

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Monday, April 28, 1997 1:30 p.m.  
**Date:** 97/04/28  
 [The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Today's prayer was authored by former Speaker David Carter.

Let us pray.

At the beginning of this week we ask You, Father, to renew and strengthen in us the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of this Legislature.

We ask You also in Your divine providence to bless and protect the Assembly and the province we are elected to serve.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a well-known Albertan seated in your gallery. Dr. Michael Percy is the former Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and served very ably as the opposition finance critic. He is here today in his capacity as co-chair of the Alberta Growth Summit. Now, hon. members may know that Dr. Percy has been selected dean of the Faculty of Business at the University of Alberta effective July 1, 1997. Please join me in a warm welcome to Dr. Michael Percy.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present a petition signed by nearly 200 people asking the Alberta government to introduce legislation which would "prevent the use of replacement workers during strike action."

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 144 Albertans asking the government to "hold a Public Inquiry into the operation of the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta."

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition signed by some of the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake requesting the government of Alberta to ban all VLTs.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. MacDONALD: I request that the petition presented on Wednesday, April 23 regarding replacement workers now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the government of Alberta to introduce legislation that would prevent the use of replacement workers during strike action.

head: **Notices of Motions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give oral notice of my intention to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly following Orders of the Day to change the membership on the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm filing two items with the Assembly today, the first being a news release issued today in support of the first ever Alberta Library Week. In acknowledging the importance of libraries in our society, the Magrath public library received the creative library award for its exceptional fund-raising efforts towards building a new library.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, during question period on August 27, 1996, while responding to a question from the previous Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I indicated that I would table with the Assembly the procedures that are followed in handling Alberta seniors' benefit claims regarding confidentiality. I am pleased to file the document entitled Alberta Seniors Benefit Program: Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Seniors' Income Information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Wabasca.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to file six copies of the Northern Alberta Development Council annual report for the fiscal year 1995-96.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table this afternoon a sequel to the Kerby Centre Synergy II report, that I tabled in 1995. The Elder Abuse handbook provides workers in this province with a model to deal with elder abuse issues and hopefully stokes the fire for effective legislation to protect persons in need of care.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today with the Assembly the annual report of the Seniors' Advisory Council for Alberta for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1996. A copy of the report will be distributed to all members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of a letter to Christy and Carlee Panyluk of Hinton, Alberta, congratulating them on a YTV achievement award for entrepreneurship.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Halvar Jonson it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly 25 grade 8 students and their leaders from the New Norway school in the constituency of Ponoka-Rimbey. I'd like to just mention the names of the leaders and teachers: Morley Dunlop, Ed Martinson, Sue Niven, and Laurie Huolt. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise at this time and receive the warm welcome of this House.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today 31 students from Concordia high school in the riding of Edmonton-Highlands. They're in the public gallery and accompanied today by teachers Mr. Lloyd Grosfield and Mr. Aaron Heinemann. I'd ask that all members of the Assembly give them a warm welcome upon their rising.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

### Alberta Growth Summit

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting time to be an Albertan. More Albertans are working than ever before. Our unemployment rate is the lowest in Canada. Financial experts call Alberta the best place to do business in Canada, and individuals and businesses are voting with their feet and their wallets by moving or expanding here. Over the last few years we have built a strong foundation with balanced budgets, diminishing debt, and the lowest overall taxes in Canada. Our economic outlook is indeed bright.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that continuing accelerated growth brings with it new challenges and new pressures on everything from our physical infrastructure and educational institutions to salaries in the public sector. The Alberta Growth Summit, which I am announcing today, will be held in Edmonton on September 29 and 30. It is an important forum to meet these challenges.

The summit will address how our province can respond to the pressures of growth and to the rising demand for public services while continuing to live within its means. It will refine our vision of what Alberta should be in the next century, and it will bring together in a fair and balanced way more than 80 leaders from seven major sectors of our economy.

1:40

Each of these sectors and its delegates will be represented by a facilitator, an Albertan with a record of active participation in that sector and a high degree of respect in the community. I would like to announce their involvement here today: from government, former MLA and cabinet minister Ken Rostad; from the social economy or the community sector, former MLA Bettie Hewes; from the municipal, education, and health sectors, Red Deer Mayor Gail Surkan; from business and industry, one of the three chairs of the Alberta Economic Development Authority; from energy, Dee Parkinson-Marcoux, president, CS Resources Limited; from agriculture and rural development, Don Mazankowski, former federal Minister of Agriculture and former Deputy Prime Minister; and from labour, senior members of the labour sector have expressed a desire to select their own facilitator instead of having one nominated by government. As co-chairs Dr. Michael Percy, who was introduced earlier, and I have concurred with this request.

They and the delegates that they bring to the process will seek a consensus on what we need to do in both the public and private sectors to ensure sustainable and broad-based growth in our province. They will look at where we want to be in the year 2005, Alberta's centennial year. The ideas that they develop will be consistent with our existing fiscal framework, our defined government objectives, and the principles of performance-based management. They will focus on creating sustainable policies, on providing quality services, and on being fair to all Albertans.

They will help to form the basis of government policy in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, this summit is truly the people's process not the government's process, and our virtual summit on the worldwide web will allow Albertans to keep track of developments and to participate themselves. So we have our agenda for growth for the next phase of this great work in progress. Budget '97 and the departmental business plans are the specifications, the Alberta Growth Summit will help provide the blueprints, and our ongoing work with Albertans will be the actual construction.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that our province is a tremendous place to live, and we will continue to build an even better Alberta together.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Before calling on the Leader of the Official Opposition for his response, I would like to thank the office of the Premier for providing the Chair with a copy of the ministerial statement before presentation.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by concurring with the Premier's comments about the importance of consulting with a broad cross section of Albertans on how to ensure sustainable and broad-based growth, which involves all Albertans as we enter the 21st century. I am hopeful that the terms of reference for the Alberta Growth Summit, that the Premier has announced today, will give all Albertans an opportunity to participate and fulfill the great potential of our province. It seems – and it is encouraging – that the Premier has finally recognized that our social infrastructure – an accessible and quality publicly funded health care system, an education system that prepares our children to compete successfully in the global economy of the 21st century, and a social safety net that protects our most vulnerable – is the foundation for a sustained growth and productivity in our economy.

Over the past four years Albertans have heard a lot from this government about balanced budgets, balance sheets, assets and liabilities, cash flow statements, and debt retirement. These are, of course, important. But Alberta is more than a financial bottom line and an annual report to shareholders. Alberta's strength is its people. I hope that the Alberta Growth Summit acknowledges that fact.

I hope that the Alberta Growth Summit deals with these issues critical to sustained growth in a postdeficit environment. I'll list some. Alberta has the lowest per capita funded health care system in the entire country and the seventh lowest funded education system. Is that conducive to economic growth? Alberta has the third highest level of child poverty, the fourth highest level of single mothers living in poverty in the country. Is that conducive to sustained growth? Personal bankruptcies have increased by 53 percent over the past four years. Is that conducive to sustained growth? Personal income, personal disposable income and wages and salaries have not kept up with the rate of inflation. Is that conducive to economic growth? Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the entire country. Mr. Speaker, is that conducive to economic growth?

These are issues that are important to building an Alberta about which all Albertans can be proud. At a time when Alberta's economy is leading the country, its wealth is all but unprecedented, the question that needs to be asked is: how do we care for the public good? Our hope on this side of the House is that Albertans are going to get a Growth Summit that asks and answers

that very important question. If, as the Premier says, this summit is the people's summit, then this summit will do exactly that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Once again the Chair would like to express appreciation for receiving a copy of the statement.

#### Day of Mourning for Injured Workers

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand in the House today and deliver a statement on the Day of Mourning for Injured Workers. The statement I will be reading was prepared by the Alberta Building Trades Council.

April 28 is a special day for labour, Mr. Speaker. It is a solemn day when we pause to reflect on the cost that is paid by workers in the pursuit of their trade. Each year Workers' Compensation Board statistics show a number of workplace fatalities as well as other deaths due to work-related causes such as industrial disease. Over the past few years we have seen a death toll which has consistently hovered around 100. It was 91 this past year. In each year one-third of those people have been from the construction industry. Workers perished as a result of falls, cave-ins, equipment overturn, and increasingly from industrial disease. The day of mourning is essentially the workers' Remembrance Day. It is a time to pause and reflect on the nature of our work, the risk it entails, and the risks we sometimes willingly accept.

The second aspect of the day of mourning is the one of workplace health and safety. Generally, everyone pays lip service to the idea of on-the-job safety. Most of us daydream through the toolbox safety meetings. After all, accidents do happen, but accidents are not merely bad luck. Virtually every accident without exception results from a human cause. That human cause arises in a number of different ways: inexperience, stupidity, risk-taking, or allowing someone else to take a risk.

The only tolerance for accidents is zero tolerance. We can no longer tolerate the cost in human and economic terms that workplace injuries cause us. Workplace hazards also have the unpleasant side effect of spilling over on our families. This can be through your own injury or from bringing hazardous materials home from the workplace. Zero tolerance for accidents is the only standard we can now accept. Our fair contractors and most of the owners we deal with believe it is their social responsibility to make sure that when you go home from work, you return home in the same condition you were in when you arrived at the work site. Employers and owners want you to work safely.

There's still a minority of employers, owners, and employees who do not yet fully grasp the importance of safety. There are avenues of relief available from Alberta Labour, and we will not hesitate to use them. We need to modify our behaviour to ensure safe work. This applies to each and every one of us.

On April 28 we ask you to stop working for a moment and observe a brief silence to think about your own safety and the health and safety of those around you. We ask you to pause and reflect on those other of our brethren who have died as a result of workplace hazards or been killed in workplace accidents. You all know someone who has been hurt or killed, who has died of asbestosis or other health-related cause.

Consider the black and gold day of mourning sticker that the hard hat displays. It is black. In western culture black is a funeral colour. We all know accidents happen to the other guy. Don't be the other guy.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind everyone in the House today

that there is a plaque commemorating the Day of Mourning for Injured Workers on the southwest grounds of the Legislature. That plaque was jointly placed by business, labour, and government, and I invite you at some point today to pay a brief visit to the site.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minister for his comments and appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in reply.

On November 21, 1950, as a young boy growing up in Jasper, a knock came to our door, informing my father, who worked for the railroad, and my mother, who was a nurse, of the Canoe River wreck. This tragedy just west of Jasper was my first opportunity to see the impact of tragedy in the workplace. I saw the shock, the sorrow, the pain of an entire community as experienced by some people who worked on the railroad and particularly a number of soldiers who were going to Korea to fight. I must agree with the minister when he says that zero tolerance is the only tolerance we can accept.

I know that in the workplace when we look at health and safety, when all parties do work together, we can make it a place where workers can go and return in the shape that they went.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

head:

#### Oral Question Period

##### Social Housing Corporation

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the announced loss of \$2.5 billion by the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation is not the end of the story. In fact, as of last year the government has provided \$326 million in loan guarantees on real estate loans taken over by institutions such as the Bank of Montreal and Canada Life. These guarantees are a huge exposure to the taxpayers of this province. To the Premier: how does the Premier explain to Alberta taxpayers that his government is still in the loan guarantee business to the tune of at least \$326 million in bad real estate?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition knows, it's been this government's policy certainly since 1992 to get out of the business of being in business. The only reason for this to happen, perhaps, is through the Alberta Treasury Branch, which operates at arm's length from the government. If the hon. member could be more specific and tell us if in fact this is through the ATB, then perhaps I'll have the Provincial Treasurer look into it.

MR. MITCHELL: In fact, Mr. Speaker, none of it's through the ATB; it's all through the Social Housing Corporation.

My next question: how can the Premier claim that his government is out of the business of being in business when over \$110 million of the loan guarantees do not even expire until the year 2011? It's only another 15 years, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member is living in the past. Those deals were done before the government brought in its policy of ostensibly getting out of the business of being in business unless the Legislature approves under the new law such a loan, loan guarantee, or grant.

MR. MITCHELL: Will the Premier please confirm that his government has already written off \$6.4 million in losses against these loan guarantees and that that is just the tip of the iceberg?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, truly it's a matter of living in the past. You know, the Auditor General has clearly indicated that the books of this province are more open, more accountable than any other provincial books in this country. Loans, guarantees, even loan losses are all listed in public accounts. We talk about them openly, and in fact they were instituted and drawn up, many of these, in the past. So for the Leader of the Opposition to raise it as if we were there at the time signing these would be the same as us raising the fact that he was vice-president of Principal Trust when it was going down the tubes and he continued to take money from widows and seniors. Same type of thing.

MR. MITCHELL: Of course, there was a public inquiry into that particular fiasco, Mr. Speaker. It would be nice to have one into this.

The Treasurer has just said that this process of announcing the \$2.5 billion in losses is just more evidence of how open and accountable this government wants people to believe it is, but our research has found, Mr. Speaker, only \$1.7 billion of the \$2.5 billion of losses, and the remaining \$800 million is nowhere to be found in the books that the Treasurer speaks about. Will the Premier please give Albertans a complete list of the properties upon which a total of \$2.5 billion was lost and a list of those people or companies that got the properties?

MR. KLEIN: Well, you know, the hon. member's fixation with the past continues. I mean, this is something that occurred, as I understand it, mostly between 1979 and approximately 1984. The disposition of those properties started in maybe 1986, continued through to 1991. Perhaps some of it is going on today, Mr. Speaker. As I explained at the outset, many of these properties were acquired when the market was at an all-time high, but we didn't think it was appropriate for the government to remain in that business any longer.

Relative to the specifics of the portfolio, Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs reply.

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to respond on this issue. If in fact there are units that are not currently disposed of, they relate in large part to difficult negotiations federally with CMHC. So we have not disposed of all of the units, but I would just suggest that the units that are still there are serving the social needs of people in Alberta, Albertans that are most in need, Albertans that were not taken care of in the '70s. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. leader, good questions and good exchanges in response, but the Chair would really like to hear both the question and the answer.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier explain to Alberta taxpayers that losses on property disposal activities undertaken not by governments of the past but by his own government now total \$360 million, the fourth largest loss to Alberta taxpayers in Conservative government history?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, we are not totally out of the business of providing social housing for those who truly need that kind of help in society. I would think that the hon.

leader of the Liberal opposition would concur that when there are people in need, in real need, there is a responsibility on the part of the government to step in. To what extent those purchases, if any, have been made for people who are truly in need in society, not as a business kind of a deal but to accommodate those who need — need — good housing, I'll again have the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs reply.

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, at the time that there was disposal of the assets, it was so intriguing to me in reviewing *Hansard* that there was very little challenge from the opposition members. Quite frankly, of the 810 social housing units that remain, there are some that have been identified as surplus. Three hundred and five housing units have been sold recently; 63 are still in the process of being sold. I would suggest that the market is still not at its peak, and I would wonder if in fact the opposition is suggesting that we dispose of these assets when it's not profitable for this government to do so. [interjections]

2:00

THE SPEAKER: The Chair would like to commend the patience of both the Premier and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs in not responding to the interjections that have been forthcoming from the hon. members for Edmonton-Meadowlark and Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Hon. leader, third question.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs confirm that she is right now providing for an additional \$12.2 million in losses from the disposal of housing properties in this fiscal year alone despite the fact that she says that the market hasn't peaked and hasn't come back to a level at which it might be more appropriate to sell those?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no, I will not confirm, and the long answer is: I have not tabled my figures yet or my budget estimates. It may be appropriate to address that question at that time.

MR. KLEIN: I'm sorry. I wish to supplement. You know, what is somewhat insidious about all this is that there is this attempt or there is this implication from the other side to say that perhaps we have been hiding and perhaps we have been keeping something from the public. Their own press release was just handed to me. All of the sources: public accounts; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; source, public accounts of Alberta; written question, August 18, 1989; source, public accounts of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, this has been out there. It has been published. The only thing they have done is that they have for the first time picked up an adding machine — well, they probably used an adding machine, because I doubt they could do it in their heads — and added it all up.

THE SPEAKER: Third main opposition question, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

#### Seniors' Tax Rebates

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The changes to federal tax credits bring gains to the Treasury of \$14 million per year because Alberta seniors are paying more in provincial income tax. Referring to this windfall, the former Provincial Treasurer said:

The gains to Alberta that resulted from the federal government's tax change announced in February 1994 were fully passed on to Alberta seniors in May 1994.

Treasury's 1997 costing of Liberal policy indicates that a rebate would cost an additional \$14 million per year, so it appears that their \$14 million has not been fully passed on. To the hon. Premier: why did your Treasurer say that seniors' tax dollars had been passed on when in fact their tax money has not been returned?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will defer to the hon. Minister of Community Development.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly there has been far more than \$14 million passed on in improved seniors' benefits, and I think the hon. member would have heard that in the supplementary estimates that were debated in this House this past week, where we had an extensive discussion on the additional dollars that were placed in the special-needs program, which seniors tell us is an excellent program that is working very well for them, in the change in the benefit definition for health care premium subsidy, in the elimination of one-senior/two-senior couple definition. In fact, I would say that our benefits to seniors have increased some \$29 million, far more than the \$14 million that the hon. member is alluding to.

MR. BONNER: My first supplemental: will the government commit right now to a rebate of \$100 per senior to make up for the money taken out of seniors' pockets over the last two years?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we spent I think probably one hour and five minutes at least in the debate, and that exhausted the debate from the other side in this House I believe it was last Wednesday evening. At that time, we talked extensively about the changes to the seniors' programs. We talked about the changes that were far more beneficial to seniors than a \$100 dividend. We talked about the fact that the easy solution is to raise the threshold \$1,000 for income definition, which would amount to about \$12 a month for seniors, and it was suggested that we don't think that's a significant amount. It's not that I don't think it's a significant amount, but I think the ability for a senior to apply for \$5,000 in one year is far more significant to those seniors who are truly in need in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the special-needs program has a record. It is working. It is working in every constituency in this province, and I suggest that those members across the way get involved with the seniors' groups, have a discussion with them on this subject, and ask if those changes have truly been beneficial to seniors in this province. I think the answer is yes.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier saying, then, that he was not including seniors when he promised in an address to the Toronto Board of Trade on January 23, 1995:

If Ottawa "broadens" the tax base, and that results in dramatically increased revenues to my government, we will find a way to rebate that money to Albertans?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm fully aware that when somebody writes out a question, somebody should read it, but I am straining the patience, I believe, of the House in responding to the same question three times.

Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that we have increased benefits to seniors in this province by \$29 million. I have also indicated

that we have had a full discussion on those changes in the seniors' programs in supplementary estimates in this House, where we took over an hour of House time to fully explore those. I have also offered to the hon. members across the way that I would give them a full written explanation if there were any questions that were not covered there.

Mr. Speaker, we have responded to seniors. We have returned investments to seniors: not \$14 million, no; \$29 million in improvements in seniors' programs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Hon. member.

### Privatization

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday my colleague Pam Barrett made public information contained . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order. Order.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, your leader has advised you that private names are not used.

Proceed.

DR. PANNU: My hon. colleague made public information contained in a speech by the Energy minister in which he revealed for the first time the true cost of the Conservative government's privatization agenda. The minister informed an audience in Toronto that the government has lost \$2.5 billion in taxpayers' money as a result of their blind devotion to the ideology of privatization regardless of its costs. In responding to the question, the hon. Premier left the impression that all of these losses had been incurred through the sale of the assets of Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. My question to the provincial Premier is this: given that the Conservative government has also incurred hundreds of millions of dollars in losses on the sale of publicly owned assets other than AMHC assets, will the Provincial Treasurer file in this Assembly an itemized list of the losses incurred on the sale of all government assets, and if not, why not?

MR. KLEIN: Just as a preamble, Mr. Speaker . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Premier, sorry to interject. We've had a series of these questions already this afternoon, so brevity would probably be helpful.

MR. KLEIN: Yes, yes.

Mr. Speaker, my only comment is that what the then Minister of Economic Development and Tourism was trying to point out was that in order not to incur these kinds of losses, we ought not to get into business, and that's precisely why this government has adopted the policy of keeping out of the business of getting into business.

Relative to the specifics, again, as it relates to the portfolio, I'll have the hon. Provincial Treasurer answer.

MR. DAY: I see the Speaker indicating brevity, and I will acknowledge that and say that the public record is clear. It's already been mentioned that the questions and the press release by the Liberals thoroughly document the fact that public accounts is clear on all these issues, and if there are any more questions or something that's not there, we'll try and get the information to them.

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

**2:10**

DR. PANNU: Given that page 262 of the budget update filed in this Assembly last week shows that the department of transportation lost \$617 million in just four years during the time that the same minister privatized the department of transportation, how can the Treasurer justify losses of this magnitude at the altar of privatization?

MR. DAY: I'm struggling a little bit to try and gain the import of the question, Mr. Speaker. You know, these sales and these transactions initiated back as far as 1979 – real estate losses were certainly not something that was unique to the government. I mean, we can list the companies: Nu-West, Fidelity Trust, North West Trust, Canadian Commercial Bank, Principal Trust. The effects of the drop in real estate were not unique to government. What is unique is that government has to fully declare all of these, and they are fully declared. Again, if there's something there that seems to be missing, we'll try and get that information out.

DR. PANNU: Given that the public accounts for the years in which the transportation department was being privatized show losses of a much lower magnitude than the Transportation and Utilities consolidated income statement that appeared in the 1997 budget update last week, how does the Treasurer explain this half billion dollar discrepancy?

MR. DAY: Again, Mr. Speaker, a lot of figures being tossed out of there from different years and different pages. We'll take a look at the question and see if there's something missing. I don't know that there could be. It may be a misinterpretation of data. We'll take a look at it, and we'll see if we can reconcile it for the sake of the member.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Rules**

THE SPEAKER: Prior to calling on the hon. Member for St. Albert, the Chair would just like to respond perhaps to the two individuals who indicated that they were going to be raising points of order and kindly advise the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that a reading of *Beauchesne* 409 might be in order for all members of the House. Section 409(5) clearly indicates that "the matter ought to be of some urgency" and 409(8) that "a question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again."

#### **Federal/Provincial Fiscal Relations**

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, the federal government announced today increases in cash transfers associated with the Canada health and social transfer. To the Provincial Treasurer: can you explain for the benefit of my constituents what this means to Alberta?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'll try and restrict my remarks strictly to the financials and not allow my cynical nature to taint the dollars and cents of this issue. I struggle, though, with the timing of this. An election announced one day, and then the Liberals, who appear to be concerned about spending, the very next day toss a billion and a half dollars out there. It's a coincidental thing, I'm sure. I would not presume anything else.

What it means to us in Alberta, Mr. Speaker – if you take the period of time from 1995 to the end of this century, we had projected that the Liberals would reduce the dollars coming to us

on our priority programs of health and education and social services by \$530 million. With this announcement today we can tell Albertans that the Liberals are only reducing those key priority areas by \$410 million.

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Provincial Treasurer: how does federal funding for Albertans compare to that in other provinces?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are a generous people, and that is evidenced by how we reach out to all other provinces, especially in times of need. The flood situation in Quebec last year was certainly a key indication of that. However, I will say that I feel our generosity does get stretched to the limit when you consider the fact that the amount of dollars given to us as a province is the lowest per capita of any other province, significantly below the average.

The reason for that is an interesting one. The amount of dollars that will be transferred to Alberta in these key priority areas of health, education, and social services was fixed in 1995. In the two years preceding that, Alberta took some very bold moves in terms of how we handle social services, no longer giving dollars on a passive basis, but in fact people on social services had to be responsible for the dollars they were getting. It was a very bold move, but we felt it was the most responsible thing and the best message to give to healthy, employable Albertans, and I emphasize that: healthy, employable.

Because we did that, our welfare rolls dropped significantly, and then two years later the federal government pegged their transfer payments on our reduced rolls. Because we were responsible, we in a way are getting penalized. Other provinces which have not done this and continue a passive system without requiring work or education continue to receive more benefit than we do.

MRS. O'NEILL: Finally, Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer: with this announcement what is the comparative drop of federal support for health, education, and social services to other federal spending?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't suggest it's a reflection of Liberal priorities, but I will say that in the area of priorities to Albertans, which are health, education, and social services, our federal transfers have been reduced by about 33 and a third percent. That's quite a significant whack. The Liberal reduction in their other spending programs is about 1.5 percent.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### **Freedom of Information**

MRS. PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget documents tabled last week indicate that the province supports four Alberta private colleges to the tune of almost \$9 million annually. Despite that significant contribution of tax dollars to the operating budgets of these institutions, the government is currently pursuing plans that will actually exclude these private colleges from the application of the freedom of information Act. To the minister responsible for freedom of information: why have you decided to block Albertans from accessing information about institutions that their tax dollars have paid to support?

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the preliminary Act is now before the House, and I don't know if I should be commenting on it at this point. I'll just say that I'll leave those answers for debate in the House.

MRS. PAUL: My second question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member: can the minister explain how this change upholds his government's commitment to provide an open, accessible, and accountable government?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that this member has now been engorged by the fever of debate, and I look forward to hearing more from the hon. member and her ability to put forth cogent arguments towards discussion of the Bill.

I can say in all candour, Mr. Speaker, that this is the most open government known to Alberta ever. In fact, there are annual financial statements that have been researched thoroughly by the opposition. There are quarterly financial statements. There is the commitment to freedom of information from the number one Bill in 1993 to the number one Bill in 1997. The beat goes on.

Thank you.

MRS. PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The beat will go on.

Can the minister tell the Assembly by what date he is committed to making all postsecondary institutions, including private colleges, subject to the Act? How about a date, time?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, consensus is built with dialogue and consultation, and that's exactly what we intend to do.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

## 2:20 Child and Family Services Authorities

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that a child and family services authorities committee has been working on a proposal on how funding will be distributed under the new community-based system. Fair allocation to the 17 regional authorities is critical. My question is to the minister responsible for children's services. Has this committee been charged with a mandate to consider and include the regional differences that will impact the cost of services to children and families?

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, actually any time we're dealing with a funding issue, we seem to have a concern across this province, so what the committee has been mandated to do is to ensure that there is a distribution of funding that would be fair and equitable across this province. As probably most of us realize, demographics and population of high needs is a concern to everybody who is impacted by this, so we must ensure that any kind of funding that does come through is going to be reflective of the needs of each region. Actually, there are 18 regions that will be established in the next little while.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the same minister assure communities that they will have sufficient funding for services for our children and our families?

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, the intent of the funding and the intent of having these communities go and assume responsibility is never to have them go and fund-raise, but rather the funding

will be the responsibility of the government. Definitely we'll ensure that the funding will continue to flow as the needs are expressed in these funding formulas as we reach them.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, my last question relates to how the funding will be applied by the new child and family services authorities. How does this funding actually flow towards the children and families who need the services?

MS CALAHASEN: Under the new system, Mr. Speaker, the funding will flow according to how the government will distribute it, and that will be determined as the funding formula comes forward. Before this funding transfer occurs, we will ensure that there are business plans in place from each regional authority that will be formed.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

## Nursing

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The proposed changes to licensed practical nurse regulations are currently being reviewed by government and in fact are slated for tomorrow's cabinet agenda, I'm told. These regulations will dramatically change the mix of professionals and the provision of care in our health care sector. Changes have been suggested before, in fact for over a year, and each time concern over safety and the lack of public consultation has caused this government to delay their approval. My questions are to the Minister of Labour. What documented studies has the department utilized to demonstrate that reducing the mix of skilled professionals will not result in increasing costs through increased mortality rates, increased complications, and increased lengths of stay?

MR. SMITH: I feel a bit like George Foreman. I'm still on my feet after. Let me very quickly – I may not be as quick as Mr. Foreman, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, this has been a process that has been two years of consultation. This goes through consultation with the Health Disciplines Board, which includes both public members and physician members. There have been two separate consultations with stakeholders on the matter. That includes registered nurses, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the province's regional health authorities. The physicians and the regional health authorities have expressed their support for the proposed amendments. Opposition to the proposal seems to be at this point restricted to Alberta's registered nurses.

I haven't seen the cabinet agenda for tomorrow, so I couldn't comment on the veracity of that statement.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that I am fully aware that anesthetists in this province have expressed their concern and have done so in writing, I would take exception to the minister's statement that nurses are the only ones opposed.

Will the minister, then, give the Legislative Assembly a summary of the public consultation process and the letters, both opposed and in support, that have been utilized to validate these important regulatory changes?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I would be more than pleased to table with the House the public consultation process and will do so.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit to circulating the regulations in hand with the summary of the public consultations before they are approved by his cabinet tomorrow?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, there's no knowledge that I have that the issue is to be approved or disapproved by cabinet tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### University of Lethbridge

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The University of Lethbridge has been planning for a new facility to replace the existing library for its campus. The planned cost of that facility would be \$30 million. At this point in time the university has set a goal for \$10 million in fund-raising of their own from private donations, and southern Albertans have responded to that challenge by coming up with close to \$7 million at this point. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. Can the minister tell us what help the government is prepared to give the university in completing this project?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, the question from the hon. member relates to libraries, and I want to, while I have the floor, tell you about my support of libraries. We had a statement earlier from the Minister of Community Development. The reason I'm in such support of libraries is that it allows me to go in and of course look up the definition of new words, especially like "piscatory," for an example.

Relating to the question as it was directed, my department has announced \$35 million a year in what we call the infrastructure renewal envelope. We will use this, of course, for renewal and upgrading. At the present time we have an evaluation system that's currently under review, and once we decide on that review system, then we will be making that announcement.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, does this mean, then, that you will fund the LINC project?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the representative for Lethbridge-West I've been particularly vocal in my support of the LINC project and as an MLA would certainly continue to do whatever I can to see this project go ahead. However, I have accepted the responsibilities as a minister, and now I have to govern myself in accordance with what is best for the whole system.

I said earlier in my answer that we're looking for an evaluation process. When we have it, we will publicize that and will allow all institutions an opportunity to send forth their projects, then, based on that evaluation process.

MR. COUTTS: My final supplemental then, Mr. Speaker, is: can the minister explain more about the infrastructure renewal envelope? What is it, and when will the funding be available?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, the infrastructure renewal envelope, Mr. Speaker, is part of our budget for the '97-98 fiscal year. We'll be in front of the assembled people tomorrow evening on our estimates. We are projecting at this time that we would have \$35 million which institutions would be able to use as part of a renewal system for the ongoing situation that they're currently faced with in terms of their capital assets.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

#### Science, Research, and Technology

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has demonstrated its interest in science, research, and information technology by appointing a minister responsible. Will that minister please explain what the duties are of the Member for Red Deer-South, who receives an additional \$15,000 to be chair of the Alberta Research Council?

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the Member for Red Deer-South is to be the chairman of the Alberta Research Council.

MR. SAPERS: That's an impressive list of responsibilities, Mr. Minister.

Will the minister explain with perhaps some more precision what the duties are of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who also gets paid an additional \$15,000 per year as the MLA responsible for technology development and commercialization?

2:30

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is to examine and take a look at the commercialization of technology in the province and to discover if, in fact, we are getting the best bang for the buck.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, thank you. All Albertans are so much better informed.

Maybe the minister will have a little better time with this one. Will the minister please explain precisely how these two job descriptions differ from one another and what exactly is left over for him to do?

DR. TAYLOR: I could provide some detail for instance of the mandate of science and research. It includes four major areas. It includes the Alberta Research Council, which also includes the Alberta Environmental Centre, which was joined with the Alberta Research Council during the last year. It includes the Science and Research Authority, which is a private-sector board that oversees policy and research development in the province, Mr. Speaker. The mandate of the ministry also includes interprovincial and intragovernment relations in the area of science and research. As well, it includes the external aspects to government in terms of information technology. We have in government a CIO, which looks at the internal aspects of information technology, and the ministry looks at the external aspects of information technology.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

#### Foothills Hospital VRE Outbreak

MR. CAO: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of media reports about the outbreak of VRE, which is an antibiotic-resistant bacteria, in the Foothills hospital in Calgary. Could the Acting Minister of Health explain what this bacteria is, and what the implications for the patients at the Foothills hospital are?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Health I'd be more than happy to respond. VRE, or vancomycin-resistant enterococci, is a very



virulent version of a common pathogen. This is a bacteria that originated in the States due to heavy antibiotic usage. What has happened is that it has come up from the States into three cases in the Foothills hospital. These cases are presently under isolation, and the general public should not have any worry. I must also mention that this is a type of bacteria that will not affect young, healthy people, but in people who are compromised in the hospital, it can be extremely dangerous. However, the staff at the Foothills are certainly doing a good job.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the media coverage about the VRE outbreak has also implied that this type of outbreak is caused by the reduction in health spending. Could the minister identify whether that is indeed the case?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The evolution of VRE started in the U.S., where they started using a lot of very strong and multiple antibiotics in treating diseases in ICUs. What then happened is this species evolved into what is called vancomycin-resistant. Vancomycin is probably the strongest antibiotic that we have at the moment.

This came from the States, and interestingly enough there have been other cases in Canada. Indeed, Alberta is one of the last places. As referenced by the hon. Leader of the Opposition last week, there was an outbreak in Kelowna. We keep hearing every day that Alberta spends the least per capita. B.C. spends more, yet it came to B.C. first.

MR. CAO: My third question is also for the Acting Minister of Health. Since the outbreak of VRE is at the Foothills hospital and since the Foothills hospital is the major trauma centre for all southern Alberta, what alternative might be available for trauma care should this bacteria outbreak affect the operation of the Foothills trauma centre?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I took the liberty today of contacting the infectious disease person and asked them that very question. Before I get into it, I must remind the Assembly that there are two tertiary trauma centres in Calgary. There's the Alberta children's hospital, and there's the Foothills hospital. This is something that hasn't come out. The children's hospital certainly will pick up the pace if on the unforeseen chance the trauma unit has to be shut down. What will happen is that when a suspected case of VRE enters the trauma unit, that particular area and that particular patient will come under isolation, and it is felt that that will successfully control any VRE outbreak in the trauma unit in Calgary.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

#### Administration of Justice

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Friday's government of Alberta *Bulletin* the government advertised that they want to hire a Crown prosecutor in Red Deer. The qualifications for the candidate are that they can have no more – and I repeat: no more – than three years of related experience. My question today is to the Minister of Justice. How do you intend to keep your commitment to community safety when you place such a low maximum experience level for such an important job?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was

indicated previously in the House, we are looking at hiring additional Crown prosecutors. I believe there are 18 positions that are being advertised. This is an entry-level position in Red Deer. We feel quite confident that the people we have in place in Red Deer at this point in time, who have a lot of experience, can handle the difficult cases that are brought forward.

MS OLSEN: My next question is to the same minister. Given that you admitted last Tuesday that most of the new Crown prosecutors will be hired at the lower level, have you considered the effect this lower average level of experience will have on criminal prosecutions in Alberta?

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, of course we've considered that, and again we still feel that we have sufficient experience within the Crown prosecutors' department to handle the serious cases that are coming forward.

MS OLSEN: My final question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will the Price Waterhouse survey being conducted across the country also compare Alberta's average level of experience to that in other provinces so that you can assure Albertans that our justice system is not being compromised?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, to give the hon. member some information, there was also another article which appeared on the weekend regarding impaired convictions, and I've looked into that. At this stage we are actually achieving a conviction rate of in excess of 80 percent, and that's in light of some very difficult technicalities in cases being brought forward.

Nevertheless, with respect to the Price Waterhouse report, I can certainly look into that. I'm not sure if that specific question was raised, but I'd be happy to get the information to the hon. member.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-*Mill Woods*.

#### Freedom of Information

(continued)

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On October 1, 1997, the freedom of information Act in this province will prevail over any other law in Alberta in conflict with it, but there's a catch. The government can exempt a statute, pull a shroud of secrecy back over other government activities if they pass a law or a regulation before October 1, 1997. So my initial question is to the hon. Minister of Labour, the minister responsible for freedom of information and protecting the public's right to know. How many statutes does the government plan on taking out of the scope of freedom of information?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I would like to advise the House that Bill 1 is on the Order Paper, so let's be careful in terms of the general nature of the questions that are raised with respect to this so that we do not get involved in the debate of the Bill in question period.

MR. SMITH: Thank you for that guidance, Mr. Speaker. We'll say that the member's question is speculative at best and look forward to the debate in the House. I cannot anticipate the full range of the government's agenda.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, this isn't covered in Bill 1.

My follow-up question to the hon. minister would be: will the minister at least give Albertans an undertaking that if the government wishes to pull the shroud of secrecy over government activity, there will first be a debate in this Assembly.

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is already in debate on Bill 1. Secondly, I would take exception to his description: shroud of secrecy. I would expect that from where they've been getting research information – public accounts, quarterly financial statements, audited annual statements, open and accountable business plans – the member knows full well what the direction of this government has been since 1993, and there's no reason to anticipate that it shouldn't continue.

2:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MR. DICKSON: I have a third question.

THE SPEAKER: Did I miss one, hon. member? My apologies. Proceed.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I promise to speak quickly.

My final question would be this then: will the hon. minister commit that statutes that are going to be excepted from our freedom of information Act will only be excepted by statute and statutory amendment and not by secret lawmaking like order in council, regulation?

MR. SMITH: A good attempt. And thank you, Mr. Speaker. In respect to that answer, the government will continue on the course that it has since the inception of the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation, since 1993.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Education Funding

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three Cochrane schools raised \$234,000 by raffling off a quarter section of land that contained a mobile home and a small herd of cattle. Extreme maybe, but an example of fund-raising by parents across the province scrambling for dollars to buy computers, textbooks, and in at least one case, to pay a teacher. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Does the minister see any contradiction between the actions of these parents and the claim by Alberta Education that education is adequately funded in this province?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the things that we've dealt with over the last four years is equity in education, and that's equitable funding throughout the entire province. These sorts of situations did exist in a greater number of cases prior to introducing a system of equitable funding. There were discrepancies in some jurisdictions with some schools being able to raise somewhat in excess of \$20,000 per student per year from their property tax bases and other cases where it would be less than \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, parents clearly want what is in the best interests

of their children, and they have great expectations for them. We believe that we adequately fund education but that there are occasions when parents, because of their desire to do even more than what is necessary, will make extraordinary fund-raising efforts. The hon. member is correct that that is an extraordinary case. Those cases don't exist very often, but from time to time there are those types of parents who will make those kinds of efforts.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister support the position of at least one Calgary school council that it is unethical for parents to turn to gambling schemes to raise the needed education dollars?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, that is clearly a decision that is best left to parents as to whether they choose to do that or not, and those that choose to do so should have the ability to do so.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. The question to the minister: what is the department doing to make sure that parent funding doesn't introduce unacceptable inequities into the system?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the differences in fund-raising abilities within a school jurisdiction, that is a question for school boards to deal with. Those school boards do recognize that there are some schools and school communities that have better abilities to raise money than others, and I think that they address those issues of equity quite fairly within their own jurisdictions.

THE SPEAKER: During question period today two points of order were indicated to the Chair.

Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm referring to *Beauchesne* 408(2), in particular when I recall the response given by the Treasurer to a question posed by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. At that time the Treasurer referred to a Liberal press release, used words to that effect, and said that it clearly indicates that there's been a full accounting – those are the implications of his words – of the money lost with the sell-off of previously held assets by government.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that that calculation which the Treasurer went on to talk about and which the Premier referred to as well would indicate that there is an \$800 million shortfall. When the Premier talked about not being able to use an adding machine or calculator, I submit that if the front bench took off their shoes and their socks and used all their toes and all their fingers, they still couldn't come up with that \$800 million shortfall, which was really the point of the question from the Leader of the Opposition. It's the \$800 million shortfall, which isn't accounted for in public accounts or in any other government documents, which was really the issue. I would like the Treasurer to stand and retract those comments, because I'm sure he wants the record to clearly indicate that the government had an \$800 million shortfall in its accounting in public accounts for the money that was lost.

MR. HAVELOCK: Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe there is a point of order here. There's simply a clarification of what was said. The House leader for the opposition is using a

point of order as an opportunity to simply expand on the question in question period. I think that you should really dismiss this and actually warn against it being done in the future.

THE SPEAKER: In your citation, hon. House leader, did you use *Beauchesne* 408(2)?

MR. SAPERS: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: *Beauchesne* 408(2) says: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate."

MR. SAPERS: It's that final phrase, Mr. Speaker: "provoke debate." I think that was clear.

THE SPEAKER: That's fine, Opposition House leader. The Chair, in listening very intently to the very, very sophisticated arguments by both the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader, would suggest that this is perhaps more a point of clarification than a point of order.

Government House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Oral Question Period Rules

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd simply like to refer you to the memorandum of agreement which was recently signed by myself on behalf of the government and by the Opposition House Leader and which indicates that during question period there should be one main question with preamble and two supplementaries without preamble. I'd appreciate your enforcing that in the future, because today I know that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and to a lesser extent the Member for Edmonton-Riverview actually had some preamble before their supplementaries. I would appreciate your enforcing the agreement that we signed.

Thank you.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, if I could respond to that point of order and refer to the same House leaders' agreement, which is not quite as good an agreement as a previous one which I think you might have some familiarity with, but it was the best we could do under these circumstances. While it's true that it does say that there shall be main questions and supplementaries without preamble, there are several other things in that agreement, including the fact that private members' statements will be limited to two minutes. I know, of course, that you have been very forgiving in that particular part of the agreement because we do have some new members in the House. I appreciate that on behalf of all members on this side. We appreciate that. I would hope that you will recognize that not all members are as adept at asking pithy and insightful questions as the Government House Leader is.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, we do have an agreement that was signed by a representative from the government caucus and a representative from the opposition caucus, but to my knowledge this agreement was not acknowledged by the third party in the House. Now, there was no signature on any agreement that I saw. But the reality is that the Speaker did ask for very, very kind clarification on the recognition that there will be a preamble on the original question and no preambles on the second question.

The Chair's observation in watching this transpire over the last several weeks is that a number of members in all seating places in the House have strayed a bit from that, but all in all it's been pretty good. The Speaker will attempt to ensure that on the preamble to the first question. On these additional comments in the second and third questions: if you keep them down to five seconds, I would suspect you can't make any preamble. You've actually come along quite well, and I'm thankful for that. So we'll continue to do it in a positive way and recognize a preamble only in the first question and very, very limited comment on the second and the third.

These are your rules, hon. members. These are not the rules of the Speaker. The hon. members write the rules, not the Speaker. The hon. Speaker will enforce the rules.

### head: Orders of the Day

2:50

THE SPEAKER: I would ask for consent of the Assembly to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

### head: Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two people from Lethbridge: Jonathan Williams and Jeffery Moore. Just as an additional point, Jonathan was the Social Credit candidate in Lethbridge-East in the just recent provincial election and enjoyed the debate that we entered into in a number of our forums. So I'd like to ask them to stand and receive recognition from the House, please.

THE SPEAKER: Under Orders of the Day we'll now proceed.

Hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous . . .

THE CLERK: Government Motions.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. That was your fault.

### head: Government Motions

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 38(1) to make a membership change to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Government House Leader, the Clerk has no eyes in the back of his head and did not know that the Speaker had overruled him, so it's really no one's fault. It's just the inability of the Clerk to know; he cannot see backwards.

Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following change to the following committee be approved by the Assembly: on the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Klapstein replace Mr. Friedel.

[Motion carried]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, you were attempting to introduce a visitor as well?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Just a second, hon. member. We'll ask for consent of the House to proceed with this brief introduction. Would the House provide consent?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes. It's a pleasure for me to introduce my wife, sitting in the gallery up there, and also Sheila Ross, who was my campaign chairman during the recent election. Please rise.

head: **Consideration of His Honour**  
head: **the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mr. Shariff moved:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable H.A. "Bud" Olson, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

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

[Adjourned debate April 24: Mr. Stevens]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, do you wish to continue with your response?

MR. STEVENS: No, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to have been elected by the constituents of Edmonton-Glengarry and to speak and present matters on their behalf in regards to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-Glengarry is in north Edmonton. It is known as one of those constituencies in Alberta that is very representative of what Alberta's all about. During the campaign they shared many of their concerns with me and expressed many views on their quality of life. Our constituency consists of seven community leagues, the members of the Edmonton garrison and their families, who are stationed at Edmonton Griesbach.

The community of Lauderdale, which is one of our older communities, is situated in the southern part of the constituency

and celebrated their 40th anniversary last May. I had the opportunity to meet a number of people from this constituency who continue to live in their original homes and now share the same challenges as Alberta's seniors. Lago Lindo and Belle Rive are newer communities situated in the most northerly part of the constituency and are our fastest growing areas. Many young families live in these communities, and they have a totally different set of concerns. Sandwiched between our oldest and newest communities are Northmount and Evansdale, which both have the distinction of having celebrated their 25th anniversaries last year. It is in all of these communities, Mr. Speaker, that we have such a wide range of people who are separated by age, education, income and so on.

I had the honour on Saturday, April 19, 1997, along with some other Members of the Legislative Assembly of attending the official opening of the Belle Rive Ismaili jamatkhana. It is truly a magnificent building that fits in well with the neighbouring community and will be a great addition to our constituency. The Ismailis are just one example of the high proportion of ethnic minorities residing in the constituency. Through my involvement in education, community league, and athletics over the past 26 years in Edmonton-Glengarry I've had the pleasure of teaching, coaching, or volunteering with a number of these families, and it is with great pride and honour that I represent all of their concerns.

There are too many poor people in Edmonton-Glengarry, Mr. Speaker, and in the province of Alberta. These are the people who do not share the Alberta advantage. When I met many of these people and other members of the constituency during the campaign, they all indicated to me the importance of fiscal responsibility, the need for jobs that would pay them adequate wages on which they could support their families, and they also expressed their concerns over health care and education. They would agree with a balanced budget. They would also agree that the era of major cuts is over. They, however, would not condone the fact that an additional 1,700 jobs in the public sector have been cut in the latest budget.

Another group who have many concerns, Mr. Speaker, are our seniors. They impressed me with their honesty, their frankness, their courage, and their concern for one another and their grandchildren, who many felt would not attain the same standard of living as their parents. Many seniors had planned well for their retirement, but unfortunately the rules were changed after they had retired and were on fixed incomes. However, their greatest fear is that the medical services or long-term care that they will require further down the road will not be accessible to them.

The seniors of Alberta constantly told me that they have paid the price in the development of this great province. They wish to continue to contribute with their abundance of knowledge and time, to help pay their fair share of the debt, and they also wish to live out their lives in a dignified and orderly manner. I look forward to their analysis of the budget, Mr. Speaker, when they are told that increased spending for seniors' programs highlights Community Development's new three-year business plan.

The minister notes that the increases in spending on seniors' income support programs will be \$29 million over Budget '96. However, extended health benefits for seniors remain the same at \$17 million. This amount does not take into account that we have an increase of approximately 9,000 seniors in the province over 1996. Also, seniors in Alberta experience the highest rate of inflation in Canada.

The Alberta senior's benefit program, Mr. Speaker, did increase from approximately \$166 million to \$184 million. This \$18 million increase only accounts for moneys required for the increase in the number of seniors. The missing \$11 million to \$12 million of the \$29 million was already announced as a subsidy to the Alberta health care insurance premiums for seniors.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne makes a number of references to education and particularly to the success of our students in achievement tests at the national and international levels in math and science. Having been a math and science teacher for most of the 27 years that I have taught and having had the experience of sitting on committees making up the provincial performance-based and achievement tests at the grade 9 level, I can truly assure this body that we in Alberta are blessed with a professional group of educators. However, I can also assure you that many cracks are appearing in the education system, and unless we are prepared to properly fund education as an investment in the future of Alberta, it will follow the same disastrous course as sight reading, open area classrooms, and the new math of a few years ago. I do not wish to see any more generations of our students missing out on the necessary components of their education through the lack of government funding.

Northeast Edmonton is arguably the greatest volunteer-based community in the city. People take immense pride in making any contribution that is required to assist any organization in meeting their goals. They are very disturbed, however, that a major part of sitting on a parent advisory committee for their school is fund-raising and that many of their volunteer hours are not spent on planning the actual operation of the school. A child's education, Mr. Speaker, and their access to new technology should not be based on their parents' ability to pay or fund-raise but on the fair access of all Alberta students to the necessary technological tools.

Educators, parents, and students in Edmonton-Glengarry have many concerns about education, Mr. Speaker. However, they will not see many answers that address their concerns. The five largest boards in the province educate 42.5 percent of the students. These boards do not enjoy even one cent of the \$8 million of equity funding provided by the province; \$4.7 million of this funding goes directly to distance education, transportation, and the funding of small schools. Teachers and parents are happy to see the increase of funding for severely handicapped children, but there is nothing addressing the needs of students with moderate and mild learning disabilities.

I referred earlier in my speech to the fund-raising role that many of our parent volunteers have reluctantly fallen into. The matching grant format, as it now stands, forces parents to pay or fund-raise in order to take advantage of the matching grant program. This program does not place moneys where they are needed most: for the poor and disadvantaged parts of the province. This type of funding will only cause the gap between poor and rich schools to continue to grow. It will also cause a growing inequity in the programs that can be provided to the students in Alberta schools.

The Speech from the Throne does not address other concerns in our educational system. We continue to see class sizes in this province grow as the teacher/student ratios also increase. There are no provisions to restore the 1,500 teaching jobs lost since 1993 due to budget costs or the return of the 5 percent cut in wages our teachers experienced. Our per capita funding for public education ranks Alberta as one of the lower provinces in Canada while our funding for private education in this province

continues to grow. Costs for education continue to grow, and in an effort to balance the budget, school administrators are being forced to cut support services for our students. The number of hours for school counselors, librarians, teachers' aides, and secretaries have been decreased. This is just another example of tight school budgets being stretched too far.

Mr. Speaker, education is a high priority for many of the residents of Edmonton-Glengarry. We have many students living in the constituency who attend postsecondary institutions or are planning to attend postsecondary institutions. A number of these will be graduating this year from our two excellent high schools. The \$12.7 million increase in student assistance is a step in the right direction. The students are extremely concerned over the rising cost of tuition and living expenses and the fact that this present funding for programs will continue to make it difficult for the majority of them to access the necessary funds to pay for their education.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne addresses the concerns of the constituents of Edmonton-Glengarry, and it does talk about fiscal responsibility. But success is measured in more than a bottom line in a financial report. These constituents cannot see any significant improvements in the core areas of health, education, and social services. I'm certain that when many constituents of Edmonton-Glengarry look back upon these times, they will remember them as times they made huge sacrifices to help pay off the provincial debt. However, their most vivid memories of these times will be the increased gap between the rich and the poor. They will remember these times when the majority of available jobs for them were part-time or low paying. They will remember these times for the difficulty they had in accessing necessary human services such as health care, education, and social services.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne does address fiscal responsibility but is severely lacking when we look at programs which affect the quality of life for most Albertans. The constituents of Edmonton-Glengarry as well as all Albertans are forced to watch their quality of life decline and at risk. As a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition I pledge to do my utmost to prevent further erosion of those extremely essential, people-oriented programs and services that define quality of life. I am humbled by the trust and confidence the citizens of Edmonton-Glengarry have placed in me, and they have my assurance that I will serve them faithfully, loyally, and to the best of my ability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to address the Assembly on behalf of the constituents of Wetaskiwin-Camrose. As all members of this House are keenly aware, it is for our constituents and Albertans as a whole that we are here, and it is with their well-being in mind that I deliver my first comments in this Assembly.

Before I explore the diversity of my constituency, I congratulate you as our newly elected Speaker. With your experience I have every confidence that you will provide excellent guidance and insight into the ways of this Assembly. Speaking as a new member, I certainly expect to benefit from that guidance.

I wish to thank the Lieutenant Governor for his reading of the Speech from the Throne. This was an insightful view of this government's goals and priorities.

Now I have the pleasure, Mr. Speaker, of acquainting my colleagues with the area of Alberta I am fortunate to represent, Wetaskiwin-Camrose. My constituency has been represented most

recently by the hon. Ken Rostad. Through my personal interaction with Mr. Rostad I know how well he represented the needs of his constituents, and I know how well he served this province. I wish to thank him publicly for his exemplary service.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne so appropriately pays tribute to the aboriginal people, who inhabited this land for thousands of years, and to the remarkable sodbusters and pioneers who came from diverse lands a hundred years ago to build this great province. I believe my constituency offers an interesting microcosm of 20th century settlement and development of this province. Like many towns and cities in Alberta Wetaskiwin owes its name to its aboriginal heritage. Literally translated from Cree, Wetaskiwin means the hills of peace, an accurately descriptive name for our constituency. As the legend goes, the Blackfoot and Cree, who were at war, sent scouts who met each other on the summit of a hill overlooking the area of present-day Wetaskiwin. While their intent was to do battle, they ended their first meeting by sharing a peace pipe, a good omen for the future.

### 3:10

But Wetaskiwin is more than a city of peace; it is also a city of motion. Before the birth of this province Wetaskiwin had become the junction point between the Canadian Pacific railway's transcontinental line and a new branch extending to Edmonton. This railway junction soon became the final train stop for many immigrants who disembarked and continued their voyage by horseback, oxcart, and wagon, many of them to their homesteads.

Many German people settled west of Wetaskiwin and in Millet. Scandinavians from Norway and Sweden fanned out to Camrose and other neighbouring towns and communities such as New Norway, the source of my own roots; New Sweden, just south of Wetaskiwin; and Bawlf, bordering my constituency on the east. Ukrainian and Polish settlers found their homes along the north of my constituency. British and Irish developed their businesses, and others of various ethnic origins and enterprising spirits settled, raised their families, and built our constituency. Today we are proud of our multiethnic origin and multicultural heritage, like all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, in a province so great and expansive as Alberta the history and development of transportation has been pivotal in unifying all of our constituencies and peoples into the great province it is today. You can see it all in Wetaskiwin. The city has become the home of the renowned Reynolds-Alberta Museum, known as RAM, named after local citizen Stan Reynolds, a prominent historian and machine collector of 50 years with a special passion for all aspects of motor transportation.

In 1992, Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame was moved to the Reynolds museum and provides an historical perspective of the evolution of Canadian aviation history. Today the second most important aircraft collection in all of Canada is located in Wetaskiwin. Through the vision of Mr. Reynolds and the support of former local MLA Dallas Schmidt and others the RAM is considered one of the world's most outstanding facilities of transportation, aviation, agricultural, and industrial history. Having attracted over 335,000 visitors since it opened in 1992, RAM is a major tourist attraction in our constituency and in our province. More than that, it is a classroom of history for the numerous schoolchildren and adults to learn more of our great Alberta heritage.

As a heritage destination Wetaskiwin has much more to offer. In 1906 the city was officially designated as the centre of the newly established central Alberta judicial district. In 1907 the second courthouse built in the new province was built in Wetaski-

win. I commend the government for valuing our historic sites. The announcement in the Speech from the Throne that we "will amend legislation to give community groups more authority to operate and manage provincially owned historical facilities" is good news. This will facilitate creativity and a heightened interest in restoring and promoting local historical sites, sites such as the majestic old courthouse in Wetaskiwin.

Wetaskiwin is known for much more than its history. It has many thriving businesses and excellent services, especially those along what has become the famous Auto Mile, and I'm sure you've all heard that advertised a lot in the media these days.

I want to also express the support of our constituency for the government's plans to improve the transportation network of today through development of the north/south trade corridor, which through central Alberta borders our constituency.

Camrose is the community my family and I call home. It is a city of beauty and parks, centred around the peaceful Muir Lake and the Stony Creek Valley. Having lived and worked there for 30 years, my family and I have seen it expand and grow into a dynamic hub of commerce, culture, and service for much of east-central Alberta to the Saskatchewan border. Served by both the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railroads, the strength of its commerce and industry lies in its 850-plus businesses, including two major steel pipe mills and the Alberta Wheat Pool, which distributes seed worldwide. An active chamber of commerce promotes business and industry and tourism through extensive programs, including the very successful June main street jamboree soon to celebrate its 40th year.

While agricultural products from the rich farmlands of Wetaskiwin-Camrose constituency are distributed throughout the world, you may be thinking more about Sunnyboy cereal, which continues to be a product of Camrose from one of the first flour mills of this province.

Through our government's efforts in establishing the agrifood and fibre value-added fund, our mainstay, agriculture, in Wetaskiwin-Camrose will surely continue to flourish.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, one cannot describe the city of Camrose without talking about its educational significance to this province. In 1911 strong Norwegian pioneers built Camrose Lutheran College, now Augustana University College, to educate their children, especially in the English language and the Christian religion. Today, 86 years later, the institute has grown into a private university college offering degrees to its nearly 800 students. Many of its students and staff have contributed significantly in this province and throughout the world.

Dr. Chester Ronning, who served as an MLA from 1932 to 1935, was president of Augustana University College prior to his service in this Legislature. During his time in this House he's best remembered for introducing the Teaching Profession Act, which continues to direct the teaching profession in this province today. Dr. Ronning, though, is best known for his foreign service as ambassador to China, to Norway, and as high commissioner to India, after which he received the Order of Canada.

Many others from our university college and constituency have served in foreign service for our country, including Stanley Gooch, the present Canadian high commissioner to India.

Mr. Speaker, I must take the time to remind those that have forgotten about another valuable contribution that our constituency has made to education in this province. In 1912 one of only three

normal schools – that is, teacher training schools – was built in Camrose, the other two being in Calgary and Edmonton. The school was a result of the priority residents placed on a good educational foundation and the need to train teachers well. As a consequence of the incorporation of normal schools into the departments of education at our universities in the late '30s, this historic school, the Camrose normal school, became Rosehaven, a mental health facility operated by the province for many years.

Today we are proud of the many fine schools of our constituency offering quality education from kindergarten to full university degrees, the delivery of education provided by the three systems: the public system, the separate system, and the private system. Each has contributed significantly in their own unique ways in serving the mental, physical, social, and spiritual needs of our students. I offer my continuing support for a strong public system of education but with alternatives to meet individual students' and group needs. I believe we are a good example in our constituency of the strong base of education in this province, upon which we will build.

My constituency is part of two different regional health authorities: East Central with central offices in Camrose and Crossroads with central offices in Wetaskiwin. Our hospital and health care facilities in Wetaskiwin are publicly operated, and our hospital and health care facilities in Camrose are privately operated by the Bethany group and St. Mary's, both church-based operations contracted by the regional health authority. I believe we provide an interesting example of how publicly operated and privately operated services can each be effective in offering necessary services.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have excellent health services, and that is one of the reasons that our cities are popular retirement centres for our seniors. Our amenities and community services are superior, but our care facilities are bulging at the seams. We are pleased that our government will undertake a review of long-term care services for our seniors.

### 3:20

We are a constituency for all ages, and we have a wonderful blend of services and activities for youth, for our seniors, and for those of ages between. Our recreation and cultural facilities and libraries are well developed, and the exhibition facilities, especially the Camrose regional exhibition, bring numerous events such as the Big Valley Jamboree to our constituency. The internationally known Viking Cup sponsored by Augustana University College in partnership with our community has been bringing world-class hockey and global cultural exchange for youth from countries like Russia, the Czech Republic, Finland, and Sweden to Camrose since 1980. Skiing, introduced by the early Scandinavian settlers, continues to dominate our sporting scene. Many of our athletes, especially in cross-country skiing and biathlon, have participated internationally, including those in the World University Games and the Olympics.

International exchange also plays an important role in the programs of our two high schools. Students in the Camrose composite high school annually tour and study abroad. The Wetaskiwin composite high school band recently returned from music competitions in Great Britain.

The children's initiative program in Wetaskiwin uniquely serves needy children through the co-operative efforts of social services, Health, Justice, the schools, and the municipality. Mr. Speaker, this is a good example of provincial and community teamwork and co-operation, something that I know this government fully endorses.

Wetaskiwin-Camrose is also the home of smaller communities

such as Millet, Gwynne, Bittern Lake, and Ohaton. Millet is well known for its antiques and revitalized town centre. Because of its proximity to Leduc and Edmonton many residents commute to work so they may enjoy the lifestyle of a small centre. If you drive through Millet this summer, you will surely understand why this proud town in my constituency won a national award in 1996 for its main street flower and plant beautification program.

Mr. Speaker, the municipalities of my constituency have a long history of effective local government. They, too, are feeling the effects of the fiscal restraint and cutbacks of the past few years. They, too, are looking for creative ways to increase assessment bases to support sustained growth during these promising times. I commend this government for taking a positive approach to the issues we face today.

There is an awful lot that is right and good about this province and this country, and we must build on those strengths. Mr. Speaker, we have many strengths in our constituency, and we intend to build on them in a constructive and creative way, just as this government is doing. Our forefathers thrived under the freedom to accept responsibility for development of our communities. I am encouraged by my government's programs to reinvest in local involvement, authority, and responsibility for community enrichment. I am also encouraged by the partnership and support of this government in developing that climate for growth and quality of life that each community needs.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents tell me that the real priorities in developing this climate are a good education system, a good health system, fiscal responsibility, a quality environment, an adequate infrastructure. I commend this government for openness to listen to the priorities of all citizens through forums such as the Growth Summit described earlier today in this House. My experience tells me that when we create the environment for growth and freedom, individuals will respond with creativity, resourcefulness, and productivity. Nevertheless, for the underprivileged and the disadvantaged I am pleased that this government provides a social safety net. I am pleased for Alberta's involvement in a co-ordinated national strategy to help needy children, and I am pleased that my government is committed to the protection of the disabled and the abused.

I believe that effective government maintains balances. There is always a danger of oscillating from one extreme to another. I am happy that my government is committed to balancing individual needs with group needs, rural interests with urban interests, privatization with public control, central with local control, and of course expenses balanced with revenues. Previous governments had strayed from a responsible fiscal path and were therefore unable to provide this balance in a sustainable way. This government consulted directly with Albertans to determine their priorities and then balanced them with fiscal realities.

The people of Wetaskiwin-Camrose are a diverse people with a strong heritage. Our traditions and our foundations are strong. Our values are rooted in our foundations. We, too, look to a new century and a new millennium with great promise in this province, with great promise and hope, promise that comes with open and supportive government. We are assured in the Speech from the Throne that the Alberta welcome is open to the world. Well, I'd like to say that the gates are also open to Wetaskiwin-Camrose. Please enjoy our features and enjoy our people. Most of all, you will enjoy our hills of peace and a peaceful people. That is our greatest blessing.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have elected me to ensure we maintain our priorities and this vision for the future. I look forward to working with each of you to this end.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne. As I hear the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose waxing eloquent about his riding, I appreciate the opportunity to wax eloquent about mine. I am honoured to be back in this highest court in the land. This is a place, I think, that is making very important decisions about the people of Alberta and for the people of Alberta, certainly not a place where we disregard those things that are held dear to us and the reasons we were elected.

I want to just take a brief moment to tell you how important this desk right here is to me. Once upon a time in the 1950s my great-uncle Art Soetaert sat in this desk as a Liberal MLA. So I am very honoured to follow in his tradition. His riding was called St. Albert, but it went out to Morinville: St. Albert, Morinville, and some of the Sturgeon area. So it's quite an honour for me to sit at his desk. My uncle is still alive and well. He's about 86 and a mentor of mine as well, so I feel very fortunate that in a way I follow in his footsteps.

The reason I ran again, Mr. Speaker, is because I didn't feel my job was finished. I suspect that's the reason why most people ran again and why some of the new people ran: because they felt they had something to contribute. I felt my job wasn't done. What I heard at the doors and what I'm sure everyone here heard at the doors I could summarize under three different categories. Everyone heard about health care concerns. To explain to you what it means in my riding – I have three health boundaries within my riding: WestView, Aspen, and Capital. That's quite a few boards to get familiar with, and I think that those people try very hard to deliver the services that their areas need. WestView is definitely underfunded. It would relate to the Chinook region in size and population, yet it gets a third of that funding. So you can imagine some of the issues that are there.

One of the biggest concerns about my riding is accessibility across boundaries. I think you heard my two-minute statement the other day. I didn't make up that statement. That happened. Someone who lives near Villeneuve cannot access facilities in St. Albert. They're about five miles apart. That was one of the concerns I heard, that those boundaries are becoming brick walls. They're not a seamless boundary that was promised by this government. So when a senior who is 88 years old, who cannot care for himself and doesn't have family members who are capable of doing that, is told that he cannot access the building that he himself fund-raised for and so did his family, that's distressing to me and distressing to that family. I think that's one of the issues that this government and that we as opposition have to continue to address, because it's an issue of fairness. I know that all of us talk about fairness as one of our priorities. Well, to me, that's not fair. That's one of the concerns I heard certainly in my riding.

3:30

My riding has the city of Spruce Grove. The reason my name in this Legislature is Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, which tends to confuse so many people, is because the largest population base is Spruce Grove. There we have a honey-producing plant that is the largest in Alberta. We're quite sweet over there. [interjection] Thank you. Some people appreciate my humour, not many, but some do. Spruce Grove is a fantastic city, offers all the amenities of a city but certainly with the atmosphere of a small town, the caring and sharing and volunteerism, which so many of us are familiar with.

Then I have part of what used to be the MD of Sturgeon; now it's going to be Sturgeon county. Within that area there are five small communities. Villeneuve, where I come from, is a small little hamlet that I'm very proud of. Calahoo: many of you have heard of Calahoo Meats, and many famous singers come from Calahoo. We're quite talented out there you know. [interjection] Sweet and talented. We're getting up there, and that's me as well, as the member knows.

There's Mearns, Rivière Qui Barre, and Alcomdale, all communities that are very supportive of one another, are very proud of their own identities, know about volunteerism, take pride in helping their neighbour, and take pride in what they do. I'm very proud of that rural part of my riding. I always like to make it clear that I am a rural MLA in a sense because that's the part I come from, and I hold quite a bit of authority then within my caucus, because they have to listen, when I come from that area; wouldn't you say? [interjection] They're choking over there.

The other part of my riding is the northwest corner of St. Albert, and that is mainly residential and great people in that city. That offers me the opportunity to get to know the entire city of St. Albert because of that involvement with the northwest corner. Certainly one of the proud events in St. Albert is our volunteer of the year, our citizen of the year appreciation night. I think that just shows the tip of the iceberg of the amount of volunteer hours that the people of St. Albert give to each other and what that community means and what a strong community that is.

Also within my riding are five different school boards. Of course, that was the other issue we heard at the doors. We heard about crowded classrooms. Just yesterday I was speaking to a teacher who was on stress leave, regretfully. She said to me: "You know, the reason I find it so difficult is because I can't possibly give to the 30 students what I used to give to 25." That's her issue; that's why she's under stress. She feels she cannot give what she used to. That's quite a dilemma for teachers, and it's not selfish. It's because they feel they can't give that to the kids. School boards are underfunded, plain and simple. Sometimes I think it's a subtle message of this government that if we underfund them enough, it'll create a void and private education will come in. I believe that's the quiet agenda of this government. I'm not against private schools, Mr. Speaker, but I am for properly funding public education.

I think there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed within the Education department, certainly rural transportation. Now, there were some dollars given to that in the new budget, and I'm grateful for that. From my understanding it won't nearly address the situation of rural transportation. I have grave concerns over that. You know, within my critic area of transportation I want safe buses, as I'm sure everyone here does. But if we continually underfund transportation, how do we expect those owner operators to replace their buses? They can't with the money they're getting. The sad part about education is that you can make cuts, but you don't see the direct effect for maybe six, seven, eight years down the road, and we'll pay that price. We will pay that price in this province. That's one of my concerns, and it was one of the concerns at the doors.

I spoke in estimates the other day in transportation about one highway, and probably by the end of this term the entire government caucus and the entire opposition caucus will be begging the minister of transportation to fix highway 794 if not to just keep me quiet, to make that Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert quit hollering about highway 794.

MR. WHITE: Just quit hollering, period, would be nice.



MRS. SOETAERT: Quit hollering, period, would be nice, my own colleague said.

Highway 794 isn't an issue of what we want; it's an issue of what's needed. I can't stress enough that there's a great deal of traffic on that road, a great many gravel trucks. There are many gravel pits out in that area. But that highway you cannot change a tire on. I would urge any member, maybe the minister of transportation on his way home, to try taking 794 and see if he doesn't feel he's taking his life in his hands.

I would urge everyone here to make a priority in transportation: safety. Not wants but needs. I can't say how important 794 is to the people of my riding and certainly all the people of Alberta, because many, many people use that highway, and it's not safe.

When I look at governance, there are a few things that come to mind, and one of the main ones is accountability. I think that's one of the reasons I ran again. I don't think this government has been held accountable nearly enough, and our job is not done. When I hear about more loan guarantees going out to Millar Western and Al-Pac and all these agreements that have been made over the years, people on that side of the House should be embarrassed that this continues. Do you know it's happening, or is it a surprise to you when it comes up in the House? I find it shameful and terribly ironic how the government can say, "We've cut this and the public service is down to this and we've cut this," yet we've lost more money than ever before on bad deals, bad deals that cost hospital beds, that cause crowded classrooms, that cause children to go hungry, that cause lack of funds going to school buildings that are certainly outdated. Those kinds of things are very related to the Speech from the Throne, because those things have been missed in the accountability of this government.

The human deficit wasn't addressed in this, and that concerns me. What cost is a life? Somebody not being able to access emergency care: those are the kinds of issues that I see this government has failed on. I think of an example of a man in his 60s who had a stroke, and regretfully he now lives in a long-term care facility, that takes good care of him. However, the physiotherapy that he can access is twice a week for an hour, which is shared with 40 other patients. That's not good enough. Now, if that man could get more physiotherapy, maybe he eventually wouldn't be in that facility, and maybe in the long term we would save money, if money is the issue with this government. I see concerns like that not being addressed by this government, but I will be here to keep reminding them that those are the things that I want to see addressed.

The last point I will make – and I know people are sad to see me wind up my speech, tears coming from the eyes of the hon. members next to me – is the democratic renewal that is missing in this place. It's shameful the way some of the deliberations on negotiations, how we conduct business in here, how that goes on. To me, it's a joke the way we're allowed to scrutinize the budget.

**3:40**

Just to give you an example. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East: his critic portfolios are agriculture and Energy. They're both being debated tonight at the same time. Now, he is better than any two PC members any time of day, Mr. Speaker, but he still cannot be in two places at once. I don't think that's very fair to that member who has to speak to the energy sector, the agriculture sector, and then he has to say: well, I ran between the fifth floor in the Leg. and tried to get my questions in. I don't think that's fair. He is the spokesperson for those, and he deserves the right to sit and hear the debate and discuss that, yet he's being denied that because of this.

The physical setup of these committees is of concern to me

because one is in this Legislature, in this House, in this room, and the other is in room 512. That's a very close room, and sometimes the discussion gets a little heated, and people are physically too close to each other. In fact, last year . . . [interjection] No; no. Last year actually I was threatened after a meeting in room 512, after we left that committee meeting, which was rather heated at some points.

MR. RENNER: A point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat is rising on a point of order. You have a citation?

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

MR. RENNER: Yes, Mr. Speaker: 23(b). I recognize that there is a certain amount of variation from the discussion at hand allowed in the debate on the Speech from the Throne. However, I find that the discussion that the member is getting into now is not only not related to His Honour's speech, but in fact I would submit that she is perhaps even beginning to debate something that's already been decided in this House.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert on 23(b).

MRS. SOETAERT: Yeah, on the point of order. Actually I'm speaking about democratic renewal and my concerns about that. I didn't see that addressed in the Speech from the Throne, and I think it's within the wide parameters of the Speech from the Throne to talk about what I would have liked to have seen in it and what I see lacking in it. One of them is democratic renewal, which does apply to the Committee of Supply. If the member would let me finish, I could clarify that so he would understand it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. The hon. Member for Medicine Hat has risen on a point of order that brings up:

- speaks to matters other than
- (i) the question under discussion, or
- (ii) a motion or amendment the member intends to move.

I presume those are the two that are covered.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert certainly was ranging wide from a description of her constituency to the perceived ills or shortcomings of the present government. This in the Speech from the Throne is allowed. There was some concern that maybe you were going to get into a fair amount of detail on the budget, which there is another sort of venue for. So with the admonition of the member in your memory we would invite you to continue to, as I gather, wind up your speech on the Speech from the Throne.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a wise ruling.

#### **Debate Continued**

MRS. SOETAERT: I was talking about the lack of information and the lack of ability to scrutinize the budget on behalf of the members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the dynamics of being in a small room like room 512. Actually, having left that room last year after one of those committee meetings – and some of the members here are well aware of what happened – I felt very uncomfortable, almost threatened by one of the members

because he was upset at the way the committee went. I think the Member for Calgary-Currie remembers that. If those things are happening right in this Legislature, that people feel vulnerable after a committee meeting, where they've been cornered in a hallway because of issues brought up in a committee meeting, then I think we've got cause for concern. I'd be more than happy to talk to the Deputy Whip to clarify that later rather than lose more time in my speech to the throne.

One of the other things under democratic renewal that I would like to see is all-party member committees. I believe that's a motion on the floor right now, and people will have a chance to speak to that. We were all elected, Mr. Speaker, and I think we should all have a chance to set policy that affects all Albertans. Another is freedom of information. To think that we have to pay \$25 to get some information is really quite appalling. I do appreciate the odd department that you can get answers from, but it is a rare occasion when you do.

The other concern that I found at the end of last session was rule by regulation, I called it. There are far too many regulations that come in without proper debate in this Chamber, which brings me back to my first point, on which I will conclude.

I have a great deal of respect for this Chamber. I appreciate the debate that does occur. I think it's very important that all of us appreciate the importance of this Chamber, not one party's caucus over another party's caucus but the actual work of the day. The work for this province should happen in here.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will allow another person the opportunity to continue. I'd just like to say that I'm very proud to be back here representing Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Thank you.

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

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. I'm thrilled to take this opportunity to stand before you and represent my constituents of Calgary-North West. It really has been great anticipation for me to come back over the weekend for Monday and to be able to deliberate on the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne and the direction of this government in the course of the next few years. In fact, I would think all MLAs are thrilled for the opportunity to come back and debate this actual speech. I would say that in this regard, that after I've finished my speech, I suspect that there might even be some that might be concerned and would want to join in more support of the Speech from the Throne. I would say that because I can see that many numbers have actually fled from the Legislature, maybe not even quite so much worried about the arguments and the issues that I might bring forward.

I only say that in this regard. I represent the great constituency of Calgary-North West. I would say that the riding offers two things in its name: the great north – we've always referred to Canada as the great north – and, really, the west, coming from the west, "the last, best west," as referred to in the Speech from the Throne. We have a couple of things. Calgary has always been an area that's been vibrant. It's looked upon in the world as a great city. It's been filled with opportunity. People continue to come to Calgary, one of the fastest growing areas in this country.

The constituency of Calgary-North West has probably been one of the fastest areas of growth throughout the province. Just looking over this past election, from '93 through to '97 the

growth in Calgary-North West has been about one-third additional people. Our constituency has grown from 21,000 eligible voters in '93 to over 29,000 eligible voters in '97, just four short years later. It's been an area where people have wanted to come. It's been an area where people were thrilled about the opportunity to come and build new homes, a place to raise their families, a place for opportunity, a place to build new dreams. It's a new area. It has all of those challenges of growth, of development, and of infrastructure, and the challenge of meeting new neighbours, the fun that comes from being oriented in a new place, in a new home.

3:50

We even live close enough that we can have some enjoyment or at least appreciation of our rural neighbours. We live on the edge of the city in the far northwest. We can even watch our farming community at work, yet we're close enough to the grocery stores.

MR. SMITH: Are you by the mailboxes?

MR. MELCHIN: Close by the mailboxes.

DR. TAYLOR: Can you see the farmer milk the cow?

MR. MELCHIN: Well, no. We can actually see the cows though, but we're not close enough to have to smell the cows. We're far enough away.

I would say that people from all other areas of the country have come to Calgary-North West for this one reason. They're eager and they're optimistic about the opportunities in Calgary. They look towards this area of northwest Calgary because it does offer all the great amenities of this city. It does offer the opportunity to participate and be involved in a city that's vibrant, that's growing.

I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the constituents of Calgary-North West for having taken advantage in this last election of participating in this democratic process. Our constituency had the second highest voter turnout throughout all of the province.

DR. OBERG: Who was that guy you ran against?

MR. MELCHIN: We'll come to that.

Our constituents are thrilled to participate. I was concerned when I first ran – and I'd heard comments – that there might be some apathy or noninterest in an election where the government had had such, I would say, a strong record. My concern was: how does that vote come out? Throughout that time I've only seen a great interest from people committed to democracy, of people committed to preserving the rights and the freedoms that we enjoy in this country.

I'd like to first off state that I do pledge my loyalty and my commitment to serve my constituents. It's an honour that we have an opportunity to serve. This position as a Member of the Legislative Assembly literally is that: an opportunity of service. Government in its noblest form is not one where we take authority but where we serve and look to our constituents for direction. It's to that end that I would look towards ideas, to look for solutions, not to concern ourselves solely with problems and challenges but to look for solutions, to look for the noble, to look for the high, to look for the ideal.

I would also like to actually congratulate another group of people that supported and were involved in a great way in this last

election. I had many youth choose to be involved. You know, it speaks well for a country where the youth see the value of democracy, where they can participate in that process, where they can have a choice in making sure that their ideas, their future is secure. I congratulate all the youth, not just in my constituency but throughout the province, who continue to play a vital role in this process.

As I was going around to doors, I did hear, as all of us have heard, a number of concerns. I would say that our constituents of Calgary-North West, Mr. Speaker, have endorsed the principles that the Lieutenant Governor spoke of in the throne speech. Though there might be some differences of opinion as to implementation at times, the principles espoused have been well endorsed and supported. They were thrilled – and it's been an enjoyment for me to know that I can come and be part of a government that through the last three to four years kept its promises. It delivered on its promises, and it was a strong message that all the constituents gave back to me. It was a strong idea when they said that it's nice to see a government attend to its promises, say what it does and deliver on what it says. We've eliminated the deficit at this stage. The debts are starting to be paid off. Yet I still heard an underlying theme and an underlying current throughout all the people that I talked to. Even though they might wish that there be a difference in the priorities of spending, there was always a wish that we not get back to the ways of the past and spending beyond our means. Always a wish and always a desire expressed that we understand the limited resources we do have, that we make sure we hold that stewardship in trust.

I did hear a lot in support of things such as mentioned by the Lieutenant Governor, about the Growth Summit, about the enthusiasm to look forward to the growth that Alberta has had in these last number of years and the optimism for that growth to continue.

In my area of Calgary-North West – it's a young community – probably the highest priority they've assessed and what I heard the most had to do with education. No one can debate the value of the future of our children and their need not just for education but for those opportunities to have learning throughout their lives.

We might assess – and certainly there were questions about priorities of class sizes, the needs of the special-needs children, sometimes about the funding. Is it adequate or is it not? I've made a commitment to my constituents so that everybody understands, as we do have limitations, that we are going to have find a balance. Yet we do need to find solutions. It is for that role that we are here. How do we not rest on our laurels and say that our education is fine, but how can we even do better? We can never stop looking for a better way.

I'd like to also recommend that we take opportunity for risk. That means sometimes to change. If we want to change and improve, it does require the element of risk. If we want to succeed, we have to sometimes allow a failure. We have to invite all those involved in providing the service to challenge the norms that they've been involved with over the years, to look for more innovative ways to provide the service.

I'd like to also address, Mr. Speaker, one of the principles that was enumerated in the Speech from the Throne, and that has to do with when our Lieutenant Governor speaks of the rich heritage that we come from in Alberta. He says, "Aboriginal people followed the bison herds for thousands of years." He goes on and says:

They created a tradition of fortitude and personal responsibility with small government, low taxation, and balanced budgets, a tradition of hard work, openness, and integrity.

Certainly when we look back to our heritage, our pioneers who've come have always looked to Alberta as the great place, "the last, best west."

But, you know, there's an underlying principle about why that's been. What is it that we have to offer in Canada? What is it that we offer in Alberta that makes this place this great, that makes it unique, that makes it in many ways superior to the nations of the world? I would say that principle is freedom. I would say and we've heard from all members of the House, both the government and opposition, that our stewardship is to protect the freedoms of this land. We might have differences of how that's taken, but that has been the hope and why many people continue to come to Alberta, that freedom and the opportunity of pursuing their dreams. I spent a couple of years in France and Belgium, and I spent a few months in the area of Vimy Ridge. Now, some of you may recall that there were over 100,000 Canadians that were involved in Vimy Ridge back in the First World War. You might question why we as a nation and also why so many thousands of Albertans would have partaken in that war in such a difficult circumstance.

Now, Vimy Ridge has an area of miles and miles of tunnels underground. You go into these trenches. I was awestruck by the situation that those soldiers had to place themselves in. Literally, at times the trench warfare was no farther than from me to the Speaker of the House or to the other side of the Legislature, easily enough within talking distance of your opponents, easily enough that warfare was there and very prevalent in their eyesight. Thousands died, yet the Albertans and the Canadians who fought and were willing to give their lives gained more ground, took more guns, and captured more prisoners than any previous offensive.

**4:00**

I've walked the fields of Flanders Fields. Why is it that every Remembrance Day here in Canada we talk of Flanders Fields, the "row on row"? Yet we're prepared to give up all. We've been willing as a people to give up our sacrifice, all that we have – our security, our comfort, our homes, and even our lives – in the defence of freedom. Though we might be courageous and die for our freedoms, we need to be even more vigilant and more courageous to live for our freedoms. We need to assess and understand the principles of how law is a vital element of preserving freedom, that without law there would be chaos. Yet law, when perverted, can be the greatest element of destruction of freedom. It's in those understandings of the framing of law that we preserve these rich traditions of which the Lieutenant Governor spoke. It's the understanding of those principles that we as Members of the Legislative Assembly can ensure when we talk about budgets, when we talk about things that we spend, when we talk about services we deliver. Do they actually protect or inhibit or deprive the freedom of its citizens?

I would say that history has demonstrated that the greatest danger the people face is not necessarily from without but from the governments that have presided. I have a good friend who escaped Czechoslovakia after the occupation of the Soviet Union. Of all the efforts he had to take, he and his family, to leave behind all that they had to come to Alberta – I remember when they moved to Calgary how they came penniless, how they spoke little English, where they had few necessities of life. Yet because of all that they were willing to sacrifice and give, they have enjoyed the prosperity and the opportunity and the bounties of this great land of Alberta and of Calgary.

I am thrilled to be a Member of this Legislative Assembly. I

know that when we examine any form of spending, any form of legislation, it will have an element that could even maybe have been justified by good cause. We can't stop the list of good causes that we might support, yet we need to be cautious in our desire to take away the burdens of challenges of life, where we actually deprive the greatest moments of learning and of growth, where we actually sometimes take away those freedoms that we say we want to protect so much. If we might understand how law is actually framed, then we as legislators can better support the initiative of the speech from our Lieutenant Governor to see that government does have a contained, a limited role. The government's role certainly is to encourage, to inspire, to expect the best in people but not to force and compel people to be those kinds.

Mr. Speaker, I would welcome the opportunity and the privilege at any time as we speak on these issues of responsibility of individuals, of the citizens of Alberta, that we remain interested and knowing of the valuable traditions of our forefathers, of the heritage that we've been blessed with in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. MASSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look at the purpose of the Speech from the Throne, and it seems to me that it does a number of things for Albertans. It establishes the goals and the ideals of the government, and hopefully it embodies the hopes and the aspirations of Albertans. It is one view. It is the view as put forward by the government.

There is an alternate view in the province. That is the view that's held by Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and we have a view of the province. We look forward to an Alberta where tomorrow's schools are better than the schools today. We look forward to schools where classroom sizes are smaller, where there are fewer students than there are in schools today, where children have an opportunity to exchange views with their classmates and with their teachers in classrooms where the number of students doesn't deter that kind of activity. We look forward to schools where the children in need receive the kind of help they deserve, whether that's with learning handicaps, whether that's with speech problems, or whether that's with physical handicaps. We've made great strides in the last number of years in this area, Mr. Speaker, but I feel we've lost ground. We look forward to an Alberta where teachers are well educated and take part in those kinds of decisions that are going to affect them and the children and parents they serve. We look forward to an Alberta where parents choose the role that they will play at school affairs and don't find that role legislated in this Assembly. So we hope tomorrow's schools will be better than the schools that exist today.

Alberta Liberals look forward to an Alberta where the health care system is better than the health care system they enjoy today. We have agreed with the government that there is a need to change health care. We've long agreed that we have to move from a system that focuses on acute care and trying to help people when they're already ill to a system that focuses on prevention. I look at the work that has been undertaken by community health centres: programs to try to convince youngsters in our schools and in our communities that beginning to smoke is a bad decision in terms of their health, programs that would have wearing a helmet when you're riding your bicycle as the thing to do and not label you as socially unacceptable, programs that focus on encouraging people to take part in physical activity of some kind in the

interests of their own better health. The government has obviously tried to encourage this, maybe moved too quickly to try to institute it, but we believe that that kind of a health care system would be better than the one we have today.

We look forward to a health care system where doctors are available no matter where you are in this province. It shouldn't matter that you live in a remote area. Doctors and doctors' services will be available. We look forward to a health care system where what's wrong with you and not how much money you have determines the kind of care that you will receive. We look forward to a health care system where a trip to the hospital doesn't mean a trip around the city.

We look forward to an Alberta where the vulnerable are better off tomorrow than they are today. One of the tragedies of the changes – and I know that we can point to a lot of good things that have happened in terms of people on social assistance, but one of the sad things, one of the side effects has been what's happened to their dignity. Many of them have come away from the offices that now deal with them feeling that they are somehow not valued, that as citizens they are second-class citizens, that they have fewer rights, and that they are somehow to feel guilty for the poverty they are living in or for the poor circumstances that have driven them to having to enlist help. So we look forward to an Alberta where those needing help will receive that help without feeling guilty, where they'll have opportunities to improve themselves, where they can pull themselves up by the bootstraps in programs that will result in real jobs that will really make them productive citizens and not just opportunities that are created to get them off the welfare rolls or for statistic's sake.

#### 4:10

Most importantly we look forward to an Alberta where the children in need in this province get the kind of assistance and the kind of help that they deserve.

We look forward to an Alberta where seniors will be better off tomorrow than they are today and where they will be able to rely on those kinds of financial and retirement plans that they put in place years and years ago and where they can live with the assurance that someone in this Chamber is not going to change the circumstances, making those plans no longer appropriate for the kind of life they have decided they would like to lead. We look forward to an Alberta where the plans that they've made financially for retirement can be relied upon. We look forward to an Alberta where seniors are included in the decisions that will affect the kinds of lives that they will lead and in the kinds of things that are going to happen to them. We look forward to an Alberta where the seniors will not live in fear that they are going to be somehow or another separated from a life partner and shipped to another part of the community or even out of the community to live their last days. We look forward to an Alberta where seniors will have the support and all of the support that they need to live the kinds of independent lives we all would like to enjoy, regardless of our age.

Alberta Liberals look forward to an Alberta where workers are better off tomorrow than they are today, where they have strong support in legislation, legislation that originates in this Assembly, where those workers earn adequate salaries, where they don't have to work at one or two or three jobs to support and raise their families at the kind of standard we would all hope for our families, where workers feel valued and their organizations aren't attacked for trying to work in workers' best interests. We look forward to an Alberta where workers are full participants again in the kinds of decisions that are going to affect them, their lives and the lives of their families.

Alberta Liberals look forward to an environment that is better treated tomorrow than it is today. We look forward to an Alberta that pays as much attention to the environment and the decisions about the environment as it does to selling off our natural resources. We look forward to an Alberta where the environment is treated as a part of our lives and not apart from our lives, and we look forward to an Alberta where people who would speak in support of the environment are treated with dignity and not vilified.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Liberals look forward to an Alberta where people have hope that the lives their children lead are going to be better than the lives they have lived themselves. We look forward to an Alberta where our children have a higher standard of living, and we look forward to an Alberta where unrestrained individualism is tempered by a strong sense of duty to the community.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MRS. TARCHUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House today to add my comments to those already offered by my colleagues in consideration of the Speech from the Throne.

[Mrs. Gordon in the Chair]

I would like to join the other members of this Assembly in congratulating – are we now switching to Madam Speaker? – both of you and offering my best wishes on your election to the Chair.

Madam Speaker, over the years the constituency of Banff-Cochrane has had some excellent representation, most recently by Mr. Brian Evans and his predecessor, Greg Stevens. Both of these gentlemen have served the constituents well, and it is for that reason I sought and valued their counsel upon deciding to enter the realm of provincial politics. I would also like to commend and thank the constituents of Banff-Cochrane for their confidence in and endorsement of my abilities to represent them in this House.

Some members of the Assembly know the size of the shoes I will be filling, and I look forward to that challenge. However, that challenge is relatively small compared to those challenges our province and our government face as we continue to ensure that Albertans benefit from growth, prosperity, and jobs and from quality, responsive, and affordable public services. Between the leadership provided by the Premier and the hard work of all Albertans, our financial situation is once again under control and manageable. We are in an enviable position to build on a solid foundation of balanced budgets, diminishing debts, and the lowest overall taxes in Canada.

At no other time has there been so much opportunity open to Albertans. In 1935 Premier Aberhart stated that the eyes of the world are on Alberta. Once again, Madam Speaker, the world is looking to us, but not just for our fledgling model economy. This time the world is looking to Alberta as a location for head offices, as a source of petrochemical technology and expertise, and as a supplier of agricultural products, timber, and information technologies. Alberta's resources are as varied as its people, and they are valued worldwide.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is the place for individuals and for businesses. Our province has one of the most dynamic economies

in North America, building on an impressive foundation of resources with small businesses playing an important role. The Alberta Growth Summit, which the Premier first announced in January and elaborated on today, will help to find ways in which the public sector as a whole can respond to the pressures of growth and the rising demand for public services while continuing to live within our means. It is indeed an exciting time to be an Albertan as we pursue and promote the Alberta advantage, but it is also a time for careful planning.

While campaigning, constituents told me that fiscal responsibility must continue to be a priority and that prudent management must guide reinvestment in areas identified as mattering most to Albertans. Many cited a preference for minimal government involvement in their lives. They want a system in place that they can depend on when they need it but not one that leads to dependence. In other words, they want a safety net that promotes self-reliance. I also heard many constituents indicate an interest in building a vision for Alberta that goes beyond eliminating the deficit and paying down the debt. They want to retain and maintain a quality of life that we can afford: nothing more; nothing less.

To summarize, Madam Speaker, Banff-Cochrane residents want to optimize the Alberta advantage while still ensuring quality health care when they need it, an education system that positions our young people well upon graduation, and a continuing, responsible commitment to our most valuable resource: our environment.

In the Speech from the Throne the Lieutenant Governor made reference to “the last, best west.” This phrase conjures up classic images of the past: of bountiful grain fields, of cattle grazing, and of majestic peaks rising over rolling foothills, images of ranchers with immense Stetsons and sheepskin chaps, images of weary coal miners from the Canmore area blackened by long hours underground, images of the aboriginal people from the Stoney reserve visibly unsure of what future lies ahead for them, images of the early mountaineers and explorers as they mapped routes through the peaks and the valleys, images of the early tourists enjoying the hot springs. These are images of my constituency's past. Some of them are not so different from the present. Agriculture and ranching are still a big part of the area's economy. What used to be exploration has been replaced by tourism, and people still come from far and wide to enjoy the hot springs.

Today Banff-Cochrane is a vibrant, diverse, and complex constituency that begins at the western edge of Calgary and continues north and south of the Trans-Canada Highway to the B.C. border and north along the Icefields Parkway as far as Saskatchewan River Crossing. Its population is educated, active, and passionate, both about where they live and the issues that matter most to them. They live in the beautiful communities of Cochrane, Springbank, Bragg Creek, Redwood Meadows, Morley, Exshaw, Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, and surrounding areas. Whether it be in the ranchlands, the foothills, or the majestic mountains, Banff-Cochrane is rich in resources and a major contributor to the best this province has to offer.

4:20

We have Canada's first national park, provincial parks, Kananaskis Country, the Tsuu T'ina and Stoney reserves, and some of the most spectacular ranching country in the world. We are the country's most popular tourist destination, as millions come each year to visit our natural surroundings. The legacy of the 1988 Olympics lives on as we continue to attract and host world-class events in our pristine environment with our first-class

amenities and warm hospitality. We are home to many famous sights, including historic CP resort hotels, the Canmore Nordic Centre, and the Cochrane Western Heritage Centre, just to name a few.

Banff-Cochrane is a very desirable constituency to work and live in, but it is not without its challenges, Madam Speaker. Our communities are among the fastest growing in the province, leading to many issues associated with increasing demands. Consider my hometown of Banff. It first developed as a tourism destination, and the supporting businesses grew around it, beginning with a railway station and a hotel. Now roughly 4.8 million people enter Banff park each year. Of those, 3.2 million are considered to be park visitors; 58 percent of those are Albertans. These visitors spend an estimated \$750 million per year. Over 650 businesses are licensed to operate in the park, including 125 restaurants, 220 retail outlets, and lodging with a total of 3,600 hotel rooms. The Bow Valley is the most developed part of Banff national park, with over 8,000 permanent residents.

Fixed town boundaries contribute to a housing problem in Banff. High cost, scarcity, and overcrowding are putting limitations on the town's residents. This impacts directly on those who provide service: teachers, health care workers, and park employees. As a result, this pressure spills outside the park gates to Canmore, Exshaw, and Harvie Heights. Canmore is continually and rapidly growing, and the area as a whole is feeling the pressure of growth from Albertans seeking summer or ski homes. Development is also expanding west of Calgary into the Bragg Creek and Cochrane areas.

While Banff-Cochrane is presented with many opportunities associated with growth, our communities are struggling with the planning for growth management and sustainable development. Increasing demands for expansion present controversy over land uses; pressures on schools, health care services, and physical infrastructure; and substantial property tax increases, just to name a few challenges. Madam Speaker, this is the environment within which my constituents want to be able to thrive and prosper and take advantage of the Alberta advantage. These are the constituents who I am honoured to represent and committed to representing.

I congratulate all MLAs on their recent election and look forward to working with you towards the betterment of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I will close with an open invitation to you and all Albertans to heed the late, great Wilf Carter's suggestion – Lorne, you can relate to this – to come and enjoy the golden poppies blooming around the banks of Lake Louise. You will not be disappointed.

Thank you.

MR. WHITE: Madam Speaker, I rise today to also speak to the Speech from the Throne and to first tell you a little bit about my constituency once again and to speak of something that is near and dear to the hearts of all of us, and that is some taxation. My constituency does not have a Lake Louise. My constituency does not even have Sunnyboy cereal, which is a claim to fame. My constituency does not have the wealth of a constituency that is able to afford to send their children to all the schools they would like. In fact, my constituency is made up a great deal by people that are only able to get by. Some of them struggle very hard to get by. My constituency has a lot of first and second generation Canadians. My constituency has a great deal of retired and semiretired seniors, some injured workers, a lot of younger people

that are looking for a home they can call their own, their first home, starter homes many would call them. In fact, my constituency from one end to the other is made up of people that are doing their very, very best to take advantage of all that they see, truly the advantages of living in Alberta. They don't have a great deal of aspirations beyond getting through the next year and month and paying down the mortgage and making it through one year more of school, perhaps making it, in some cases, one more year of life.

These people do not demand a great deal of government. My constituents aren't those that are lined up at the welfare rolls. These are not the people that are putting their hands out for large loans from any banking institution. These are not people that one would call the movers and shakers of the world. These are darned good people. They work hard, and they expect the government to deliver a modicum of respect back. Oftentimes they find it wanting in this particular government because of the fact that this government is made up primarily of people that come from better backgrounds than my constituents. They have had some advantages that my constituents have not had. Some have; some have not. I don't say that of all members. Some members here certainly came from humble backgrounds and have done very, very well, and I respect that a great deal. However, it is not open to all citizens to be able to do this.

The constituency does have a great number of needs. One of the things they would like to have seen done prior to the ease with which this government says "No more taxes," and "We want to hold down the budget" and all the platitudes is a fine examination of the expenditures in the way of need, not just saying, "Okay, we have a budget here; we slash the budget and do away with whether it be teachers or whether it be road maintenance workers or whether it be some capital works here or there." No. What they would really like to see, in an honest examination, is for this member to be able to speak in this House with an open mind to have those kinds of debates, back-and-forth debate about what truly the needs are for every individual soul in this province.

Yes, there are special interest groups, and so there should be. If you don't have any special interests, it's likely you don't have many interests at all. Well, we do have a lot of people with special interests, and yes, they should be listened to. Yes, some of them want a little more, but that's what open debate would do, and it would be nice if that kind of open debate could occur.

I'd like to speak about the motivation for members seeking office. I've often found, in speaking to the average citizen out there, that they don't seem to understand that the motivation is as pure as in fact it is. Even for those members that once in a while I have a little less respect for than I should, I always have to bring myself back to understand that their motivation is no greater or lesser than mine for wanting to come here to this Chamber to speak one's mind and try to move society along.

I have children, and I expect them to grow up and to live and be very productive in this society. I work very hard in order to provide them with a head start in this world, unlike a great number of my constituents that simply cannot. Either they're not equipped financially or they're not equipped experientially to give those young people a start. I know in my heart of hearts that every single soul here has the motivation in the right direction: number one, truly to represent their constituents; number two, to represent those in society that aren't here to represent themselves, those that don't have a large voice. I'm speaking of those less fortunate than ourselves, being able to have the opportunity to serve in this House as we do, and doing the very best they can for

future generations, wherever they may live in this province, in any particular locale.

4:30

I'm reminded that there are some very great members that have gone before in this House. Some members in the last House from both sides of the Legislature I have a great deal of respect for, for the things that they did. Yes, we often differed on elements of philosophy, and yes, we often differed on a particular item of business, but I had a great deal of respect for them. I hope that others would have that of me once departed from this House.

The longer you sit in a Chamber such as this or serve in other levels of government, which a great number of members in this House have done – they come to understand that the only thing that really makes this Assembly and any others that we belong to work is respect for the institution and a modicum of respect for one another.

What prevents me now from wandering over and giving someone a hard time about any piece of business, whether it's the member opposite from Vermilion-Lloydminster, that often interjects, or a member from this side of the House that often interjects, from coming over and having it out with them? It's respect for this place, and that's the only thing we really have that keeps us from folding into what has occurred in the Soviet bloc currently. Incidentally, there's a member of the provincial government that has spent a great deal of time trying to teach people in the Soviet bloc about how things occur here. It is the single most difficult concept for them to understand: that being on opposite sides of the political spectrum, being on opposite sides of so many things that we do and say outside this Chamber, we don't throttle each other in this Chamber and that some work actually gets done. A ruling comes from the House, and actually the administration of the province of Alberta carries that out because it is the majority wish of the House. It is very difficult for the world to understand that, that all this democracy and how it operates comes down to that simple word, respect, and we have to maintain that in this Chamber.

I have a little difficulty with how this Chamber works relative to others, if you speak to members of other Chambers across this country or, indeed, other places in the world where British parliamentary democracy works or works after a fashion. This House has become so partisan and so partisanly charged that not all committees have members from all parties. Each and every one of us has a number of Members of Parliament that we associate with in our ridings. If you go to them and tell them that this House does not allow nongovernment members on a standing committee or a special committee of some kind, they're taken aback.

I ask those members here to do that, to just find out how it occurs, and then ask yourself the question – the rhetorical question, I would suspect, but it might be a real question to you – what does this government have to fear? You have a majority in every one of the committees. If you're interviewing a group or a special interest, if you will, that has some interest to further with this government, what is to be lost by having an opposing opinion? You may find that in fact there will be a lot of opinion that would be similar. You may find that there are members on this side of the House and to our far left, too, that actually concur in a direction this government may or may not go. But to stifle debate, to not allow the debate is what you would call, what a lot of people would call perhaps bully or perhaps head in the sand or perhaps unwilling to spend the time for democracy to occur or something. I mean, it's really kind of strange that that kind of thing would occur only in this House.

I happen to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee, which is supposedly the watchdog, the private members' review of the legislative expenditures. Well, in fact we're so stifled that to my knowledge – and we've questioned them right across Canada – this is the only Legislature that holds their meetings only while House is in session. Now, you would think that an open and accountable government would want the scrutiny of that committee, which does not occur. It's very unfortunate, and you needn't be here very long to understand that this House operates considerably differently from many others.

I would like a true and an honest debate on levels of expenditure in each one of the departments in the way of describing the deliverance of service, the level of service. Define the level of service and, yes, do the best one can to generate a budget that would reflect that in an honest manner such that there is no fat. Of course, that's always the end, and it's a never-ending process to try to do that, but of course it's an honourable end. Then build that up to the point of saying: okay, this is the tax load that will have to be levied upon you the citizens if we act on this.

Now, take that load to the average soul and say: look; that's the tax load, and you have one tax pocket, whether that be for income tax or property tax or a sales tax, which we have a number of in this province currently. If you do that and you have an honest debate on that, yes, the government side will and should always win out. Of course it should win out; that's why we have elections. But in that debate hopefully we'll have enough public participation, enough people that will understand truly what does occur in a province with money coming and money going. It's not always a guarantee, but at least it would be an attempt. Yes, there would be some risk for the government. Of course there will be, because there will be some risks of embarrassment. There'll be risks of embarrassment for some ministers that in their areas their level of services is too high or too low. Yes, there are all of these risks, but each and every municipality goes through the same sort of thing every single budget. They do it without partisan politics and in fact have become in a number of cases really quite efficient in deliverance of their services.

I should like to talk about – and I won't be talking about it a great deal because of time being as limited as it is. I won't be talking about how we build up a budget in the way of expenditures, because that would be in anticipation of what is to transpire over the next 20 days or so. We'll go through a process. It may not be the process that I like. It may not be the process that I think is really, truly open and accountable. It's not the process that the accountants would like to see, but it is a process that is in place. I won't speak about some of the foolhardy balanced budget legislation and hampering future governments from making decisions on how to tax. I won't deal with that, as ridiculous as it is, because we have a number of days of debate on that subject too.

I will talk about something that is clear in the minds of all Albertans, something they feel very strongly on: how we're taxed. Now, I would have to start with the assumption – and it's very difficult to talk to people about this in a very short presentation. You have to put on a cap and say: "Look; we're not talking about expenditures. We're not talking about how much or how little it is. We just arbitrarily say that taxes must be raised." There's death and taxes. They're the two axioms that we know are coming. Taxes have to be paid, and it only comes from one pocket. We have often heard of the one taxpayer. We've heard that rhetoric thrown about a number of times.

There are the fundamentals: income tax, property tax, and sales

tax. I must add that there are currently some sales taxes in this province already, say, with the hotel tax and the gasoline tax. Those are taxes that are applied at the point of sale, and there are some others. I can't recall what they are offhand, but there are others. In fact, they're not shown to be horribly regressive. At least this government doesn't believe them to be so and hasn't presented any arguments as being so.

4:40

Income tax. Now, income tax for years and years has been called a progressive tax because the rate moves up with the income generated after all of these other deductions, and there are those that put forward and will put forward again and again and again the simplistic flat tax. Now it has moved to a flatter tax, because flat tax simply cannot and will not operate because of such things, very simple things, as RRSP deductions, child care deductions. I mean, if you had a flat tax, a true flat tax, you'd break a great number of middle and lower income earners. You'd move middle-income earners to low expendable income families. You certainly wouldn't move them – there needs to be a discussion about some property tax.

It's personally my view that property tax and the services to property should be one and the same. We have gone from a property tax system in the '50s that actually was almost entirely and completely for property to now having a part that is tacked on for education, which adds to the tax load. We have things in the purely municipal tax area, things that go far beyond the protection of property, for fire and police, beyond roads and services and sewers and hard services to property, beyond all of those hard services to the very soft services like social services. Every municipality spends some on social services. Every municipality spends a great deal on arts and culture and recreation. These are things that should be set aside. These are things that should be set aside and should be going to the provincial realm, in my view.

Consequently, yes, under an open debate on this we may have some debate on why we would pay less in property tax and perhaps, just perhaps, pay less on income tax too. I could make a good argument for an at-point-of-sale tax if you could say to the average soul: "Yes. We will not tax you on your property to the extent that we do now. We will not tax you on your income. We will leave that money in your jeans to expend as you wish, but because we need the income, we will tax you at point of sale." Yes, that's what's called a sales tax.

There are a number of people that have – well, the accountants have made that case. Yes, it is very easy to stand back and wave your arms and say no new taxes and all of this other, but in fact it adds nothing to the debate. If you really want to get into the debate, I would like to hear both sides of that argument. I'm an engineer by profession. I don't think I could adequately bring that depth of understanding to accounting or to micro- or macro-economics to understand it fully, but I certainly would like to hear the debate here. I personally have heard a great deal of the debate, and it's unfortunate we're not going to hear that debate here.

Madam Speaker, I will take my seat on that note. Thank you.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to address this Assembly and to represent the constituency of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. I'd first like to commend the Lieutenant Governor for his inspired speech and for laying out the

direction that this government is headed. I'd also like to offer congratulations to the Speaker and to the deputy Speakers for their successful election and appointments. I wish them the best in those new roles and responsibilities, and I'm confident that they'll serve as a guide to this Legislature and maintain a high level of decorum in the Assembly. Of course, I recognize my own responsibility in that regard, and I will endeavour to conduct myself as I believe the residents of my constituency expect.

Madam Speaker, I sought the nomination and ran for election because I respected the leadership and commitment to fiscal responsibility of the Klein government. I recognized that this government was committed to provide Albertans with a balanced budget, to get their fiscal house in order, and to scrutinize every hard-earned Albertan tax dollar spent. This government kept their promise and, more importantly, stuck to their plan. It was because of this government's fortitude that we are now in a position to move forward. With our reduction of our debt, our savings from interest payments may now be used to build the kind of Alberta we all desire, an Alberta that's sustainable for the present and future generations. We are now in a better position to contribute to our social programs of education, health care, and seniors and to keep taxes the lowest in Canada and to attract investment and jobs for our youth.

Madam Speaker, the second reason why I sought the nomination may be considered more ideological. I wish to bring to the government caucus table an accurate representation of the consensus of the residents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, to put forward their interests and to work for their corporate benefit. The constituents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan have bestowed the great honour upon me to represent them, and I am committed to see that their voice is heard in this Legislature. Having lived in the riding for over 20 years, I've gained a good understanding of the range of interests of business and community members, as well as the issues surrounding health care and especially education. My personal experience as an educator and assistant principal has helped me shape an understanding of the variety and divergence of opinions, and it's that experience I would like to share.

During the election I heard the concerns of constituents and the issues they raised. Much of the election surrounded the issue of health care. I was told by most people that they experienced only the most effective and competent of health care. However, there was a perception that the system has some pressure points, and those pressure points must be addressed. We must not only have a good health care system; we must be confident that it is a good system. It's my commitment, Madam Speaker, to consult with those people who are involved in the system and to work toward providing the kind of health care system my constituents and Albertans want and are willing to pay for. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, my constituents can be assured that we seek to provide an accountable framework, to set out our expectations for our health system and to measure its performance, to ensure quality, accessibility, and stability in the health system.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to contribute to good decision-making in regards to our education system. I'd like to commend the Minister of Education for directing resources to the classroom, where they are needed the most, and also for the creation of school councils. It's an important attempt to get parents involved in their children's learning. Parents must share in their children's education and play an active role to ensure their children are prepared to learn. This is a responsibility that must fall on the parent and not the teacher.



Many factors like behaviour problems, special needs, learning disability, medical needs, and social programs impact the ability of the classroom teacher to teach. A funding increase, however, is not the only answer, because other costs may be reduced by utilizing alternate delivery models. It's been my experience that to fund a reluctant learner for four or more years of high school is a poor use of resources if at the end of that time that student made little progress towards the completion of a high school diploma. It would be better to see that type of student in a more practical work/study program. As outlined by the Lieutenant Governor, this government will continue to work towards improving high school completion rates and provide innovative programs.

Madam Speaker, I promised that if elected I would be committed to listen to the concerns of my constituents and would attempt to implement solutions that are fair, forward looking, and reach a consensus among the residents of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. There are concerns unique to my constituency, including the massive expansion of industry in the Fort Saskatchewan area, the rivalry among municipalities, the health care authority responsible for the different municipalities, and school district regionalization. There's also the concern about maintaining the status of Fort Saskatchewan as a municipality, upgrading of water and sewer in small communities, and a need for hospital modernization. While it is my objective to address these concerns and others, all decisions must be made with respect to Alberta as a whole.

4:50

It's our job as members of this Legislature to balance the diversity of opinions through consultation. As elected officials or as candidates for election I firmly believe we must not promise what we can't deliver. It's this sense of realism that this government was voted in on, and it's a position we must maintain. We cannot be everything to everyone, but what we can do is continue to listen to Albertans and strive to do our utmost to provide quality, affordable, and responsible public services to meet the demands of growth. We must continue to provide a climate that's conducive to the private sector to ensure investment and job creation in Alberta. As we head for the 21st century with the blueprints from the Alberta Growth Summit, a consultation process among stakeholders, I am confident of Alberta's future.

Our work is just beginning. Over the next four years I pledge to my constituents that we will meet the challenge that we face, and we'll continue to strive to provide the foundation for a bright and prosperous Alberta, an Alberta we can all be proud of.

Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I first congratulate you on your election to the Speaker's Chair and offer you my very best wishes for your continued success in that role.

Madam Speaker, the constituents of Leduc have bestowed a great honour upon me: the opportunity to represent them as a member in this the 24th Legislative Assembly. My roots in this constituency run deep. I am a fourth generation Albertan of German descent. My family settled in the Nisku area in the 1880s. For the past 15 years or so I have been involved in local government, having served for a short while as councillor and school trustee in the county of Strathcona followed by 14 years as councillor and school trustee in the county of Leduc. During this time I served as chairman of the board of education for six years and as reeve for the past four years. It is through my involvement

in local government and in the community that I have gained a good understanding of the constituency of Leduc and the issues peculiar to it, and it is this experience that I would like to share with this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, the Leduc constituency runs 54 miles east to west and 24 miles north to south. It includes the town of Devon; the city of Leduc; the town of Beaumont; the village of New Sarepta; the village of Hay Lakes; the east portion of the county of Leduc and the north portion of the county of Camrose; the hamlets of Round Hill, Kingman, Rolly View, Kavanagh, Armenia; the Nisku Business Park; and the Edmonton International Airport. Should you ever want to know where Edmonton is, it's north of the Leduc constituency.

The Leduc constituency is home to several historical, recreational, and environmental areas including the big Hay Lakes Ducks Unlimited bird habitat, the Lake Demay bird sanctuary, Miquelon Lake provincial park, Joseph Lake centennial park, Hay Lakes telegraph park, Rabbit Hill ski hill, Shalom water ski park, Alberta heritage exposition park, and the Leduc-Devon oil field interpretive centre. At the Alberta heritage exposition park, which is operated by the Leduc West Antique Society, artifacts which were used by the pioneers of Alberta are displayed and their use demonstrated so that present and future generations can experience some of our history.

The Leduc constituency is also home to Imperial's Leduc No. 1 discovery well, which 50 years ago established the course of Alberta's history, ushering in a new era of prosperity and decades of wealth. At this historical well site in the county of Leduc just south of the town of Devon, the volunteers of the Leduc-Devon oil field historical society have constructed an oil field interpretive centre. During the long weekend in August of 1997 some regional municipalities, in co-operation with the Leduc-Devon historical society, will hold celebrations commemorating the 50th anniversary of Imperial's Leduc No. 1 discovery well. Everyone is invited to participate.

I gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the province of Alberta for the interpretive centre and the anniversary celebrations. All of these communities and attractions encompass a unique blend of people and places that make a significant contribution to this great province.

Madam Speaker, the motto of the city of Leduc is: the living city with the right connections. With Leduc's direct link to Highway 2, CP Rail, and proximity to the international airport and Nisku business centre, it is a claim that is hard to dispute. Leduc is also the only city I am aware of in which the police department, the fire department, and the ambulance service will be housed in a common protective services building adjacent to the hospital. The city is also home to excellent educational, cultural, and recreational facilities. In fact, I have witnessed several significant new developments in the past year. Leduc is truly poised for growth.

The progressive attitude of the city has led to a number of significant events occurring in the city of Leduc, such as the Alberta dairy congress annual show and sale and the 1997 international weightlifting championships.

The county of Leduc is considered the southern gateway to Edmonton. The county of Leduc is home to the Nisku business and industrial park, which began as an oil field service park but has diversified into manufacturing, research, and training facilities and does much of its work for customers outside the province. The park has witnessed revitalization over the past few years and is once again growing rapidly. In addition, the consolidation of

scheduled air traffic at the Edmonton International Airport is expected to prove beneficial to the economic growth of the area.

Madam Speaker, the county of Leduc and the city of Leduc have a unique relationship. For the past 12 years the city and county have co-operated to promote their region through the Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Authority. This creative and collaborative effort has served to promote businesses and communities and has facilitated reciprocal visits with trading partners in places like China, Argentina, and Brazil.

The town of Devon was built in response to the oil boom. It began nearly 50 years ago as a fully preplanned town to house Imperial Oil workers and offices. It also established one of the first community libraries, which served as a model for the rest of Alberta. The town of Devon is also known for its beautiful golf course along the scenic North Saskatchewan River.

Beaumont, a town centred around an historical church, began as a French settlement. The town has continued its link with its French roots by incorporating a French architectural theme in its development planning. As well, all schools in the town offer immersion classes in French. The high school has an award winning design incorporating a dynamic state-of-the-art, high-tech component.

The village of New Sarepta had its beginnings as a German Moravian settlement. More recently it has gained recognition as the cartoon capital of the province, courtesy of the renowned Edmonton cartoonist Yardley Jones and his creation of the imaginary New Sarepta Tire and Girdle Company.

Hay Lakes was the site of one of the first telegraph offices in Alberta, having established there in 1877.

Kingman, a hamlet of about 100 population, is located within a region that is predominantly of Scandinavian descent. It is the lutefisk festival capital of Alberta. This Scandinavian celebration, held in December, brings about 800 people to the hamlet. Madam Speaker, Leduc constituency has some interesting communities amidst the outdoor splendour of Alberta, made up of a wide range of people and interests.

**5:00**

The reason I sought the nomination for the Progressive Conservative Party was to bring a positive voice to this Legislature. My commitment to the electorate was to bring my 15 years of experience in local governance to this Assembly and help make things happen and get the job done. I have now been given the opportunity to pursue an election campaign goal: to provide good channels of communication between the government of Alberta and my constituents.

Madam Speaker, another reason I sought the nomination and ran in the election was based on philosophical grounds. Four years ago this government ran on the commitment to balance the budget and get their fiscal house in order. I saw a commitment to a goal and a promise kept. What I saw was a simple idea that had a profound effect: you can't spend more than you earn, and if you don't pay down your debt when you have money, when will you?

During the election I witnessed promises by the opposition that committed to excessive amounts of spending. This is clearly something Albertans don't want. One way to enslave a people is to get them so deep in debt that they can't make their own decisions. The solution to poverty is not in reslicing the same pie into more and ever tinier pieces. The solution to poverty is the creation of more wealth and more opportunity. It is the Klein Progressive Conservative government along with Albertans' hard work and sacrifice that has restored a sense of freedom, the

freedom to make our own decisions and control our own destiny. I am proud to be a member of the government side of this Legislative Assembly.

Madam Speaker, our accomplishments are also accompanied by many challenges. We are now in a stable fiscal position and must accommodate increasing growth while maintaining a solid network of services. This government ran on the mandate to continue to remain fiscally responsible while reinvesting in targeted areas that Albertans considered important: health, education, seniors, and providing a strong infrastructure for growth.

Madam Speaker, one of the things I heard from the electorate during the election campaign was that there is strong support for the preservation and continuance of a publicly funded health care system. My pledge to my constituents is to work to ensure the best of health care services. Everyone should have access to affordable health care services when they need it. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, health remains a vital priority for our government. I will keep working to ensure high-quality, accessible, and sustainable health care with stable and predictable funding.

Education is also very important to the constituents of my riding and the province of Alberta as a whole. Alberta must continue to provide an excellent education system because education is an investment in our future. As the Lieutenant Government indicated, our government will continue to work to improve high school completion rates, student achievement in math, and student access to information through technology. I truly believe, Madam Speaker, that it is our responsibility as government to ensure that the only limitation for our children should be their own ability or will to succeed.

Madam Speaker, we are also in a challenging era of growth. We must stay ahead of the changes in a growing economy. One of my goals is to ensure good infrastructure within the Leduc constituency. It has been my experience that infrastructure must be maintained to avoid the high cost of neglect and to meet the needs of small businesses, which are the backbone of our community. My constituents can be confident that in keeping with this practice of consulting Albertans on important issues, the government will meet with leaders from municipalities, the health, education, labour, business, and general public sectors in an Alberta Growth Summit this year.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is truly a work in progress. With the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, we are the envy of the nation. We are leading the nation in growth. Individuals and businesses continue to set up shop in this fine province. As we embark on our journey together over the next four years, our vision will lead us into the next millennium confident in our future and the future of our children.

Thank you.

MR. BRODA: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and take this opportunity to speak about my constituency of Redwater. It gives me great pride to have been elected by the constituents of Redwater. After a brief hiatus the people of Redwater have spoken. They voted for the Progressive Conservative Party. They voted in a government that kept their word, a government who balanced the budget and got their fiscal house in order, a government that provided a climate for growth. This is the reason I sought the nomination for the Progressive Conservative Party and ran in the election. Nearly 5,300 constituents voted for me and this government's record. That is what democracy is all about.

Being an almost total stranger as a new member of this Assembly, I wish to thank my colleagues for their warm reception, encouragement, and support. I would especially like to thank my constituents and volunteers for the honour bestowed upon me to represent them on the government side of the Table.

Madam Speaker, at this time I wish to recognize one of my constituents, Ryan Keane from Legal. Ryan and his team took the Canadian junior men's curling championship and went on to win bronze at the world junior men's curling in Japan. Yes, I am proud of my constituents, and I feel this was important to mention.

I also want to set the record straight, Madam Speaker. My predecessor was quoted in the local papers as stating: Broda will only be a backbencher and will only be allowed to speak when the Premier gives him the nod. She goes on to say that Redwater lost a voice. Well, I'd like to let my constituents know that the very first day of this Legislature's sitting I did bring a concern forward from my constituents during question period. I want to assure my constituents that this is a trend that will continue as their concerns arise. I am here in government to represent and serve you. The Klein government prides itself in its open access to its members and allowing participation in decision-making. Combined with its consultation process, this government is a true government of the people.

Madam Speaker, the constituency of Redwater comprises half of the MD of Sturgeon – they changed their name just recently to the county of Sturgeon – all of the county of Thorhild, and half of the county of Smoky Lake. The town of Morinville has the largest population, approximately 6,300 people. The constituency includes also the villages of Legal, Waskatenau, Warspite, and Thorhild, the towns of Gibbons, Bon Accord, Smoky Lake, and Redwater, and the hamlets of Radway, Newbrook, Opal, Egremont, and Abee. The constituency is also represented by one Hutterite colony and numerous acreage subdivisions, with Sturgeon valley being the largest. We have also two health authorities in my constituency.

This constituency also includes the new ground military base at Namao. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the military personnel and their families to the constituency of Redwater and give a special welcome to those who recently moved to the province of Alberta.

#### **5:10**

Madam Speaker, the constituency as a whole is very diverse, with industries ranging from agriculture to petrochemical firms. The constituency has excellent recreation facilities, such as Long Lake provincial park, and numerous golf courses, including the famous Goose Hummock 18-hole course.

Three major highways intersect the constituency: highways 2, 28, and 28A, which combine to serve the heavy truck traffic. These highways provide access to Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Bonnyville, and the Peace country.

Madam Speaker, as mentioned, the Redwater constituency has numerous industries which have benefited from this government's climate for growth. The Redwater community has many industries, including mixed farming, gas. The Du Pont Canada petrochemical plant serves the western Canadian and U.S. markets. Procor provides butane and methane from its large underground storage caverns.

Madam Speaker, there's also a very good example of value-added industries in this constituency. Morinville has a very productive pet food manufacturing company. In Legal, St. Denis receives and produces peas for overseas shipping and is proposing

to expand production to include a value-added initiative of cholesterol-free peanut butter.

Having heard all that we have available in our constituency, it's not that we don't need further economic growth. Jobs are needed. The county of Thorhild is just another potential example of diversified industry. The county has proposed to construct a strawboard plant. This project combines a value-added industry with renewable resources. The private venture would employ approximately 100 people with added prospects of further spin-offs. There's also an example of agrifood industries that use blending plants to make fertilizers.

These examples serve as a confirmation of this government's climate for growth. The positive economic environment provides the private sector with the infrastructure to increase its production. The positive changes in streamlining government services and getting rid of excess regulations and legislation have materialized in this constituency, and I see an era of growth ahead for us.

Madam Speaker, this diverse and strong economy is also accompanied by many challenges. We are now in a stable fiscal position because of the hard work and sacrifices of Albertans. We must now accommodate increasing growth with solid infrastructure such as roads and highways but, more importantly, continue to provide for those areas which Albertans consider important; namely, health, education, and seniors.

Madam Speaker, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne our government will provide programs and services that help Albertans take responsibility for their own future and enrich the quality of their lives. I want to assure my constituents that health remains a vital priority for this government. I will keep working to ensure high quality, accessible, and sustainable health care with stable and predictable funding. This government will also continue to build on improving high school completion rates and provide curriculum standards in technology for students. This government will make career and technological studies a permanent part of the high school curriculum to prepare our children for the global marketplace.

This government also cares about Alberta seniors, the bedrock of our community. To this end, the government will review long-term care services for seniors and implement legislation to protect against the physical, emotional, and financial abuse of seniors.

Madam Speaker, probably the most important quality of this government is its responsiveness to the people of Alberta. We will continue to listen. Our government will seek input from a diverse group of people and occupations in the Alberta Growth Summit this summer to respond to the pressures of growth and the rising demand for public services in a financially sustainable manner.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank the constituents of Redwater for their support and confidence. They endorsed this government and its policies, and I intend to continue to meet their expectations. Over the next four years I pledge the constituents of Redwater that my door will remain open and I will continue to listen to Albertans. I assure you that you will continue to have a voice in this House as long as I sit in this Legislature.

I would like to state that our government has a lot of work to do over the next four years, but we will do it with due diligence and will work in consultation with Albertans. Because of this government's fortitude in balancing the budget along with the hard work and sacrifice of every Albertan, we are now in a stable fiscal position. Many more Albertans are working than ever, and we continue to lead the nation in economic growth and jobs.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, our future looks brighter than ever. We may soon be free of the net debt, as early as the year 2005. In essence, we are working to free our children and grandchildren from the burden of debt.

In closing, Madam Speaker, in the words of a famous politician: there is indeed no limit to what people can accomplish when they are free to follow their dreams. We're making that dream a reality. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to move that we adjourn debate.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Redwater, does the Assembly agree with the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MRS. BLACK: Madam Speaker, I move that we call it 5:30 and that the House stand adjourned until 8 o'clock this evening, when we will reconvene in Committee of Supply.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with the motion by the Deputy Government House Leader?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

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