Opposition House Leader.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair received indications during question period that the hon. Member for Leduc, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View would like to pursue points of order.

**Point of Order  
Allegations against Members**

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, I stand under 23(h) and (i), and I'm sure you're surprised that I would bring this point of order up. However, I will broaden it somewhat to see if I can also educate the hon. Member for Red Deer-North so he can work it into his little aspect. But I deal specifically with 23(h), "makes allegations against another member."

The Premier has on two previous occasions suggested that I was in support of Hotel de Health and that I would be their best salesman. Now, you know full well that I've brought before the Assembly documentation that conclusively shows that in fact that's not the case, and I suggested yesterday that the Premier was perhaps a bit of a slow learner. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm a nice guy and I generally don't take kindly to throwing insults around this Chamber. But if you in fact had to correct somebody three times, you would probably think they were daft. Now, that may run through your mind, and I'll let it slide.

The Member for Red Deer-North suggested yesterday that I should receive a written apology from the paper, and I certainly can do that, Mr. Speaker, without hesitation, but knowing full well that if I did, that particular reporter who wrote that, who's a single mom with three children, would probably come under some sort of threat with her job. So being a person with a heart, unlike the minister from Red Deer-North, I don't intend to do that. I'll take the bruises and I will counter.

Mr. Speaker, we look at that particular allegation, and I look at the headline of the *Edmonton Journal* on March 9. It says, "Get ready for election, says Klein," and one of his quotes, "The Charter might allow private health care, permitting people to pay for quicker treatment, he said." Now, who is the best salesman of Hotel de Health, the Member for Leduc or the Premier of Alberta?

As I indicated, under (h) it makes an allegation that I have proven incorrect, and I would appreciate your very diligent attention to this matter, because it will continue to come up. As you know, Mr. Speaker, if it's ruled as a point of order, you could put it to bed.

Thank you.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, you have most graciously allowed the member opposite to digress somewhat to try and make a point. I'll be compelled to do the same, because we're having some difficulty accepting what he says at face value. There's a newspaper recording that says, quoting him, that he would be the best salesman for Hotel de Health. There's been no correction from the newspaper on that. There was a letter sent in by the member. Also in the letter, apparently he's still waiting for the RHA to correct it, so we have to look again at past performance. I think of a time not long ago when I was in the member's constituency at a fund-raising function for independent schools where he was walking around shaking hands, congratulating them, and mere nights later he stood in this Assembly saying that independent schools destroyed or fragmented the fabric of the education system. So, you know, we're only going on track record here. That's all we have to go on.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. It appears the disagreement over facts continues.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Point of Order  
False Allegations**

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23.

MR. HAVELOCK: Which one?

MR. SAPERS: All of them, hon. member. I won't call it a response to my question, but in his comments that followed my question the Premier mentioned that when this hon. member visited the village of Forestburg, somehow I was not well received by the fine people of Forestburg. As a matter of fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

Now, I don't know, Mr. Speaker, who it was the Premier was relying on for his intelligence reports. Perhaps it was the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, who was there. The Premier wasn't.

Now, the first thing that happened when I got into Forestburg and I went into Cedar's restaurant is that a couple of people came over . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, this is directly to the point.

**2:50**

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. The Chair did hear some exchange about what happened at a meeting. If the hon. member wants to clarify briefly what happened at that meeting, fine. But let's not go into going into restaurants and dining and other things, hon. member. We don't need the whole itinerary.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I take your advice. I have to build my case, because it's the Premier who was casting aspersions upon this member. The people of Forestburg were so happy to see me that two strangers in that restaurant came over to myself and my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly and bought us dinner to thank us for being there. After that, I'll have you know that the first thing that happened is that I couldn't even make my way to a seat in the meeting hall because of the throng of constituents from the hon. member's constituency who couldn't wait to talk to a politician that they had some faith in. Immediately following that, the chairman of the meeting invited me to please come to the microphone and ask a couple of very important questions, not to give this member's opinion – I wouldn't do that; it was a public meeting – but to ask a couple of very, very important questions about this government's attack on public health care. The chairman of the meeting invited me to do that, which I did. Those questions weren't answered. Then, just to show you how warmly received I was by those people in Forestburg, the former mayor of Heisler even offered me accommodations. It was so late getting out of the hall because of the lineup of people that wanted to talk to me that I couldn't leave.

MR. DAY: Very briefly on the point of order. The Premier was quite clear. His comments were directed to a very specific incident that took place there. I, too, when people come to my constituency, am kindhearted to those I feel sorry for, and I'm sure that's why he was well taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora stood up at that meeting, tried to make his points. The people took a vote, the people spoke, and he got smoked.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair believes that this will probably continue, this minor disagreement between members in the House.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View now wishes to – is this a real point of order?

**Point of Order  
Imputing Motives**

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is, and I hope I have the patience of the House to get through it here. Section 23(c), “persists in needless repetition” – and it’s following the Multi-Corp type of questioning that’s been going on – and 23(h) and (i), imputing motives.

This government has worked hard to raise the esteem of this House in the public’s eye. It’s balanced the budget, is paying down the debt, and we’re starting to define and create accountability in all departments of government. This Liberal line of questioning has nothing to do with government policy, Mr. Speaker. It is nothing more than a personal, slanderous attack on the Premier.

I had a town hall meeting two Saturdays ago, and a self-professed Liberal spoke to this terrible line of questioning. He is very disappointed with the disgraceful line of questioning and that this House is not dealing with government policy questions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you find this line of questioning out of order in this Assembly. It is in your hands to uphold the high standards of this Assembly. If you do not or cannot address this issue, I am very concerned that the line of questioning will continue to degrade the high esteem of this House.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View doesn’t like my question, but that quite frankly is of no concern to me. If you look at *Beauchesne* 410(5), “the primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account,” as *Beauchesne* 410(10), “the subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or . . . responsibilities of Ministers.” What I’m pursuing is what it is the Premier did in his role as the Premier of the province of Alberta. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the questions were put in a very succinct and precise manner, and I note that at the time you did not rule the question out of order, and I was asking the Premier to explain his actions.

THE SPEAKER: Well, with all due respect to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Chair did feel that the question was framed in a way that was in order according to the rules of the Assembly. The fact that this matter has cropped up three or four or five times, a number of times, really doesn’t matter.

Before proceeding with Orders of the Day, on a more historic note it’s been brought to the Chair’s attention that today will conclude 90 years of the work of this Assembly. The very first session of the Assembly was 90 years ago. Tomorrow will start the 91st year.

MR. HAVELOCK: Were you here for the opening?

THE SPEAKER: No, I wasn’t. In any event, hon. members, the Chair thought you would all be interested in knowing that there have been 90 years of progress, and no doubt over that period of time we have seen some ups and downs and some repetition. Anyway, I hope it hasn’t been all too tedious. I for one am quite proud of the fact that Alberta has progressed the way it has over

the last 90 years, and I think we all should be very pleased that we’re marking this event. Maybe it just does conclude that.

**head: Orders of the Day  
Committee of Supply**  
3:00

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I’d like to call the committee to order. I just seem to have a standing committee right now, but hopefully in a moment we’ll have found our seats or our seats of choice.

Before beginning this afternoon’s deliberation, we would just remind members that we had a motion last evening, and the Chair is assuming that that will continue. The motion was substantially the one that was approved some days ago. If there’s no objection, then we’ll call on the Minister of Community Development.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, could you just repeat the motion so that I can understand what it is you’re referring to?

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I haven’t got *Hansard* here, but it was basically that the minister would speak; 20 minutes on the one side, shared however they wish; 20 minutes on the other side; and if any time was left over in that 20 minutes on the government side, then opposition members could pick off of that. Then we would move on and just report it, move that it be reported. It’s not voted upon at this stage.

Hon. Government House Leader, are you rising for the motion? Well, before we can begin, the Chair does have to know what it is that we’re going to be doing.

MR. DAY: Well, since you asked the question, it’s established between the Opposition House Leader and myself that for these particular days of estimates, this reporting process as we see it – it was agreed between us that the process would be as you have described. I understand that last night, in my absence and in the absence of the Opposition House Leader, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo tried to suggest another process, and that led, then, to a motion, as I understand it. I’m of the understanding, as is the Opposition House Leader, that the agreement is as you have laid out. I don’t think that requires a motion because we’ve done it. There was a motion last night, and it’s understood, and I think we’re happy with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

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Community Development**

THE CHAIRMAN: With that understanding, we’ll call the hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’ve returned from my retreat at Graceland to answer a few questions this afternoon. I’m back to continue reviewing Community Development’s 1996 through ‘99 business plan and ‘96-97 estimates. On the 6th of March we ran out of time, so some questions did not get answered at that time, and for the record I have answered those questions in writing.

Today I want to talk about the supplementary information, which covers three topics: performance measures, the regulatory review work plan, and the seniors’ business plan. With respect

to performance measures, Mr. Chairman, first I want to look at those matters. We have four core businesses and four sets of measures to get to the heart of what we need to know. Under the first core business, promoting community development, we're measuring the mix of community activities and participation by Albertans in these activities to determine what is really important to Albertans.

Our second core business covers support to Alberta seniors. We want to make sure that everybody who is eligible receives benefits. The measures for special-needs assistance tell us if seniors' needs are being met, and client satisfaction tells us how effectively we have been delivering our services.

But under our core business of protecting human rights we are not measuring client satisfaction; we're measuring confidence, the confidence of all Albertans that their rights are being protected in Alberta, even if they have never had a complaint.

Our fourth core business is heritage preservation. Our measures there will tell us how much Albertans and people outside the province value our historic resources. Our performance measures are not static.

I am open to debate that will improve our measures to reflect new impacts and new ways of gathering and interpreting data.

Our regulatory review work plan outlines our intentions by year to amend or repeal legislation or consult with Albertans on changes to our regulatory environment as part of a commitment to a simplified, less intrusive, and more balanced regulatory environment.

Now I want to take a few moments just to comment on the strategic business plan for Alberta seniors for the years 1996-97 through '98-99. This is our first governmentwide plan. Four departments – Health, Family and Social Services, Municipal Affairs, and Community Development – co-operated on the plan, and each has specific actions in their own respective business plans. This plan continues to protect those that are the most vulnerable, seniors with lower incomes or with health and related needs. At the same time it lets us maintain a vital balance. It lets us respond to seniors' needs while we maintain our fiscal responsibility to all other Albertans.

The result in my opinion, Mr. Chairman, is a responsive and responsible document that takes a step in a new and co-operative direction.

Those are my only opening comments, Mr. Chairman, and I'd be pleased to entertain questions.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to understand this process again, because I'm having some difficulty embracing this new budget process. Parts of it don't seem to be working for me. Do we now on the opposition side have a total of 20 minutes only at this stage of the estimates debate on Community Development, or do we have 40 minutes from the minute that the minister started speaking? Could that be clarified, please?

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The agreement, as I understand it and as we've reconfirmed here, is 20 minutes for the opposition side; then government members are invited for 20 minutes. If there's any time left over there, it may be used by other members who wish to speak. Then we just adjourn debate and have a motion to rise and report.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Stating that in my own words then, I now have my 20 minutes and then the government itself gets 20

minutes, but if they don't use their 20 minutes, then we can fill it in. Is that right?

THE CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. I'm glad that's the way it is. Okay, that's very clear. [interjections] Yeah. We get 20 minutes, then you guys get 20 minutes, and if you don't use your full 20 minutes, then we can use up whatever's left of your 20 minutes. That's fair ball.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. A perfectly good question, Edmonton-Avonmore. The first evening that we did this, as memory serves the Chair and the Table officers, a member of the opposition did get up and ask a question on the other's time. Another evening the government members ran out of time. I can't predict if there's going to be extra time available for opposition members. I'm just saying what happened on one evening, and there's nothing precluding them, as far as I know.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: So we basically have a total of 40 minutes to deal with then, starting now.

THE CHAIRMAN: Twenty here and 20 there.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: And if they don't use up their 20, then we may use theirs. Okay. Well, let's proceed. Let's get started here. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, last week I had a few minutes to talk about the estimates of Community Development, and I posed a lot of questions. Some of them the minister has graciously undertaken to answer, and some answers I expect are still forthcoming.

In my remarks last week I talked about the ideology that I see the government having embraced with regard to furthering what I have referred to oftentimes as the erosion of the arts and culture sector that falls within the Community Development ministry. I highlighted a few issues thereto, such as the forced amalgamation of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts under some superstructure in the interests of, presumably, streamlining and saving money. At least that was the department's response. I also talked about the unfortunate circumstance that's coming about where the government wants to get rid of the carillon live performance that takes place here at the Legislature, a concern to many constituents I'm sure. I also talked, or my colleagues did, about the collapsing together of the Multiculturalism Commission with the Human Rights Commission, and I think even the women's secretariat has been rolled in there for a short period of time. What that signals is a devaluation, I think, of the importance of those particular areas to our Alberta society.

I flag these issues right off the top, Mr. Chairman, because it's unbelievable to me that an industry such as the arts, cultural, humanity sector, which contributes \$1.3 billion in economic activity to our province, the bulk of it being found within the Community Development ministry, along with 79,000 jobs that are contributed to by the industry, is being singled out and attacked through this ideological bent. I can see no other reason other than pure ideology for the kinds of changes that are taking place here.

**3:10**

The other issue I flagged and I want to re-emphasize is that one which comes up as a form of creeping censorship and is given rise under the veil of community standards. We had quite an excellent debate on this in Calgary, courtesy of the Alberta Theatre Projects

group, which of course the minister and I and the Member for Calgary-Bow attended. Within that aspect, too, I see also the government's desire for more control through the regional adjudication panels surrounding arts and culture grants, and I just want to voice my concerns about that. I have asked the minister questions about that, and I'm going to ask him again, for the record, if he's had any additional thoughts on how he sees that particular process coming in, when he sees it coming in, and if it does succeed in coming in, who it is that is going to appoint and/or select the people that are going to become those adjudicators.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have made extensive comments about the arts and cultural side. I may, if time permits, come back to that, but I want to move to another very important part, and that is the aspect of seniors, which comes under the minister's portfolio, at least the Alberta seniors' benefit program does. I want to begin by saying that my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar covered this most adequately and has posed a lot of questions, but there are still a few things that I need clarified for many of my own constituents in the Edmonton-Avonmore area.

I know there are new ASB guidelines that came in last year, and I know the minister wrestled with this a great deal to try and come out with something better than the original, which he coined perhaps as much as two years ago. I know the intention was to streamline and give the seniors one-window shopping, one-stop shopping as it were, but I'm interested to know if the minister would tell us what sort of feedback he has had regarding the ASB programs and its successes or failures. In other words, what I want to know, Mr. Minister, is: what is working really well in the ASB area and what is working not so well? And I want to know what kind of feedback directly you're getting in that regard.

The reason for my questions, Mr. Chairman, is because I'm getting a lot of comments and concerns at my end that tell me that in spite of the fact that the intention was to streamline and perhaps even speed up the process, there are still very long waits that people are encountering in getting responses to their questions and to their applications. So my next question to the minister is very specific. What has the minister done to reduce the response time to seniors who are in need of assistance in completing these forms? Now, that can be the ASB general form or it can be the renters' assistance form or any others.

Specifically with regard to the seniors' renter assistance program, I want to know if the minister can assure Alberta seniors that the amount of dollars he has allocated for this program is indeed sufficient to meet the demands that are out there. I'm not sure that it is, Mr. Chairman. I believe there is something in the order of another million dollars that was added or something thereabouts. But when you see 230,000 seniors in the province who are potentially eligible for some of that assistance, up to a maximum of \$500 per eligible senior, the mathematics obviously doesn't compute, and there would be a horrendous shortfall. I'm not trying to imply that all 230,000 are eligible. I simply want the minister to give me the statistics on how many seniors are eligible for that renters' assistance. If they were able to qualify for the full \$500 per person, how much of a shortfall would he in fact incur?

The other area, very quickly, Mr. Chairman, under this section is with regard to the horrendous situation that occurs pertaining to elder abuse and neglect, and I really would like to know what the province's strategy in that regard is.

Mr. Chairman, I was just at the Good Samaritan hospital in my riding a couple of days ago and speaking with a number of the

residents who are there. I think there's something in the neighbourhood of 200-plus residents at the Good Samaritan hospital in Edmonton-Avonmore, and something like 25 percent of them are what they call subacute, which means they are in greater danger of this type of potential neglect and/or abuse. However, at the Good Sam hospital I want to make it very clear that they feel very comfortable with the level of service they have enjoyed up until now. There is no direct abuse, and I don't want to infer that there is. But the point is that with the cutbacks that are starting to happen now, they have advised me that some of the services are being cut back and some of the services may in fact be cut right out. So we will see some form of potential neglect, I think, coming into play there.

What that does, Mr. Chairman, is it creates a great deal of fear, fear followed by uncertainties, not knowing where they're going and who's going to look after them. The insecurities are almost insurmountable. So having talked with a number of them at the Good Samaritan hospital and having talked with the very hard-working staff there, I know they're doing their best to wrestle with this, but I wonder if the minister could specifically enlighten this member on the impact to hospitals, such as the Good Samaritan, of his new budget. What are the impacts to a hospital like that, Mr. Minister?

Moving on. I've asked the question about what the current backlog is with regard to seniors' application forms, and I hope the minister will comment on that. If there is indeed as large a backlog as we're given to believe there might be, then what specifically are you doing to try and catch that up? Are you moving more staff toward that area from other parts of your department perhaps, or are you chaneling more dollars toward it, Mr. Minister, or are you hiring some consultants? How do you intend to deal with catching up the backlog? Some of the seniors fear for their future.

Another point I want to just raise, Mr. Chairman, is at top of page 169 of the document Agenda '96, wherein the document Strategic Business Plan for Alberta Seniors is referred to. It says that it is going to be released with a detailed ministry business plan. I don't think I've seen that, Mr. Minister, and I wonder if it's your intention to release it soon. If not soon, then can you give us a specific date? I'd be really interested to see, as would 230,000 seniors, what that strategic business plan that affects them is going to be. I'm sure that's not too difficult a question for you.

I want to move right on in the short time available, Mr. Chairman, to talk briefly about the area of human rights. It surely must be among our highest of goals and our highest of ideals as a government to care for the people of this province first. That care should include and must include protecting human rights as a fundamental of our civilized society and a fundamental of our democracy. We have to protect individuals who are in the minority, individuals who are in a disadvantaged position, and it's integral, I would say, that we do it and we do it very, very soon. I'm not trying to infer that nothing has been done in that area, because I think the government has made some legitimate attempts to do that. However, what causes me to flag this issue is the forthcoming collapse of the Human Rights Commission with the Citizenship and Women's Secretariat and the Multiculturalism Commission. Somehow they're all being amalgamated, and I just wonder: how does such an amalgamation move the specific cause of human rights forward in a positive way?

In reality, Mr. Chairman, what I see happening here is that I see a further dilution of the importance of these areas. If you really felt and believed that human rights were so important to our

society, you would surely have an agency self-standing that addressed human rights, that could not only address human rights but could also advocate for them. Similarly with the Multiculturalism Commission. If you really felt that multiculturalism was important to this province, as I believe it's important – in fact, it's an undeniable fact – then why are you not allowing a self-standing Multiculturalism Commission to exist? In fact, it's going to be interesting to see what the title of that new commission really comes out being when it's amalgamated.

So I want to know what specific things, then, the minister and his department are doing to further some of the causes which we heard so eloquently expressed this morning at the opening ceremonies of the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, who of course is the group that undertakes the international day for the elimination of racism on our behalf in this province. This morning, Mr. Chairman, we heard very eloquent addresses by the Minister of Community Development, by the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, even by our own Speaker. Those comments were highlighted by His Excellency the High Commissioner for Africa, Modise, who spoke to us about the tragedies that occur when people don't feel they have adequate and equal human rights in their particular cases.

3:20

Now here we have again an opportunity for the government to take a real leadership role and assist people with a certain comfort level that I think is entrenched in human dignity and a good sense of fair play. I want to know what the minister is doing specifically to further those good ideals that he espoused and the others espoused this morning. I think cutting back the multiculturalism fund, for example, by 50 percent and perhaps reducing staff – I don't know what his intentions are, but I would assume that within that there'll be some reductions of staff. Certainly there will be reductions of programs and services. I can't see how you could have any increase in programs and services when you're cutting things back by 50 percent. So I want to know if the minister has some concrete ideas and how they are going to crystalize into plans to help out that particular situation, given the cutbacks that are forthcoming.

On the surface I would say that the very intention of the consolidation of some of these equity agencies looks like it will dilute the intentions for which they were set up. We have some alarms that have been sounded here. For example, I am not sure what the future of some of the umbrella organizations right now is, Mr. Minister. When I take a look at some of the larger groups such as EISA, the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, or the Calgary Multicultural Centre, for example, what is going to happen to organizations like that? Because if my understanding is correct, under the new direction that the minister and his department are taking, there may not be or perhaps will not be funding for the operations side of things.

If that is true, then I'd like the minister to simply clarify that. Will there still be provisions for operating dollars for some of the umbrella organizations that serve the multiculturalism community? Yes or no. And if not, then will they have to move more to project funding only? Will there be room within project funding for some of the operations costs that go along with running the programs? That might be a point for you to consider, Mr. Minister. Would you allow operating costs to become an eligible expenditure under a projects budget undertaken by an umbrella organization? So I would look forward to that response.

I know there are many projects and programs that these umbrella groups already undertake that really do help move the

cause of human rights or positive multiculturalism forward, and we have to recognize that unless they have the ability to use some of their budgets or use some of your grant dollars for operations, Mr. Minister, they may not operate anymore. That's the bottom line, and I think it would be a big tragedy to lose what has been built up and so effectively built up for the last 15 or more years here. We really have come to a certain height of understanding and a certain level of acceptance through many wonderful multiculturalism programs. It would be a shame to see them suddenly collapsed or somehow else eradicated, because we do in fact live in a one hundred percent totally multicultural society, whether we wish to embrace it or not. That is the fact, and I for one embrace it wholeheartedly.

Similarly with that same collapse, I note the winding down of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. I know my colleague from Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has spoken with you and has put things on record regarding this particular council's winding down and no doubt registered her concerns about that. I would submit to you, Mr. Minister, that women need a voice. We have just listened to International Women's Day speeches over the last couple of weeks, and we have been to brunches and heard very eloquent addresses about the Fab Five, as they're referred to, and the tremendous struggle they have had, and we still see tremendous inequities, it would seem.

I'm not suggesting, Mr. Minister, that they're intentional. I'm simply stating the fact that they do exist. Sometimes it's important for these organizations just to have a voice into government, a direct voice as a self-standing organization with their particular concern right in the title. The same way that I'm lobbying you hard to protect the word "art" or "culture" on some of these organizations' letterheads, so too would I argue that it would be important to have something to do with women's issues on your letterhead as well. It's actually, in my view, a step backwards not to.

You need a nonpolitical arm's-length agency telling you where the trip wires are. It doesn't matter if it's on AMPDC or if it's on AMPIA or if it's on women's issues or on AFA; these are significant organizations most often, as you know, staffed by volunteers who come and give of their free time to provide government with advice. I don't think they're into condemning the government. I think they are there with a legitimate purpose. In any event, through your own policies and regulations, of course you have the control mechanism for who comes on and who doesn't come on to those groups. So it's just another double check and another way of providing excellent service to the areas flagged.

I want to go very quickly here, because I see I'm running out of time, to the privatization of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute and again commend the minister and the Glenbow Institute for having worked that deal out together. As he knows, we phoned and spoke with them and met with them to make sure that this was a good, sensible plan, and they were very in favour of it. Now that we've got the Glenbow institute so well looked after, could we please also look at the Red Deer museum, the Edmonton Art Gallery, the Remington-Alberta Carriage Centre, the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and a number of these others to make sure that they are somehow looked after.

The bell has gone, and I'm afraid I'll have to stop. I hope I'll get a chance to come back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few questions of the hon. Minister of Community Development. I'd like to direct his attention to page 73, the cultural facilities and historical resources division. Mr. Minister, the operating expenditure estimates show an increase in the program support element of the cultural facilities and historical resources division. I wonder if you can explain why an increase is shown when the government policy and your department's policy require the reduction of budgets in administrative units. I'd like some explanation on that.

Again on the same page, Mr. Chairman, the operating expenditure estimates indicate an increase to the Jubilee auditoria. I would like the minister to explain the reason for this increase.

Again on the Glenbow Museum, I note that the income statement for the Glenbow-Alberta Institute does not show a 1996-97 estimate amount. However, Mr. Chairman, the income statement for the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation does include an amount of almost \$2.6 million for the institute in the same fiscal year. I wonder if the minister could explain this apparent discrepancy. The new strategy calls for the privatization of the operation of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute. I wonder if the minister can explain how the privatizing of the Glenbow Museum will help to preserve, protect, and present the historical resources.

My last question to the minister, Mr. Chairman, deals with the special assistance programs to seniors. I'm sure the hon. minister is aware that a large number of seniors live in my constituency, and many of them contacted our office and sought assistance with that special-needs assistance application. We thought at the time that they really had serious financial difficulties and thought they were indeed prime candidates to receive this assistance, but they were turned down. So I would like to ask the minister why they were turned down, how many people applied, and how many people received the assistance.

Those are my questions. I look forward to hearing the answers from the minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3:30

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

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to join in on the discussion on the estimates because I have a number of questions, somewhat similar to what my colleague before me from Calgary-East had. It's a good thing to know that colleagues in Calgary are as interested in cultural facilities and historical resources, because they share some of those facilities that we also have in our rural areas.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, just before he sat down, was talking about Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre and Leitch Collieries and those types of things. In looking at the operation of the Department of Community Development, dealing with the restructuring of the department certainly has created some suspicion and some doubt into the viability of some of these operations.

Mr. Minister, there are number of these historical resources and cultural facilities in the province. Notable, of course, are the Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, our famous Provincial Museum of Alberta here in Edmonton, the historic site services, and the Provincial Archives, which I have used on many occasions. I must say that that particular facility and the staff there do an excellent job of facilitating myself and our constituents with some of the archives that are so important to our early days of life and the historic corridor of the RCMP and our pioneer way of life.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East talked about the Jubilee auditoria and how we work in the planning and the marketing of our foundation services branches.

I think what we're looking at here is that with this restructuring – and the operation expenditures do show an increase, but we know that the stress placed on these facilities is tremendous. As we work into a partnership in tourism and try to promote people to come to these attractions that we have built, in having more people come, I just wonder if in our planning we have built in a factor which says that with increased use of these facilities and these attractions our costs will also increase. I'm wondering if that's why we're showing an increase in the program support. So if you could just give us a very detailed idea of what that program support represents with those facilities I would appreciate it.

Now, I also know that there are a number of smaller facilities in the province, interpretive centres all across the province from north to south, smaller sites like the Victoria Settlement on the North Saskatchewan River near Smoky Lake; the Fort McMurray oil sands, that interpretive centre; the Father Lacombe chapel in St. Albert; Fort George and Buckingham House near Elk Point. A facility that I'm particularly fond of – I had an opportunity to talk with the Friends of the Rutherford House regarding the Alberta Tourism Partnership here. I really think that is one of the finest facilities that we have, particularly when I go through there and I see the dining room settings from a pioneer family in Fort Macleod, so it kind of brings it home for me, sir.

Then we have Historic Dunvegan on the Peace River near Fairview, and our hon. Member for Dunvegan is very proud of that particular facility. You'll have to make sure that we get up there so we can help you promote that.

MR. CLEGG: Stay the summer.

MR. COUTTS: You bet.

An area that I've often wanted to visit – I see it every week as I travel back and forth up Highway 2 – is Stephansson House near Markerville. I want to make sure that I go there so I can promote all of these smaller attractions and sights as a unit, and of course the Cochrane Ranche near Cochrane.

Then there are the facilities in my constituency like Head-Smashed-In and particularly the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, which I talked about earlier. I think the situation at Frank Slide is somewhat indicative of my question, because as we look at an increase in funding in the restructuring of your department, we're looking at the facility itself there being restructured in its administration and its management team. I wonder if you could shed some light for me in your answers. Even though you have increased the funding, we've downsized the management units there, and I would hope that we could take a look at how we would involve that particular facility in the restructuring of your southern department there, particularly because the Leitch Collieries is about three or four miles away from the interpretive centre. The interpretive centre and Leitch Collieries we try to promote as a harmonious unit because we promote the historic corridor of the Crownsnest Pass.

Leitch Collieries, as you know, is a wide-open facility; that is, you go on your own self-interpretation and guiding. There's a collection box there at the corner, and you can put your dollars in. If we're downsizing at the facilities, do we have enough people to make sure that we could still at the end of the day collect those dollars, and what donations we do get from that voluntary collection box at the Leitch Collieries?



Then, of course, I must complete the circle because what we're talking about here is promoting all of Alberta. The Brooks aqueduct, that particular historic site, is also included in those smaller centres, and I'm wondering if there's any effect on those.

Some of these smaller sites have displays and interpretive programs that are maintained, as I said, like the Leitch Collieries, by the cost of the centre. They have physical facilities at each of these sites that are maintained in conjunction with Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services also. I must congratulate the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services for the good work that they do, particularly in the Crowsnest Pass, at the interpretive centres there and along that corridor, and particularly at Head-Smashed-In and Fort Macleod. I really appreciate the work that you do there, sir.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about the community heritage services section, which provides specialized technical advice to community-based heritage preservation initiatives. They look at regulatory functions specified in the Historical Resources Act. Those include things like creative services units, which provide graphic designs, audiovisual designs, maintenance services, and exhibits maintenance services at all the centres. At Frank Slide Interpretive Centre we're looking at changing some of the displays. We've been looking at some of the audiovisual, and that has been put on delay, certainly pending some of the restrictions of resources within the department. But the community and the advisory board there continue to work hard and, through the friends of course, try and make sure that those displays are kept up. I'm hoping that the community heritage services section will be able to assist in that area.

3:40

My colleague from Calgary-East also talked about the Jubilee auditoria, which was on my list of things to talk about. One thing particularly that he didn't mention – I do agree with his concept about the operating expenditures estimate, that they are going to increase, but I thought we were looking at privatizing this. I hope the minister can do some clarification on that portion for me, because if we're privatizing, how come we're increasing our expenses in that area?

The last area I'm a little confused about, and if I appear to be a little disjointed, it's because of my confusion. I look at page 172, where we look at performance measures for the department. If you look at page 172, it's in the area of community-based heritage preservation and the activities that go on around that and the "appreciation for Alberta's diverse natural, historic and cultural resources." I just wonder if you could spend some time in telling us how you can measure our historical and cultural resources and come out with a performance measure on that. When we look at the initiatives that are put forward, just how can we consider what is a good indicator of ministry performance? How do they show or how do they demonstrate it? I think that would certainly help me in my talks with the people that I work with over at Head-Smashed-In and Frank Slide. I guess the other thing is: what do we target in performance measures? What do we do within the industry itself or within the department itself, and where are those levels at and how do you attain them?

With that, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I would like to express on behalf of those fine facilities in my constituency how much we appreciate the work that you and your department and the people do for the preservation of our cultural history in southwest Alberta. I hope we can continue to keep on that same path, knowing the kind of financial restrictions we're under, but more importantly, keep up the promotion of our fine facilities so

they are left there for our young people to know a little bit about where we came from, where we're at today, and how we got here. Those facilities are there for not only Albertans, but they're going to be there for people from all over the United States and Canada and the international market too. We hope that we can continue to promote these fine facilities, that they are world-calibre facilities that we can continue to promote through the Alberta Tourism Partnership, and we look forward to that association continuing.

I thank you for your time.

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

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, members of the Liberal Party who are cheering me to speak here today. I'm very encouraged. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, we are talking about the estimates of Community Development. I just want to begin by stating that this country is a country of immigrants. Many new people like myself, who came here in 1976, seek to make a home in this province, in this country. We come with a very important element, and that is hope: a hope to make a future, a hope to make a future for our children, for our society, to be able to live side by side with one another. As such, services that you provide under the citizenship services program are important.

My first question is basically that I would like to know: what are the activities that you will undertake or are planning to undertake under citizenship services in the year 1996-1997? Those are going to be important landmarks, pointers that people in Alberta will be able to identify and to associate themselves with to try and know and understand where we as a province are heading.

Then I look at the estimates that you have, and I notice that there has been some reduction in citizenship services, a reduction of about \$513,000 from the 1995-1996 budget. I'm a little concerned about this reduction and how it's going to affect the goals that you would have laid out in your business plans. I hear from time to time about administration cuts, but I am concerned about program cuts and how they will then be interpreted in the community. As such, I think that answer would really help me understand what citizenship services will accomplish in '96-97.

I would also like to know about the reduction that I mentioned, the \$513,000. How much of that is attributable to staff reduction, especially the full-time equivalent staff reduction? That's important for us to know. While you identify the reduction, it's also important to know how it will impact the programs that these people serve.

Then, Mr. Chairman, I have to ask this question, because I've asked it before in the House. How will the dollars in the Alberta multiculturalism fund that is being proposed be allocated for education purposes? [Mr. Shariff's speaking time expired] Does that mean I'm done?

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The time for the estimates on Community Development is up.

MR. MAR: Mr. Chairman, I move that we adjourn debate on the estimates of Community Development.

THE CHAIRMAN: The minister has moved that we adjourn debate. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I move that the estimates of Community Development be reported when the committee rises and reports progress.

[Motion carried]

### Energy

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to be back again before the committee. Before I start, when I last appeared here on March 6, I think we had a very good discussion about the estimates that are before the House. I appreciated the comments that came from the side opposite, from both sides actually. I did say that I would try to have the answers to the questions back as quickly as possible, and I am able to table with the committee copies of the responses to the questions that were asked. We've been able to give detailed responses to 65 of the 74 questions that were asked – that's 88 percent – in this one-week time frame. I think it's an onerous task to go through all of the *Hansards* and answer those questions quickly.

I do want to say, as I table these responses, that a lot of credit has to go to the dedication of the ministry staff and, in particular, to Grant Weismiller and Greg Kliparchuk and Steve Tkalcic, who have worked round the clock to get these responses in order for today. I'm pretty pleased with the way they have co-operated, considering that this week we also had to appear before Public Accounts and get ready for that. So they deserve a lot of credit. They worked very, very hard. They're not here with us today, but I'm very proud of them.

So I am tabling five copies, and we will, again, undertake to have the balance, which require more research and background on the questions, back to committee members or members of the Assembly as quickly as possible.

### 3:50

Mr. Chairman, my comments today will be quite brief. Again, I will remind members of the importance of this industry and what it means to the province. I can say that I was pleased to see last week that the interest in development in this province was continuing. We had a \$37 million land sale for our leased bonuses last week, and that to me sends a signal of confidence in long-term projections for activity levels within the industry, because you don't buy through land bonuses and leases unless you're prepared to go through with the development on them.

I'm also pleased to say that the price forecasts for this week have been a little shy on the oil side. We've seen an increase in oil prices this week, which I think is comforting to everyone. It's a plus. Everyone knows how cyclical the industry can be. It goes up and down, and nobody knows where that is. The importance of this industry cannot be overlooked, because it in fact is the major motor industry within the province.

So I won't dwell on my comments today, Mr. Chairman, other than to say that I'm looking forward to the final questions from the side opposite. When we were in subcommittee the last time, I did ask if there were any further questions coming from the side opposite, and there were none. So I don't expect there will be an

awful lot of questions today. However, I expect one or two from my Energy critic. I will take my chair and listen to those questions.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Well, Mr. Chairman, that was just a little presumptuous on the minister's part. I just have a few questions.

Before I get into the questions, I must make a comment. I know that the minister has been very diligent in trying to get our responses back on a timely basis, and I thank her and her staff for that. Once again – you know, I'm not one to unduly criticize processes or things in the House here – this budget system that we've got highlights the problems that we've got. I am now faced with not having these answers. I'm not putting the blame on the minister; I want to make that clear. It's the process that we've got here that has compressed the time. Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if we could possibly adjourn debate and maybe come back a little bit later so I could have time to review the responses. Maybe I won't even have any more questions; who knows? The problem here is that we've compressed the time with this subcommittee process.

THE CHAIRMAN: If you're asking to move adjournment of debate, then that's sort of irrevocable. How you use your time, your 20 minutes, is up to you.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: So what you're saying is that we have to continue along then. Okay, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'll try to remember the questions that I asked last time and try not to reask those questions. I just have a few anyway.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

I guess in view of the good-news budget that the federal government came down with on March 6, particularly in the area of Syncrude, one of the things I'm just wondering, Madam Minister, is if the revenue estimates are still going to be valid. The industry response seems to be that we're going to get a bunch of new development in the tar sands, in the oil sands, and with that should follow additional revenues. I don't know that the revenue estimates would still be valid or that the amount of staff that would be required on the department side to manage all of this would still be valid. So I'm wondering if, say, the '97-98, '98-99 table, for example, on page 202 would still be valid.

I have another question, and this one is one that the minister keeps bringing up publicly. I told her that I was going to ask her this question, as a matter of fact: how do you get your \$20 million to \$40 million loss to the industry? I know your department has calculated that, and I'd be curious to see how that figure was calculated, Mr. Chairman.

We had a good meeting and dinner last night, Mr. Chairman – this is the CAPP dinner I'm referring to, where the federal Finance minister spoke. A number of people came up and asked me about the collection of these royalties. This was news to me, how they're sort of submitting the royalties on a volunteer basis, and this is something that they wanted me to ask the minister: how are we going to ensure that we get all of our money? I recall that in one of my conversations a controller/production accountant from a particular oil company said that this person was aware there were other companies that weren't going to be able to properly calculate what they owed. They were aware that they were behind in their royalty payments because of the invoicing being behind and all the rest of the problems – and I'm not totally

up to speed with what the problems are – and they felt that the province was going to be out of pocket on some royalty money. The minister is shaking her head, and she obviously knows something that I don't know. I was curious that this was a concern of people in the industry. So I would just ask that maybe she respond to that. What is being done to catch up? I know we're catching up with the invoicing, but what specifically is being done in that regard?

Moving along to the APMC, I would ask this question once again just in case it doesn't get answered. On page 202 we still have costs for the APMC, the second line under expenses, two million three for '97-98 and two million three for '98-99. We're going to get rid of the APMC, presumably. Why would we still have a cost there?

The Alberta Energy . . . well, the EUB now, as the minister corrected me. On page 151, under the business plan summary, the second last bullet, it says that we're reducing the funding for the EUB from \$21.5 million to \$12.8 million, which is a drop of, give or take, \$9 million. Yet on page – well, you can sort of take your pick. If you look at page 202 again and look at the revenues and the expenses, quite simply I don't see how this table here reconciles with what's being said in the business plan. In the table on page 202 – and I've looked at this for some time – there's a drop of \$9 million. According to the business plan, the ministry is dropping the funding to the EUB, yet I don't see it in that table.

4:00

Now, we have a Bill before us, Bill 8, that talks about certain things dealing with the AEUB. One of the things in that Bill – I think it's clause 3.2, as I recall – talks about the province making guarantees to the AEUB on some of its operating expense shortfall. I would like to know from the minister if she could tell me: is there any provision for possible costs there? I don't know that I understand why the government has to guarantee loans for the AEUB.

Also, as the industry is now going to fund a greater proportion – the percentage escapes me now; I think it's an extra 20 percent – what is the industry's view of picking up this additional funding? By my reading, the information that I get is they're not really happy about that. You know, I'm all in favour of user pay, but there is a certain regulatory component to this. Why should the industry be picking up the cost of everything or almost everything in this case?

MRIS. I don't think I asked this question last time: are we going to be done by this summer? This question came up again at the CAPP dinner last night, and it was mentioned to me. I said: "Well, I don't know. I mean, we're supposed to be finished this summer." So I pose the question to the minister: do we have a firm idea that the MRIS is going to be done by the summer?

On page 153, VCR, the voluntary challenge and registry program. What information is being disseminated to the oil companies to make them aware of the VCR? We can have this program in place, but in some of my discussions with particularly the smaller oil and gas companies, they don't seem to be really up to speed on this. They know there's something out there, but they seem to be in the dark. So I was wondering if the minister has given it some consideration. If she has given it consideration, what is being done to make these people aware of their voluntary obligation? That's on page 201.

On page 155 – I'm almost done here – of the budget estimates, we are forecasting for the AEUB under capital costs \$3 million, and we actually projected back last year a million five. What

happened there? Once again, that's the AEUB, page 155 of the estimates. The forecast for this year is going to be three million one, and we had only estimated a million five sixty.

The same thing with AOSTRA. What happened there? We didn't have anything in the estimates, and it looks like we're going to have \$10 million. I would guess that that's probably as a result of the merging in, but I'm not sure.

An interesting question was asked of me last night, and I didn't know the answer to this as well. The minister has said that she's gotten advice that we can't go to a cash royalty system for oil, yet we have it for gas. Everybody wants to go to this cash system, and I agree and I'm sympathetic to the advice that the minister has gotten. But that was a good question, I thought. I said: yeah, why can we do it for natural gas but can't do it for oil? The answer is probably really obvious; I just don't know what it is.

What are we doing about PUITTA to try to get the federal portion back? I mean, I'm not hearing anything more about this.

MR. DINNING: What are you doing about it?

MR. DALLA-LONGA: The Treasurer has asked what I am doing about it. I'm doing whatever I can. I have to remind the Treasurer of a little bit of history, how the problem started. He's quite well aware that the province was the first one to withdraw the PUITTA rebate, so the feds figured: well, if the province doesn't need to do it, why should we do it? So what do we need to do? [interjection] The Treasurer seems to be fairly chirpy. Probably he wants to get up and ask some questions too.

MR. DINNING: You're doing nothing; right?

MR. DALLA-LONGA: He must be really sensitive about that or something, Mr. Chairman. He must be feeling kind of timid about what's happened there. I don't know; maybe he feels like he's done something wrong. Certainly his behaviour would indicate that.

Now, the next thing. Moving on to page 202. Madam Minister, why is the department expense for 1997-98 jumping from \$59 million back up to \$66 million? That's about a 15 percent jump. We've got a nice drop, and then all of a sudden in '98-99 the department expense goes up to \$66,827,000. I'm referring to page 202.

I think with that, that is the end of my questions. I'll give someone else an opportunity if they'd like to speak. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. [interjections] Order on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have several questions for the Minister of Energy. The first question. In terms of the business plan summary highlights on page 151, one of the bullets says that "the Department will continue implementation of the electric industry restructuring." What I'd like to know specifically is whether or not the department has set out in any format, in a brochure, what they anticipate the industry's response to be to the deregulated framework. I mean, that's important both for economic development and in terms of just the innovations they expect. Do we expect to see more cogeneration? What do we expect to see in the nature of pooling, line use? What does it imply, then, for costs through time and just the type of restructur-

ing that the market is going to generate? Debate on the Bill got sidetracked over the issue related to Edmonton Power and moved us away from debating the nature of the outcomes in terms of the cost structure and the competitiveness of the industry compared to other jurisdictions.

So what I'd like to know is: does the minister have a plan that envisages how the industry will look in '97, '98, '99 and how it will differ from the existing industry now? Partly it will change because of technology, but partly it will change because we've changed EEMA and the whole process of pooling. So what has been done? What are the studies? What is publicly available?

The second set of points relates to page 153 and the participation in the voluntary challenge and registry program, VCR. I note that on that page there are emission reductions reported to the voluntary challenge and registry program. It's not available – not available – and I understand that they're being collected. My question is: what resources is the department putting into play to ensure that we get a faster turnaround? The issue of greenhouse gas emissions I think is going to be increasingly important as we approach 2000 and the numbers being available as to voluntary compliance. The third line there is greenhouse gas "reductions achieved through Alberta Government action plan." Again, I think that as we come closer to the year 2000, there are pressures for a move away from voluntary compliance to a more interventionist mode. I mean, we saw that under the former Minister of Energy, who thankfully has moved on to another portfolio.

MRS. BLACK: Environment.

4:10

DR. PERCY: Yeah, environment.

So the issue here is basically the collection and monitoring of the greenhouse gas reductions.

The other point I'd like to ask is: to what extent, then, is the province going to move towards a proactive strategy of active monitoring? Voluntary targets have been set out. Are we going to hold firms that have made commitments to the targets that they've set out? Will it be part of the business plan here, and will we see it with a far quicker turnaround than we presently do? I think this is going to be an increasingly important issue the more it appears that Canada is not going to meet the target set out for the year 2000 in terms of our 1990 levels, and Alberta will be the target of opportunity in this regard. So I think it's important that we make the voluntary challenge and registry program work. That really does depend, I think, on faster monitoring and highlighting wedges between outcomes and targets set out under that plan.

With those comments, I will close.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I understand from the opposition that those were the only questions coming forward from my estimates, so I will answer them immediately. Those that I don't have a direct answer for in detail, I will, again, send them over to the people that asked the questions.

Mr. Chairman, one of the things that we didn't talk about the other day when we were doing the main thrust of the estimates was in fact the voluntary challenge and registry program. This program has been very successful in dealing with the action plan that was prepared for Canada and submitted. The monitoring of the actual results – i.e., the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is requesting, is an ongoing thing, a daily reporting. But as to numbers, we will

report back to the CCME through the joint environment/energy ministers conference coming up, I believe, in November this year.

We've given some preliminary numbers as they've come in and shared them with our colleagues across the country so that we could not only say where Alberta is coming from but also encourage others to buy into the program, because it's important that everyone buy in. We've been extremely pleased. I think we had over 400 companies from Alberta who had signed into the process. I said it the other morning in our discussion at Public Accounts – and I didn't bring that – I believe it's fairly close to 80 percent of the industry that have in fact registered for the program and are putting forward their own initiatives through the program. So I think it's very good.

Insofar as monitoring, there is monitoring going on. The CASA movement has looked at some of the monitoring concepts to see how monitoring is effective, and we'll be following through on that. CASA, of course, is the clean air strategic alliance group, that the departments of Environmental Protection, Health, and Energy are all supportive of as we try and put forward the best model for Canada in clean air strategy. So I think those are important initiatives.

The hon. member asked about the electrical restructuring and what that model will look like. Clearly we believe that when we started down this road, we were going to move from an over-regulated scenario – it wasn't dealing with market forces – into a new arena that would be market driven, provide competition, provide incentive for investment to occur within the province, which of course would provide additional incentive for reduction in costs and efficiency within the system.

So we believe that through incentive regulation programs, the market will in fact develop and take hold in Alberta, which already today it is resulting in, because we have implemented the lowest power costs within the country. Where that leads to is the broader picture in the global sense. Down the road as all of the kinks come out of the system – there are some that have to be there actually when you put a new one in place – and you look at the opening up of market arenas in the global sense, I believe that Alberta and Alberta companies will be well positioned to be the lead competitor in those new market arenas.

Clearly, we are the only jurisdiction in all of North America that has deregulated their generation of electrical power. That positions us already ahead of the rest of the jurisdictions. In fact, we're the only jurisdiction that through a process of stakeholder involvement – they didn't always agree, and that's okay – which is still going on, came forward for a restructured model. In other jurisdictions they have the regulators trying to design the deregulated system, and it'll never work. Again I'll say that any time you make a change, the ABCs have to be there. You have to have awareness and acceptance. The B is you have to have a buy-in. The C is the commitment to the program. Unless you have the ABCs, you'll never make a change effectively occur. So that is in place, and that advisory group is still working today to get through some of the final implementation discussions that are going on.

I just want to flip to a couple of comments. A number of the questions the Member for Calgary-West asked I believe we answered in the last go-round of main estimates debate in the House. He asked: why not a cash royalty system? That's a very valid question. I personally am very much in favour of a cash position. However, as the Minister of Energy for the province of Alberta I had to be sure of what we were doing insofar as a cash position, and I did engage outside legal counsel. I asked the

question: what is the impact on the province of Alberta? The counsel that came back to me was: yes, you can do that; however, if you move in that direction, you could diminish the constitutional and jurisdictional position of the province of Alberta. As the Minister of Energy for this province I had to go forward and say: I'm not prepared to take the chance on losing our constitutional and our jurisdictional abilities as this province. So I cannot recommend to my industry or to this Legislature a cash royalty position, because I cannot put that in jeopardy.

With those few comments, Mr. Chairman, I will commit to replying to the balance of the questions in writing, if there are any outstanding that we haven't replied to.

I would now wish to adjourn debate on the estimates of the Department of Energy.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Energy has moved that we adjourn debate on the estimates of the Department of Energy. All in favour, say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the debate on the estimates of the Department of Energy be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

### Justice and Attorney General

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. minister want to start with a few comments, please.

MR. EVANS: I'll start with a few comments, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to provide to the Chair six copies of answers to the questions that we've been able to get to thus far. Actually, if I can have another page come by, I have some answers to specific questions asked by members, and the members are noted on the top left-hand corner of those responses.

By our calculation, back on March 5, which was only a week and a couple of days ago, we had about a hundred questions asked in our estimates. They were rapid-fire questions.

MRS. SOETAERT: Good questions.

MR. EVANS: Yeah, there were a lot of good questions. We're continuing to work on getting answers to them. I'll try to be brief right now, Mr. Chairman, and just stress a couple of points that I think bear a little further comment.

There was a lot of comment over the performance measures and the targets for the department in our budget, and I'd just like to talk about a couple of them in particular. One, the omnibus survey that was conducted last year showed that 49 percent of Albertans were either very or somewhat satisfied with the justice system. So our analysis found that dissatisfaction was very focused, and it was directed at things like sentencing and the Young Offenders Act and not at policing or the administration of our courts. I think it's important to understand that the level of

satisfaction was specific to those areas where people thought we should make some improvements. I would point out that the Department of Justice doesn't control many of the players in the system like the judiciary, the federal legislation, or even our police forces.

4:20

There were a number of members as well, Mr. Chairman, who asked: why did you use 21 percent or less as the target for the percentage of Albertans who reported being a victim of crime? Now, I want to stress that when we develop our targets, we have to use realistic assessments of where we are now, and unfortunately crime is a reality. Twenty-one percent is the percentage found recently in a national survey, and I feel that targeting at less than the national average is an appropriate target for Alberta to be looking at at this point in time. Hopefully, it will be much less than the national average in the future.

I also have to stress that 21 percent is not the same as the crime rate; it's a measure of self-reported victimization. Therefore, it's higher than the crime rate, which is based on Criminal Code offences. Even if a person had not reported a crime to police, Mr. Chairman, they might respond in a survey that they felt they were a victim of crime, and this could include things like minor vandalism or even noisy neighbours. It's the perception of victimization that we want to get at with our performance measures. Certainly the department doesn't control crime or the causes of crime, but through multifaceted strategies such as our focus on serious and violent crime, we do everything we can to respond effectively from prevention to law enforcement to sanctions.

I also want to go on to another topic. I know that a number of colleagues on both sides of the House received complaints from constituents as to their difficulties with the maintenance enforcement program. Regardless of how good that program is, Mr. Chairman, there are going to be those who either will not or cannot pay their maintenance. In those cases we hear complaints from creditors who are not receiving maintenance, no matter how vigorously we pursue those cases. We're also going to hear complaints from debtors that we're treating them unfairly when we take enforcement action.

When we look at other provinces, I think it's important that we do a comparison, and when you do that, you see that Alberta compares very well. Alberta collects maintenance payments for other jurisdictions far better than other jurisdictions collect for Alberta. Alberta is also the top province when it comes to intercepting federal payments like unemployment insurance and tax rebates for Alberta creditors. By the end of this fiscal year the program will have collected \$502 million, more than \$91 million of which has been collected for the Crown. For many single-parent families the program has made the difference between social assistance and independence.

From the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar there were number of questions about aboriginal issues and the Cawsey report in particular. I'm pleased to say that over half of the report's corrections-related recommendations have been fully implemented and all within existing resources in the department. The Métis wilderness camp for low-risk offenders in custody has been opened, and the Siksika community corrections initiative is now under way. We're continuing to work to progress in this area.

So with those overview comments, Mr. Chairman, I welcome any further questions from, I believe, the Liberal side of the House first.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister for the answers. I had some questions about some of the questions that were put that were not answered at the last opportunity. However, I'll wait for your responses, Mr. Minister, and hope that they'll be contained there.

Just before I forget that point, Mr. Chairman, the Cawsey report is something that I've been committed to. I think we're a little slow in getting to those recommendations. I'm glad to hear that over half of them are done, but I think they are all deserving of our attention. They all have merit, and I would hope that we can deal with them more rapidly.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister about, relative to maintenance enforcement, the federal program announced in the budget. Now, I appreciate that probably the minister has been apprised of this some time in advance and that his department is geared up to deal with it. I'd like to ask the minister about the guidelines and whether or not I should expect that the guidelines that were enunciated, and I realize with discretion, will be implemented in this province, and if so, when.

I'd also like to know about the income tax implications of the federal plan, what they will be for the province of Alberta and whether the minister can answer what our intentions are in that regard. It's my understanding that there's \$50 million in federal funds assigned to the transition period for this program. Perhaps the minister can tell us where this government and his department will be collaborating with the federal government in that transitional period and if we are collaborating with them. I think that families of Alberta need some assurance in this regard, Mr. Minister.

The other question in that whole package, Mr. Chairman, is the business of access for noncustodial parents. It's still unresolved as to whether or not we're going to provide any mediation to eliminate the necessity for people who need a variance going directly to court when either parent is in breach of the court order.

Mr. Chairman, I have one other question about maintenance enforcement. In the business plan summary on page 281, Mr. Minister, you indicate that there are "options for the delivery of the services" of maintenance enforcement, that they're going to be "evaluated to ensure . . . continued effectiveness." Now, that statement worries me because that has some faint whiff of privatization in it. I need to know and the people who are dependent upon the maintenance enforcement department and who over some years have complained about the department need to know if it has been evaluated, against what kind of criteria, if there are in fact some – that word – "options," if there are some other possibilities being considered as to how it's to be delivered, and again, what relationship this has with the new federal program.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I think we've all been concerned in maintenance enforcement with the discrepancy from province to province. I know there's collaboration, but I think there needs to be some national system in place where people cannot escape their obligations by simply moving out of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, I want to speak briefly about Bill C-31 and ask the minister if in his department there is any intent to provide an

intervention in the appeal that is currently happening. I think we've talked about this in this House on a number of occasions. There are many native Alberta women who are still deprived of their rights to return, and I think it's incumbent on the government to take up their cause. These are citizens of this province. The law is there. Bill C-31 is duly passed into legislation, and they are not able to avail themselves of it. Has the minister any intent of providing an intervention on behalf of the Alberta women who are so deprived, and if not, why not? I think this is the very least we can do for native women in this province.

4:30

I'd like to ask the minister a question that has been asked of me on a number of occasions, and that is related to the appointment of justices of the peace. Perhaps the minister could provide me with criteria as to how this is done, how applications are evaluated, who does that evaluation, and whether or not appointments are forever. I simply don't have that information, Mr. Minister, and I've been asked that question on a number of occasions.

Way back when the Minister of Family and Social Services announced a comprehensive reform in child welfare, your department was supposed to be one of the major partners in that whole reform process. Now, the process is well along. In fact, we anticipate the legislation in advance of the reporting of the steering groups, which I think is a grave mistake. We anticipate that legislation in this spring session, but your department, I think, has not been a party to the discussions as I would have expected. In fact, there have been statements made about where the department fits, the kind of part it's playing. Mr. Chairman, I think it's absolutely essential that the Department of Justice be properly represented not only now but in the final analysis in how child welfare reforms are going to be applied. It is a major player, and I would think it would be detrimental and difficult for children and families in this province if your department was not an indigenous part of that whole process, not just in the planning stage but as we go into operationalizing it and implementing the recommendations.

At the end of our discussion, Mr. Chairman, the hon. Government House Leader made some statements about Mr. Justice McClung's decision, and I'd just like to ask you if this reflects your government's policy and your department's, if those statements were made on behalf of your department and should be so considered.

Finally, Mr. Minister, some questions about your key performance measures. I know you did answer some of the questions that were raised before, but I am disturbed at the notion that court delays of 13 weeks are acceptable. I'm not suggesting, sir, that you find it acceptable either, but it seems to me that we should be aiming for fewer instead of more. What is it we're doing to get out of this backlog?

The efficiency of correctional facilities. Now, you're telling us, Mr. Minister, that this provides information on how efficiently correctional facilities are operated. The only variable that I see you using is the per diem cost per offender, and that seems to me to be a very narrow slice of what the efficiency measure ought to be. I can't believe that that's the only way we measure efficiency in the correctional facilities, and I would like to suggest that that's too shallow a measurement, that there should be several different variables in that measurement. Then we would have a better snapshot of how we're doing and how efficient we are.

Back to maintenance enforcement and the key performance measure in this regard, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, I find it unacceptable that we don't have numbers in '93-94, '95 and that

in both '96-97 and '98 they are still "to be determined." I think that is unacceptable. Again, back to my questions about our interaction with the federal plans, somehow it's not, in my view, good enough that your department not only is still determining it after years of operation – it started in 1985 – but that you're writing it in your performance measures. I think that's unnerving.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to yield to my colleague for Edmonton-Glengarry.

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

MR. DECORE: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to spend a little time on specific issues dealing with the business plan, specifically pages 280 and 281 of the Justice business plan. One of the major strategies identified on page 280 is "to focus the resources of Alberta Justice on serious and violent crime." Now, I think that we need some specifics, Mr. Minister, on exactly what resources are going to be allocated, what sort of time frame we're talking about, what priorities exist on those issues of spending resources.

I need only look back to last week and this week on a motion we had in this Assembly on child prostitution, a motion that was passed unanimously, urging the government to take action to deal with child prostitution. The suggestion that the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek made was that there be a task force, that there be resources allocated to this. I don't think it's good enough, Mr. Chairman, for bland, general statements to be made without some time frames and without some specifics. Now that we have had, as an example, this motion passed unanimously, Mr. Minister, what are you going to do in terms of child prostitution? Is there going to be a task force?

I thought that was a great suggestion from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I indicated that we would be prepared to participate in a task force that would involve our side of the House and the government side of the House. I like the fact that somebody has given suggestions on child prostitution: having more counsellors, having counsellors in the street, having more education, having licensing. I thought that was an interesting idea that was brought forward: we should be licensing prostitutes so that we can control and start to deal in a more effective way with prostitution, but give us some specifics on money and time frame on issues like child prostitution and other serious and violent crimes. How have you prioritized those serious and violent crimes?

MR. JONSON: Are you suggesting that we license child prostitutes?

MR. DECORE: Pardon me? The hon. Minister of Education is asking me whether I am suggesting that there be licensing of child prostitutes. The hon. minister should know that there are experts . . .

MR. JONSON: Answer the question. Come on. [interjections]

MR. DECORE: I'm trying to answer the question for you. [interjections]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order.

MR. DECORE: If you'd just have a little patience, Mr. Minister, which you never have exhibited in this House, I'll try to deal with

that. You like to do things by regulation and behind closed doors. I like to debate out in the public arena.

Mr. Chairman, there is a report dealing with child prostitution from experts that suggest that one of the ways that we would consider in a task force – and that was the context that I put it into last time, hon. minister. I guess you weren't here or you weren't listening, like you usually don't listen. The issue is: I don't know if it's a good idea. I think it should be . . . [interjections]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. Order. Order. Both sides: this is a debate on the estimates of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Across-the-gap arguments are not permitted, so if you could get back to the estimates.

MR. DECORE: You are quite right, Mr. Chairman. I take your comments to heed and only note that the minister seems to know more about justice than he does about education. Thank you for those comments.

So, Mr. Minister, give us some specifics. I've given you some ideas, our ideas, on how experts – experts, Minister of Education – are thinking about dealing with some of these serious problems. How are you expecting to deal with them? Who are you going to call in? Where is this advice going to come from? How are you going to prioritize this issue of focusing resources?

4:40

In the business plan you talk about implementation of alternative dispute resolution. I've heard that one going in this Assembly for I think eight years, and I'd like some idea – you know, the minister is chiding me for not having decisions made. I've seen this brought forward by the Conservative government now for at least eight years, talking about, "We're going to bring forward some ideas on alternate dispute resolution." Well, it's time to put up or keep quiet. Now, what are the ideas? What kind of resources need to go into this alternate dispute resolution? A lot of work has been done at the university on this thing, and I think that the minister knows that. There's a whole section that's been started in that area.

I'm most interested in the business plan, Mr. Minister, for you to tell us how and why there needs to be an improvement in the accountability of the partnership with the RCMP. Now, that suggests to me that things haven't been going correctly, and I'd like the minister to identify some of the specific problems that have surfaced in dealing with the RCMP. Obviously something isn't going correctly or isn't going efficiently or isn't going well. I understand the issue of cost effectiveness and the improvement of that. Why aren't things going correctly, and what do you intend to do, specifically? What are some of the options that you're going to put forward in this Assembly on how we improve RCMP accountability? Is it your intention to create some new legislation by which they have to be accountable to a board? What is the specific intention that you have?

I'd like the minister to tell us, more specifically than just a generalization, what Provincial Offences Procedure Act improvements will be made. What specifically will be brought forward?

When you talk about a camp being operated by aboriginals and you talk about the Cawsey report – and we could talk about that one, Minister of Education. There's another area where you sat in cabinet for a long time and no decisions were made, and we still haven't got this thing under control. Who is it that you've contracted with? Is this something that you're going to contract out? Is this a particular Indian Nation that is going to come forward and provide the assistance? Is it all of the Indian

Nations? Are we talking about the three treaty areas of Alberta? How are you going to deal with this? Do you have to deal with it on that basis? Are you bringing in outside experts from the United States or somewhere else to deal with this issue of operations of a work camp for aboriginals?

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to ask the minister to explain in more detail the time being taken to get trials through the civil process. I hear more and more complaints from the public and from lawyers about the difficulty in getting trials through the courts system, and we see that there is actually a reduction in allocation of moneys for that process, for dealing with civil matters. So how specifically, Mr. Minister, are you going to deal with that matter and improve it?

Mr. Chairman, I think I'll stop there and rise later so that the minister can respond, if he will.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly.

**MS HANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to ask you a number of questions specifically about legal aid. I notice that again the budget has been cut by \$419,000. It lost 2 and a half million dollars last year, but I believe that was because of the task force that had been finished, and you didn't have to do that.

The reductions in legal aid and what is happening to the people that are not accessing it. I notice that the figures have gone down. In '91-92 111,600 people accessed legal aid, and they're down in '94-95 to 84,700. I wonder how those 30,000 people are having their legal representations met and if you have any studies to show what these people are doing, whether in fact they are simply going unrepresented? I also wonder if you are making eligibility requirements stricter. What will happen to low-income individuals if you do that? I also wondered what program you're taking this reduction from this year, this \$419,000. It will be very difficult to deliver quality legal services when the amounts that are paid to lawyers now are barely enough to cover their expenses.

Also, I haven't seen a report on the cost-effectiveness of the staff counsel pilot project, and I wonder when we can expect a decision on the future of that report.

I have a few questions on maintenance enforcement as well. This is also in the cuts to the department – this year it was \$226,000 – and the appearance to the public and some of us that there may not be enough staff in the department to serve people in a timely way. The maintenance enforcement issue is the biggest in one area, the number of calls received by constituency offices, and there's a need for more people to deal with the system rather than less, if that's where the money is being taken from. I'd like to know how many caseworkers are there and what the average caseload is of each caseworker and how many support staff we have. You know, we get calls from people who have been trying and trying for days to call the department, generally can't get through on the line, and it's very difficult for people who are working and can only get at a phone periodically.

I was talking to a woman the other day who'd come here from Ontario after having a divorce, having access and maintenance all sorted out in Ontario. She's been here for a year, and for six months out of that year she has not been receiving maintenance, but she cannot find out from the department the disposition of her file. She doesn't know why the system has broken down. It worked okay for the first six months. I suspect that maybe

they're so slow with things like that because the staff may be overworked.

I had another case where a man had paid \$2,500 in maintenance over the past two years, but his wife never received it. Well, after numerous calls, we discovered that the money had been paid, but there'd been a glitch in the record keeping. It was simply a mistake, but the woman wasn't getting the money, and the man wasn't being credited for paying it. They couldn't sort it out themselves. It took a lot of phone calls and a lot of work. So it seems to me that we could use more staff there or a better system.

I wondered if you could tell me about maintenance enforcement files in arrears for more than 90 days. I wondered if you had ever considered deducting maintenance payments from source, which would make it a lot simpler, I think.

I think that's all I have to say at the moment. Thank you.

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

**MRS. SOETAERT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have a few concerns. Some I expressed the other day, so I won't repeat those. Just the other day someone came up to me on my way to the Leg. and asked about that program: parenting after separation. He sang its praises and said how well it worked. I guess my questions are about that program. Is it going to be funded more? Is it growing? Are we going to use it more? He felt it was an excellent program that worked very well. I heard it for about 10 minutes. So my questions are: is it growing? What's happening with it?

**4:50**

Maintenance is always an issue that I'm concerned about. My colleague for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly mentioned that, so I won't go into it.

I want to take a moment to mention the Elizabeth Fry Society and express again how important I feel that is. I also want to thank the minister – of public works? No – who helped build the renovations on the new E. Fry. Would it be Municipal Affairs?

**MR. EVANS:** Public Works, Supply and Services.

**MRS. SOETAERT:** Public Works, Supply and Services. Carol Hutchings from there said that she had excellent co-operation with that department. She couldn't sing their praises high enough, how well they worked with them to renovate that building. It's an excellent facility. They're very, very happy with it. I was most impressed with the work being done.

I have a list of some very specific questions about correctional services. Because it's late on Thursday, I'll just list them without elaborating, and I know you welcome that. I might elaborate, if I break into it.

The cuts to correctional services. For the institutions that are receiving less funds, where's the money being cut from? Staff, programs, food: which ones? For the institutions that will be receiving more money, where's that money going? How much money is put into rehabilitation programs at each of the institutions? Has the minister projected what impact the funding levels of each inmate program will have on rates of repeat offenders and effective rehabilitation? Has the percentage of aboriginals in prison decreased since 1993, and what is the amount of the reduction planned in the next three years?

A couple of questions about young offenders. How many young offenders who have been sentenced to open custody are



being held in provincial young offender centres? What measures are being taken to increase the number of less-costly open-custody beds? What measures are being taken to increase the number of open-custody beds available for female young offenders so that they are not continually housed in the CYOC?

One of the goals of the department is to have the lowest cost per offender in adult custody in Canada. How is this going to be accomplished, and what will be the long-term price of providing only bare essentials to offenders?

Those are some of my concerns. I've already expressed to the minister the general fear out there of break-ins. The Rural Crime Watch: how is that supported by your department? We have quite an active group out where I live, but at times they feel frustrated because break-ins continue. I guess I would ask for some initiative or some direction from the department as to how we can certainly help decrease the amount of break-ins and vandalism in rural Alberta where your neighbour isn't right next door and can't see who is coming to the driveway and emptying out your house.

So with those few comments, I want to thank the Minister of Justice for his patience, as always. I'll hand it over and graciously sit down.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of things that I didn't have an opportunity to speak to before. I would hope that the minister in his answers deals with the Member for Fort McMurray's issues regarding the system in the smaller rural communities. Much of his questioning was based on that. I haven't yet seen any answers, Mr. Minister, but I hope you can assure me that you will deal with that.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a general comment that I think is reflected here this afternoon. That is: I don't believe this new system of dealing with the estimates is an efficient one. I don't think it's working to anyone's advantage. I think it's a very clumsy one and one that has not been helpful, and I would hope that the hon. Government House Leader will be willing and eager to . . .

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Rising on a point of order, the hon. Government House Leader.

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

MR. DAY: I wonder if the member opposite would entertain a very brief question.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is reminded: you just have to say yes or no.

MRS. HEWES: No. I don't think so.

I always love it when the hon. House leader tries to interrupt my train of thought. It's well done. It works, you know; that's the interesting part of it.

**Debate Continued**

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I hope the hon. House leader and the members of the front bench – and I don't believe its advantaged them either. I think this is difficult for ministers. I think it's far less efficient. I think it makes it very hard for them and

their staff to deal with the questions, and this afternoon has reinforced that for me. So I hope that we can look at the thing again in the clear light of day, Government House Leader, and if it seems appropriate, that we can make some more changes and improve the system.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't let this opportunity go by without taking a moment to speak about the maintenance enforcement program and your plans for the next year. Well, when I take a look at the goals under Justice and the major strategies, I find nothing that indicates any improvements in the way that the program's being delivered. The only thing that you state under the highlights is that

options for the delivery of services by the Maintenance Enforcement Program will be evaluated to ensure its continued effectiveness.

Well, I have to state that of the people who talked to me in my constituency office, either those who are custodial parents or those who are noncustodial, few of them would agree that there's any continued effectiveness in this program.

So I'm wondering what the minister is going to be doing to address that issue, particularly when we see in the income statement that the dollar figure for maintenance enforcement is in fact going to be reduced over this year. It would seem to me that there should be some sort of long-term strategy that would considerably enhance a program that has fallen short from many people's perspective. It's interesting to see here that when you talk about client satisfaction with the maintenance enforcement program, you state that it wasn't applicable in the '93-94 or the '94-95 year.

Well, all you'd have to do is poll the calls coming to your office pro and con in order to be able to establish a level of client satisfaction or nonsatisfaction, as the case may be. I'm surprised that there's nothing in here that discusses that. I'm really wondering, when you say that the '96-97 and '97-98 targets are "to be determined," what the precise criteria are that you're going to be using and what, Mr. Minister, you are doing in concert with the federal party right now to co-ordinate anything that may be occurring in maintenance enforcement. [interjection] Well, now the minister says, "Us?" as if that should be a big surprise. In fact, this is a problem across Canada, not just unique to Alberta, and I believe it would be in the best interests of custodial and noncustodial parents to co-ordinate a Canada-wide program, that you could show some leadership in that area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. EVANS: Actually, Mr. Chairman, when the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was making her last comments about our party, I said: our? I wasn't sure whether she was talking about the federal Progressive Conservatives or her federal party. I didn't say, "Us." That's the difficulty of hearing across the way.

As I said in my preliminary comments, we had about a hundred questions on March 5 and a number of new questions that I'll have an interesting time answering. I hope that the answers are going to be clear to hon. members who took part in the estimates today.

For now, I would move that we adjourn debate on these estimates, knowing full well, Mr. Chairman, that we will be back next Thursday. It's been indicated in Projected Government Business that we'll be back next Thursday for another review. So I would move that we adjourn debate on these estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved that we adjourn debate on his department's estimates. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

5:00

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Community Development, the Department of Justice and Attorney General, and the Department of Energy, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

I would like to also table copies of all documents tabled during the Committee of Supply this day for the official records of the Assembly.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: So ordered.

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

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call the Committee of the Whole together.

**Bill 11**  
**Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1996**

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to Bill 11, the interim supply Bill, and at this stage to debate whether or not to bring in amendments. I'd like to review some of the issues that were discussed on second reading and how they affect me with regards to the issue of amendments.

We had initially argued that the Bill was redundant, and it was redundant because the estimates process that has been set out will be completed by the 21st of March. The appropriations Bills, it's clear, once introduced will be passed each day that they're introduced and will go through the three stages. So it's clear that

by the end of the month, Mr. Chairman, we will have completed the budget. This is an interim supply Act, which is for funding subsequent to the end of this current fiscal year, so I had argued that the Bill was redundant, but the Chairman in fact suggested that that was not the case. So it would not be, then, either prudent on my part or wise to bring an amendment in that regard to deal with what I would view as the redundancy of the Bill.

Having that avenue foreclosed to me, Mr. Chairman, we then debated the issue of the form and content of the Bill, and we raised the issue of how at each appropriation level for operating and capital these in fact were arrived at. I think, as my hon. colleague from Fort McMurray had highlighted, there was wide variance across departments. In some cases virtually none of the operating or capital budget was allocated, in other cases 60 to 80 percent. It was impossible to make rhyme or reason of the level of expenditures relative to the amount that was appropriated in the budget itself.

Now, as you can imagine, Mr. Chairman, this causes significant problems for us, because were we to bring in an amendment, we would not know how much then to subtract because there has been no justification offered for these expenditures either as operating or as capital except by the hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities, who in a very thorough, emotional, and impassioned review justified the expenditures of his department, the sole minister in fact to rise to the occasion in light of the comments by the Member for Fort McMurray. So we couldn't, in light of the clarity of his response, deduct anything from that department.

So as we went through each of these departments, Community Development, Economic Development and Tourism, asking how much we should remove from the operating or the capital, it was very difficult to bring forward an amendment in that regard, because no minister stood up and said: this is why this number is here. Many times this side of the House has asked members of Executive Council to justify the interim supply: why that proportion has been requested, what rhyme or reason. Except for the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, who in fact convinced all of us that his request should go through unimpeded - we then turned to the others.

As I say, there was considerable discussion as to sending a signal that we wanted some additional information about interim supply, but then when it came to the specifics of the amendment, we found it was impossible to agree. It would not be our wish in health care, for example, to impede the construction or renovations to hospitals that are very much needed, as we've seen as the rural hospitals are closed and shut down. We feel that there should be more investment in health care, not less. So would we, in fact, then bring forward an amendment there? The answer is no, Mr. Chairman.

We looked at other departments. Education. It's very clear given the level of demand for renovations certainly in the city of Edmonton, which I thought had put forward a compelling and convincing case for renovations. Some of the schools are 25 to 30 years old, have reached that cycle of pretty intensive need for significant renovations. Would we in fact bring forward anything that would preclude expenditures, then, on needed capital even though the city of Edmonton received disproportionately less than one would have thought? The answer is no.

We looked at Family and Social Services, and again it was clear to us that in light of the stress on the system and on the workers, it would not be prudent to bring forward an amendment to reduce the operating there.

So it was clear, then, as we went department by department that it was difficult to determine where and how to bring forth an amendment that would signal that we wanted additional information as to the requirements of interim supply but without us being provoked with a scattergun approach that would hurt the very people or groups that we intend to help.

Part of the problem with the whole process, Mr. Chairman, is that we get a Bill such as this, two pages, that requests \$2.7 billion in operating and \$58 million in capital without justification. It's our job to hold the government accountable, to ensure that funds are being spent wisely, but it's impossible given the absence of comment by the ministers involved or additional detail with regards to the interim supply to make reasoned and prudent decisions as to what should be voted upon and what should be deleted.

So again I would say that we were stymied then. In Committee of the Whole we felt almost compelled to bring forward an amendment, but found that in the absence of information and a defence of the budget by the ministers involved it was just not possible, because we did not want to use the scattergun and hurt the very people that we argue for on this side of the House.

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

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise in opposition to Bill 11, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1996. When I review the financial documents pertaining to the province or the assessments and analysis prepared by external groups and presented to the government – in particular the one I refer to is the Alberta Financial Review Commission, because they provide insight that sometimes we can't because we're not far enough removed. We can't see for ourselves, so it's helpful to have that third party, that objective analysis of the province's finances and direction.

The report which I refer to is the Report to Albertans: Highlights, March 31, 1993. When I went through that, what interested me in particular was page 5. Page 5 has a chart that shows the consolidated annual overspending in millions that the province had incurred for the time period of 1985 to 1993, and it's quite staggering when you take a look at it. In '85-86 we overspent just under a billion dollars. In 1986-1987 it was a record year. We overspent by \$4 billion, Mr. Chairman, and then that trend continued. Although it declined over time, it did continue.

5:10

Now, why did that happen, Mr. Chairman? That's the question we need to ask. Well, I think one of the reasons that occurred is that sufficient debate didn't take place in the Assembly on the expenditures prior to those expenditures being approved. Consequently, in this report by the Alberta Financial Review Commission they in fact make another statement on page 7, and their statement refers specifically to the review of fiscal accountability. They go on to say:

The Commission suggests that the government review its procedures to ensure fiscal accountability to Albertans and to the Legislature. The government should demand fiscal responsibility and accountability from all entities supported by government funding.

Mr. Chairman, that's precisely why I stand at this time in opposition to this Bill. When we look at this Bill, which is in all five pages, the only information presented in this Bill is the

expenditure figures, the amounts. Now, there's no explanation, for example, of whether the Economic Development and Tourism budget somehow includes any guarantees for someone who produces chocolates in Alberta, and although many of us have a sweet tooth, Mr. Chairman, we don't know for sure that there's no loan guarantee of some sort hidden in that Economic Development and Tourism budget for operating expenses. That budget is set currently at \$14,450,000, and I'm terrified on behalf of my constituents that there may be something within that budget that they wouldn't agree with, that I wouldn't agree with. So what I need is some assurance.

When the hon. Provincial Treasurer stood the other day, he said to my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud that he wanted some assurance that the appropriation Bills that follow the estimates would be completed by the end of this month. Well, Mr. Chairman, in fact the government controls the rate at which we move through these. That's clear.

There's very little that the opposition – because we are the minority here, whatever you put to a vote, even with our full complement, we're guaranteed to lose. So what can we do as an effective opposition? The only thing we can do is raise questions. We can look to those comments that were made by the Financial Review Commission that “the government review its procedures to ensure fiscal accountability to Albertans and to the Legislature,” and we can request the government, we can only ask the government to live by that recommendation, to encompass it, and to try to practise it.

So in terms of assurance that the appropriation Bills pertaining to the estimates will pass by the end of this month, the hon. Treasurer knows full well that they will, and he knows full well that if there was a chance that they might not, he could ensure that they do that. So the assurance that he requests is in fact within his own control.

Mr. Chairman, we as elected officials, all 83 of us, have to be held accountable for the estimates, for the expenditure of public funds, and the only way . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, but under Standing Order 61(4) I must put the question proposing the approval of every appropriation Bill on the Order Paper for consideration by the Committee of the Whole. Does the committee approve the following: Bill 11, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1996?

[Motion carried]

MR. DAY: I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain Bill. The committee reports the following: Bill 11.

I'm unable to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Agree with the report by the Member for Highwood?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I note as we move to adjourn today that it was on this day in 1979 that a Conservative government was once again elected to a majority in this province.

[At 5:18 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to 1:30 p.m. on Monday]