

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Tuesday, April 22, 1997 8:00 p.m.  
**Date:** 97/04/22

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee to order. First, a reminder that this is a relaxed, less formal but not too relaxed, stage of the Assembly. We do have a rule that only one member stands and talks at the same time. Members are free to have light refreshments, take their jackets off if they so desire, and may even move quietly about. We want to emphasize the point about quietness. We want to be able to hear. I still have four or five people moving around, but if we're ready, I would like to get your consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests. All those in favour of that motion please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried.  
 The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two guests from Innisfail, Cheryl Darling, president of the Innisfail Chamber of Commerce, and Denis Smith, who's vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce in Innisfail. They're up at meetings with the Alberta Chamber today, and I'd ask them to rise in the members' gallery and give them a warm welcome.

### Subcommittees of Supply

13. Mr. Havelock moved:

Be it resolved that:

1. Pursuant to Standing Order 57(1) four subcommittees of the Committee of Supply be established by the Committee of Supply with the following names: subcommittee A, subcommittee B, subcommittee C, and subcommittee D.
2. The membership of the respective subcommittees be as follows:  
 Subcommittee A: Mrs. Gordon, chairman; Mr. Severtson, deputy chairman; Mrs. Burgener; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Ducharme; Mr. Dunford; Mr. Friedel; Mr. Hancock; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Jacques; Mr. Johnson; Ms Leibovici; Mr. Loughheed; Mr. Mar; Dr. Massey; Mrs. O'Neill; Dr. Pannu; Mrs. Paul; Mr. Sapers; and Mr. Zwozdesky.  
 Subcommittee B: Mr. Tannas, chairman; Mrs. Laing, deputy chairman; Ms Barrett; Ms Blakeman; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Cao; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Doerksen; Mrs. Forsyth; Mrs. Fritz; Ms Graham; Mr. Havelock; Mr. Jonson; Ms Kryczka; Mrs. McClellan; Mr. Melchin; Dr. Oberg; Ms Olsen; Mrs. Sloan; and Mrs. Tarchuk.  
 Subcommittee C: Mr. Tannas, chairman; Mr. Fischer, deputy chairman; Mr. Clegg; Ms Evans; Mr. Gibbons; Mr. Klapstein; Mr. Marz; Mr. McFarland; Mr. Mitchell; Dr. Nicol; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Paszkowski; Mr. Shariff; Mr. Stelmach; Mr. Stevens; Mr. Strang; Mr. Thurber; Mr. Trynchy; Mr. White; and Mr. Woloshyn.

Subcommittee D: Mrs. Gordon, chairman; Ms Haley, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Ms Barrett; Mrs. Black; Mr. Bonner; Mr. Boutilier; Mr. Broda; Ms Carlson; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Herard; Mr. Langevin; Mr. Lund; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Pham; Mr. Smith; Mrs. Soetaert; Dr. Taylor; Dr. West; and Mr. Wickman.

3. The following portions of the main estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, unless previously designated by the Leader of the Opposition to be considered by the designated supply subcommittees, be referred to the subcommittees for their reports to the Committee of Supply as follows:  
 Subcommittee A: Advanced Education and Career Development; Education; Executive Council; Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs; and the Provincial Treasurer.  
 Subcommittee B: Community Development; Family and Social Services; Health; and Justice and the Attorney General.  
 Subcommittee C: Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Municipal Affairs; Public Works, Supply and Services; and Transportation and Utilities.  
 Subcommittee D: Economic Development and Tourism; Energy; Environmental Protection; Labour; and science, research, and information technology.
4. When the Committee of Supply is called to consider the main estimates it shall, on the six calendar days after agreement on the motion establishing the subcommittees when main estimates are under consideration, resolve itself into two of the four subcommittees, both of which shall meet and report to the Committee of Supply.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Chairman, before I get to an amendment which has been developed with my colleague across the way, I would like to simply very briefly reiterate that we have attempted to develop a process with respect to the subcommittees that is fair to all parties. I understand and appreciate the concerns that have been raised by my colleague, but nevertheless it's our position that the process does work effectively and that members are allowed to participate.

In any event, what I would like to do, Mr. Chairman, at this time is as a result of changes in the membership being needed by the Official Opposition and as a result of changes subsequent to the naming of the five designated supply subcommittees. I'd like to move that Government Motion 13 be amended to read as follows:

Be it resolved that:

1. Pursuant to Standing Order 57(1) four subcommittees of the Committee of Supply be established by the Committee of Supply with the following names: subcommittee A, subcommittee B, subcommittee C, and subcommittee D.
2. The membership of the respective subcommittees be as follows:  
 Subcommittee A: Mrs. Gordon, chairman; Mr. Severtson, deputy chairman; Mrs. Burgener; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Ducharme; Mr. Dunford; Mr. Friedel; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Jacques; Mr. Johnson; Ms Leibovici; Mr. Loughheed; Mr. Mar; Dr. Oberg; Mrs. O'Neill; Dr. Pannu; Mrs. Paul; Mr. Sapers; and Mr. Zwozdesky.  
 Subcommittee B: Mr. Tannas, chairman; Mrs. Laing, deputy chairman; Ms Barrett; Ms Blakeman; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Cao; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Doerksen; Mrs. Forsyth; Mrs. Fritz; Ms Graham; Mr. Hancock; Mr. Havelock; Mr. Jonson; Ms Kryczka; Mrs. McClellan; Mr. Melchin; Ms Olsen; Mrs. Sloan; and Mrs. Tarchuk.

Subcommittee C: Mr. Tannas, chairman; Mr. Fischer, deputy chairman; Mr. Clegg; Ms Evans; Mr. Gibbons; Mr. Klapstein; Ms Leibovici; Mr. Marz; Mr. McFarland; Dr. Nicol; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Paszkowski; Mr. Shariff; Mrs. Soetaert; Mr. Stelmach; Mr. Stevens; Mr. Strang; Mr. Thurber; Mr. Trynchy; and Mr. Woloshyn.

Subcommittee D: Mrs. Gordon, chairman; Ms Haley, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Ms Barrett; Mrs. Black; Mr. Boutilier; Mr. Broda; Ms Carlson; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Herard; Mr. Langevin; Mr. Lund; Mr. Magnus; Dr. Nicol; Mrs. Paul; Mr. Pham; Mr. Sapers; Mr. Smith; Dr. Taylor; and Dr. West.

3. The following portions of the main estimates of expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, unless previously designated by the Leader of the Opposition to be considered by the designated supply subcommittees, be referred to the subcommittees for their reports to the Committee of Supply as follows:

Subcommittee A: Advanced Education and Career Development; Education; and the Provincial Treasurer.

Subcommittee B: Community Development; Executive Council; and Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

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

Subcommittee D: Economic Development and Tourism; Energy; and science, research, and information technology.

4. When the Committee of Supply is called to consider the main estimates it shall, on the six calendar days after agreement on the motion establishing the subcommittees when main estimates are under consideration, resolve itself into two of the four subcommittees, both of which shall meet and report to the Committee of Supply.

As I indicated, Mr. Chairman, the reason for the amendment is primarily to reflect the changed membership on the subcommittees, and on that I would sit down.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question through you to the Government House Leader. I would also like to say that these amendments come as a result of our discussions in anticipation of what may happen to the main motion. My question through you to the Government House Leader regards clause 4 of the amendment. I'm just wondering whether or not the wording is correct. The way it reads is:

When the Committee of Supply is called to consider the main estimates, it shall, on the six calendar days after agreement . . . when main estimates are under consideration . . .

The meaning I derive from that is that after the Committee of Supply is called to consider the main estimates on six calendar days, there will be opportunities for two subcommittees to meet concurrently. Or is it four subcommittees to meet concurrently? I'd just like some clarity on that.

MR. HAVELOCK: The way I interpret that, Mr. Chairman, is that concurrently only two of the four subcommittees would be meeting, not all four at the same time. Is that your concern?

MR. SAPERS: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. If there's no further discussion, are you ready for the question?

Hon. members, we have a little bit of difficulty, but it shouldn't be that difficult to get through. When voting, we want to know

clearly what it is that we're voting for. We have before us a motion that has within it an amendment, and as long as we understand it as that, then we . . . We haven't got that understanding.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: It may be the freshness to the task of the two House leaders, but our intent, Mr. Chairman, is to deal with the amendment only, not the main motion. If that frustrates the Table officers, I'm quite prepared to table separate amendments, but clearly we anticipate a vigorous debate on the motion once it's amended or not. This will simply be a vote on the amendment.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Government House Leader to explain?

**8:10**

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Chairman, my understanding of procedure is that once the motion is moved, you are able to put an amendment on the floor at any time, and I moved that amendment. I would expect that we're able to vote on the amendment separately from the main motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Government House Leader and members of the committee, we have now in front of us a motion, and what we're voting on is the amendment. We're having some difficulty because the amendment isn't in a separate document. Be that as it may, everyone has the document in front of them which says "Amendment to Government Motion 13." If there's anyone who doesn't have that, then let us know, and we will provide them with that. Right now, we're voting on the amendment.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Chairman, I have a separate document. I think everyone else here has a separate document, one separate from the motion. [interjection] Well, it was to have been distributed to you all. [interjection] Yes, that's it, right in his hand.

THE CHAIRMAN: The original motion is on the Order Paper. The amendment is this multipage thing that was on all of our desks when we arrived in the committee tonight. We are now voting on the amendment that is the four-page document in front of you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually will not say much more on the main motion. I'll turn the floor over to my hon. colleague, who I know will be fully supportive.

MR. SAPERS: Don't count on it, Government House Leader.

My apologies to the Table if there was any confusion on that process. We were actually trying to make things easier, weren't we, Government House Leader?

Mr. Chairman, earlier today I had an opportunity to rise in the Assembly and present what I believed to be a prima facie case of privilege considering the creation of these subcommittees. Because of some timing and consequential issues the Speaker found that he had no other option than to rule against the question of privilege.

I'm a little bit concerned that, in that ruling, there is some misapprehension about what the privilege argument was really all about. The privilege argument was really all about a very simple truth, and that is that one person can't be in two places at the same time. The most fundamental flaw with the government's strategy of dealing with estimates debate is that it would require private members to split themselves in half or perhaps in quarters.

There is a secondary issue, though, which may not be as apparent but is no less fundamental to the question of properly proceeding with an honest and true debate on estimates in this Assembly. Let's take, for example, a person who is employed in the medical helping profession who was very interested in knowing about the estimates of the Department of Health and wasn't able to attend necessarily in the Legislative Assembly to track down the committees. That person would have to know, for example, that the budget isn't being dealt with in Committee of Supply, except for the brief report that comes at the end. Furthermore, that person would have to know that estimates are considered only by subcommittees in any detailed form and that those subcommittees are created or not created by a separate whim of either the government or the Assembly. Furthermore, that person would have to know which subcommittee is dealing with the health care estimates, what dates that health care subcommittee will be meeting or has met, and somehow that person would have to be able to access a stand-alone *Hansard* report of those proceedings.

All of this taken together is a rather onerous and tortuous path that any individual should have to take simply to become informed about debates of estimates in this Chamber, which is after all supposed to be the most public of all public institutions. Now, to follow that whole process, that person would then have to compare what was said in those subcommittees with the ongoing dialogue and debate in the Assembly, as reported in yet another separate *Hansard* document, through the subcommittee report back to the Committee of Supply.

If I were cynical, I would argue that this would be an attempt to prevent ready access to what's being said by whom about what when it comes to the budget estimates of this province. Not being cynical and not wanting to risk a Standing Order point of order, I would not attribute those motives to the government or to any of its members. But I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the eyes of Alberta are upon this Chamber as we debate the expenditure of tax dollars, and appearances should not be deceiving. We've been told that in politics perception is almost everything. This debate should be above politics. There should be no perception of either deceit, collusion, or clouding of the issue. There should be no hint that the government is trying to somehow pull a fast one or pull the balaclava back over the head of the taxpayer, to paraphrase the hon. Treasurer.

MR. MAR: Baklava.

MR. SAPERS: No, that's a Greek dessert, hon. Education mister.

So it seems, Mr. Chairman, that we're really no further ahead in committee than we were today in the Legislative Assembly when we were discussing the point of privilege, that being that there is one group of private members who feel that they are being denied the right to do their duty by this action on the part of the government, and there is another group of government members . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont is rising on a point of order?

### Point of Order Repetition

MR. HERARD: Yes, Mr. Chairman, 23(c), which deals with needless repetition of matters raised that have been decided during this current session. I think the point of privilege was in fact decided, and we shouldn't have to be subjected to the same arguments again in committee.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: On the point of order?

THE CHAIRMAN: On the point of order.

MR. SAPERS: Yes. Certainly the point of privilege has been decided, and I'm not arguing the point of privilege. I'm arguing about Government Motion 13. Government Motion 13 is a substantive motion that would create subcommittees. The point of privilege was about the presence of that motion, hon. member. It's two severable issues. I know that you were paying very close attention, and I know that you probably realize that, that they are two very separate issues. So, Mr. Chairman, may I continue on the separate issue of the substantive motion, or did you wish to rule?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont does raise a good point. The Chair was already looking at 23(c) and even (d) and watching to see whether or not you were going to stray into that. It's an area that we would hope that you're not going to dwell upon, the previous vote and decision that was made, but make your point about your objection to Motion 13.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and a good ruling.

### Debate Continued

MR. SAPERS: Simply to pick up where I left off, the issue is really one of fairness. Motion 13 as amended is very explicit in what it would do. It would create subcommittees, and it is the creation of those subcommittees which is at issue. Not that I want to dwell at all on the Speaker's ruling from before, but of course that point of privilege was about the presence of a motion that would obstruct a private member from doing his or her job. I know that you will be vigilant in keeping me on track, and my colleagues, as we debate this issue tonight.

8:20

Mr. Chairman, this process was also debated and corresponded about at some length during the last session, and at that time it was the position of the government that the creation of these subcommittees would provide healthy debate. We now have the evidence of last year's process that can certainly set the record straight. While it may be true that in the aggregate there were additional hours of debate time allocated to estimates, as you are aware the way that that debate time is allocated is nothing akin to what happens in this Chamber.

As I stand in my place in this committee, I have the prerogative to take full advantage of the Standing Orders which allow me to speak for 20 minutes in Committee of Supply at one time and to be able to address in the most wide-ranging way the estimates of a given department. When we are in subcommittee, my time is

considerably more limited. I am one of a smaller group of MLAs – but the time itself is also constrained – and do not have the opportunity to ask the minister in as broad a way the questions that I need so I can report back to my constituents.

It is a really a matter of how the individual MLA or private member is impacted by this process. I don't think we should be at all fooled by pooled numbers, which might suggest otherwise. Every member that has had the experience of debating estimates both fully in committee and then had to endure the experience of subcommittees will attest to the fact that the subcommittee process is far less satisfactory and far more problematic in terms of eliciting complete and full information.

Mr. Chairman, it is my submission that even though this motion has been amended without any vigorous debate, that amendment in no way signifies that the opposition caucus is in favour of the motion. Furthermore, we remain adamantly opposed to the motion and perhaps even more so than ever before because of the overwhelming presence of government members on all of the subcommittees.

Mr. Chairman, it is finally my argument that Motion 13 should not go ahead and that this committee has it within its power to prescribe that estimate debates be held only in this Chamber and only with the full participation of all private members. I would urge that members of the Assembly not feel pressured to vote otherwise and instead defeat Government Motion 13.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Mr. Chairman, I would like to adjourn debate on Government Motion 13.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Education has moved that we now adjourn debate on Motion 13. All in favour of that motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:25 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. Since this is the first occasion that we've had a division in committee, I'd remind all hon. members that just as you must speak from your place, you must also vote from your desk even though it is committee.

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Amery	Hancock	McFarland
Black	Havelock	Melchin
Burgener	Herard	Oberg
Cao	Hlady	Pham
Cardinal	Jacques	Renner
Clegg	Johnson	Severtson
Coutts	Jonson	Shariff

Day	Klapstein	Smith
Doerksen	Kryczka	Stevens
Ducharme	Laing	Strang
Evans	Langevin	Tarchuk
Forsyth	Lund	Thurber
Friedel	Magnus	West
Fritz	Mar	Woloshyn
Haley	Marz	Yankowsky

Against the motion:

Blakeman	Massey	Sapers
Bonner	Nicol	Sloan
Dickson	Olsen	Soetaert
Gibbons		

Totals: For - 45 Against - 10

[Motion carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: Might we have unanimous consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

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

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For those of you who had the opportunity tonight to be at the Alberta Chamber of Commerce reception, where they honoured some of Alberta's young entrepreneurs, I would like to introduce to you one of the semifinalists from our riding of Little Bow. He's here along with his grandpa and grandma, who don't have anything better to do, when they come all the way up from north of Lethbridge, than to come over here and see what happens in the evening. So would Mr. Harold and Mrs. Joanne Cutforth and their grandson Andrew please stand up and receive a warm welcome.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As reluctant as I am to do this, I'd like to move another motion pursuant to Standing Order 56, following the incorporation of lists of members received from the Official Opposition, the third-party New Democrats, and the government side.

#### 8:40 Designated Supply Subcommittees

Moved by Mr. Havelock:

Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to the five designated supply subcommittees:

Health: Mrs. Forsyth, chairman; Ms Barrett; Mr. Broda; Mr. Clegg; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Doerksen; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Pham; Mr. Sapers; Ms Sloan; Mrs. Tarchuk; and Mr. Thurber.

Justice and Attorney General: Mr. Jacques, chairman; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Ducharme; Mr. Friedel; Ms Graham; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Hlady; Mrs. O'Neill; Ms Olsen; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Sapers; and Mr. Stevens.

Family and Social Services: Mrs. Laing, chairman; Ms Barrett; Mr. Cao; Mr. Cardinal; Ms Carlson; Mr. Johnson; Ms

Kryczka; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Melchin; Ms Olsen; Mr. Shariff; and Ms Sloan.

Environmental Protection: Mr. Boutilier, chairman; Mr. Amery; Ms Carlson; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Gibbons; Mr. Langevin; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Marz; Dr. Nicol; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Strang; and Mr. Yankowsky.

Labour: Ms Haley, chairman; Mr. Bonner; Mrs. Burgener; Mr. Fischer; Mrs. Gordon; Mr. Herard; Mr. Klapstein; Mr. MacDonald; Dr. Pannu; Mrs. Paul; Mr. Pham; and Mr. Renner.

MR. HAVELOCK: Is that okay?

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, do you wish to speak to this?

MR. SAPERS: I thought so, Mr. Chairman, but we'll give the government this one.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. No further discussion then. We have before us the motion by the hon. Government House Leader itemizing the members to be appointed to the five designated supply subcommittees.

[Motion carried]

MR. SAPERS: I'd like to table with the Assembly four copies of a letter transmitted to the Speaker and copied to the Clerk regarding the Leader of the Official Opposition's designation of the departments of Health, Justice, Family and Social Services, Environmental Protection, and Labour to be considered by designated supply subcommittees, also stipulating that the department of transportation be considered by the Committee of Supply on Thursday, April 24, 1997.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 1996-97**

THE CHAIRMAN: We have before us this evening for our consideration in Committee of Supply supplementary estimates, No. 2, of the general revenue fund for 1996-97.

Family and Social Services may wish to speak first. Hon. minister.

### **Family and Social Services**

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. You have before you a supplementary estimate for \$5.225 million of additional capital investment. This investment is required as we move from operating dollars into capital investment. What they're there for is for computers, and I'll go through them line by line.

Resource management services, 1.0.8, is \$245,000 to enable client tracking and to update and expedite the computer system and how we supply the cheques and income support to the clients, as is \$250,000 in the family maintenance information system. The child welfare delivery system is \$80,000. The SPD and supports to community is \$350,000.

We're also asking, Mr. Chairman, for an extra \$4.3 million in capital dollars to accommodate the year 2000. One of the issues is that in our local income support application we presently have 18 minicomputers around the province that are not capable of dealing with the year 2000 problem. I'm sure everyone is

familiar with the year 2000 problem. So what we have done is purchased for \$4.3 million a mainframe computer with networking computers in these areas that are capable of handling the year 2000 problem. The other thing that will be there is the maintenance cost for these computers. It's \$35,000 per year as opposed to \$350,000 per year, which we presently have.

Mr. Chairman, this represents a very significant move ahead in how we deliver service to people in Family and Social Services. I would urge the Assembly to agree to this and would certainly entertain any questions.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To begin with, perhaps prior to critiquing the supplementary estimate budget for Family and Social Services, just very quickly a synopsis in terms of the evolution of this department.

I find it of interest that we are exactly today in 1997 at the same point we were in 1890 in this province, where we are in the process of transferring the delivery and responsibility for social services for children and for families back to communities. Since 1890 we've gone through an evolution of transfer of responsibilities to government-supervised voluntary community agencies. In 1930 we transferred them from the Attorney General to public health, and in 1957 the government took over child welfare financially. In 1966 we had the transfer from municipalities to the province with municipalities providing prevention or early intervention in these services. In 1970 government child welfare community agencies, municipality early intervention, and government established a child protection registry. Now in 1997 we are in the process of regionalizing the system, particularly for child welfare, and evolving those responsibilities to 18 regions.

One of the points that I would like to make, Mr. Chairman, with respect to this supplementary estimate is that in the course of the last month I have made inquiries to try and establish various statistics for this department. The result of those inquiries has been that the department cannot provide specific data, specific data like how many handicapped children exist in each region or in each constituency in this province, how many children on the same points live in poverty in each constituency or in each region. I would like to critique this estimate and raise the question with respect to the allocation of these funds. Is this the appropriate time?

The government has decided that we want to embark on regionalization of the program. They've made that decision. We're in the process where some of those regions have developed service delivery plans or drafts of service delivery plans. Others have not. We are also in the process of having consultations on funding models in the province. They are nowhere near completed, nor is the model itself anywhere near acceptable. It would appear to me that a decision to allocate \$5 million of taxpayer dollars immediately to the upgrading of the computer system is somewhat premature.

The other point that I would like to raise with respect to this is that I am aware that in other provinces in Canada there are currently trials being undertaken to interlink the computer systems of Health and social services. As a registered nurse and as someone who has practised in this province for a number of years both in emergency departments and in hospitals, I am very familiar with the interrelationship between the social determinants of health in a person's health status. If we want to move towards an up-to-date, relevant, futuristic computer system, Mr. Chair-

man, why are we not looking at some of the other alternatives that are being tried by other provinces? Why are we not perhaps incorporating in this allocation of funds a trial to interlink the computer systems of Health and social services?

I would like to turn now to also critique this allocation based on the recommendations of the Auditor General in '95-96. I'm sure that the minister and his colleagues are very familiar with the recommendations that were made in that Auditor General's report. I'm not sure if any of these recommendations are going to ensure that those are undertaken.

8:50

One of the first recommendations the Auditor General made was with respect to supports for independence and supplement to earnings and related assistance. It was recommended that the Department of Family and Social Services review the status of clients whose earnings are being supplemented or who are receiving support while they are seeking employment or receiving training, to determine whether appropriate assistance is being provided.

Are the allocation of funds and this new computer system going to incorporate that recommendation and ensure that tracking is undertaken?

A secondary recommendation related to supports for independence, program results. It was recommended by the Auditor General that "the Department determine the impact and cost of various initiatives." This recommendation was accepted, and at the time of publishing this report, the department was said to be in the process of tendering a contract to an independent evaluator to determine the impact of the welfare reform initiatives implemented in 1993.

I have not seen that report, Mr. Chairman, and I would very much like to see that report. I would expect that if we are acting in the interests of Albertans, we would want to make sure that report was published, the recommendations of that report in any fashion were integrated into the recommendation to spend money on new computer systems and equipment.

With respect to a third recommendation, supports for independence, documentation, the key observation the Auditor General made was that "in past years, the evidence needed to support benefit payments" had often been deficient. He went, I guess, through a process of articulating how difficult it was for his staff to find samples and evidence. He cited that the department at that point in time had an error rate of 33 percent and indicated that he believed, as did the department, that that error rate was unacceptable and that it should be attended to. I would also raise, Mr. Chairman, that I'm questioning whether or not that error rate has been incorporated and if there are mechanisms in these recommendations to address that error margin and make it, I would hope, lower.

Also, there was a recommendation with respect to the fraud investigation unit. The unit's mandate had been primarily to review instances of abuse within the program. The Auditor General outlined that the department needed to

communicate information about observed instances or methods of program abuse to all program delivery staff, thereby allowing them to develop better systems and procedures for preventing or detecting similar types of abuse.

I would ask whether or not in these recommendations and in these funding allocations that recommendation is intended to be addressed.

A further recommendation that was made was with respect to a Métis settlement agreement that existed in the province at that time. It was observed by the Auditor General that the Department of Family and Social Services needed to

improve the monitoring of programs it funds to ensure they are achieving the results expected, are used for the purposes intended, and, if problems occur, take appropriate action to recover funds and restore services.

I would also ask, Mr. Chairman: are the monitoring mechanisms going to be incorporated in this new computer system, in the hardware? Are there in fact computer programs in existence anywhere that in actuality will be able to provide the monitoring? I think not, and I would highly recommend that further investigation and research be undertaken to ensure that we don't come to a point next year, when we come back to address the supplemental estimates, where we then find our computer program and systems are out of date. I think that's very important.

There was a further recommendation, also speaking to the Métis Settlements Transition Commission, an agreement for longer term planning. With respect to that, I'm not sure if the minister has given thought to whether or not as the Métis region evolves, region 18 as it is known, they will be incorporated. Will their unique needs with respect to computer systems and programs be incorporated? I raise that because we're in a process right now in this province of just undertaking the consultation and development of service delivery plans by these regions. I would not suspect that the Métis region is any different than any of the other 18 regions in that they are just beginning to get their feet under them in terms of what their responsibilities for service delivery are.

So with respect to that I would again raise the question: is this allocation premature? Are the motivations and the timing for this expenditure right? If the regional authorities, all 18 of them, have had some input into this, I would be very interested to know what that input was. I would hope, Mr. Chairman, that we are not going to go in this province to a patchwork system of computer programming or computer systems. I would also hope there's been some thought so that as these systems are regionalized, particularly in child welfare, we don't see a huge expenditure at the provincial level within all 18 of the regions for child welfare in short order making recommendations to expend additional money to build their own computer hardware and software mechanisms at the regional level.

That being said, dry and perhaps somewhat lacking, I would just like to share an observation that was made in fact by a columnist of the *Globe and Mail* in 1996 on our system of social service delivery in this country: year after year, decade after decade, abuse and death investigations into child protection systems turn up the same problems: inadequate record keeping, poor or nonexistent co-ordination among agencies, lack of public accountability, inadequate research, undertrained workers, and excessive secrecy. The point I would like to make in summary on that, Mr. Chairman, is that computer systems alone will not – and I emphasize will not – address all of the issues that exist within the Department of Family and Social Services.

I do want to give some degree of accommodation to the department with respect to recognizing that this area has to be developed. It has certainly been something that as an opposition we have pointed out not only in this session but in previous sessions, that the process of record keeping has been starkly lacking. So it is laudable, but at the same time I must emphasize a measure of caution, because computer systems and equipment will not make up for the gaps and the reductions and absent human supports that Albertans are so often emphasising to me are not there for them.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would conclude my comments on the supplemental estimates.

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

9:00

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the hon. member for her comments. I think they're very good and very timely.

In answer directly to some of her questions, first of all I must point out that the \$925,000 is for software applications to work on the computer. One of the applications, for example, is the tracking of maintenance information system. These are directly in keeping with the Auditor General's comments on not very good tracking mechanisms, and that's where we're spending the \$925,000.

The personal support system within the individual funding agreements of SPD will authorize and record all financial activities for each individual funded under this program. Again, what we're trying to do is decrease the 33 percent number, the error margin that the hon. member referred to, by putting the tracking mechanism in place.

We recognize that any information system is only as good as the questions you ask it, so we are not hanging all of our hats on it, but we do feel that this a step forward. To say that this is the ultimate system would be wrong. I don't think there is such an ultimate system to look at it, but it certainly will improve our service to the clients. It will improve our tracking mechanisms, consistent with the Auditor General's report.

The other two issues. First of all, the reason we had to update and buy the hardware was again a direct recommendation from the Auditor General, where he stated: you must prepare for the year 2000. It's costing us \$4.3 million extra in capital costs to prepare for the year 2000, but by doing it now, we feel that we are positioning ourselves for this at an early stage. The other issue, in direct regards to what the hon. member was saying, is that this computer system's hardware is capable of running the majority of the programs that are there. I think anyone who estimates what computer technology is going to be five years from now is probably going to be wrong, but this is the closest thing we have come to that will handle all of the software programs that we are looking for in the future.

Your point about linked data bases with Health I think is an excellent idea, but unfortunately right now it's against the law. We do not have that information transfer. It's something that I have asked the Information and Privacy Commissioner to look at, given what happened in Ontario, where they discovered that they had some 200 or 300 clients in jail who were still receiving social services payments. The reason for that was because there was no interdepartmental transfer of information, and we presently are in the same scenario in Alberta. I think what the hon. member is talking about is certainly laudable, and we're working towards it, but at the moment the legislation is not there.

In summary, I really feel that this computer purchase and software purchase places us very well to accommodate the needs of Family and Social Services as we go forward into the year 2000, and I would urge all members to vote on this.

THE CHAIRMAN: The vote has been called.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did want to just make a supplemental comment with respect to the minister's comment in terms of the linkages of databases being against the law. I am not aware of that. In fact I know of a trial that

apparently is under way in a region in this country already to do that.

My question again with relationship to timing is: have we adequately explored what the legal barriers are to doing that? Why construct a computer system at this stage that is going to be built on a regional social services model only if in fact there are in formative stages other models out there that would provide a broader picture of health and social well-being? If it's against the law, I would be interested in knowing what aspect of the law it violates and whether or not the minister has taken any steps to explore what would be required legally to undertake a trial in that respect.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I certainly have. First of all, your point is very well based, and again your background in nursing serves you well. We are looking at that. We're confident that this computer system will handle the needs when that occurs. What you're talking about is various software programs, and we are confident that this will meet it. We still need these other programs in order to just administer services such as income support to the clients that we have. Our system has been outdated, so we still need the software. The hardware for \$4.3 million, which is a majority of the cost, is designed to enable us to do that and to look at that.

With regards to the legislation, I have taken already the liberty of talking to the freedom of information and privacy commissioner about getting the interdepartmental information, but at the moment each department has its own rules regulating transfer of information. Yes, I am looking at it. I feel it is a priority, and it's something we're working towards, and I think you'll see the first of this come forward as Health brings forward their information legislation. We are certainly looking at it, and your points are very well taken on that. Hardwarewise, we are assured by the computer experts that this will handle anything that is needed for the next time to come.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. Thank you to the minister. Just a couple more comments with respect to this. Is the hardware, then, that's being considered for purchase the same as the Department of Health's? I think we're all aware, even in terms of our own personal expenditures on computers, that most often it's the hardware that's the most expensive portion. So I would ask: do we have at this stage any understanding of how similar the hardware between the two departments is?

The other aspects of my comments that I would like the minister to address are: what mechanisms are in place allowing, number one, for regional input into the design and, number two, ensuring that when the regions are actually authorized to implement their service delivery plans we don't have 18 different regions going out and constructing their own little forms of patchwork computer systems in duplication to the ministry's?

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much. First of all, the computers are not the same, but we are assured that they are compatible. Again, what you're talking about is different software applica-

tions, as they vary between different computers, and we are assured that this mainframe will be compatible to anything that is there.

With regards to the regional input and design, I have the same concerns that you do about coming forward with 18 different designs. What we are trying to do is centralize with this. We will provide the tracking and give the information to the regions as they need it. As you are well aware, they do not necessarily need to bring in the information, but they need to use the information. We are foreseeing that we will be providing the information to them through our computer systems, and we think that will be the most efficient as we go to six what are called service centres around the province. We feel this will centralize administration, it will decrease costs, it will increase moneys available to the client, and it will just overall streamline the efficiencies of delivery of the service. So again your points are well taken, but they are being addressed.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final questions in relation to this. The supplementary estimate recommendations specifically address income support to individuals and families. I am not clear and would like some further information with respect to the other programs under the ministry's jurisdiction, those being ministry support services, social support to individuals and families, the children's advocacy, and the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. Are all of those program areas going to be encompassed in the computer implementation? If they aren't, will we then be looking at future upgrades to integrate those other aspects of the ministry?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, these are very program-specific computer software programs that we are looking at because each program that we administer has slightly different needs.

With regards to administration support, \$245,000 of this is for what is called PeopleSoft software, which is a government financial system. We also upgrade the child welfare information system under that \$245,000.

One thing just as a point of clarification on the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. That was disbanded about two years ago, so that's no longer a program area.

We are looking again at program-specific. Each one has slightly different needs when it comes to software, but again the software is very adaptable as we use it. It's very difficult and probably impossible to get one software program that is going to solve all our problems, run all our different programs for income support and employment opportunities in the department. Therefore we have got what is best for each program that can be run on the hardware that we have.

Thank you.

9:10

MRS. SLOAN: Just to offer as an example, I guess. If they have a young teenage mother who is currently receiving AISH from the department but also has a reason to utilize the Children's Advocate or another aspect of the ministry, what I would like to see in the future from the ministry's computer system is that the computer system is in fact going to be able to accommodate and to link those areas of service delivery. So I would offer that as one example.

I can elaborate even further. If that teenage mother is also a recipient of student finance, will we in fact be able to get through the computer system a summary of those? That is intended to provide for the minister's purposes a concrete way where I think our computer tracking and system of information gathering would be more efficient.

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

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You've hit it on the nose. That's what we're aiming for. That's what this software is geared towards: to be able to track these, to be able to provide better service, to provide more efficiencies to the client. That's what we're doing this for. I truly believe it's a step in the right direction, and from your questions I'm sure that you do as well. This is what we're moving towards, and it's going to make everyone's life a lot easier by implementing these programs. This is not something that has just been done on an ad hoc basis. It's been done with a lot of research, and I'm quite confident that this will serve our needs to help the client, which is what this is all about.

Thank you.

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

MS OLSEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions for the minister. First, when was the special warrant passed that allowed for the purchase of the computer equipment? Of bigger concern, given that the hardware becomes very obsolete very quickly – we're still a couple of years away from the actual implementation date or from the year 2000 – I'm wondering if this is going to be the total cost. As other organizations – and I can only talk about the police service that bought into this wonderful package, this wonderful hardware system that was going to provide us with all the information we needed. It was going to track everything we needed; it was going to give us everything we needed. In fact this system actually ended up costing almost a million dollars more. So my concern is: at this stage of the game why are we entering into this, when both the software and the hardware could be obsolete?

The other question in terms of tracking: do we not have some sort of proprietary program – or has that been researched? – that will take all of those different departments and the ability to link those so that information can be drawn off? I know that I've had experiences where I've chased four different departments to find out – and I think I alluded to one of those cases yesterday – whether somebody was on assistance, were they in a halfway house, were they on student financing. I think social services would operate far more effectively if the systems were adequate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'm sure the other ministers are thanking me as well for still standing on the supplementary estimates.

First of all, the special warrant is not new money. This is money that has been transferred from operating to capital. It is simply a change in our budget, from operating to capital. Therefore there was no special warrant for this.

With regards to the tracking side of it, we are hoping that this will take us a step in that direction. I think the previous hon.



member alluded to the whole issue of interdepartmental data exchange, and this is but one piece in that. We do not have proprietary rights on any of this. We feel that it is better to purchase existing programs rather than to spend the money and the expertise to develop our own. So what we did was go out and try to find the program by asking the question. This is what we need to come forward with the program that best suits our needs, and we feel that these programs do it. Will it be the ideal programs that you asked for, where you put in one name and everything comes up? No, it won't be, but those programs are not in existence yet. Your concern is certainly duly noted, and we're hoping to move in that direction.

With regards to whether or not these computers will be obsolete, the answer is no. They're very flexible. They're very high-powered computers that can be added to if and when the need is there. So we feel that this hardware will not be outdated. We are attacking the year 2000 problem now, because it does take a lot of planning, rather than immediately embarking sort of six months before. So we feel that it is very much an imperative for us – where we deal a lot in cheques, a lot in income support, getting these out to the client – that we do this now and that we're prepared for the year 2000.

Thank you.

DR. MASSEY: Just a couple of questions to the minister about the supplementary estimates. Are these funds part of a comprehensive program by the government to deal with the problems that the year 2000 is going to present for all computers? Is it part of an overall scheme to deal with that? Is the equipment purchased, or is it leased? What kind of an arrangement is there for that equipment being placed in government offices? What about satellite offices? Are these funds used in part to upgrade their equipment and to deal with the kind of difficulties they, too, are going to face?

I have a question. When the budget was prepared, didn't the department know that the year 2000 was coming? Is there some reason why at that time and even in previous budgets the department wouldn't have addressed, you know, what everyone has known about for a good long time? It seems an unusual expenditure, given the state of knowledge about computers and what was going on, that this wouldn't have been a matter of routine budgeting as far as the department and in turn the government were concerned.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, your last question about the budgeting. I think everyone wants to put as many dollars as possible into programming, and one of the issues that can keep being moved along from year to year until we face that wall is computer costs. What happened this year is we had freed up dollars from operating, and these dollars were available. So we took the dollars from operating and put them into capital because we could. We had that flexibility at this time without requiring new dollars. When we did our budget last year, we were looking at putting as many dollars as possible into the actual program delivery. As you know, caseloads fluctuate dramatically, and that's very much one of our cost pressures in social services. So with the savings in operating dollars we were able to do that ahead of schedule.

This is part of the overall government scheme. Each depart-

ment is responsible for its administrative side to solve that problem, and this is consistent with the government initiatives to deal with the problem of the year 2000.

I think those were basically the questions you asked.

DR. MASSEY: The satellite offices.

DR. OBERG: Oh, the other thing was with the mainframe. What we have done is set up a mainframe computer that we purchased. It is being leased out. The operating side of it is being put into a private firm, and they are looking after the maintenance of the operating, the networking into the mainframe from the satellite offices.

Thank you.

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

MS OLSEN: Yes. I just have a follow-up question to that. I find it actually a little disconcerting. I'm wondering why you had \$4.3 million to take out of the operating budget of social services to put into capital expenses when we're faced with problems in social services with child welfare, social services, AISH. I just find it astounding that you would do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First of all, we are dealing with an inevitable expenditure. The year 2000 problem is coming, whether we like it or not, and we have to deal with it. I would question the whole issue of the problems in welfare. We have put 300 more people, frontline workers, in child welfare within the last month. We have dealt with that. That was included in last year's budget. I would ask the hon. member to peruse the C.D. Howe Institute report which states that putting people back into the workforce and the success that we have had in Alberta on the welfare reforms lead the nation.

This is an inevitable issue. The dollars had to be raised at some time. As I mentioned before, what we have seen is a fluctuation in caseloads. We hit a 15-year low two weeks ago in caseloads. We did not predict that, and because it's a month-by-month basis, it freed up dollars in the last month of the fiscal year that we use now to solve a problem that would present to us later on.

Thank you.

9:20

MS OLSEN: I have difficulty referring to C.D. Howe and the welfare reform when as a frontline worker what I see is not welfare reform. It's poverty. It's homelessness. It's hunger. It's all of those things. I am appalled that you would take \$4.3 million out of the budget that should be going to those people.

DR. OBERG: I'm quite appalled as well, because what I've just been hearing is how we need better information to track these people. I've just been hearing how we have a problem with the year 2000. We are addressing this problem. We are addressing it with software in better ways to create efficiencies to serve the clients, yet the hon. member is criticizing the intentions of this which will streamline service delivery and improve the delivery of services to the clients.

MS OLSEN: Well, I just worry that the money and the service should be maybe to the people that need it, and that's in food, shelter, and clothing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much. Your point is taken, but we really feel that by decreasing the number of 33 percent of errors, we can actually free up dollars to go towards that. What we're saying is that if we put in better tracking systems, if we put in better software, if we put in better computer systems, we will free up money to do just that. Can you imagine what would happen in the year 2000 if we hadn't planned for this? If we hadn't purchased a new mainframe, there would be no one getting any income support cheques. Our system would crash. What we're looking at are issues that will help social service clients in the future. We're trying to free up the dollars for them. I personally feel that this is a step in the right direction and a very positive step.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do want to just raise a concern with respect to the comment made by the Minister of Family and Social Services that a private firm would handle computer information. Maybe I'm taking that comment in the wrong context, but to me that comment reflects that perhaps there is more in this supplementary estimate than I originally thought. Are you in fact saying that we are contracting out, paying for a computer system that will be developed, designed, implemented, and monitored by a private company? If so, I would then raise – even if the private company is involved in any aspects of that – concerns surrounding confidentiality of information.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much. What we have contracted out – this has been a department initiative that has been there for approximately two years – is all our service maintenance of the computers, our administration of the maintenance of computers, to a private contractor. So that's what I mean by doing it. They do not control the information, but if there is some problem with the computer system, we as a government and we as a department do not feel that our job is necessarily to impinge on the private industry and have a whole panel of computer experts within our department. That's not what we do. So we have contracted out all our information technology servicing and maintenance contract to a private contractor.

Agreed to:

**Family and Social Services**

Capital Investment \$5,225,000

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported when the committee rises and reports?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

**Education**

MR. MAR: Mr. Chairman, I'm here to speak to my department's supplementary estimates for the 1996-97 fiscal year. The amount comes to \$29.3 million. That represents 1.9 percent of education funding from GRF and 1 percent of total education spending. I am not here cap in hand; I make no apology for needing this

money. In fact, I look upon this need with a great deal of satisfaction, because this supplementary estimate does not represent a failure on the part of the Department of Education. In fact, it represents a tremendous success on the part of this government.

Colleagues, on page 16 in your supplementary estimates book we see why and where that money is needed. Sixteen point eight million dollars for increased basic instruction. Why? Because of increased enrollments. Eight point five million dollars for high school instruction. Why? Because there are more high school students completing their courses. Four million dollars for children in early childhood services who have severe disabilities. Why? Because our health care system is working.

I want to take a few minutes and talk more about each of these requests. First, increasing enrollments. In 1995-96 when we were budgeting for 1996-97, we predicted a growth rate of .8 percent. This was optimistic considering enrollments in the previous year were on the decline, but enrollment figures for the second quarter forecast for 1996-97 showed a growth rate of 1.5 percent. For the third quarter it was expected to be almost 2 percent. There could be two reasons for this: Albertans started having more children a few years ago and we missed it, or more people are coming here from out of province.

Albertans were not having more children, Mr. Chairman. In 1991 there were 42,500 children in this province who were in their first year of life, but when we look at the enrollment figures for the 1996-97 school year when these children would be in grade 1, we see more than 44,200 students enrolled. That is a difference of 1,700 students. Those extra children are coming from somewhere; they are coming from out of this province. They are the children of people attracted to this province by our economy and our quality of life.

For confirmation we only need to look at where the highest growth rates are. We see the highest enrollment increases in areas with the most buoyant economies: Calgary, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray. For example, not including ECS, enrollments in Calgary separate were up by 4.65 percent. In Fort McMurray public they were up 7.6 percent. In Grande Prairie Catholic, enrollments were up almost 4 percent. That tells us, Mr. Chairman, in my strong opinion, that the Alberta advantage is working. We are creating business opportunities. We are leading this country in economic growth. We know we are creating jobs; we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Our economy is attracting businesspeople and workers and their families to Alberta, but we are also having to educate more students, and that costs us more money, \$16.8 million more in 1996-97.

Question: could we have predicated these higher enrollments? Should we have anticipated this kind of growth? As I said, we did predict some growth. Predicting any growth at all in 1995-96 was pretty daring, but we did have faith. In his first year as Premier, the Premier made a commitment that Alberta business would create 110,000 jobs. According to the Premier's Internet home page, the Alberta economy actually created about 145,000 net new jobs between May 1993 and November 1996. Could we have predicted that we would pass that goal by over 30,000 jobs? We could not budget for the kind of growth we are seeing because we did not see it coming.

The supplementary estimates before you today will let us meet the immediate budget needs of school boards providing for these additional students. Increasing student numbers creates other pressures, space for one, but that is a discussion for another time.

9:30

The second area I want to look at is credit enrollment unit funding. The supplementary estimates for education ask for \$8.5 million for course credits for senior high school students. Again, this is cause for celebration. When we changed the funding framework for education, we looked at funding for high school. Under the old funding formula high schools received funding for the number of students enrolled in courses on a specific count date, but too many students were not completing their courses. That raised some questions. How can we make sure that we're paying for learning that is actually taking place? How can we encourage high school students to finish the courses they start?

The answer is funding by credit enrollment unit or CEUs. CEU funding is based on the number of courses a student actually completes. To get that funding, high schools have to find ways of encouraging students to finish the courses they start. The goal is to see that students get their high school diplomas, and that only happens when they complete their high school courses. The numbers show courses being completed at a remarkable rate. We have seen the number of course credits per student go from a low of 31.3 in 1993-94 to 34.56 credits per student in 1995-96, a significant achievement, Mr. Chairman.

One of the reasons is the flexibility built into the CEU funding model. Because funding is no longer based on enrollments at the beginning of a semester, high schools are not tied to the traditional school year. They are offering more options by providing courses in evenings or on weekends or for year-round schooling. Students have greater flexibility in balancing their course loads with extracurricular activities and part-time work. The end result is more course completion. Alberta is unique in North America by paying for results instead of paying for enrollment. I am pleased to see it working so well.

CEU funding was our first step in improving high school completion rates. Students complete their high school education one course at a time. On the up side, as far as the budget is concerned, there are limits to the number of credits a student can earn in a year. In our new three-year plan for education, high school funding will be based on 34.56 credits per student.

The third item, Mr. Chairman, in our supplementary estimates is severe disabilities. We are asking for \$4 million in program unit funding for children with severe disabilities enrolled in ECS. This too represents success. Our health care system and new medical technologies are saving young lives that would have otherwise been lost. Better methodologies are better able to identify severe emotional and behavioural disabilities more accurately and at a younger age when help is most effective. All the studies show that the sooner help is provided, the greater the benefit. That is why children can start in ECS programs as early as age two and a half.

There is a sad side to that success, Mr. Chairman. The number of children entering ECS with severe disabilities is increasing at about 15 to 20 percent a year, but we have to put this growth rate in context. The number of children with severe disabilities is still only between 1.5 and 2 percent. At an average funding of \$12,500 per child the \$4 million would serve approximately 320 children. Mr. Chairman, I admit the growth rate looks big, but that is because the base number is so small. In any case, funding is not the bottom line. Funding and progress for children with severe disabilities is all about opportunity. Providing a quality education to children with severe disabilities can help them reach their full potential and make a positive contribution to society, and we should never apologize for that.

Back in the early 1970s a young family man was stricken by Lou Gehrig's disease. He was given just months to live. Soon he was confined to a wheelchair. He needed help with the simplest physical needs. Surgery to remove a part of his trachea also took away his ability to speak. That young person is still with us. He's contributed many great scientific theories, and some say that he may even surpass Albert Einstein. He is, of course, physicist Stephen Hawking. True, he developed his severe disability in early adulthood, but he accomplished all of his important scientific thinking and published most of his papers and books after he was in that wheelchair and after he had lost his voice. I have to wonder how many other brilliant minds are out there trapped inside disabled bodies.

In days gone by, we would have institutionalized these children. Today we can educate them. The true test of our society, Mr. Chairman, in my opinion is not how we relate to our equals in abilities and status, it is how we relate to those who are less able than ourselves. I believe that programs and funding for children with severe disabilities say a great deal positive about our society.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my presentation on the supplementary estimates for Alberta Education, and I'm pleased to entertain questions.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I couldn't agree more with the minister, that he shouldn't come cap in hand to this Assembly for the money contained in these estimates. It's a very legitimate use of the supplementary estimates, the material that we have before us. Anyone that's had any dealing with trying to estimate student enrollments anytime in the future knows just how difficult that is, and when you try to do it for a province the size of ours, it becomes even more difficult to predict. It's really very, very good to see these estimates here, based on the rationale that the minister has given. I think it's in contrast to the previous estimates that we considered. It's very interesting – and I applaud the minister for not cutting other areas of his budget to make up the shortfall – that he took it as a legitimate call on supplementary estimates and brought it to us. So I applaud him, and we'll vote for his estimates and support them.

I would like to look at the money involved in the estimates themselves and how those dollar figures were arrived at in the original budget and then in this estimate budget. The background for my comments, Mr. Chairman, comes from a meeting of 40 school councils in Calgary on February 27. The summaries of the school councils and their comments were tabled in the House by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo last week. I took an opportunity to look through what those parents were saying about the Department of Education and its funding. It would be interesting to have their voices, and I'd like to bring their voices to this debate on the estimates, because as you read through them – and I would just like to sample a few, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

Parents from Henry Wise Wood high school commented on funding levels: "Many years ago we did fundraising for those little extras; now we are doing fundraising for bare essentials."

The parents at Sir Winston Churchill high school, one of their comments about funding:

Alberta Ed's focus on increased technology, Career counselling, CTS, Achievement standards is good but all of these initiatives require financial support. We do not believe that they can be addressed effectively at the current level of funding.

The parents from University elementary school made a rather dramatic plea, a powerful plea, I think. Their comments include:

My take on the current situation of education in Alberta, in terms of this definition, is that we are failing our students and cheating ourselves of a rich future resource. Classes are overcrowded, specialists are few and far between, resources to support special needs are inadequate and administrators are picking up more responsibility with fewer resources available.

That's from University elementary school. [interjection] There seems to be a problem with one of the ministers, Mr. Chairman.

The parents at Altadore elementary school summarized what they thought of funding. They said:

The resources being delivered at the school level are simply not adequate. Inequities between schools within Calgary are increasing because of funding restrictions. School Councils are being forced to provide financial support for "core" needs - including curriculum support/resource materials, technology and facility maintenance/improvements.

It goes on.

**9:40**

There were 40 councils that made presentations at that meeting, Mr. Chairman. They said a lot of things, obviously, that I haven't covered, and they have a lot of concerns. One of the things those councils asked those people to do in preparation for the meeting was to identify what they saw as the major problems. They prepared a summary chart of the concerns they presented at that meeting. I believe, if I'm reading the chart correctly, close to 90 percent of those councils identified funding for the mandated curriculum as a concern. You heard from their comments what they thought.

Their second major concern was resources for special needs, and their third concern, which involved about 75 percent of them, was the teacher/pupil ratio and class size. Those were the top three, and they go down to the bottom concern, interestingly enough with 12 percent identifying it, the taxes stay in Calgary. These are the voices of parents and what they would be saying if they were here this evening in terms of talking to the funding by Alberta Education.

There are other themes that run through the materials: frustration, inequities as I identified. But, overwhelmingly, funding is a major problem for them. They fear that it is introducing inequities in the system that are working a hardship, ultimately, on children and teachers and people trying to serve those students. I guess their voices should be heard. In terms of the estimates and, in fact, in terms of the budget, I've heard people from the department, and the axiom that they seem to be promoting is: it's not how much you spend, but how you spend it. That, I think, can be countered with another axiom. What these people seem to be saying is that you get what you pay for.

So I would ask the minister if he would, maybe not this evening but at some point, share with the Assembly the basis on which the allocations were made. When you're moving to school-based budgeting, when you're trying to move to equity across the province in student funding, it's very difficult to decide on what that base dollar should be. There had to be some decisions made in terms of what that base figure would be, and I wondered if the minister would be good enough to share with the Assembly how that base figure was arrived at and how that base figure is such that they feel very comfortable in telling people that the current funding levels are adequate.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased tonight to speak to the supplementary estimates for Education. I echo some of the words that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has said tonight.

I guess I have some concerns. I know the minister is dedicated to education. Sometimes I have real concerns about, I guess, our difference of opinion on what is adequate funding. I would say my main question tonight is based on the need for increased basic instruction grants. I guess my question to the minister is: how do you come to that basic instruction grant? What's the criterion for coming to that exact number? I know the minister hears it all the time, but most recently in the Sturgeon school division they're projecting a \$500,000 shortfall for next year. So what the school board is doing is going to all the communities around and asking people for input. I guess that way they feel part of the process, but in other ways it creates a great deal of division in the community. My concern is that by inadequately funding education, we're creating a great deal of division in this province.

At the parent committee meeting I was at as a parent in that community in that school, some of the suggestions made put a real fear into me about the mentality towards public education that the public is getting. Some of the suggestions I heard - and I know the minister would be concerned if he heard these too. A group of parents, about four parents altogether, said: well, why do we need to have special-needs kids in our school? Now, that to me is a very discriminatory and I would say uninformed statement on those parents' part, because I know that as individuals they certainly would help out their neighbour. But when it gets to dollars being spent on education, they get very possessive. They want those dollars spent on their child and on the best education for their child. I understand that as a parent. I don't want my child lost in a class of 36 children, some of them with special needs, some with severe needs, some with no aides. I don't want that. Selfishly speaking as a parent, I don't want that.

As a legislator I don't want that at all, because our job and your job as government is to provide public education, and in order to do that, you have to properly fund it. What I see happening out there because of inadequate funding of public education is that we're creating the need for private education because people are not satisfied with public education.

So we have a real division amongst our parents, and I hate to see that, especially in - well, in any community. But when you're talking about small rural communities and the parent with a child in a wheelchair, a parent with a child who is hard of hearing, or a parent who has a child that has visual problems or attention deficit, then we create division amongst parents. I would like to see parents working together to solve some of these problems. They are trying to suggest solutions, but in their angst for their own children they're leaving other children out, and I know the minister would not agree with that solution. My concern is that out there the information is that, well, we can get rid of special-needs kids; send them somewhere else, but not our school.

One of the other suggestions was: why can't we just have young teachers and get rid of old teachers? Now, whether you like teachers or not . . . [interjections] Well, I certainly like teachers, especially the one I'm married to, so there's my bias, Mr. Minister. The point is that I think the age of a teacher has nothing to do with the ability, and I'm sure the former Minister of Education would agree. It's more expensive to keep a teacher who has 15 years' experience, yet you know, Minister of Health, that certainly on a healthy staff you have a balance of younger

teachers and older teachers and male and female, and it creates a dynamic that's usually very healthy in a school. So when we start having parents saying, "Why do we need expensive teachers?" maybe it's because experience counts for something.

The other issue that was mentioned at another school, where I have another child, was the money spent on computers. There was a real concern. I don't know if this in the minister's domain or not; I guess everything within Education is. There was a great deal of money spent on setting up the computer system within the schools and within the central office, not within the classroom, and a great deal of their budget was spent on modernizing the whole system. Parents questioned that as well. Now, you and I know that in this modern world we do need technology and we have to keep up in Alberta, but I guess it all stems to that one basic instruction grant. Is it sufficient? I beg to say that it isn't. When we see divisions like I saw the other night at these two different council meetings – and certainly in the one area, which does have, I would say, generally parents of a higher income than other areas within the MD of Sturgeon, they truly felt: why should their dollars be spent on special-needs children instead of their own children?

9:50

Of course, there's absolutely no room in the budget for gifted children, just none. I guess people feel that, well, they're gifted; they will survive and they will do well anyway. They most certainly will, but could they not be doing better? Are we serving their needs like we could? I don't see that happening.

I'm grateful that the special-needs funding was boosted a bit there, but still in that there's no money for mild and moderate. I know you've heard that before, and I'll repeat it in this House so that – I'm starting to give him a twitch here I can see. I do appreciate the minister's supplementary estimates tonight. I know his intentions are good for our children in this province, but I would ask him to reconsider. Maybe in the next budget – well, we didn't get to see it in the last one, but certainly the basic instruction grant I would beg has to be revisited. Our schools are underfunded, it's creating division amongst parents, and I don't think that's healthy in our communities at all. That's certainly what I saw the other evening in ours, and nothing strong is built on division.

So with those few words I will submit the chair to someone else. Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Until February 17 I was one of those old teachers the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert was referring to. Her sister was certainly a much better student than she was; at least much quieter.

My latest experience, Mr. Chairman, with school-based budgeting occurred in February, and I can assure this body that the principals and business administrators in the schools are very creative when it comes to budgeting and to bookkeeping. They are forced to do this in order to balance their budgets. We are certainly very happy to see the increased funding from the minister in Education, but I do have a number of concerns as well with this funding.

My first question is: how was the formula applied to determine the per student grant for the higher than anticipated grade 1 through grade 12 enrollment?

As well, Mr. Chairman, there are more students taking more

courses for credit in high schools. However, it appears to me that the way funds are being allocated is not necessarily in the best interest of the students but in the best interest of the schools. I have heard from former students of situations that are cause for concern. These concerns are with the performance-based funding. My question is: are students being encouraged by high schools to take courses they don't require and that are not prerequisites for their postsecondary education? Is this being done so high schools can maximize the number of credit enrollment units they are funded for?

A second question: are high school students having difficulty dropping courses once they have enrolled in them due to the method that schools are funded for the credit enrollment units?

My final question. Are some students in high school being given a minimum grade in courses so these high schools will receive their full funds for credit enrollment units?

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of comments I wanted to add. I was put in mind of this listening to my colleague the Liberal Education critic when he spoke of the presentation made by representatives of the 40-odd school councils in Calgary. I just wanted to add, because I had the privilege – this would have been about halfway through the election campaign in Calgary. The Member for Calgary-Bow and I both had the opportunity to attend this gathering at Central Memorial high school. I'm not sure what my expectation was when I went, but I have to tell you it was one of the most powerful, impactful presentations I've ever heard on the subject of education. We heard representatives of 40 different Calgary school councils talk about their frustration and their experiences in the schools. Some of these people were from Calgary-Buffalo but actually from a fair sampling of schools throughout the Calgary public system.

I wish so much that the Minister of Education would have had the opportunity to take some time off from his campaign schedule to attend, as his colleague from Calgary-Bow did, because the impact – and I understand the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was there as well, Mr. Chairman. I'd be remiss if I didn't point that out. I expect that Member for Calgary-Fish Creek may have had some of the same reaction that I did to listening to these parents. Keep in mind that these weren't school administrators. They didn't represent a vested interest in the sense that they weren't teachers, they weren't school psychologists. There were a few school trustees there, and the school trustees came in for some pretty substantial criticism as well. Those parents I think were fair in terms of saying that they think the Calgary board of education has to do some things differently, and they had some constructive criticism for the school trustees that were present.

But we're here dealing not with the budget for the Calgary board of education but for the provincial Department of Education. I just wanted to refer to the presentation from one school in my constituency, the Sunalta school. I know the Member for Calgary-Currie in fact lives in the same neighbourhood, and many of her neighbours and friends have children at the Sunalta school. I expect that she's heard and probably relayed to the Minister of Education some of the same comment. What those parents raised with me and at that time – they talked about the fact that the Alberta government should increase funding so that schools don't have to "fundraise for items necessary for learning." This was

one of those messages that was repeated time after time after time by parents and the school council representatives. I think what the parent volunteers were saying is that they're experiencing a level of burnout. You could tell and measure the frustration by their demeanour and their body language and by their voices.

There was also a lot of concern – and this was certainly expressed on behalf of the Sunalta school – about the cuts in terms of funding for resource teachers. That also is having a big impact in the classroom. The Sunalta school council, probably one of the most successful school councils in Calgary in terms of fund-raising, raised an additional \$6,000 over and above their own needs, which they gave to high-needs schools in other parts of Calgary and in fact in other parts of Calgary-Buffalo. They were able to raise \$6,000 additional, but that's an unusual school in a relatively high-income area. Lots of the other schools didn't have a surplus that they had raised and were able to give to other schools. They were simply frustrated that they couldn't even meet the basic needs of students in their schools.

There'll be much to say in terms of the Education budget in due course, but I just want to encourage the hon. Minister of Education to take the time to read that document I tabled in the Assembly a couple of weeks ago, to speak to his colleagues from Calgary-Fish Creek and Calgary-Bow and to the home and school association that was responsible for organizing it. I trust that the minister maybe has received his own copy of those reports. It's powerful reading. I think it's instructive not only for the hon. minister but to every one of us when we deal not only with the supplementary estimates in Education but when we deal with the major budget. There is, I think, an important reminder to us in terms of what we have to do better.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

**10:00**

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

**MR. SAPERS:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of quick comments that I would like to have the minister reflect on.

First of all, I do take the minister at his word when he talks of the inability to project the increased enrollment, and I just wonder out loud whether or not that has anything to do with the rather significant departmental cuts in the staff that would have been responsible for doing those kinds of estimates. I'm wondering whether he's thought about that, because while on the one hand we can accept that it may have been difficult to more accurately project, I submit that being a hundred percent wrong on student enrollment, projecting .8 percent growth and instead it being 1.5 percent growth, is pretty significant. I would hope that he would comment on what he's doing to make sure that kind of error doesn't happen again and whether or not he believes that perhaps the education cuts that affected his own staff went just a little bit too far and whether or not this is jeopardizing the ability of the department to be accurate in its forecasting in the future and what his intent is in that regard.

The other comment that I have for the minister tonight has to do with the increase in program unit funding support, the higher than anticipated costs for children with severe special needs in ECS. I note that it's some \$4 million, Mr. Minister, and I actually congratulate you for making that commitment of funds to that program. But I wonder what commitment of funds you would make to support the pre-ECS children in early intervention programs. I'm particularly thinking of the Mayfield early intervention program, which operates in my constituency, a program that has had tremendous success, high demands on its

programs, and is constantly struggling for funding. As you sit beside the Minister of Health, perhaps you should have a word, a chat about how your two departments could work a little bit more effectively to ensure that programs such as the Mayfield early intervention program receive adequate funding.

You made the reference yourself, Mr. Minister, that you did not come into the Assembly cap in hand. Unfortunately, these very hardworking and dedicated professionals are constantly going cap in hand, seeking funding on an annual basis for a program that should have some stability and predictability attached to it. I know that you are familiar with the excellent work of the early intervention programs and specifically the Mayfield early intervention program. I'm certain that you wouldn't quibble about their need for stable and predictable funding. I just regret that you haven't seen fit to ensure that, and I was hoping that given that we've just come through an election where special-needs funding for children was a bit of an issue, we may have seen something in the supplementary estimates in that regard.

Those are my comments for the minister, and I look forward to his response.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**MR. MAR:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've listened carefully to all of the comments made by members of the Assembly with respect to the supplementary estimates, and I thank them for their kind and considerate comments, most of which I found constructive and some of which I agreed with and some of which I've not agreed with. Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, the easiest way for me to entertain the questions is to provide my undertaking to this Assembly to review the Blues and reflect upon the questions which were raised and provide answers to members outside of this Assembly by way of written communication.

To comment in brief overall on some of the issues raised, Mr. Chairman, I first wish to say that I'm of the strong opinion that we have a very good and sometimes excellent education system in public education in this province. We of course don't have to be bad to want to do better, and what I would prefer to see is an excellent and occasionally very good education system. I think a great deal of credit must go to Alberta's teachers in this regard but also to parents and students, who are all very important partners in the education system in the province of Alberta.

A couple of comments struck me. I share the comments that were made by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert as it relates to special-needs students.

I wish to also comment on the overall comments made by members about funding. Mr. Chairman, I'm of the view that the funding that we do provide from the provincial government to school boards is an adequate level of funding. However, that is not to say that those levels should not be reviewed from time to time, and to the extent that members would ask that I do continue to look at the appropriate levels of funding, I happily entertain that responsibility.

One comment that was made with respect to fund-raising by parents was made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. He was commenting on the reaction of parents whose students were attending Calgary board of education schools or schools in Calgary. One of the difficulties with respect to fund-raising is knowing exactly what the correct figures are. The Calgary board of education, for example, has identified in its books \$24 million in fund-raising that took place last year by its schools. There are approximately 220 schools in the Calgary board of education,

which would mean that each school would have to be raising approximately \$110,000. That does not strike me as being likely to be the case, and upon my reflection on some of the numbers proposed by the Calgary board as being fund-raising numbers, I have found that some of those dollars in fact are in-and-out dollars. For example, cafeteria revenues were included in that \$24 million. So while I acknowledge that some parents indicate their difficulty with fund-raising, I must say that we do need to make further inquiries to determine whether this is a significant issue across the board.

I want to point out what I view to be a couple of myths or possible mythologies in the area of education. I have often stood with a great deal of pride in talking about Alberta's results in the third international math and sciences study, or the TIMS study. The TIMS study, which Alberta participated in with 48 countries, demonstrated that in the area of science Alberta students came out number three in the world, a very significant achievement. In the area of math they finished in the top one-third.

The interesting points about the TIMS study are that, first of all, there appears to be not much of a connection between the quality of education and levels of funding. Some of the countries whose students performed best in fact funded their education systems the least. The second area, Mr. Chairman, is in the issue of classroom sizes. Some of the best-quality students came from countries where classroom sizes were typically in the 50-student range. I'm not suggesting for a moment, Mr. Chairman, that we need to spend less on education. I'm not suggesting for a moment that we need to increase our classroom size to 50. But I do think that those two facts suggest that we need to ask more questions about the connections between the quality of education and funding levels and also the issue of classroom sizes.

Mr. Chairman, with those few comments and my undertaking to review the Blues and take a look at other questions asked and provide my written responses, I move the vote on the supplementary estimates for the Department of Education.

Agreed to:

**Education**

Operating Expenditures: \$29,300,000

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported when the committee rises and reports?

[Motion carried]

**10:10**

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe I have a motion that is being distributed at this time. I would like to move the following motion, and that is

that the membership of the designated supply subcommittees be changed as follows: on Health replace Mr. Pham with Mr. Severtson, on Justice and Attorney General replace Mr. Jacques with Ms Haley, and on Labour replace Ms Haley with Mr. Jacques.

[Motion on amendment carried]

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have a motion that I would like to present to the committee. After another discussion with the Government House Leader we think we finally have this right. I would move

that Government Motion 13 be further amended as follows: in Section 2, under subcommittee A strike out Ms Leibovici and substitute Dr. Massey, and under subcommittee B strike out Ms Sloan and Mr. Dickson and substitute Mr. Bonner and Ms Leibovici.

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Chairman, having had such a long illustrious career, I'll never forget this evening. I'd like to move that the committee do now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration the motion proposing the establishment of four subcommittees of the Committee of Supply and reports progress thereon.

I wish to table copies of a resolution relating to the membership of the designated supply subcommittees agreed to in Committee of Supply on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Family and Social Services for the fiscal year ended 1996-97, reports the approval of the following estimates, and requests leave to sit again: capital investment, \$5,225,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Education for the fiscal year ended 1996-97, reports the approval of the following estimates, and requests leave to sit again: operating expenses, \$29,300,000.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

[At 10:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

