

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 5, 1997**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 97/05/05

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. The prayer that we use on this day is the prayer that Parliament has used at Westminster, our Mother of Parliaments, since the year 1659, and it is still used on occasion in Commonwealth parliamentary assemblies all over the globe.

Let us pray.

We, Thine unworthy servants here gathered together in Thy name, do humbly beseech Thee to send down Thy heavenly wisdom from above to direct and guide us in all of our considerations.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and on behalf of the chair I beg leave to present the following petitions that have been received for private Bills under Standing Order 93(2):

1. The petition of TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company for the TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company Act,
2. The petition of Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, Montreal Trust Company of Canada and Montreal Trust Company for the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, Montreal Trust Company of Canada and the Montreal Trust Company Act,
3. The petition of Karl Ewoniak and Gerald Chipeur for the Trans Global Insurance Company Act,
4. The petition of Karl Ewoniak and Gerald Chipeur for the Trans Global Life Insurance Company Act,
5. The petition of Kenneth Garnet McKay for the Kenneth Garnet McKay Adoption Termination Act,
6. The petition of Gerald Chipeur and Victor Fitch for the Canadian Union College Amendment Act, 1997, and
7. The petition of Dwight Bliss, John MacKay and Gerald Chipeur for the Altasure Insurance Company Act.

head: **Notices of Motions**

THE SPEAKER: Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of the following motion.

Be it resolved that this House invite Mr. Rick Hansen to the floor of this Chamber to address the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, May 8, 1997, and that this address be the first order of business after Orders of the Day is called. The ordinary business of the Assembly will resume upon the conclusion of Mr. Hansen's address. Be it further resolved that Mr. Hansen's address become part of the permanent record of the Assembly.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table two documents today. The first is a supplemental bit of information responding to questions that I answered in the House on Credit Counselling

Services of Alberta.

The second document I'd like to table is the Auditor General's report on the financial operation of CKUA. The news release is issued and attached to a copy of the report.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table two sets of documents today. First of all I'd like to table four copies of the 1995-96 annual report of the Provincial Mental Health Board, and I would like to table four copies of a document released by the Provincial Health Council of Alberta entitled Report Card on the Status of Health Reform in Alberta. Copies of this report can be obtained through my office.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, followed by the hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a document signed by 25 constituents requesting that I work on their behalf and in their interest to see the banning of VLTs in the province.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table a news release that was issued today announcing assistance to the Alberta Indigenous Sport Council. This funding will help send over 700 – in fact the council tells me today perhaps over 800 – aboriginal athletes to the North American Indigenous Games in Victoria. My colleague the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs and I had the opportunity of meeting with this group today. I would take this opportunity on behalf of all members of the Assembly to wish the aboriginal athletes all the best at the games in Victoria.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a copy of the formal accord for the shared stewardship of public lands, where Environmental Protection states that they

through the Public Lands Act will control all public land ownership and make and administer decisions regarding planning, allocation and sale.

The second is the government of Alberta news release regarding the stewardship of public lands to be shared, where it states that Environmental Protection will maintain control of these lands.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table four copies of a letter to Mr. Victor Stepovy, general manager, and Mr. Dennis Kowalishin, coach of the Edmonton UKES hockey team, congratulating them on behalf of all members of this Assembly on winning the International Kontakt Cup and bringing great accolades to our city and our province this past weekend from Toronto.

THE SPEAKER: I'd like to table with the Assembly today a copy of a letter from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to the Speaker advising the Speaker as per the Standing Orders that the hon. member would like to bring Bill 201, the Parenting After Separation Act, before the Assembly for third reading on Tuesday, May 6, 1997.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. BRODA: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you visitors from G.H. Primeau school in Morinville. There are 120 visitors seated in both the members' and the public galleries. Included with them are teachers Mrs. Blackburn, Mrs. Maslyk, Mrs. Sowinski, Mrs. Ostafichuk. Parents and helpers included in there are Mrs. Pelletier, Mrs. Bullock, Mrs. Harasimiuk, Mrs. Welwood, Mrs. Hanson, Mrs. Nimmo, Mr. Gow, Mrs. Gunderson, Mr. Stacey, Mrs. McLaggan, and Mrs. Rosaasen. I'd like them to rise, please, to a hearty welcome, as we're accustomed to.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Rural Physicians

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Despite the crisis due to a doctor shortage in Redwater, the Member for Redwater didn't raise the matter in the health care estimates this morning with the Minister of Health, nor has he ever raised the issue in this Legislature.

MR. HAVELOCK: Point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: In addition, Mr. Speaker, the minister has taken no action on the matter since our Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert raised the issue two weeks ago in question period. So I'm going to raise the question again today. Why has this crisis occurred over two years after it had become very clear that there are profound weaknesses in the province's program to get doctors to go to rural Alberta?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all the Member for Redwater has been very active in making representation to me with respect to his concerns about physician services at the Redwater hospital. I have had correspondence with him, and it is my understanding that he has been working, including over this weekend, with the local authorities and the people involved in the Redwater area to do whatever he can as a representative for that area to see the issue resolved. It's my understanding that it's through the efforts of the MLA but certainly also of the local population and the regional health authority and its chairman that progress has been made in this particular situation to work out a coverage and service arrangement between the regional health authority and the doctors in that particular area.

1:40

MR. MITCHELL: The Member for Redwater has to write because he can't get a meeting with the minister, Mr. Speaker.

Has the minister considered that one of the frustrations rural doctors encounter is that they cannot get adequate access to beds in major regional centres like Edmonton and Calgary when their patients need more sophisticated health care than they can receive at their own rural facilities?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it should be recognized that we have here an issue, as I understand it, involving arrangements and co-operative planning among the physicians and the physicians with the regional health authority. So I think that should be kept in mind. There are certainly local issues in this particular case which do arise and which communities and their

MLA and their hospital board work to resolve.

Now, moving on to another topic, which in a sense the hon. leader has alluded to. With respect to access to provincewide services, these key services that are offered in Edmonton and Calgary for the most part, we have taken action on that particular area of concern, Mr. Speaker. We have provided millions of additional dollars, very significant funds in the case of the Capital health authority, which serves Redwater, and the whole area of waiting lists and access to acute care beds is being addressed.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister just negotiated a \$20 million increase to some doctors. Why didn't he at the same time make provisions to pay rural doctors an hourly rate for weekend on-call emergency responsibilities when they have to remain in the community but don't often see enough patients to adequately compensate them for their time or to adequately compensate them for the pressure that this places on their personal lives?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, before addressing the question directly, the introduction to the question bears a response, and that is that what are now referred to as "some doctors" are the very doctors offering those specialized services in those beds in the Capital health authority that were referred to as being in need in the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, in the rural physician action plan there are a number of provisions which deal with the particular challenges faced by rural physicians. One which has been quite successful and directly applies to the hon. member's question is the overall locum program that we have operating with two different branches or initiatives involved for weekends, for holiday breaks, for certain particular situations. Yes, many rural doctors are under tremendous pressures as to the utilization of their time. They do need relief, and that is one of our initiatives in that program.

THE SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Official Opposition.

Bre-X Minerals Ltd.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you. The single largest example of fraud in the history of the mining sector just unfolded this weekend with the collapse of the Bre-X gold find, in quotes, in Indonesia. Bre-X was first listed on the Alberta Stock Exchange in 1992. It remains on it today, so it falls under the jurisdiction of the Alberta Securities Commission and the Alberta Securities Act. My question is to the Treasurer. What steps is the Treasurer taking to ensure that Albertans who invest in an Alberta-based company, listed on the Alberta Stock Exchange, reviewed by the Alberta Securities Commission, can have some confidence that they won't be fleeced?

**Speaker's Ruling
Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility**

THE SPEAKER: Provincial Treasurer, before you rise, and to the Leader of the Opposition: the Chair has listened very attentively to the question, and I hope that both the questioner and the responder will find a very, very narrow range for dealing with this matter. It seems a long way away from Indonesia to this Assembly, so let's be very narrow and to the point in this question, Provincial Treasurer.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Bre-X Minerals Ltd.*(continued)*

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, unless I heard incorrectly, the opposition leader was incorrect. I believe it was July 21, 1989, that Bre-X was listed on the Alberta exchange. He might want to check. He could be three years out there.

He would certainly know – as I say, this is a matter of record – in fact from his previous experience as vice-president of the Principal Group, managing all sales and operations as an investor taking people's money, that you can never one hundred percent guarantee that all investment is going to be successful.

I can tell you that what we do in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, is make sure through the Alberta Stock Exchange that we are constantly reviewing and surveying the regulatory rules and the regulatory regime that's in place so that people can at least have a sense that there are some guidelines. You cannot guarantee one hundred percent that somebody is always telling you the truth. Though many people, especially in Alberta, made huge amounts of money on Bre-X, many, many other people lost a lot of money, and that's always a disappointing thing to see.

The Alberta exchange is working closely with the Ontario Stock Exchange, which is actually taking the lead since that's where the main trading is happening. Incidents like these are used to evaluate the system that's in place: are there some aspects of regulation that should be enhanced or not? Those are the types of things that are being looked at.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's indication that the Alberta Securities Commission will co-operate with the Ontario study; that's the right thing to do.

Could the Treasurer please undertake a review internally here to make certain that adequate regulatory measures were taken by the Alberta Securities Commission when they reviewed Bre-X to enter the Stock Exchange originally and have reviewed material that's come up in prospectuses and other financial material throughout the lifetime of Bre-X being on the Alberta Stock Exchange?

MR. DAY: Yes.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you for that commitment, Mr. Speaker, to the Treasurer.

Will the Treasurer also undertake a thorough review of the Alberta Securities Act now to ensure that the Securities Commission has a broad enough mandate and sufficient resources to review applicants for the Alberta Stock Exchange adequately to properly protect the interests of Alberta investors?

MR. DAY: Well, in doing so, Mr. Speaker, what we would look to is Albertans in general: those who are sophisticated and also those who may be concerned. If they have advice that changes in the Act may indeed make for a better situation for everybody, then we'd be willing to look at that. It's important to remember that you can overregulate in this area also. You can have a regulatory regime that is so stifling that investors indeed are not able to move their dollars around and to take the chances and take the risks that they want to take. Certainly when an incident like this happens, it provides a good opportunity and an opportunity that should be capitalized on, if I can use that word, to review what we do have in place.

We do believe that this particular stock exchange in Alberta has integrity. It's seen as having integrity around the world. It's certainly not the biggest exchange in the world, but it's one that

has made a mark for being a good system with sound principles in place, and we'll always review to make sure that those continue to exist.

MR. SAPERS: I've got a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Employment Standards Enforcement

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday a news report demonstrated that nonpayment of wages is a problem in the service industry. Employment standards are not being met in the car wash and restaurant industries. My questions today are for the Acting Minister of Labour. Will the minister confirm that his department has been unable to properly enforce the employment code because of staff reductions in the employment standards branch?

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to take that under advisement.

1:50

MR. MacDONALD: Can you explain how there is a fair and level playing field for the small businesses of this province if standards are not being met and some employers are allowed to circumvent the law?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, and I will undertake to have the appropriate minister look into that.

MR. MacDONALD: Can the minister instruct the fleet manager responsible for maintaining the fleet of cars for Executive Council to ensure that these vehicles are not being washed in a car wash that is violating the employment standards Act?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, speaking personally, Mr. Speaker, I haven't partaken of that particular car wash. Nevertheless, again I'll take it under advisement, and I'll have the appropriate minister take a look at the issue.

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

Midwifery

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Why is the minister refusing to have midwifery services covered by the province and instead fobbing off the responsibility to regional health authorities?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think it's important to note that we are one of a few provinces in Canada that have passed regulations with respect to the establishment of midwifery in the province of Alberta, and we're moving forward to implement those.

In terms of the payment this was not an issue in our discussions, as I recall, a couple of years ago now with respect to midwifery services. In fact no funding was sought at that particular time. However, we have established a fund, \$800,000, in the current budget to fund pilot projects whereby we would be looking at the possibility through interested regional health authorities of establishing midwifery as an integrated service within the overall health care program of the RHAs. So that is

our initiative in this particular area at this time, Mr. Speaker.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why does the minister believe that women in Alberta should not be entitled to the same high quality midwifery services regardless of which region of the province they happen to live in?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would not want the impression to be left that midwifery services are anywhere in this country provided on a fee-for-service basis or in terms of a dedicated separate budget. The point here is that we want to work with many groups, many professions, many occupational groups in health toward an integrated team approach in terms of offering these services through the regional health authorities. They are the bodies in the province which have the responsibility for overall health planning in this area, and we're taking that approach.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the minister is not prepared at this point to take action on this issue, will he at least meet with the representatives of the midwifery profession and listen to their concerns?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I have met, yes, on one occasion but at some length with representatives of the midwifery association. I am certainly prepared to meet again. I think that we have had a very thorough discussion of the issues, and I have provided the answers to them basically on the lines that I am today in the Assembly.

CKUA Radio

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, in light of the Auditor General's report on CKUA that was tabled by the Minister of Municipal Affairs today, my question is to the minister. How binding is this report on the government and on CKUA?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the report was very instructive, and government accepts the recommendations of the report. I think it's clear that we have work to do and we need time to review the recommendations of the Auditor General. The accountability issues in this case are unique. They are unique in large part because this is a foundation that has been accountable procedurally as well to yet another foundation.

Finally, I have to say, Mr. Speaker: we are angry. We are raising in fact the same questions that the public has asked and demanded in response to the report.

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the minister is: how is the department going to ensure that the recommendations are followed by the CKUA board?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, first of all, many of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report address government. In terms of the new CKUA foundation board I intend to meet with them on May 21, and I trust that we will be able to satisfactorily conclude arrangements at that time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Bow Valley Centre

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the provincial government closed the Holy Cross hospital a year ago, it created

a task force with representation from the local community, local businesses, and even the local aldermen to advise on recommendations for disposition. Curiously the last patient has not yet vacated the Bow Valley centre, but the government's already negotiating the details of demolition. My initial question would be to the hon. Minister of Health. Why not involve the community in the decision as to disposition of that building, particularly towers F, D, and G, before it's demolished?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member I think knows, there has been a fairly lengthy discussion among legal experts over the proper way of fulfilling responsibilities with respect to the ownership of the land, allocating it, and then, of course, planning for the demolition of the building and the use of the site. Perhaps there is some new development in this particular case as far as the legal advice is concerned, but that is really one of the items that this minister has been waiting for agreement from the lawyers on and a stable situation in which to look at overall planning for that particular site.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, to those Calgarians who are more interested in what the people in the community have to say than what the lawyers have to say, I'd ask the minister: why will he not at least ensure that there's community input in terms of disposition of that facility, subject, of course, to whatever kinds of legal advice and legal opinions may be provided?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the hon. member that the people of Calgary, particularly the inner-city community, are more interested in planning for the future site of the hospital than what the lawyers have to say. Nevertheless, this has to be concluded so that any planning and discussion and consultation with the community that the regional health authority may undertake is done with the right base of information and knowing what's going to be the disposition of the land.

MR. DICKSON: My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, I'd then direct to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. My question would be this: will that minister confirm the estimated demolition costs of the Bow Valley centre? Who will pay for that: Alberta taxpayers, since it was the provincial government that made the decision, or Calgarians?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I don't believe there have been any accurate estimates for demolition of the Bow Valley site, so I would have to provide that information at a time when I do have it.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

2:00 Science and Research Authority

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June of 1996 the Alberta Science and Research Authority released a report entitled Barriers to Technology Commercialization in Alberta. The title of this report seems to imply that we are not doing everything we can in our province to encourage the growth of the advanced technology sector. My question is to the minister responsible for science, research, and information technology. What were the most significant findings of the report?

DR. TAYLOR: Fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, the report pointed

to a condition in Alberta which is slowing technology growth and slowing the growth in jobs in the technology sector. The report suggested two areas where we need to improve. One was in the financial area, and the other was in the area of management.

When we look at the financial area, Mr. Speaker, we are in Alberta lacking in seed capital for new technology companies, and we are also lacking in tax incentives to encourage investment in the R and D sector. We are lacking in terms of what other provinces in the country are doing.

In terms of management areas we're lacking in a number of areas, including appropriate mentoring activities to encourage new companies to develop in Alberta.

MR. HLADY: My first supplemental to the same minister: what is currently being done to address the primary recommendations of this report?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the financial area, the Alberta Science and Research Authority is working very closely with Treasury to come up with recommendations in this area. We are also working with the Alberta Economic Development Authority and other departments that have an interest in encouraging R and D in the province. So that is being done at the present, and hopefully we'll have some recommendations coming forward for the new budget year.

In terms of management we're working very closely and having very good co-operation with ED and T in terms of developing some of the management profiles that we need to encourage R and D in this province.

MR. HLADY: Thank you. My second supplemental is to the Provincial Treasurer. Could the Treasurer indicate how a tax credit designed to encourage research and development would fit into the province's overall tax structure?

MR. SAPERS: I've got a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, as the minister has just indicated, there is work going on with officials from both departments, as a matter of fact a number of departments, looking at possibilities there. So in anticipation of the point of order, it is somewhat hypothetical.

I might add that the interesting point about this question leads to the broader question, which is: is this one of a number of ways in which the member is suggesting we should be looking for both the timing and the ability to do something about taxation relief? It is a form of taxation relief in a way, and this surely will form part of that larger discussion, which is an important one to have.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Public Lands Management

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Environmental Protection with the help of the minister of agriculture is ducking his responsibility with regard to 5.5 million acres of public lands, specifically grazing leases in the white area of the province. When the formal accord on the shared stewardship of public lands was signed, the former Minister of Environmental Protection stated: the first word and the last word regarding land use will rest with my department. Will the current Minister of Environmental Protection keep this promise and now move to take an active role in the white area land review?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the hon. member is suggesting – although the way she said it, it sounds like she's suggesting – that I am supposed to make some decisions immediately. Well, that's not the form that this government operates in. We believe in public consultation. That is exactly what we're going to do: have a thorough discussion in the public about what the public sees as the best way to manage the public land that is under disposition within the white area.

MS CARLSON: We're just asking for an active role here.

To the same minister: as the terms of reference for the white area task force are being drafted, will the minister ensure that the terms include open public hearings across the province at which all interested parties in the use of public lands can present their case? Last week you said you wouldn't.

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development told us in the Legislature last week in a very extensive, exhaustive explanation of exactly how this was going to work, he said that there would be those public consultations. So I'm really at a loss as to what it is the hon. member is searching for.

MS CARLSON: This minister has repeatedly said that he won't have any participation in that process. Will the Minister of Environmental Protection commit that he and the task force will meet with environmental groups and others interested in the multiple use of Crown grazing leases? You've said repeatedly that you won't.

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what station the hon. member has been listening to, because I have never said that I would not participate. It sounds like the Liberal opposition once again are wanting us to circumvent and possibly not even hold any public discussion. That's not the way this government operates.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Disaster Services

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, responsible for disaster services. The focus this past week in the media has been heavily related to flooding in Manitoba and in northern Alberta. I'm not sure if the two are related, but this week has been designated as the first ever National Emergency Preparedness Week. I wonder if the minister can advise us what impact this designation has in Alberta and what the province is doing to enhance emergency and response readiness.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the disasters that have come forward within the last month throughout western Canada particularly clearly demonstrate the need for a properly trained disaster services team. Yes, the Alberta disaster services branch has worked very, very closely with the communities to see the systems, to see that the people are properly trained to look after whatever the disaster may be. The important element is: you can never foresee or foretell just what form that disaster may take. You can't project as to where it will happen. You can't project when it will happen. So what you really need is a team that's properly trained that can deal with whatever the disaster may be.

We work very closely with communities, so each community in the province, each municipality in the province has their disaster services team. The success was clearly demonstrated as far as Alberta's contribution to the process when Peace River, Fort McMurray, and Fox Creek all came together in a very short period of time and very, very successfully dealt with a tragedy within their community, truly a disaster had there not been a plan that was properly implemented.

MR. FRIEDEL: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if he could give us some specifics as to what this initiative does to ensure that individual citizens are reasonably prepared for emergencies.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Again, Mr. Speaker, it's important that each community have their own plan of design, and at this time I'm very confident and very pleased that we do have a process throughout the province that is able and capable to deal with an impending disaster that could befall that particular community.

We're taking a step further in that this coming week we're now planning to work with the grade 4s to 6s in a contest that will indeed allow the young people to clearly understand what's going to be needed in their future. So there will be a contest of the grade 4s and grade 6s where they will be submitting drawings to us. They will be judged, and the winner will ultimately win a trip to Ottawa. There will be other two winners as well, and they'll have their drawings framed and presented to them.

We just can't prepare enough for an impending disaster.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

2:10

Midwifery (continued)

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1990 the government's Advisory Council on Women's Issues and several community groups recommended that the province license midwives, regulate them under a governing body, and have midwifery funded by the provincial government. My question this May 5, International Day of the Midwife, is to the Minister of Health. When will families in Alberta learn the results of the pilot programs on midwifery?

MR. JONSON: The results of any pilot project on midwifery which we are currently working on initiating with RHAs – and we're looking for RHAs to be candidates for this particular project – will certainly be announced when they're completed. We have not yet launched one of these particular projects, Mr. Speaker. It's difficult to speculate on just when they'll be completed.

MS BLAKEMAN: My second question is to the same minister. Will the minister assure Albertans that actions taken won't lead to two-tiered health systems wherein families are paying between \$800 and \$1,500 out of pocket for this service?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly the whole idea of the pilot project approach is to work at making midwifery services successful, cost-effective, and operating within the budgets of the regional health authorities on a long-term basis.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Treasury Branches

MR. McFARLAND: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Provincial Treasurer. Every one of the 16 communities in Little Bow have had chartered bank services over the years, yet today the chartered banks have a presence in only six communities. Four main Treasury Branch banks, including Vulcan, provide full or subagency services to nearly every community. My constituents are concerned about the negative impact of the Liberal push to move out this service. Can the Treasurer tell these constituents and the rest of Albertans: are we going to lose our local Alberta Treasury Branches?

MR. DAY: Vulcan is not going to be losing its Treasury Branch. I think history will show that it was the 25th Treasury Branch in this province and has continued to deliver good service over the years. Albertans have come to appreciate the service that Treasury Branches offer.

If we remember the history – it's very important, Mr. Speaker. Going back as far as 1937-38, when the very clear reality of central Canadian banks not being responsive to the situations here in Alberta – this particular Treasury Branch operation was developed.

MR. SAPERS: Point of order.

MR. DAY: We still need, especially in rural Alberta and especially for small business, that sense of an Alberta-based banking system that responds to those sensitivities.

I can tell you that it has been surprising to the government and to a number of Albertans that on an institution that is so wide spread in this province – as I said the other day: 900,000 depositors and 80,000 planning their retirement through ATBs, through their investments there – the Liberals would leap to their feet. It was the Liberals who said last week: sell Treasury Branches now. That's what they said: don't consult; don't do a review; sell it now. I can assure Albertans that we will not be responding to this foolhardy cry from the Liberals.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary as well is to the Provincial Treasurer. Can you tell our constituents if leaving their dollars in the bank is a safe thing to do at the Treasury Branch?

MR. DAY: There are few banking institutions that have the guarantee that Treasury Branches do, a depositor guarantee of this government. Indeed those dollars are safe. They're as safe and secure as they ever have been and will continue to be so.

It's interesting also, Mr. Speaker, to note that because of concerns related to Treasury Branches over the last few years, a management board has been put in place that has very clear direction that this particular organization would be operating with monetary and fiscal principles that are consistent with the banking community, that would have legislation to enable them to deal on a level playing field as other banking institutions do so that they can offer the same types of products and services. Those types of things will be done.

When a loan loss review was ordered by the board, some people reacted with surprise, but it's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that in the early '90s the chartered banks did similar loan loss reviews of their own loans. The Royal Bank, for instance, early in the '90s took a loan portfolio of some \$662 million dollars. After they did their loan loss review, that had grown to

about \$2.2 billion in terms of risk. So this is a common business practice in banking that was done by the banks in the early '90s, now being done by the Treasury Branches.

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental: will the Provincial Treasurer assure our constituents and Albertans that he will consult with them before any drastic changes are made?

MR. DAY: That's an absolute guarantee, Mr. Speaker. An institution of this size, an institution that means so much to Albertans, and an institution that has been delivering such a good service: everything to do with that institution will be done carefully. Full consultation with Albertans will always be a hallmark of this government.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Child Welfare

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week questions were raised in this Assembly in relation to the absence of government reporting of child deaths and the impending regionalization of child welfare. In at least one other province a thorough investigation of departmental tracking has discovered that as high as 25 percent of the child deaths that occur within the department while these children are in the custody of government are not reported. In fact, there is not in some instances a single document to refer to in relationship to their deaths. My questions today are intended to link the two and are directed to the Minister of Family and Social Services. What actions will be implemented immediately to address the disparity of statistics available on the rates of child abuse, neglect, and death and to ensure that all child deaths that occur within the system, reported or unreported, are in fact published?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. First of all, any time a child dies when he's in custody of the government, it is a tragic event. Unfortunately children do die. In the report that was put forward there were some SIDS deaths. There have been deaths that have taken place in the custody of the government. One of the precursors, one of the issues that is looked at all the time and every time is - any time a child dies in the custody of the government, it is looked at and is looked at every time, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental also directed to the Minister of Family and Social Services is: what actions on this serious matter have been undertaken and will be a requirement within the regional service delivery plans now being developed by the 18 regions?

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any time a child that is under the custody of the government dies, it is a medical examiner's case. The medical examiner takes it forward and looks at each case specifically. Throughout all of it every one is recorded, every one is put forward and the deaths are made public. So that certainly will go on. It is a part of the law that will not be changed when it goes down to children's services, to the local boards.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. Also, then, to the Minister of Family and Social Services: in light of a document released by the

government last week indicating that child services was one area of service to be divested by 1998, how will you ensure that the gaps with respect to this reporting and actions taken thereunder will be an item for serious examination and incorporation before the divestment of these programs occurs?

2:20

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fate of our children, especially children that are under the guardianship of the government, is first and foremost. We still maintain the presence and the importance to look after their well-being. If there are any children that are under some influence that causes them to die while they are in our service, they are investigated, they are looked at, and this will continue to be done even as the service is divested down to the regional boards.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Centennial Food Corp.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1991 Centennial Food Corp. of Calgary received a \$15 million government loan from the province of Alberta. This government loan was then used to retire an existing bank loan which the government had earlier and first guaranteed back in 1988. However, Budget '97 shows this loan as still owing in the full principal amount of \$15 million. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Since it's clear from the budget that no payments have been made on the principal portion of this government loan, can the Treasurer tell us if any interest payments have been received or made on this loan? If he has the information, perhaps he could tell us in what amount.

MR. DAY: You know, that's a good question, Mr. Speaker, and coincidentally about a week and a half ago when I was reviewing all of these various loans and that whole portfolio, this one stood out. I actually asked for some numbers. I wanted to know the answer myself. Also, I was actually anticipating the question maybe last week some time. I do have all that material. It's not fresh in my brain right now, but I've looked into it because it also stood out. I'm going to get the answer to that. Those answers may arrive before the final question. Who knows?

MR. ZWOZDESKY: It's nice to know that the government can move with that kind of speed when it's necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Are you, then, in a general sense perhaps considering some form of financial restructuring of this loan or perhaps an exit strategy since the principal amounts match from one year to the next?

MR. DAY: Well, in terms of restructuring to do with this loan or, as a matter of fact, any loan, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that we operate now under the business limitations Act. If there were to be any kind of restructuring that would go on with this or any other loan, it would have to be with a clear eye to that particular Act to make sure that we're not violating our commitment, that we're not getting back into the business of getting into business. So proposals which might be entertained would be one thing, but it would be with a very clear eye to making sure that the taxpayers' dollars are protected, that we're not getting ourselves deeper into any of these. That's the overview that we would take on these and other loans.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Provincial Treasurer undertake to present to this House and to all Albertans a copy of the terms and conditions of repayment of this loan, which would further the government's desire perhaps to become more open and transparent?

MR. DAY: Yes. Actually, Mr. Speaker, not just with that particular loan, but you know that in public accounts under Ralph Klein's leadership on this particular issue it's been made very clear that we need to be absolutely transparent and open on all these loans, many of which, of course, were signed into being before the Klein administration came into being. That's a commitment.

On this one, if there are areas that are not clear to the member, we'll certainly clarify those and make those public. The expiry date on that particular loan is the year 2003, and if there are things that can be done to recoup the value and also protect the taxpayers' interests, then we want to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Dutch Elm Disease

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For decades the province has handed out elm trees, planted throughout the province in towns and along shelterbelts. They're an important tree landscape for Alberta. The Minister of Environmental Protection has refused to prevent elm logs that could harbor beetles spreading Dutch elm disease from being stored in provincial parks but claims that he is educating the public to this disease. I'd like at this time to table two graphs, one being a graph that compares the dollars spent between the three western provinces, as well as the ones spent between the two major cities in the province of Alberta. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. How can the minister claim his department has taken the lead in public education when it has only just reproduced the city of Edmonton's brochure and then they send them out and sell them to the municipalities?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before in this House, we believe very strongly in the education process and believe that if the public becomes aware of the danger, then in fact that will be much more effective than us trying to look in the trunk of every vehicle that may be carrying some firewood.

Mr. Speaker, the incidence of people taking firewood from areas that are infested into the parks is minimal. The greater danger rather than the parks, of course, is the cities. That's where the greatest concentration of elm trees exists. In fact, if I'm correct, within the budget of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development there's about \$200,000 to assist the city of Edmonton.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental is: if the minister's department claims to be so proactive, why has his department only purchased a few traps and then they rent them out to the municipalities around?

MR. LUND: Once again, Mr. Speaker, through this whole process we are attempting to get the information out to people that in fact there is the possibility of a problem and, through the education process, will eventually get people to be very careful with the movement of firewood that in fact would cause a problem throughout the province.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental. These trees are not only in the two cities. Figures have been produced to me in the last few days that they are in the small towns. So those of you that are affected in small towns should be ready for some answers. When will the minister take action to spread the news out to the municipalities of this province?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, this has been an ongoing process, and we have been spreading the word for a number of years, ever since there was any threat within the province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Forest Management

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Minister of Environmental Protection talked about a sustainable timber supply in the province on April 16 in the House, he compared net annual growth of trees, some 44.5 million cubic metres, to an annual allowable cut, which is about half of that figure. To some in this House, certainly not this member, that may be considered misleading. To the Minister of Environmental Protection: do you agree that the annual growth of 44.5 million cubic metres includes large areas of forest that are in fact not harvestable, some are not accessible, and certainly include large tracts of land that are set aside for recreation, environmental protection, special-needs areas, tourism, wildlife, and watershed protection areas?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I think the only area that he didn't include was private land.

MR. WHITE: I assume, Mr. Speaker, that that was an answer?

THE SPEAKER: You raised a question, hon. member. No interruption. The hon. minister gave a response with no interruption.

Second question, no preamble.

2:30

MR. WHITE: The minister is undoubtedly aware that his answers given on April 16 were minorly in error. [interjections] I'm asking him to confirm the matter in fact, without any interruptions, as the good Speaker mentioned. At that point, he mentioned there were 24.5 million cubic metres. Is it true that it is 22.1 million?

MR. LUND: Well, one of the difficulties of course that we have is that there are many, many levels of utilization. We can be at 7/13; we can be at 9/13, we can be at 11/15; we can be at 13/15. All of those change the annual allowable cut. Mr. Speaker, if you go back and use the 11/15 standard, then it's 22.1.

MR. WHITE: Okay. Does the minister agree that while there's a small portion, only 4 percent of the net annual allowable cut has yet to be allocated for cutting?

MR. LUND: In that number of 44.5 million cubic metres it is true that there is a large portion that never will be harvested. Once you change and go to the 7/13 utilization, then of course the number would move to about 24.5 million cubic metres that would be on land that in fact could be harvested. But, Mr. Speaker, we are asking the industry to move to a higher utilization simply

because as fibre is valuable, it's very important that when we are harvesting, we're taking out anything that we could use in the process, whether it be for pulp or for oriented strandboard or any of the other products that we might be producing. So to say that there's only 4 percent that has not been allocated is close, but it's not exactly right on the number.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, Oral Question Period is now concluded. Normally we would immediately go to points of order, and then the Chair would call Orders of the Day, and then I would ask for your permission to have a brief reversion to Introduction of Guests. I wonder if I could do that now. There seems to be a school group in here. Can we do that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

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

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you 36 visitors from G.P. Vanier school at Morinville. Included in the group is their teacher Mme MacKinnon and parents and helpers Mrs. Krekoski, Mrs. Lafond, Mr. Gagnon, Mrs. Coulombe, and Mr. Andres. I'd like to ask them to rise, as we normally do, and receive applause from the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. members, we have six points of order to deal with. So may we first call on the Government House Leader.

Point of Order
Allegations against Members

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's probably the only legitimate point of order we'll deal with.

I rise under Standing Order 23(h), "makes allegations against another member." During his preamble today, or his ramble would be more appropriate, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the Member for Redwater did not make representations regarding a health issue during the Health designated supply subcommittee meeting. I think that meeting was held this morning. The implication the Leader of the Opposition is attempting to raise is that the member is not concerned with respect to the issue, nor had he made any inquiries. Now, that's clearly not the case, based on the response from the Minister of Health.

I believe that the Speaker has ruled before that it is inappropriate for one member to specifically mention another member as not having raised an issue, and I would therefore ask that the Leader of the Opposition apologize for his remarks.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader has himself been somewhat abusive or insulting in raising this point of order: you know, his comments about the Leader of the Opposition's ramble. I would suggest that he's making a habit out of this kind of pejorative and argumentative language as he raises points of order in the House. [interjection] Yes, I would say that it is odious and getting tedious to boot.

On the point that the Government House Leader attempted to make, the Leader of the Official Opposition was simply making a statement of fact, and that is that a perusal of *Hansard* would

indicate that the Member for Redwater has not taken an opportunity in this Assembly to raise the issue of the shortage of physician services for emergency purposes in the Redwater hospital. That was the basis of the statement made in the preamble. If the Member for Redwater has evidence to the contrary, I would welcome him tabling that evidence to the contrary, in which case we could certainly have another discussion about this point of order.

As it stands right now, Mr. Speaker, the point of order certainly can't be correct given that the Leader of the Official Opposition was simply making a statement of fact in the preamble to his very important policy question to the Minister of Health.

MR. BRODA: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it's in order to make a comment. However, I'd like to speak on that point of order. Certainly it may not have been in *Hansard*. However, I have been in constant consultation with our minister, I have attended three meetings, and I am concerned about my constituents. Whether it's on the record or not, that's a fact.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the point of order that has been raised here has to do with a reference about raising questions. If I recall correctly, it was stated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition something along the lines of the absence of a question in a committee.

I would like to refer all members to *Beauchesne* 411. *Beauchesne* 411 clearly states, "A question may not . . . seek information about proceedings in a committee which has not yet made its report to the House." Quite clearly the committee in question, whatever happened, has not made a report to the House, so clearly it was out of order to make the suggestion that something may or may not have happened in a committee that has not made a report to the House.

I'm going to ask for indulgence on another one, though, that is really important. The purpose of question period is not to reflect upon another hon. member in this House one way or the other. There'll be ample opportunity coming up for discussion and debate on Bills and estimates, that we're currently into. Hon. members may have numerous opportunities to make comments, but no hon. member has to make a comment if the hon. member feels that there's another way of dealing with a problem.

I don't know what the bottom line would be, but the one point is about the reflections, and I sincerely hope that we'll get above all of that.

Second point of order, Leader of the Official Opposition.

Point of Order
Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise under *Beauchesne* 409, which addresses the matter of a question "which falls within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the specific [member] to whom it is addressed" in order that it be in order. I note and I respect the fact that after the first question of my second set, you indicated that it was important that I remain very precise and within the bounds. I had taken a great deal of effort and care to ensure that I did that. My preamble did outline that the relationship here to the relevance within the House is that Bre-X is on the Alberta Stock Exchange, which is of course under the jurisdiction of the Alberta Securities Commission and the Securities Act. So I simply want to say that I appreciate the ruling, but I was cognizant of it, and I hope you found that my questions stuck within those parameters very carefully.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. leader, the answer to your question is yes. The Speaker did rise after the first question. It's certainly within the parameters of a question in this House to deal with safeguards and protections afforded by the Alberta Securities Commission in terms of stock that's issued publicly in the province of Alberta. It was on that one area that I wanted to ensure that in fact the questions would be raised. This is a matter of concern, no doubt at all, to citizens in the province of Alberta and to citizens in Canada, but it's the province of Alberta that we do represent. My only concern was that I was certainly hopeful we were not going to get into a whole series of questions dealing with the history of this particular company and other parameters dealing with it. So I think that matter is clear.

2:40

Opposition House Leader, you have four points of order, so for the ability of the Chair to comprehend which one it is you're dealing with first, when you rise, would you just kindly identify which specific that would be.

Point of Order Provoking Debate

MR. SAPERS: Certainly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to make this as quick as possible, and I do appreciate your indulgence on these points.

I am dealing right now with a response that the Treasurer made to the Leader of the Official Opposition's question regarding Bre-X. I am rising under *Beauchesne* 417, which reads, "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised" – adding emphasis to that – "and should not provoke debate," adding emphasis once again. For the second time since we have reconvened this session of the Legislature, the Treasurer, in answering legitimate questions of urgent public business, has taken it upon himself to mention the Leader of the Official Opposition's past employment with Principal Group, which itself is a matter of public record. I don't think that any hon. members need to be further reminded of the résumé or CV, as impressive as it may be, of the Leader of the Official Opposition. I can only believe, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Treasurer . . . [interjection] Perhaps Little Bow would like to just be quiet and listen. That would be appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I could see is that the hon. Treasurer is trying to provoke debate, be argumentative, and trying to in some way be backhanded in referring to the tragic collapse of the Principal financial group, for which the government has never fully accounted and for which the Leader of the Official Opposition has absolutely fully accounted. It has been in front of a judicial inquiry, something that government members who were present at the time never, ever, ever complied with. So I would hope that the Treasurer, in responding as a minister of the Crown, would no longer abuse both your patience and the privilege of this House or the rules of this House, particularly *Beauchesne* 417, by adding irrelevant information to the answers to questions and information whose only purpose is designed to be provocative and to elicit debate that is totally off the mark.

Albertans want answers to questions. They don't want to see this government dip and dive and try to deflect attention away from important issues of the day because of something that happened so long ago. After all, Mr. Speaker, it's this government that's always saying: that was then and this is now; don't live in the past.

I would appreciate your guidance on this, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I think the simple point that the Treasurer was trying to make for the Leader of the Opposition's edification is that Bre-X certainly is a situation where people risked some dollars in the market. No one can predict what will happen in the market, and the analogy to the Leader of the Opposition's involvement with Principal Group would simply underscore that. I think that the Treasurer was actually a little surprised that the Leader of the Opposition did not seem to understand that one cannot control these events.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the issue was raised in such a way that I think it would provoke debate. Quite often the preambles are of such a nature that members in the front and other members of government have no other option than to respond rather forcefully. If the House leader for the opposition wishes to have the government temper its responses, then I quite frankly would offer some advice: that the opposition temper its questions.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in my understanding, the point of order is very correct. The Provincial Treasurer did refer to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition's involvement, in quotation marks, with Principal trust, and there was a reflection. The irony of all this is that the point of order just one or two ago, though, had to do with the casting of reflections on another hon. member. This one now is the reversal of it from the other side. Perhaps the bottom-line lesson of all of this is that if we stuck to the facts and used question period to seek information rather than to present allegations to one another, then the temperature would be lowered to a suitable level that would make all individuals in this Assembly proud of their actions and activities and that in fact would see us all spend a great deal more time trying to find the information and the facts than currently.

Opposition House Leader, on point of order number four.

MR. SAPERS: Two.

THE SPEAKER: Your point number two; point of order number four for today.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks. Yeah. We'll try to keep the record straight.

Point of Order Legal Opinions

MR. SAPERS: My second point of order this afternoon has to do with the question from the Member for St. Albert, and I rise quoting *Beauchesne* 408(1). Generally, 408 is about Oral Question Period. Subsection (1) is:

Such questions should . . .

- (e) not be of a nature requiring a lengthy and detailed answer.
- (f) not raise a matter of policy too large to be dealt with as an answer to a question.

I note as well, Mr. Speaker, an earlier ruling of yours in which you quite correctly reminded members of the Official Opposition that we were not to ask questions of the government (a) about Bills in debate or (b) in a hypothetical way about an issue that might become a government Bill and that in fact the question should be specifically about policy, not about Bills.

Now, in the same way, Mr. Speaker, choosing words very, very carefully, the question from St. Albert asked in essence for a legal opinion. The question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs was: is the Auditor General's report on CKUA binding on the government? I think a careful reading of *Hansard* will reveal that

the question in essence sought what would be a legal opinion, which is contrary to *Beauchesne* 408 and other Standing Orders. So being very careful and reflecting on your previous ruling in this Chamber about the importance of particular words in directing a question, I would submit that that question was out of order because it sought in essence this legal opinion, asking if the report was binding on the government.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, whether something is binding or not certainly would involve a legal opinion in some instances, but also it can be a statement of fact. I think that all the minister was simply trying to convey is whether or not, pursuant to statute or any existing precedent, the government was bound to follow the report's recommendations. I do have some sympathy for the remarks that we need to avoid asking for opinions, but again I think it's a question of interpretation, the heat of the moment, and I think we're getting to be a little too picky when we're winding up with six points of order during question period. I don't think that many questions were actually asked today.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the hon. Member for St. Albert, in terms of the Chair listening to the question, certainly was within her purview in raising the question. She raised a question dealing with the Auditor General's report. There was a report by the Auditor General. It was directed, as I understand, to the administration of the Department of Municipal Affairs, and that certainly would be in order. From the Chair's interpretation of what the word "binding" means and recognizing that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is not a lawyer, I didn't see the connection, hon. member, in saying that the hon. Member for St. Albert was asking a legal opinion in this regard. So perhaps it's one of those subjective things and a little bit of ebb and flow, but I appreciate the point of order being raised.

Hon. member.

Point of Order Oral Question Period Rules

MR. SAPERS: Well, I'm going to try to improve my batting average here, Mr. Speaker. Thanks.

I'm trying to find my way through this carefully, Mr. Speaker, because the individual words, the importance that we can attach to each one of those individual words, I guess, is what this is all about. I know this gets a little tedious, but my third point of order relates to a question from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

I'm going to quote a couple of sections of *Beauchesne*, all subsections of 409. First, 409(3), which reads:

The question ought to seek information and, therefore, cannot be based upon a hypothesis, cannot seek an opinion, either legal or otherwise, and must not suggest its own answer, be argumentative or make representations.

Then 409(5): "The matter ought to be of some urgency." I think I'll stop there.

Then 409(12): "Questions should not anticipate a debate . . . but should be reserved for the debate." The most relevant part of 409(12) is: "Questions should not anticipate a debate scheduled for the day." The estimates of the department which is responsible for the area questioned by Calgary-Mountain View are on the Order Paper clearly for debate this evening in Committee of Supply. The minister of science and technology rose to answer the question. It is certainly my reading of the rules that the question violated at least two sections of *Beauchesne*, both that it

was hypothetical and it anticipated debate. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that it was not in order.

I raise this point of order, Mr. Speaker, not because I don't think you noted those two deficiencies in the questions – I'm certain that they were apparent to you – but simply as a way of reminding all members that when questions are being crafted, they be appropriate. We only have 50 minutes during Oral Question Period in which to hold the government to account. We have to make sure that we use that time most appropriately . . .

DR. TAYLOR: Is that why he asked about car washes, Howard?

MR. SAPERS: . . . and we can't do that when the questions are clearly out of order.

2:50

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I too believe that question period should be used effectively. As the minister for science, research, technology, et cetera, mentioned, asking whether or not the labour code is being followed by the government car washer does not to me indicate any sense of urgency or the use of time effectively.

MR. SAPERS: You should have raised a point of order then.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I enjoyed the question, so I didn't raise a point of order.

In any event, the issue which was raised by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was a policy issue and not necessarily related to the estimates which are being discussed this evening. I'd also like to commend the hon. member for the skill with which he asked the question, because as admitted by the Treasurer, it was a hypothetical question. Perhaps that would have been the better argument for the point of order. Nevertheless, the Chair did not intervene, the question went forward, the Treasurer admitted it was hypothetical, and quite frankly, I don't see any point of order.

THE SPEAKER: In this case the Chair does have the Blues. The first question by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View had to do with a report, and the question is to the minister responsible for science, research, and information technology: "what were the most significant findings of the report?" The second question, first supplemental: "what is currently being done to address the primary recommendations of this report?" And perhaps it's on the third question, the second supplemental, that the point of order was being raised:

Could the Treasurer indicate how a tax credit designed to encourage research and development would fit into the province's overall tax structure?

Well, I suppose one can conclude that there was some hypothesis involved in this, but the question was: "Could the Treasurer indicate how a tax credit . . ." Not suggesting. So perhaps the argument of opinion might come into play here. But the most important argument is certainly anticipation of the estimates that are coming up from this particular department tonight.

Just so hon. members should not feel they're at a loss on this, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, though, did raise a question with the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services – and his estimates, too, are coming up tonight – when he raised a question about what the proposed cost of demolition might be. So the Chair, having allowed the Member for Calgary-Mountain View to get his question through also then in fairness to the

Member for Calgary-Buffalo allowed his question to get on without intervention. There's absolutely no doubt at all that the Chair will have to be more vigilant in ensuring that these questions do not get through.

Hon. member.

MR. SAPERS: A tie doesn't always go to the runner; does it, Mr. Speaker?

Point of Order Improper Questions

MR. SAPERS: In that case, we'll just deal with my final point of order, which perhaps is the most serious this afternoon, at least in my mind. It has to do with a question from the Member for Little Bow to the Treasurer regarding the future of Alberta Treasury Branches. The preamble, as I heard the question, talked about the Member for Little Bow's interpretation of what an Alberta Liberal plan or policy or notion about Alberta Treasury Branches may or may not be. This is a classic partisan political setup question, Mr. Speaker. It's a question that is not in any way designed to hold the government accountable for one of its policies. It's not in any way a question that's designed to elicit information about government activity. It's a question designed, in fact, to allow the Treasurer to stand up and make what should have been a ministerial statement. Maybe the Progressive Conservative Party could have issued a press release if they wanted to make that kind of a political statement about the future of Alberta Treasury Branches.

The Official Opposition would like to introduce some certainty for those depositors and those people who have loans and those people who have their assets involved with Alberta Treasury Branches. The government has introduced the uncertainty. It was the Premier, after all, who first raised the questions about the potential sell-off of Alberta Treasury Branches to perhaps outside banking interests.

Under *Beauchesne* 409(3) it reads:

The question ought to seek information and, therefore, cannot be based upon a hypothesis, cannot seek an opinion, either legal or otherwise, and must not suggest its own answer, be argumentative or make representations.

Well, that preamble in question offended each and every one of the clauses in that subsection.

Also, under 409(6): "A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government." I don't think the Treasurer, as omnipotent as he thinks he is, has the competence to deal with what may or may not be Alberta Liberal policy.

Finally, under 410(5): "The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling of Government to account." Government to account, government policy, Little Bow. You ask the government about their own policy.

Mr. Speaker, this is an ongoing issue in question period where government backbenchers stand up and for crass political reasons give the government front bench puffball questions so that they can play politics instead of provide accountability to the people of this province.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I think part of the anger which the Opposition House Leader is exhibiting is due to the fact that they have to rely on the New Democrats to set up their issues. They aren't able to do it themselves. Quite frankly, when you get into a classic partisan political setup, that's ridiculous. The issue was important enough for the Member for Little Bow to raise it. I would refer you to *Beauchesne* 409(4) and (5). It is an important matter, Mr. Speaker. It is not frivolous. There is some degree

of urgency, and part of the urgency is because the Leader of the Opposition has for some time been indicating that Liberal policy is to sell the Treasury Branches now. The Member for Little Bow has received a number of concerns from his constituents regarding what the government's plan are. There are questions being asked throughout rural Alberta. So this is an important issue and needs to be raised in this House. Quite frankly, one of the reasons we're having to raise it is because of the irresponsible statements by the Liberal leader that we should be selling the Treasury Branches now. So I don't see what the point of order is.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, today in question period there were 15 questions. To my recollection this is the day that had the greatest number of questions since this session started: 15 of them. Four came from private government members. Of the other 11, 10 came from the Official Opposition, one from the third party. That was the distribution of questions in today's question period.

All hon. members have the right to raise questions in this question period in this House. It's the duty of all hon. members, if they feel so moved, and is also the right of all hon. members to raise questions on any subject matter they would want to raise, seeking positions with respect to the position of the government. But there is absolutely no doubt at all that with this little theme that has come through in most of these points of order today, the more argumentative and inflammatory one wants to be with the use of certain words and phrases, it tends to move people in other parts of the House. So your movement is directed by exactly the words that you choose to use among yourselves in terms of raising the questions. There is, of course, a nicer way of raising the question and getting the information and another kind of way of raising the question. I'm going to applaud all of you today for 15 questions, quality with respect to that. We've now concluded the points of order section and now will deal with Orders of the Day.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

head:

3:00

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 29: Mr. Sapers]

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

MR. SAPERS: It's going back over to the government, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome you to your new position in the Legislature and take this opportunity to speak about the fine constituency of West Yellowhead. The constituency of West Yellowhead is a diverse riding balancing the interests of industry with the concerns of the

environment. The West Yellowhead quarter runs through the town of Edson, the gateway to the foothills, past Hinton, and opens up to Jasper and the splendour of the Rocky Mountains. With it as a well-known location, Jasper and the rest of the constituency play host to numerous travelers. This is an important industry, that is thriving today. It may not be as well known as the fact that Edson, Hinton, and Grande Cache also have major industries led by coal mining, forestry, agriculture, oil and gas, and manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, the municipal district of Yellowhead No. 94 is home to 9,325 residents and is located approximately 100 kilometres west of Edmonton along the Yellowhead Highway. The corridor of this constituency's boundaries of the MD of Yellowhead No. 94 runs from where the Pembina crosses the Yellowhead Highway to the Jasper park gates. The municipal district has 2,500 kilometres of local and secondary highway infrastructure. The available transportation system is further complemented by the CN main line, which runs east to west through the municipality, generally paralleling the Yellowhead Highway. The West Yellowhead constituency as a whole provides an excellent quality of life for a wide range of people and lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, traveling the Yellowhead Highway, one runs into the town of Edson, centrally located between the city of Edmonton and Jasper. Transportation and infrastructure such as the Yellowhead Highway, CN rail, and the year-round airport provides an excellent base for movement of goods and services for industry and tourism. The town of Edson combines affordable commercial land within its boundary with excellent education facilities, including the Yellowhead region educational consortium adult learning centre, an initiative this government is completely in support of.

Edson's recreation needs are met both by sports and leisure facilities such as a pool, two arenas, a curling rink, and an 18-hole golf course. It is little wonder that Edson is designated the slow-pitch capital of Canada. With its 30 diamonds, 24 of which are located in Vision park, on July 1 it will be hosting 258 teams.

The town of Grande Cache is located along Highway 40 north. The improvement of Highway 40 from Grande Cache north to Grande Prairie is a boost to the infrastructure and has increased traffic and industry. Smoky River Coal, for example, has plans for expansion and will have a very positive impact on the region. The town is currently working to meet the growth with a new subdivision, which includes manufactured home lots, 34 single-family lots, and about 5 hectares of multifamily lots.

Mr. Speaker, in the middle of the riding is the town of Hinton, a regional area with the slogan: Hinton Proud, Life at Its Best. This statement is confirmed by Hinton's location along Highway 16, its industry, its tremendous view of the Rocky Mountains along scenic walking trails. Hinton further enjoys chinook winters and a world-class cross-country ski facility with lit trails. The town of Hinton is well represented by a strong economic development committee, a chamber of commerce, a progressive town council, and a strong volunteer base, which combine to make the town of Hinton a place to set up shop. The progressiveness of the town council fueled by a strong Alberta economy has led to building permits increasing every year. This includes two new motels currently under construction and two motels under expansion. With all this increased development, economic activity in Hinton takes place under sound environmental planning. Hinton's environmental training centre is recognized provincially, nationally, and internationally, which adds to the economic and

social strength of this region. Hinton's model forest is yet another way this area looks at the conservation methods.

Mr. Speaker, probably the most scenic area in the riding of West Yellowhead is the town of Jasper, situated in Jasper national park. The town is nestled amongst emerald lakes and snowcapped peaks of the majestic Rocky Mountains. Clearly Jasper is one of the most beautiful and natural areas in Canada. The natural beauty of Jasper can be enjoyed with its numerous recreation facilities, which include world-class downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, mountain climbing, and other alpine sports year-round. The town also boasts world-class conference facilities, which recently hosted the Premiers' Conference. All amenities around Jasper, especially the natural state that the town maintains, make it a travel destination year-round.

Over the last four years, Mr. Speaker, the West Yellowhead constituency has seen lots of growth and benefits from this government. The government initiative of deregulation and streamlining and improving government services has contributed to the climate of the economic growth in the constituency. As outlined, the constituency of West Yellowhead represents a very important part of the Alberta advantage. Economic development opportunities are being encouraged in the areas of secondary processing of natural resources as well as tourism and agriculture. The constituency of West Yellowhead is rapidly growing, putting pressure on the government to maintain the stable base of infrastructure and services.

The economic base, though dependent on natural resources, is not concentrated in one area of the constituency or on any one industry. Reserves of coal underlie the area, and significant investments and expansion of the industry are evident, with the new Cheviot mine project to complement the existing four operating mines. Further developments are possible as the opportunity for diamond mining may be a reality if initial testing proves as viable as sources suggest. The oil and gas industry, although considered a nonrenewable resource, is investing and expanding in the Yellowhead municipal district with new discoveries and new technology.

Mr. Speaker, we plan to build on this growth. As indicated in the Speech from the Throne, this government will work with industry in streamlining business rules. It will amend the rules that govern the tenure of minerals and provide more flexibility and clarity for the industry.

The forest industry is one of the renewable resources. It is investing in a new secondary processing facility and expanding silviculture initiatives to improve the sustainability of the forest resource. The Premier's recent opening of the Sundance forest industry's SunPlus is a further assertion of this government's promotion of value-added initiatives.

The agriculture industry is maintaining steady growth in the cattle industry and specialty crops. There is also considerable investment in the game farm, feedlot, and commercial greenhouses and nursery developments.

Mr. Speaker, the maintenance of infrastructure and services must accompany this tremendous growth. Many areas within my riding have expressed the need for further infrastructure, including maintenance of primary and secondary roads, as well as maintaining the level of services in health and education. This government will meet this increased growth in consultation with Albertans, including members from the constituency of West Yellowhead. The government will canvass members of various industries, the public sector, and municipalities in the Alberta Growth Summit this year. This summit will serve as a development co-ordinating approach in policy development and management.

Most important of all, Mr. Speaker, is the people of the

constituency of West Yellowhead. It is the people of this riding who cover a wide range of age groups, occupations, and interests that contribute the most to the growth of Alberta. Because of the natural beauty of this constituency, there is a wide range of people seeking a variety of lifestyles.

3:10

There are even smaller areas, such as Robb, Cadomin, Marlboro, and Brûle, that are great places to live and visit. People have the option to live on the farm, in the country, in residential, bare-land condominiums, hamlets, each with its own amenities and access to services. What we are talking about, Mr. Speaker, is that the constituency of West Yellowhead and Alberta as a whole provide a good quality of life. I'm proud to say that the government will balance the interests of industry while sustaining the environment in close consultation with all Albertans. This government will maintain its focus on target reinvestment in areas considered important: health, education, jobs, seniors, and those in need.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I've gained a good understanding of the diversity of the constituency of West Yellowhead. As a former mayor and councillor to the town of Edson, combined with my involvement in various economic development, tourism, mining, and environmental associations and committees, I've gained a good understanding of the constituency of West Yellowhead and the needs of the people. I pledge to take this opportunity to work with this government and to serve the interests of my constituency in a dependable, balanced, and open manner. It is to the people of West Yellowhead that I owe my gratitude, and it is the people of West Yellowhead that I will serve to the best of my ability.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege for me to rise today to deliver my maiden Fort McMurray speech. Also, special thanks to Jamie Davis for his invaluable assistance in helping me along. It is with a great deal of pride that I'm able to be here as a representative of the constituency of Fort McMurray, the oil sands capital of the world. I've had the privilege of serving our citizens in Fort McMurray and the Wood Buffalo council for the past 11 years, both as an alderman and as mayor. I hope that my time as MLA will be equally as rewarding. As a weathered rookie in this Assembly, I'm sure that your guidance as well as that of my other colleagues will help me along to quickly adjust to this new setting.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate those who have been elected for the first time and those who have been recently re-elected. I do believe that elections and re-elections are in many ways like performance appraisals, and I intend always to keep this in mind as I rise to speak in this House.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

As I was preparing my remarks, I thought long and hard about what I was going to say here today. My thoughts ranged from discussing the great constituency which I represent to the local economy to the reasons why I decided to become an MLA and run. After thinking about this, I decided to talk about something much larger than just my constituency. Mr. Speaker, I've decided to talk about an area of Alberta that affects all Albertans, even at times when they do not realize it. That place is northern Alberta.

I hope the comments I will make today mirror the comments all northern members would make regarding the north.

Northern Alberta and Fort McMurray are one of the most prosperous regions in Canada, with vast resources, scenic landscape, and hardworking people dedicated to making their communities grow. The north is truly a land of opportunity. In our city our slogan is: we have the energy, natural resource energy and people energy. People who have never lived in the north, Mr. Speaker, may have a hard time understanding how different the lifestyle, priorities, and problems are from those faced by people in the south. Geography, weather, and a smaller, more dispersed population are just some of the factors that create a unique set of living circumstances. In promising fair and equitable treatment of all Albertans, the provincial government must take these differences into account and continue to give the north and its people the same respect and attention as the rest of the province deserves and receives. The growth that we are experiencing presently in Fort McMurray and the region present a different set of challenges that the constituency citizens in Fort McMurray are prepared to address and work on solving by partnering and working closely with our provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, nature is a constant presence. In the north natural resources provide much of the basis of the Alberta economy, from oil and gas to the forestry industry, but the vast stretches of untouched beauty in the north also represent a different kind of resource providing personal peace and renewal, which many of us in this room can enjoy, and serving as a constant reminder of our place within the environment. Anthropologist Douglas Leechman summed up the northern experience back in 1945:

In years to come, those who have seen the North will never forget it. There will be a hankering to return to a land in which life somehow seems closer to the ideal life.

Mr. Speaker, the north has been generous to all of us. It may not be the most understanding of areas when one fails to etch their mark on the land, but those who do accept it on its terms are well rewarded. When people succeed in the north, the north rejoices with them. When people are able to succeed in the north, everyone in Alberta succeeds.

Fort McMurray and northern Alberta are the economic engines, I believe, of this province right now, and I'm here to ensure that this fact is not forgotten. The confidence and interest that our citizens and all Albertans have shown in Fort McMurray, in the region, and in the north in 1997 has never been stronger. All the members of this Legislature who call the north their home should join together and make our voices one strong voice as an advocate for the northern people and economy in contributing to and building a stronger Alberta for us all.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention the fact that approximately 10 percent of Alberta's population lives in the north. This, when combined with the fact that the north is said to include up to 65 percent of the landmass, shows the need for all of us to work together for the betterment of northern Alberta in partnering with our neighbours, always willing to leave our turf at the door and to do the right thing for the right reason, the right thing for our citizens. The right thing for Fort McMurray is the right thing for all Alberta. So as we move forward, we look forward to a seamless approach, being able to work together. We're very proud of our new regional municipality, the largest in North America, where we were able to combine three city councils into one, going from three mayors and 21 councillors down to one council and one mayor. It's an opportunity to do what is right for our citizens first and leaving our turf at the door.

I've heard that upon the highway south from Fort McMurray

flow the dollars and cents that help stimulate this province's economy. Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason that when there are problems in the north, we as a government should work collectively to try to solve those problems by continuing to dialogue and build relationships with our people. Northern Alberta continues to contain the key to Alberta, and we must remember that when we make decisions regarding the north.

It's not my intention to speak for my allotted 20 minutes today as I hope the words I have spoken here will be remembered for much longer than that. Finally, I want to conclude by sharing with you and the members of this Assembly some friendly advice that I was recently given by constituents of Fort McMurray who faithfully watch this Assembly on television. Recently they suggested that while we're in the Assembly, we should consider every minute we speak as if it were personally costing us a dollar a minute. So with that in mind, I had 20 minutes, or \$20, to spend. I'm pleased to say today that I've come in 50 percent under my budget and can return 10 minutes allotted to me, or \$10, Mr. Speaker, which I would like to give to you to donate on behalf of this Assembly to a charity of your choice. This is a principle that citizens have encouraged me to follow, and I believe it's good advice for all of us to follow.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The kindness and thoughtfulness expressed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray is, I'm sure, overwhelming, but I would not agree to take the money and would return it to you. Thank you, hon. member. You can give it to the charity of your choice.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not making my maiden speech today, but I'd like to add a few comments to the Speech from the Throne. First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleagues and to welcome all the new members to the Legislative Assembly.

As it relates to the Speech from the Throne, I wholeheartedly agree with the mandate that was set out for this government in the Speech from the Throne: to continue on the path of fiscal responsibility while ensuring that all Albertans enjoy a high quality of life.

3:20

During the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, this is what the people of Calgary-East told me. They simply said: stay the course. I'm very proud of the accomplishments of this government. Albertans are very proud of the accomplishments of this government. It is because we were fiscally responsible and no longer spent more than we earned that we have balanced budgets and we are able to pay down our mortgage ahead of schedule. In the last four years the net debt has fallen by 57 percent. If current trends continue, by the year 2005 our net debt will be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is thriving. More Albertans are working than ever before. In fact, 157,300 new jobs have been created over the past four years, and the target is an additional 155,000 by December 2000. In addition, we have no new taxes, no tax increases, and no sales tax. It was music to Albertans' ears to hear in the Speech from the Throne that this government will be considering a law to cap personal and corporate income taxes and other taxes at the current level unless and until Albertans expressly vote to increase such taxes in a referendum.

Mr. Speaker, we have laid down a solid foundation, a foundation based on legislated balanced budgets, the rapid reduction of Alberta's net debt, improved government accountability, taxpayers' protection, and streamlined government. As reflected in the Speech from the Throne, Alberta is a work in progress. It is now time to look to the future and build upon our foundation.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Calgary-East have expressed three priority areas: health, education, and the economy. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, the government is continuing to address each of these areas. Clearly, this government listens to Albertans and will continue to listen to ensure that Albertans' priorities are our priorities.

At the Alberta Growth Summit to be held later this year, Mr. Speaker, the government will consult with Albertans on these issues of importance. Collectively Albertans will discuss how to remain committed to fiscal responsibility while responding to the pressures of growth and the rising demand for public service. This government is asking Albertans for their ideas and will act on them. Enriching the lives of all Albertans is a priority of this government. We must ensure that all Albertans have access to necessary health services, to quality education and job training, and to social programs that they can count on now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, because we stayed the course, because our actions were reflective of the needs and concerns of Albertans, our government now has the resources to reinvest in priority areas such as health and education. Spending on health care in our province will be \$3.96 billion in 1997-98. This brings spending on health to levels slightly lower than 1992-93, before the cuts. This does not mean that the cuts weren't necessary. Through restructuring we have streamlined service delivery and reduced duplication and waste. Our health care dollars are now more effectively spent. We have a first-rate health system that provides quality services that better meet the needs of Albertans at a price we can all afford.

Mr. Speaker, it was clearly stated in the Speech from the Throne that this government will continue to address pressure points in the system to ensure a stable, accessible, and sustainable health system that is responsive to the needs of Albertans today and tomorrow. I am pleased to hear that an accountability framework is being created. This framework will set out the expectations of our health systems and build in performance measures to monitor the system. This initiative will ensure that Albertans receive quality health services when they need them. In addition, Albertans will soon be able to access a new, simplified system of appeals and complaints. By expressing their concerns about the delivery of health services, patients will assist RHAs and the government to accurately address concerns about our health systems.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Calgary-East also told me that we must continue to improve our education system. Through their primary and secondary education young Albertans must have access to knowledge and skills that will form a strong base for their lifelong learning.

As we face the dawn of the 21st century, an increased focus on technology and job training is necessary. This will ensure that Albertans are better able to meet the needs of an evolving marketplace and secure a better future for themselves and their families. We must create a healthy environment for job creation to ensure that Albertans have opportunities to use their skills and expertise. We will continue to work with the private sector to build the right environment for economic growth and jobs.

Initiatives will include expanding national and international market opportunities for Alberta value-added industries and services and removing barriers to national and international trade so Alberta business can expand and compete in new markets.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the strongest economy in the country, and the future looks even more promising. Our economy is forecasted to grow by 3.6 percent in 1997 and by an average of 3.8 percent a year over the following three years. We are clearly building a strong future for our province.

In closing, I stand in support of the Speech from the Throne. I look forward to working with all members of this government to build upon our strong foundation and ensure that the house we call Alberta is a comfortable home for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a really a pleasure today to stand and speak with respect to the Speech from the Throne. I want to begin by adding my voice to the chorus of good wishes on the election of the Speaker and you, sir, as Deputy Speaker and of course for the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, who is the first woman ever elected as an officer in this provincial Legislature. So my congratulations to all of you. I know that you will serve with dignity and provide all members with your experience and good counsel with respect to decorum and help restore the sense of honour that it is to serve our constituents in this Chamber. I trust that the goals that I expressed in my somewhat ill-fated campaign, that we never again be ashamed of having visitors in this gallery because of how we treat each other in this Chamber – I trust that under your stewardship this will come to pass. Certainly I've seen some very good indications of that over the last few weeks, and it makes one feel proud again to be in this Chamber.

I want to begin by thanking the constituents of Calgary-Egmont for again giving me the honour to represent them in this Legislature. Sixty-five percent of my constituents who voted for Ralph's team, voted for the policies of the Progressive Conservative government, and I believe they've made the right choice.

My constituency has 27,100 voters that come from virtually every economic and socioeconomic background. I did lose some very important communities with respect to the boundary change. I lost Ogden, Millican, Lynnwood. Those were extremely good communities to serve, and I was very proud to be representing them. I also gained the good residents of the community of Kingsland to add to the communities of Fairview, Acadia, Willow Park, Maple Ridge, and Riverbend. So I thank them very much for returning me to the Legislature.

3:30

Now, speaking to the Speech from the Throne, I want to congratulate the Lieutenant Governor on his delivery of the speech that represents for me a large number of the reasons why I chose to run again. All of us incumbents in this House at some point had to grapple with why we would return to this sort of fishbowl and cut ourselves off from the quality time with our families. The Speech from the Throne has certainly given me a lot of reasons.

The first reason is of course the Growth Summit that will take place this fall. I believe the Growth Summit is a real opportunity for this province to begin again, because if you look at the last number of years, we were up against the wall financially. The policies of the day certainly took that and turned that around.

We're in a different era now; we are facing unprecedented growth. You have to manage growth, as the Lieutenant Governor so wisely counseled us at our swearing in. Managing growth can be a real problem, because it's not too difficult to get buy-in from everybody when you're about to hit the wall, but when things are, shall I use the word, booming, it's a little more difficult to get buy-in from all sectors of the economy and from labour. So I see the Growth Summit as a tremendous opportunity for this province, and I'd particularly like to invite all hon. members to perhaps have some mini growth summits in their own constituencies so that your constituents can be part of this process as well. I would invite the hon. members from the side opposite, from the opposition, to also participate and have growth summits in their constituencies and make sure that that input is fed into the overall process. I'm very, very pleased to be involved with the Growth Summit.

Another area that is extremely important is the government's new economic development strategy, a document called Building on the Alberta Advantage. It provides a framework for further growth in key sectors of our economy. It's an interesting document, Mr. Speaker, because it speaks of government departments working together, several disciplines working together to achieve economic development. It's asking departments to come out of their silos and to in fact work together with respect to all of this. I think it's a very important document.

The government's planned use of information technology is another area that has interested me for quite a large number of years. I've been involved in technology for 32 years, and certainly I'm very pleased to see that in the throne speech. This should encourage Alberta firms to develop new products and services in that area and in the area of information technology for use and sale at home and abroad. Mr. Speaker, what that does is speak to a knowledge economy, and I'm so pleased to hear . . . [some applause] You're too soon, Lorne. I'm so pleased to hear the hon. minister of science, research, and information technology starting to use the word "knowledge" as a pillar of what it is that he plans under his stewardship to bring to this province. We really need a knowledge industry.

If one looks at all of the economic sectors, we find that one of the factors will in fact change most of the economics and the economic outcomes in all of the sectors. You keep hearing: information technology. Yet it's really strange that in order for that to happen, people have to be trained, and in order for people to be trained, there has to be information and knowledge and a content industry in order to provide all of that. So I'm really pleased to see that that is coming about.

Another area that I was extremely interested in over the last number of years because of my involvement in education – it took almost, well, I guess, a little over two years to get through the technology in schools implementation plan, and it also took about the same amount of time to get through to the framework for business involvement in education.

Now, if there are two things that are fairly sensitive, I think, to most teachers it is, one, to be replaced by a computer and, two, to have businesspeople in their classrooms teaching our kids. When those documents came out, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't a loud hue and cry because we had teachers on our committee, and through working together over a period of two and a half years, we came to understand each other's concerns. We came to understand each other with respect to how we could work together, and we came to some agreements. This is how I see the Growth Summit coming this fall, as well. I'm sure that there are

going to be many, many issues on the table that through interdisciplinary types of discussions we can find common ground and work together.

Now, under education the throne speech talks about “expanding distance learning programs,” and certainly this is an area that is extremely important. We now have in our province many virtual schools. Some schools have students that are well outside the jurisdiction of Alberta, some as far away as Baffin Island. That’s what distance learning is starting to do. So that’s an area, again, that I have a very strong interest in and will continue to work to achieve.

One of the areas that I was, again, extremely pleased to see is: “changing guidance counseling programs to raise students’ awareness of career options.” That is so important. You know, if you talk to rural students, most of them know exactly what their father and mother do for a living. They know what their neighbours do for a living. They know what goes on inside those silos and inside that infrastructure. But go to the city and ask, you know, our children in the city the same question. Most of them, quite frankly, don’t know what goes on behind those doors or inside those buildings or behind those silos and smokestacks, and I think that changing our guidance . . .

MRS. SLOAN: Point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is rising on a point of order. Do you have a citation?

**Point of Order
Allegations against Members**

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I raise a point of order with respect to the hon. member’s comments relating to the children in cities not . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation.

MR. SAPERS: Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j).

MRS. SLOAN: Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j). Thank you. My point is that the hon. member, while speaking with all eloquence about the rural perspectives and rural intelligence of children – I take offence to that statement on two points: one as a member who was raised in a rural environment and now a mother of children, raising her children in an urban environment, and I would take issue with the statement the member implies that children in a city context are not going to be understanding of the rural. As the Speaker earlier this afternoon said, I think that in all statements that occur within this House, we want to convey respect. We do not want to be subliminally insulting or undermine the intelligence or perspectives of other members or their children. I really do believe that in the context of the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague’s comments have absolutely no relationship or factual basis to the item under discussion.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont on the point of order.

MR. HERARD: Yes. Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member doesn’t have to agree with what I’m saying, as I often don’t agree with what she’s saying. I have the floor, and I’m speaking to the

Speech from the Throne. In fact, you can look at it yourself on page 3, and you’ll find that I’m speaking to those items in the Speech from the Throne.

3:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen on a point of order citing 23(h), (i), (j). Standing Order 23(h) is: “makes allegations against another member.” Certainly the Speaker did not hear such an allegation. “Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.” Certainly the Chair did not hear that. “Uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder,” was the third part of the citation. While it obviously stirred the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, I would have to look at the Blues to see how abusive that language was, because it did not occur to the Chair at the time. However, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview went on, then, to bring up yet another issue: relevance. The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont has indicated that his remark was relevant to the Speech from the Throne. The Chair would rule that no apparent breakage of the rules has occurred, other than the one that I mentioned that we would have to look at in the Blues.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Debate Continued

MR. HERARD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about guidance counseling programs to raise student awareness of career options. Personally I think that we can use technology to help us do that. If in fact we thought about the Internet, and if we had a web page and every employer had a web page that said: “Here’s what we do; here’s how we do it. Here’s why we do it. Here’s who we do it to. Here are all the careers that we have in our organization. Here are all the skills that we look for in people. Here are all the values that are important to us with respect to our employees. Here are all the business partnerships that we have established, and here is the summer employment that we have to offer” – think of what that would do if our grades 7 and 8 and so on started to see the tremendous opportunities there are in this province with respect to careers. So personally I really appreciate that that’s in the throne speech.

Now, the next one is “establishing curriculum standards in technology for students and technical standards and certification requirements for teachers.” Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the introduction of computers in schools is raising quite a number of problems for us to deal with. One of them and I think possibly one that might have in fact been talked about in this particular document is that it seems to be creating an even deeper chasm between the haves and have-nots in this province. In other words, kids from affluent families will typically have computers in their homes, whereas children from less affluent families and families that are having problems, struggling and so on, probably won’t. Perhaps this is something that we can talk about in the Growth Summit, with respect to how do we deal with this? One of the things that certainly could happen is that instead of bringing computers from the business community into schools where in fact they may not necessarily fit the technology plan, why don’t we put them in the homes of the disadvantaged? If we put them in the homes of the disadvantaged, then the entire family can benefit from it.

The other area that the throne speech talks about is “making career and technical studies a permanent part of the high school curriculum.” That I applaud wholeheartedly. Career and technology studies currently has 22 streams of studies that students

can undertake, 600 different modules that students can in fact migrate through until they find something that turns them on to what it is that they want to be in life.

You know, one of the things, Mr. Speaker, that's happening today is that 60 to 65 percent of our high school graduates don't go on to postsecondary education, and that is a North American problem. You know, they default into the workplace; they work at several jobs. They might buy some neat wheels, get into debt, maybe fall in love down the road, and all of a sudden they discover that they really don't have the skills to support their family. So that is a problem that we're faced with here in this province, as well as every other jurisdiction in North America, and something needs to be done about it.

Of course the throne speech speaks to that. It talks about "revising Alberta's apprenticeship and industrial training programs to ensure that they meet the challenges of globalization." If you look at the current list of 60 or so occupations that are listed in the apprenticeship industrial training section, you won't find too many that are based on the knowledge industry as yet. In other words, you'll find the more traditional apprenticeships in some of the trades that have been around for years and years and years. So I believe that it's a good move to look at our apprenticeship system and try and make some improvements and maybe modernize it to include some of the skills that our young people are going to in fact require in terms of information technology and the knowledge industry.

Another item in the throne speech is:

launching a project which combines career information and consulting programs with job placement services for young people who have left high school without the skills and credentials that they need for sustained employment.

Well, that's all part of the overall problem.

The other area that I'm deeply interested in with respect to having worked on some of these things in the past is the area of health, where we are looking at "legislation to protect the privacy of information about Albertans' personal health." Of course, anytime that you talk about Albertans' health records, that's a very sensitive issue, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that any system that is put in place with respect to health information ought to have an audit trail to make sure that every access is in fact tracked and can be followed up and audited to see if the access was legitimate and for legitimate health reasons.

Another one that is a big item is "improved systems of health-related information and technology for more informed decision-making." I'm very pleased to see that there is quite a bit of work that is being done in that particular area, because one of the ways of reducing the cost of health care is to make sure the best practices are available throughout the province. Of course, the better the information that you have with respect to that, the better the backup information technology system, then the quicker we'll get to spending less money more effectively and not have to cut anymore.

The other area in here that is also extremely interesting to me, because in the previous session I was the chairman of the Health Facilities Review Committee - I see that "a new, simplified system of appeals and complaints to address patients' concerns about the delivery of health services" is in the works. I applaud that being in the throne speech this year.

Another one that is extremely important is under social services:

Introducing legislation to co-ordinate the delivery of services at the community level to persons with developmental disabilities and . . . legislation to protect against the physical, emotional, or financial abuse of seniors.

When we started back in 1993, we started in fact to look at decentralization and bringing the services where they need to be: in the communities. So I'm extremely pleased to see, again, references in the throne speech with respect to that.

I think that the problems that we're having right now, for example, with respect to education in Calgary is that the services are not quite there yet to allow school jurisdictions to in fact use the model of school-based decision-making, but I think we're very, very close to that now. I know that the minister of children's services is very close to deploying people in the community, and I know that Health and Justice and other departments are doing that as well. So the sooner we get the services in the community where they're needed I think the better all of these systems will in fact work.

Another area that I'm extremely interested in is the alternative measures program for the sentencing of less serious offenders and community-based youth justice committees. It's interesting that in the city of Edmonton last year I'm given to understand that there were 600 young offenders incarcerated, and only 60 of those had records.

Mr. Speaker, I note that my time is up. I think what I would like to do is adjourn debate in this area, please.

3:50

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, your time was up, and I do have other people on my list.

The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was sitting listening with rapt attention to particularly the members for Calgary-East and Calgary-Egmont, and that, I think, provided the impetus or the motivation for me to join debate on the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I might start off by saying that I guess the fact the voters in Calgary-*Buffalo* have decided after 10 years that the constituency in the heart of Calgary will remain represented by somebody other than a government member may be because Calgarians have the good sense to understand that Calgarians don't speak with a single voice, that there's a range of views and values. Those Calgarians in the seven communities I represent who started voting for an opposition member in 1986 and continued to do so in 1989, 1992, 1993, and then most recently in 1997 understand that party labels are often a whole lot less important than simply ensuring that ideas in this important place are subjected to vigorous scrutiny and robust debate.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to share with the members, particularly in light of what we've heard from some of the other Calgary members on the opposite side, some of the feedback and advice that I received in the run-up to March 11. I had the privilege of getting to almost 9,000 doors by March 11, and as I listened to members opposite talk about what Albertans told them, I wondered how it can be that the message I received was so different and that the concerns that were expressed to me numerous times could be so much at variance with what the members opposite say. I don't question their veracity. I'm sure that they're accurately reflecting what they heard in their parts of Calgary, but it just makes me marvel all the more, then, at those people who live in downtown Calgary and Calgary-*Buffalo*. I don't think they're natural contrarians.

You know, in terms of hospital closure, I can't tell you how strongly people expressed their concern about not only the Holy Cross closing some time back but also the prospect of the imminent closure of the Bow Valley. Whether I was talking to

seniors living in seniors' residences or apartments, whether I was talking to young families with children attending school in the downtown area, or whether I was talking to young people in their 20s or 30s perhaps living on their own in an apartment, most of these people, with very few exceptions, expressed concern that access to necessary health care services was going to be compromised by the plans of this government.

In fact, I suggested to my constituents that we could turn the vote on March 11 into something more than simply a referendum on Ralph's team. We had an opportunity to turn March 11 into a referendum on health care, a referendum on hospital closure. My constituents embraced that in Calgary-Buffalo.

MRS. BURGNER: Not all of them.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, it's funny. I'm almost inclined to forget from time to time that one of my constituents sits here in the Chamber. I think it's wonderful, because very few of us, when we're here until 11 o'clock at night, have the satisfaction of knowing that one of the people that pays our salary and that we're directly accountable to is actually here looking over our shoulder, able to make sure that we don't go home early, able to make sure that we don't fall asleep in the course of debate even when that debate tends to be a little tedious and a little vexing.

AN HON. MEMBER: As it is now.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, we're just getting warmed up, and already we've got some people that are looking for the bell.

Mr. Speaker, the point I wanted to make about hospital closure is this. I think Calgarians recognized that you can't base absolutely every decision on the cost of programs. You can't base every decision on how cheaply any service can be delivered. There is a whole range of quality issues that Albertans think are important and want to see addressed. What people told me time and time again is that we don't need perhaps a full-service hospital sitting on the Bow Valley site. We don't need all seven wings of the Bow Valley hospital to remain intact, and parts of it are old.

I think people in Calgary-Buffalo also recognized that the government created really a false choice. They said on the one hand that either you can spend over a hundred million dollars rebuilding a hospital on that site, or we tear the whole thing down. People I spoke with said: you know, that's not a reasonable kind of choice; we see governments and we see businesses and we see individuals making compromises all the time, and you keep what's still serviceable, you keep what still works, and you discard that which does not. [interjection] People in Calgary-Buffalo understood, even those that came from Medicine Hat, Mr. Speaker, that what happens is you don't look at the whole facility. You recognize that buildings F, D, and G have all been newly renovated since 1972. Parts of the General hospital are as modern as any other hospital in Calgary. People said: why wouldn't we keep the services that we define as being essential downtown? Those services tended to be 24-hour emergency service and a full range of mental health services, including mental health beds. That's consistent with what the Calgary regional health authority and this Minister of Health and the predecessor Minister of Health had been told in numerous workshops and roundtables and meetings.

My constituent the Member for Calgary-Currie and I had the privilege of attending a meeting put on by the Victoria Commu-

nity Association. She and I were there along with representatives of the Calgary regional health authority and a lot of angry residents from the downtown core talking about the future of health care and hospital services and access to hospital. The Member for Calgary-Currie I expect will attest to the concern people had, the apprehension, the fear those people had. Why? Because it was apparent that the government was making decisions without listening.

Mr. Speaker, hospital closure continues to be an issue. I had the chance to tour the 8th and 8th clinic, and as is always the case, I'm always struck by the commitment and the enthusiasm often of professionals who want to make change work and want to make new systems work, but those people also will readily admit the limitations of what they're given to work with. There is simply no way that a fancy walk-in clinic with a mental health counselor and a physician not able to practise emergency medicine – people recognize the limitations that go along with that service.

Some of the concerns people had as well would be that last year I think 6,100 people of the 50,000 that went to the Bow Valley emergency ward – 6,100 of those 50,000 patients – showed up with a life-threatening condition. What people would often ask is: how many people in downtown Calgary are not going to be aware that the Bow Valley doesn't exist anymore? How many people realize the 8th and 8th clinic isn't an emergency service? In fact, I heard one government member on a radio program last spring referring to the 8th and 8th clinic as an emergency clinic, and if an MLA can't get it right – and this was one who was an MD by training – why would we be surprised that seniors, new Canadians, many of the people who live downtown aren't going to know what the limitations are of that service? So how many people show up at the clinic on 8th Avenue and 8th Street only to be told: "Sorry; what you've got requires hospital emergency service. Do we call you an ambulance or a taxi? That's where you've got to go."

4:00

Some of the other concerns, Mr. Speaker, just moving on. We've heard talk from the Member for Calgary-Egmont, who was talking about transparency and freedom of information, and he was interested in what was going on in terms of information. I would have thought that member would have been as disappointed as I am that Bill 1 and the government's legislative program seem to be taking us backward, not forward. There's no commitment to when local government, regional health authorities, universities or colleges are going to be subject to the freedom of information Act. Some members of the media I notice, who perhaps were not paying close attention, seem to have bought the government message or line which is that somehow we are expediting or accelerating application of freedom of information to local government. Well, the reality is that we're not. In fact, we're moving backwards, not forwards, in terms of the broad application of that.

In terms of schools, there were serious concerns identified by Calgary parents with respect to what's going on in their schools, concern over overcrowded classrooms. That's a big issue in Calgary-Buffalo. Surely, if there's anything we know about education, it's that having 35 or 38 students in a classroom is not an optimal learning experience, but that's the reality at many of the schools, at St. Monica's and Connaught. These are schools where you have a very high number of English as a second language students. Then if you layer on top of that, a number of these students have other special needs. One would think we would want to ensure that each Alberta child, regardless of the

kind of income situation their parents may be in, regardless of the part of the city they may live in, every child in that city and every child in this province would have a first-class education. Well, that's not happening, Mr. Speaker.

The other problem we hear about time and time again is parents who feel they simply don't have enough time and energy to do all of the fund-raising that this government expects them to do. I think sometimes the government of Alberta has some kind of a fantasy world view of parents, of families in this province. Are the members opposite and certainly the draftspeople behind the Speech from the Throne not hearing the frustration of Alberta parents? Well, it appears not, because there's no mention of it in the Speech from the Throne. I just think that if we go back to what Calgary parents told legislators – they told the Member for Calgary-Bow this, and I know there were some other members. Calgary-Fish Creek was also at that meeting. The message was as unambiguous and as clear as can be. Those parents wanted some relief. They simply didn't feel the education system was doing the job.

I could go on and talk about seniors' issues, but I think we've heard some of that already.

The other point I just wanted to make is a concern with protection for persons in need of care. One of the things that I think has been frustrating to many of us – you, Mr. Speaker, will recall, because in fact it was your private member's Bill that passed that was going to deal with protection of seniors, people with developmental disabilities.

The difficulty, though, was this: the various reports and the experts told us that the biggest problem with elder abuse is not in institutions. The Kerby Centre had undertaken the Synergy II report with federal funding I think about three years ago, and what the Synergy II report identified and documented quite clearly is that the abuse we should be legislating against and protecting against is abuse that happens to seniors in their own homes and smaller institutions and a range of other facilities. The government must have heard some of that because they didn't proclaim that Bill, Mr. Speaker, which you had introduced and then negotiated through the House, and they held a series of workshops last summer. We understand now that new legislation is coming forward.

I have to tell you I was at the Kerby Centre a couple of weeks ago when the Premier was there speaking to the legislation coming forward, and it seemed to me, as carefully as I could listen, that some of the major flaws with the Bill – your Bill, Mr. Speaker – that had gone through the House and passed just a couple of years ago may not have been remedied. So if in fact our job is to listen and reflect on the wisdom of the people that put us here, then we may have some ways to go yet to try and resolve some of the shortcomings in that legislation. I look forward to seeing the Bill, and we can deal with it.

The business of protection of health care information. There is, I think, a big problem with the government's genuineness in terms of being interested in consultation. What I recall was that the government issued a discussion paper which came out towards the end of the first week in December. The deadline for submissions was the end of January, not an ideal time to be trying to engage Albertans and solicit their ideas. To compound it, at least a week before the end of January the government member who has taken a particular interest in health care, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, was on a radio program and was talking about the decision already having been made by the government that they weren't going to go with a particular kind of smart card. They

decided they were going to go with a different kind of information management system. He proceeded to outline what the elements would be of this new information system, and I found myself thinking: what an insult to all of those Albertans who have either made submissions or intended to make submissions, that it appears the government has already made a host of decisions even before the end of the consultation period. So that doesn't encourage Albertans, Mr. Speaker, that the government is listening with their ears open as opposed to their ears closed.

Mr. Speaker, I think the difficulty with this legislation may be – I've just finished looking at the legislation that's been introduced in the province of Manitoba. I've looked at the agreement that the province of Manitoba has entered into with a subsidiary of the Royal Bank to manage their health information system. Imagine, if you will, members – the chartered banks have expanded their business so we're now looking at everything, including life insurance – the prospect of chartered banks, even through wholly-owned subsidiaries, now running the health information systems in the provinces of Canada. Smart Health, which has scored the contract in Manitoba to provide their health information system, said expressly that they'd like to corner the market in all of Canada, and they're aggressively shopping.

DR. WEST: It'd be efficient.

MR. DICKSON: Well, that points at the highlight, Mr. Speaker, that whenever this government deals with the two competing goals of efficiency and cost shaving on the one hand or on the other hand respecting the privacy rights of Albertans, invariably it's the efficiency goal which is given primacy. Well, I'd say to the hon. Minister of Energy – through you, of course, Mr. Speaker – that Albertans, frankly, don't agree with them. I'd wager that Albertans put their personal privacy higher than they do their interest in simply saving money. Albertans want to be prudent, and they want to ensure that tax dollars are stretched.

4:10

DR. WEST: Did you not hear anything on March 11? Were you deafened by that?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Hon. members, we still are working on the convention of one member speaking at a time. Right now the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* has the floor.

Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just finishing off on this point and my concern that once again what we see in peril in this province is protecting the privacy of Albertans' personal information.

I've looked at the Manitoba statute, and I understand that Alberta and Manitoba are both introducing similar legislation and that Ontario is working on I think their third draft, which is soon to come in. We can see that privacy considerations may be acknowledged in the preamble. They may be acknowledged in the words that government uses to introduce this material, but clearly it's driven simply by a means of saving dollars wherever they can be saved, regardless of the impact and regardless of the effect in compromising privacy of individual Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat then. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne at this time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved we adjourn debate on this item. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
head: **Second Reading**

Bill 8
Historical Resources Amendment Act, 1997

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 8, which is the Historical Resources Amendment Act, 1997.

Alberta has developed an enviable system of museums and interpretation centres, which attract over 1 million visitors per year. These facilities contribute over \$52 million per year to regional economies. Community groups, usually called friends, have assisted in meeting fiscal objectives and in preserving and promoting Alberta's historical resources by making them available to the public.

In a nutshell, the amendments will allow the Minister of Community Development to delegate through contract to these friends groups the collecting of fees and charges at our museums, archives, and historical sites. It will also allow the friends to then spend these fees to provide necessary services to our visitors.

Currently, the Act only allows fee collection to be done by employees of the ministry. This has resulted in an overly complex system of government employees collecting the money, depositing it in the historic resources fund, and then contracting for services with the friends. The amendment will simplify matters by allowing the friends to both collect revenues and pay their expenses under contract.

The Act will also retain the historic resources fund. This will allow the Minister of Community Development to continue literally dozens of other cost recovery activities at the museums, archives, and historic sites, from carriage rides at Reynolds to, say, dinosaur exhibits at Tyrrell. The ability to offer different historical experiences is what has given our museums and interpretation centres their world-best reputation. The continued existence of the fund will also allow the Minister of Community Development to continue to solicit sponsorships, grants, and donations from both the private sector and the federal government. Sometimes these can exceed \$1 million per year. By providing the Minister of Community Development with increased flexibility, these amendments will ensure that the minister and her staff, in co-operation with affiliated community friends groups, can exercise wide opportunities to preserve and present Alberta's rich and diverse heritage.

The fund has allowed provincial facilities to achieve outstanding results. They provide leadership and standards of excellence for both Alberta and Canada. In 1996-97, 93.5 percent of visitors rated their overall experience at provincial historic sites and

museums as above average or excellent; 91 percent of visitors indicated an above average or excellent learning experience during their visit to provincial historic sites and museums.

The entrepreneurial spirit that has led to this success is very much in evidence in this province. In Fort McMurray, for example, the community advisory board has set itself a \$2 million target to redo the exhibit hall. At the Provincial Museum the corporate sector and the friends have helped put on the excellent Genghis Khan show.

While the amendment concentrates on the historic resources fund, I would be remiss in not mentioning the importance of some of its other sections. The Act created the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. Every year it provides approximately \$1.2 million to over 200 community museums and 30 community archives through the Alberta Museums Association. This leverages another \$3.6 million in activity. The foundation directly manages the Alberta Mainstreet program. Over nine historic main streets throughout Alberta receive \$600,000, which levers another \$1.8 million. Another 15 main streets, like Fort Macleod and Blairmore and Vegreville, have received support in the past. The foundation also provides designated historical building owners with over \$1 million in support per year, and this levers another \$10 million.

The point is that heritage provides real economic and cultural returns. Alberta has been successful because the Historical Resources Act encourages entrepreneurship and preservation of the Alberta can-do spirit. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Act is one of Canada's best. The amendments will ensure that it stays that way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that I can rise today and speak about historical resources in Alberta and speak to the debate on Bill 8. I've been able to enjoy many of the historical resources available in Alberta. I'm an Albertan, and family holidays in Alberta are about touring around to these different centres: Drumheller, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, the Leitch Collieries, the Frank slide, very popular places – it's a travelogue – and other sites in other parts of Alberta.

But I have to express my concern over the intent of this Bill. I don't feel that it's clear, and therefore I am not willing to support it at this time. I'm wondering why this Bill is being amended right now. Why is it necessary to do this? Who has asked for these changes to take place? Could the minister table any letters or reports from Albertans that are indicating there's this great driving need to devolve the management of these historical sites to friends-of organizations? The minister already delegates powers and duties to employees appointed under a section of this Act, and it seems that the only real reason to repeal this section would be to end the prohibition on the minister from delegating powers and duties under the section. Most of these sections deal with the minister's right to prescribe regulations regarding the naming, management, and handling of historical resources. I'm looking for confirmation that it is the minister's plan to delegate these responsibilities to friends-of organizations or groups. It should be noted that in section 10.2 of the Act it states that the minister may use the fund to provide operational grants to nonprofit organizations who take care of historical resources.

4:20

I guess at this point it's appropriate to remind the minister that it was a friends-of group which was to take over CKUA radio, and I think there are serious reservations that have been expressed by the community to me regarding the historical resources.

I think there's a real concern out there, and I share it. We don't understand why this Act and the amendments to this Act are necessary. Why are we devolving down to these friends-of organizations? If that is going to be what is going to happen, then I have a number of questions regarding the amendments. Can Albertans expect the same from the friends-of groups that will take over the management as from the services we've come to expect with the management being under the provincial government? If it's going to go to a friends-of group, what kind of qualifications and criteria are involved in selecting the people that would be taking over this management? At the very heart of my concerns over this Bill and the amendments therein is that if it's devolved to friends-of organizations to manage and these groups fail financially, will the minister still guarantee that these historical sites will remain open to the public and be preserved for future generations?

In what we have received today and was tabled today, the Auditor General's report on CKUA, there are a number of situations that are pointed out in that report which seem relevant to the discussion today. In particular, when we talk about board responsibilities – and I'm assuming that these friends-of organizations will become some kind of management board, and if not, please, please correct me; I'd love to be corrected on this one – are we getting into a situation where friends-of organizations are going to be responsible for setting policy, for deciding on program delivery, for monitoring compliance with rules and regulations and policies, for assessing the performance of management? Who does assess the performance of the management? Who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of these historical sites? Currently that's done by employees of the provincial government. Who would this go to, and who's responsible for making sure that this in fact is done in an orderly and responsible manner?

I'm also wondering about the direct accountability. Again I'm referring to what I'm reading in the Auditor General's report on the CKUA foundation. The accountability is meant to be there to monitor activities and ensure compliance with whatever was set out for the way the historical site would be managed. I have deep concerns about how this would all happen, and I haven't been able to really get an answer back.

I think the local input from friends-of organizations has proven extremely valuable in the past. In many cases where the historical site is site-specific – for instance, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump just outside of Fort Macleod. I know that the friends-of organization there has been very helpful in tying in to the local community and being able to bring quite a bit of historical knowledge to the project and to its assistance. But my understanding of friends-of groups is that they are there to supplement what the organization is doing. They're there as an auxiliary or as a corollary to what is taking place, and these amendments seem to me to be moving them into a place where they would be totally responsible for it. As I've already mentioned, if they're responsible for it, how do we ensure that it is well managed on behalf of the people, and where is the accountability for it?

I really am concerned that we not see a situation where the government hands this over and washes their hands of it. I think people are deeply concerned in Alberta. We love these historical

resources. We do all take our families to them on summer holidays, and we want to make sure that they're still there for us and that they don't disappear, fall through some sort of accountability and management crack.

I guess I have questions about what is wrong with the way the friends-of groups are operating now when they operate as an auxiliary to it. I mean, in many cases they're operating a gift shop, they're doing some local fund-raising, and this money is used for extra projects. The hon. member mentioned the friends-of group for the museum here in Edmonton being able to assist bringing in a larger show, the Genghis Khan show, which wouldn't normally be within the budget of that museum. So this was an extra special thing that was done, and I think that's an appropriate place for the friends-of. I believe that most friends-of organizations feel comfortable in that role. Where are the people that are feeling it necessary to move to this devolution or outsourcing of the management of these? I haven't spoken to anyone. No one has contacted me indicating that. I think there are real concerns there.

I also have a concern, given the way things went with our most recent episode with CKUA, about whether perhaps these groups might be being set up to fail. For the most part, the friends-of groups are volunteer organizations. They're people that are bringing their skills from their working life and their family life and volunteering for something. They may not have all of the skill sets that are required to manage a large and in some cases multimillion-dollar operation. They are doing their best, they want to do their best, and they all learn as they go, but I really don't want to see a situation where management is devolved to them and they don't have the money to be able to accomplish the job well and in fact they're set up to fail. Then we have the potential to lose the resources that are so important to the rest of us in Alberta.

There is a section that I have questions about. Section 4 of the amendment appears to be repealing section 10.3. I have a question about whether in fact this section required the government to provide matching grants of \$1 to the designated historical site for every dollar in administration fees. Perhaps I'm misreading this, but the information I have seems to indicate I'm not. When did this section come into force? That is the section which said there was a matching dollar-for-dollar for the admission fees that were brought in. These amendments are changing that, and the admission fees now seem to be going to the friends-of organizations. If there was a matching grant system, where has that gone? Does that mean we've now set up these friends-of organizations in a situation where they are really only going to have 50 percent of the revenue that was in place right now? Or was this matching dollar-for-dollar gotten rid of sometime in the past?

I'd really like clarification on that because I've specifically been asked about this from some of the friends-of groups. Their concern obviously is that they're being set up to fail, that there was a set amount of revenue that's available that would no longer be in place, and they'd be expected to provide exactly the same services and resources with significantly less money. Of course, no one wants to see them in that situation. So there are a number of questions that are raised by this amendment Act that I think need to be addressed on behalf of the people of Alberta.

While the hon. member was introducing this Bill, he also talked about how wonderful it was to get sponsorship from the private sector. Again, I think in some instances that is a good idea. Certainly some of the large traveling visual art and museum

displays we've seen have come with sponsorship, but he who pays the piper calls the tune. I think we can also get on a slippery slope here where we are beholden to the corporations that are sponsoring these types of exhibitions. As well, I guess I have to ask the question: why do we feel that we need corporate sponsorship? What is wrong with the system we have where the Alberta government has been responsible for our historical sites and resources and our cultural resources? What is this great need to get out of this? This is something that people do expect the government to be in, protecting those kinds of resources on our behalf.

The comments about an entrepreneurial spirit again make me start to question what's really the intent behind this whole Bill. Yes, we appreciate an entrepreneurial spirit, but I have to ask: what is it doing in connection with the management of our historical resources? Is it ideological? Are we now going to have, you know, the Coca-Cola provincial museum of Alberta? There are a number of things in here that make me really nervous.

I've just spoken very briefly on this, and I won't take up any more time. Those are questions that have been raised to me from people involved in the community and from others who have enjoyed the historical sites that we have in Alberta. At this point, because of all of these questions that are raised and the lack of clarity about what the intent behind the Bill truly is, I am not able to support this Bill for amendment at this time.

Thank you.

4:30

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Bill 8 is another one of those Bills that would purport to do one thing and really accomplishes something else. It's not simply housekeeping amendments; it's a very substantial change in the way Albertans will be able to enjoy their own heritage. The Historical Resources Amendment Act really is the first giant step towards privatizing our museums and many of our culturally important sites in this province.

With my colleague from Edmonton-Centre I've had an opportunity, with my family, to visit the Oil Sands Interpretive Centre up in Fort McMurray, go down to the Frank slide, Head-Smashed-In, Tyrrell, Reynolds, the Provincial Museum right here in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora. All wonderful assets, educational. Out-of-town visitors often enjoy those. I know I make it a point to bring my out-of-town guests, my children, their friends to the Provincial Museum whenever possible.

One of the nice things about all of these sites is that I'm certain of a certain quality. I'm certain of a certain kind of access. I have some expectation that they will be well managed, well run, safe, and even affordable. As much as the cost has been creeping up in recent years because of government cutbacks – well, in fact the elimination of the department that one time was responsible and then government cutbacks overall – it is still affordable, particularly on Tuesdays, Mr. Speaker. It's always a special opportunity when I have an opportunity to visit these sites on Tuesdays. But now we see the government coming in and saying: well, we'll allow these friends-of organizations.

Now, don't misunderstand me when I make some critical comments about this plan. The comments are not critical of the friends-of organizations. The volunteer groups that help run and manage and raise funds for these historical resources now are to be commended for their efforts. They do wonderful work. But

they didn't really sign on to do the work of government. You know, we hear this government always asking: "Why should we be in this business? Why shouldn't business be doing this? Why shouldn't business be doing that?" We never hear this government ask: "What business does business have in running this or that? Isn't this really the business of government?" I guess I would submit that I think the preservation of our historical heritage in this province is in large measure the appropriate business of government.

What really concerns me about Bill 8 is that it's another one of those illegitimate offsprings of Bill 57, if you'll think back a couple of sessions, when this government withdrew its attempt to totally subvert the role of this Legislature and to really take public debate and public discussion about accountability out of the public domain and allow ministers to willy-nilly just delegate authority whenever they felt, to allow order in council cabinet decisions to really set the agenda for what should have been public business. Here we see Bill 8, which tries to do that sort of through the back door, the side door. It just says, "Well, maybe we don't have to come back to a full debate about whether or not we believe that our cultural, historical heritage should be protected by the Legislature," and instead says, "We'll just allow the minister to sort of willy-nilly go about her business as she sees fit," as though it's not really a matter of public concern. And it should be a matter of public concern.

You know, Mr. Speaker, my colleague referred to the Auditor General's report on CKUA. The very first recommendation in that report – you'll find it on page 3 – reads like this:

It is recommended that when grant funds and/or assets are provided to an organization or individual in return for an expected level of performance, an appropriate accountability framework be established to enable the recipient's performance to be measured and evaluated.

Nowhere in Bill 8 do we see any hint of an accountability framework, of any kind of performance measures, of any way of determining whether or not Albertans are going to be well served by this policy initiative. Do you know what the government's response to that recommendation was? The government's response was to say that they're shocked. I'm reading off a government of Alberta news release dated today. It says, "Government shocked" – and I might say shocked and stunned. "Government 'shocked' at Auditor General's findings on CKUA." It goes on to quote the current Minister of Community Development. The quote is this:

I agree with the Auditor General's suggestion that government needs to be vigilant when taxpayer dollars are entrusted to independent boards and foundations.

What a revelation. The government agrees that it should be vigilant when they turn over assets to private individuals or private organizations. My goodness, what a breakthrough that is. Again, we don't see anything in Bill 8 that would protect us from the same kind of potentiality. In fact, Bill 8 is an open invitation to repeat what has just happened with CKUA.

When I travel around the province with my family and take advantage of attending several of these historical resources – I for example, Mr. Speaker, am able to make use of my family annual membership with the Edmonton Space and Science Centre, which provides me with either discounted or free admission to several of these other resources. Now, if these are all privatized, what value will I be able to enjoy? Not just for myself and my family, because that would be a narrow and selfish interest on my part, but I daresay for all the Albertans who make the decision to join one friends-of society in the knowledge that their membership,

that their fees paid will serve them well as they travel elsewhere around the province. We're going to lose that kind of consistency. We're going to lose that kind of predictability and, again, for no particular reason.

I haven't heard, not once, from one of my constituents, and again I'll remind you that the Provincial Museum is in my constituency. I haven't heard once a request that this happen. I haven't heard complaints from the friends-of organizations that they need more flexibility. I haven't heard once a request from the museum curators that they want less government support. In fact, I've heard quite the contrary; they expect more. They feel that they can't do their job, that their hands are tied, that the government is forcing them to be purely cost recovery when they thought part of their mandate was education and the preservation of cultural heritage. Now they're being told: no; it's got to be cost recovery.

So having heard no requests for what this Bill would accomplish, and having heard in fact just the opposite, I have to ask: why is this happening? Why is it the government picks this time to repeal those parts of the Act which protect these organizations? Why would this government be preparing to leap headlong into privatizing it? Is there nothing that is sacred? What are we going to have next? Are we going to have that if you want to see the dinosaur exhibit down at the Tyrrell Museum, it'll be running like a peep show, like a peep booth? You keep on putting your loonies in, the screen opens up, and you can see the Albertosaurus. Then after your two minutes are gone, unless you put in another loony, the screen won't open again. I mean, what is this government heading towards? Is there going to be a bank of VLTs, and it's only when the right crests line up that you can actually gain entrance to the Provincial Museum? Mr. Speaker, where is this government taking us when it comes to allowing our children to participate and learn and gain access to these resources? A comment was made: are we going to have the Coca-Cola provincial museum? I guess there's a natural propensity of this government to sell things off, but I would hope that that was tongue in cheek, and I would hope that's not something that's ever going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the object of Bill 8, as I read it, is not an acceptable object. This is not the time in debate when we should be doing . . . [interjections] I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I thought maybe we'd have to have a recess, because one of the hon. members is having a bit of a seizure over there, and I just wasn't sure whether we needed him or not.

4:40

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Just stay with your own business. Get on with your speech.

MR. SAPERS: What was that, Walter?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Get on with whatever it is you're doing.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order, hon. members. It's not incumbent upon the person speaking to make comments about whether somebody is having a seizure or whatever unless it's of a nature that would disturb the whole Chamber. Hon. members will please remember that we have one member speaking at a time.

Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was simply concerned for him.

Debate Continued

MR. SAPERS: I was saying that I can't support Bill 8 in its present form, and I know that this is not the time in debate when we should be doing a clause-by-clause review. Now, it's a fairly thin Bill that won't take long, but I'll wait for committee stage to do that. What I will hope is that somebody from the government side will stand up and defend the Bill, will say why we must do this, why it is good public policy, why it would serve the public interest, how it will help preserve our cultural heritage, how it will help educate our children, how it will help our tourism industry. I would want somebody to say that, yes, they've met with all the stakeholder groups: they've met with the archivists; they've met with the historians; they've met with the curators. They've met with all of the people who have a vested interest, and they've got evidence that says, yes, this is clearly what the stakeholders want.

This is the government that talks about consultation. This is the government that talks about being responsive, so I want to know what they're responding to. I would want somebody from the government to at least briefly indicate: why now? What's going to be accomplished? How is this even efficient? How does this protect our assets, particularly in view of what's just happened with CKUA? At the very least I would want somebody from government to say: well, certainly before we support this Bill, we will put into place all of the regulations, and all of those regulations will be referred to the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations, so all of those regulations will be debated in public. They will put into place an evaluative framework, that evaluative framework will have been filtered through the stakeholder groups, and we will clearly know what the performance measures are. Before we start handing these assets away, these assets that have been paid for and developed by Albertans for generations, we'll know exactly why and what we expect to get in return. Those are my minimum expectations before I can change my mind and support this Bill.

If this is good public policy, Mr. Speaker, then those are the things that I would expect the government to be saying. If this is helpful, then let's hear about it. If it's not helpful, I would expect the government to withdraw Bill 8, withdraw Bill 8 the same way they withdrew Bill 57, because they knew it was bad public policy.

Mr. Speaker, if what the government's waiting for is the building of a public outcry, being told that they've gone too far, that they've pushed the envelope too much when it comes to getting out of the appropriate role of government, and that they've given away too much of our public assets, if they're waiting for that roar to build, we'll certainly accommodate them. You know, it would be nice if this government simply did the right thing first. Why not recognize, hon. members, the flaws in this Bill? Why rush headlong into it? Why threaten these world-renowned sites with two or three pages of ill-conceived legislative amendments? Why do that? It doesn't make any sense to me. It doesn't make any sense to this caucus. I'm hoping somebody from government will help make sense of it. Perhaps they can do so now. If they can't, perhaps the mover will simply withdraw it, and they can bring it back to the table when they've done some of their homework.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak in support of this Historical Resources Amendment Act because I do not feel that it threatens in any way the strength of the historical resources and the sites that we have in this fine province.

I would point to the brevity of this amendment Act, and I would suggest that we look at the preciseness with which each of the sections is dealt with. The friends of the societies are not, I would remind the members from across the floor, and will not be management. Management is in place; management is doing a fine job with all the historical sites that we have and the resources that are in the purview of this province. This is not in the interests of moving the work of the friends into the work of management. In fact, there is nothing in here that suggests so.

Secondly, I'd like to say that this amendment to the Act is meant to facilitate the goodwill and the good work of the friends of these historic societies. It's meant to facilitate, to ease, and to expedite all the paperwork that is incumbent upon those who manage these sites. For that reason and that reason alone this amendment Act should stand.

I would also like to take exception to making a reference to the CKUA situation. It is a different situation. This particular Act does not deal with establishing a foundation that would work similar to the CKUA situation.

I would like to conclude by saying that because this Bill is very brief and because it is meant just to facilitate and to enhance the wonderful historic sites that we have and to enable those who manage those sites to manage them very well, I would suggest that we support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. In view of the comments by the last speaker, the Member for St. Albert, where she suggested that compelling, good reasons to support the Bill would be its brevity, its conciseness, and the fact that its purpose is not a nefarious one but rather a positive, enabling one, I would just say to her – and through you, Mr. Speaker, to all members – that if indeed history is the torch that illuminates the past, a bit ironic given the subject of what we're talking about here, I think for some of us who have had the benefit of seeing since 1993 a host of concise, brief Bills that have been used, whether it was the original purpose or not, in ways to in fact injure, undercut, or undermine important public institutions, that may be part of the suspicion. So the Member for St. Albert is quite right to say it's brief and it's concise, but I think we have to look at this in a particular context. The context is what we've seen government do in the past with a whole range of Bills that are similarly brief and similarly concise.

Now, it was interesting to me the way the Bill is structured, because I would have thought, when you look at the changes in it, that what government might have done is address section 2, which is the duty with respect to historic resources. In fact, you look at the purpose clause set out there, and it's interesting to me. It says, "The Minister is responsible for," and then we enumerate four specific things, including:

- (a) the co-ordination of the orderly development,
- (b) the preservation,
- (c) the study and interpretation, and
- (d) the promotion of appreciation
of Alberta's historic resources.

It seems to me that what in effect we're doing is we're attempting

to amend section 2 without express wording. It's a backdoor means of involving people who don't have ministerial responsibility, who don't have to come into this place and truly be accountable for what's happening.

4:50

I might just say parenthetically that it was curious or interesting when my colleague the Opposition House Leader said a moment ago – he was talking about Drumheller. Being a native of Drumheller, I always have a particular interest in how this kind of a Bill would affect an institution like the Tyrrell Museum. I guess in a bit of a fanciful moment, if I were partisan – and I'm not really, Mr. Speaker, but if I were – I could imagine going through the museum at some point and seeing that somewhere between the Albertosaurus and the pterodactyl we might have the Toryosaurus with a little sign underneath. The dinosaur, this particular Toryosaurus, would have no doubt a calculator in one hand and a broadsword in the other. In any event, it looks like that's not going to happen for at least another four years. As I said, I'm not particularly partisan, but it was a fanciful notion that went through my head while I was thinking about these.

DR. TAYLOR: There are only 18 Liberals left in Alberta.

MR. DICKSON: We won't even talk about Calgary and southern Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

In any event, getting back to the Bill, as I say, it seems to me that we are attempting to do through the back door something that ought to be addressed at least squarely. If in fact we're going to get into turning over the kind of responsibility like dealing with funds to friends-of organizations, why don't we address it squarely by talking about section 2 of the Act instead of simply leaving section 2 and then carving out a whole lot of areas of responsibility that formerly were the responsibility of a minister of the Crown? Section 2 ought to be the place where we're having the debate, but we're not. Instead, what we're doing is we're fiddling around with a host of regulations and things that we're not going to see in terms of many of these changes.

DR. WEST: You're just nothing but a New Democratic Party. I used to have some respect for Liberals, but he's an NDP. That's all he is.

MR. DICKSON: Now, I want to say this, that there is a role – even the Minister of Energy will agree – there's certainly a role for involving friends-of organizations. I think of the Glenbow institute in Calgary. I seems to me it was year ago that the then Minister of Community Development sponsored a Bill that effectively took government out from running the Glenbow institute. I was happy to support that Bill, Mr. Speaker, and the reason I did so was because there had been a long history and a tradition that the Glenbow has virtually operated autonomous of the government of Alberta for a very long time anyway. In many respects it wasn't a collection and a resource in the same way that I see the Tyrrell Museum and the Reynolds museum and some of these other provincial assets, so I supported that. I can see that there's an important role for friends-of organizations.

But the difficulty, Mr. Speaker, is to come and do what this Bill proposes. For example, in section 2 of the Bill, particularly the deletion of a number of limits on the minister's power, where we're going is a degree further removed. I mean, it's one thing for the minister to be able to do subordinate lawmaking outside of the immediate scope of the Legislature, but then for the minister

to sort of hand over a significant area of responsibility that formerly was the minister's, it's now that much further removed from the kind of scrutiny that Albertans expect us to exercise in this Chamber. So I've got a particular problem with section 2 and the fact that we would lose the requirement that's set out in section 18(d)(ii). The expansion of discretion, discretionary power in terms of dealing with funds, I think is problematic.

[The Speaker in the Chair]

Section 3(b)(iii). I understand that I'm dealing with some detail in the Act, Mr. Speaker, but if you'll permit me, since it's an amendment Act, there are not principles as such. There's no principles section, so that's why I'm focusing on some of the narrow concerns. What section 3(b)(iii) purports to change is 10.2(3)(d), which deals with agreements between governments as to dollars. Well, it seems to me it's a curious thing. I'm not sure what other governments are going to enter into an arrangement with the government of Alberta whereby dollars are turned over and are going to be managed not by a provincial government entity but by a friends-of organization. I think it's not entirely likely to happen in any event.

The whole business of admission fees not going into an historical resources fund. It seems to me that we're being unfair to new historical sites that will be developed, because it seems to me there will always be some, like the Tyrrell Museum, which because of their size and uniqueness are going to attract a huge portion of the tourist dollars in terms of people that go outside the major centres. Then I wonder about developing new resources, and we know that as long as this government is in power, the dollars will not be there to nurture, to support other fledgling enterprises and other fledgling historical sites. I think that was surely one of the reasons for having an historical resources fund – wasn't it? – so that you would have a dedicated amount of money that would be available to take and encourage the development of new historical sites. I think that's what we want to see. That's what the ATP, the Alberta Tourism Partnership, wants to see. The comment always is that in terms of encouraging more people to come to Alberta and stay longer and spend more money, it's trying to develop a whole lot more tourist sites. Well, my concern is that we will be crippling – crippling may be a bit severe. We may be handicapping our ability as a province to be able to have funds available to develop new historical resources, historical sites wherever they may be in the province.

Now, it may be that members opposite will say: "Buffalo, you're all wet again; there is already every intention that funding is going to be available to develop these other sites. But, Mr. Speaker, we don't know that within the four corners of the Bill. It's not evident, it's not clear, and that's a concern I think will continue to exist.

I'm sure there are plenty of other members that want to speak to something as important as historical resources and how we promote them and protect them, so I'll take my seat at this point, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I would like this afternoon to say a few words about Bill 8. But first to my hon. colleague from Calgary-Buffalo: I realize his birthplace is Drumheller, but if he is to find a *Toryosaurus*, he's probably going to have to go to Medicine Hat and start digging, because I'm sure that's a logical place to start.

Why is this Bill necessary right now? Are the managers of these historical sites anxious for these changes? What is wrong with how things are run now? Why do we need to have these changes? The admission fees that we are talking about: if we end the payments to the historical resources fund from admission fees charged the visitors of the historical sites, where's the money? Where is it going to come from? How are we to do this?

This Bill will amend the Historical Resources Act. We realize that, but the minister already delegates powers and duties to employees appointed under section 3(1) of the Act. Therefore, it seems that the only reason to repeal this section would be to end the prohibition on the minister from delegating powers and duties under different sections. With these few statements I, too, am opposed and skeptical of Bill 8.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to speak against the Bill for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the apparent disregard for recent history. We have just received today, in fact, a report that explains the folly of privatizing a lot of services and allowing friends – and in this case, the report today, friends of the government – to take over a lot of operations. Now, agreed: this particular Act in and of itself does not precisely say that. But it is definitely a start, and I must take exception to some of the statements opposite: oh, don't worry about a thing; this is a small element of business; we needn't be concerned about this; our intentions are so wonderful and rosy that there isn't anything to be feared. Well, we heard the same thing a number of times from the opposite side.

DR. WEST: Tell us. Do. What were you thinking?

MR. WHITE: I have a question from the other side asking what I am thinking. In fact, the front row on the other side, with a far-out West over there smiling and thinking devious thoughts of what he's going to do to me if we meet in the hall outside once more.

Back to the business at hand, Mr. Speaker. Sorry to digress, but if anybody noticed that I did digress, it'd be amazing to me.

The historical resources. Really, when thinking of historical resources, we referred to some of the *Toryosauruses* and other such critters and creatures around this province. In fact, the historical resources of this province are really quite precious. We have a very recent history in this province, and we destroyed a great deal of it in the '40s and the '50s and in the '60s started to regain it and in the '70s really did some reclamation of those.

We're fast losing some of the resources: the people of our province that can tell us and remind us of how we came to be and how rapidly things are changing and of things that did change in their world. These resources are not to be taken lightly. In fact, there are those of us that grew up in this province and believe that these resources that we have and that we as a province, to the credit of provincial governments before this present government, have done a great deal to protect and enhance – I look at such recent acquisitions in the sphere of historical resources in this province as the Reynolds museum, an absolutely fantastic resource available to all in the province that pay the fee. That's a particularly good example of private and public ownership and operation. That particular one works, but we have equal and opposite to that.

We have a resource of some 70 years in a radio station that was

to be thrown away and discarded without a whimper from this government, not even a call for concern. That, in my view, is another historical resource that needed to be protected and in fact enhanced. Now, there are people that are out there today that are donating time and money and a great deal of effort to do just that, and here we have a Bill before us that says: well, just open the door; we'll allow friends of to do this and friends of to do that.

This one is dealing with money. There's one particular section that repeals the reason for the funds gathering. I would have thought that one of the things that would be fundamental in a Bill purporting to be protecting historical resources would in fact be how the money is spent, what kinds of safeguards one would put on those funds, what kinds of safeguards one would put on the devolution of the responsibility and, in many cases, artifacts and pieces of history. There are many questions to be asked and answered when you get in a small measure into privatizing these resources.

There are those of us in this province that believe that there are a number of avenues, other ways to deal with this. In fact, some people here believe that only those that can afford the entrance fee should ever go into anything. Well, I have a little difficulty with that in that the people that I represent in a great deal of my riding simply do not and cannot afford to do the extra fund-raising to send their children off to a provincial museum or to Reynolds museum or to the Ukrainian historic sites around the province, simply cannot do those kinds of things because the entrance fees are higher than they need be now.

I believe that the historical resources in fact are owned in small measure by each and every one of us. If you don't avail yourself of the opportunity to go see and to view and to understand these things and to study the locations that do house all these resources, well then, that is an owner's loss. This Legislature and certainly this government seems to treat historical resources as ownership by all of us, but only those that can afford it are able to go and visit these places. I prefer to treat them as a library would be treated or a resource that one can really draw upon to find who in fact they are and to find what they are.

This Act is offensive in its assumption that every soul in this province can actually afford to go, to drop cash everywhere in order to attend a number of these facilities. I would think that donations to the funds are wonderful things because there's an awful lot of people that do that, but they come generally with the proviso that that's for all of the people to use. Then the imposition of fees and certainly taking fees out and setting them aside for some private organization to run is mildly distasteful and in fact runs contrary to the spirit in which I believe: that historical resources should in fact be administered in this province.

Mr. Speaker, looking across the way and looking at the historical resources and thinking of historical resources and how one would preserve that: it's a special specimen. There are very, very, very few Westosaurus around, and the example we have in this House is such a prime example of a one-off that we'll likely never, never, never have it repeated, and I would hate to see it go beyond anything. Sort of in a pickle jar would be kind of good for a while. Mind you, we wouldn't want to have that happen prior to a full and long life in this Legislature, certainly, but it would be of interest, and we're certainly not likely to see any others come across this Legislature such as that one. There are many others of many other types, me included, but that one's kind of special.

Mr. Speaker, the train of thought is thoroughly destroyed, and

I'm going to have to take my seat and allow some of my colleagues to speak on the Bill but certainly not before we have some answers on the administration of this Act, and certainly the proponent might have some answers for us too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to lend my voice as well to the opposition to Bill 8. I would also raise my voice and ask the questions: why, why now, and why, also, given the stark lack of this issue being raised during the election? Not once did I hear that in any way, shape, or form this government was intending to fragment, further deregulate, offset, or funnel funds in a different route, and quite frankly, I think that Albertans have been kept in the dark with respect to the possible implications of this Bill. Certainly the members on the government side of the House did not raise it during the election, and I would indicate, because of that to some degree, perhaps the Bill should be withdrawn.

5:10

I would also just like to note that I really see the process, particularly with respect to those bringing Bills, to be somewhat flawed when there is no substantive rationale brought forward other than in the preliminary remarks that the member makes upon introducing the Bill. Those who are not of the party introducing the Bill are really left to speculate about what the rationale or basis is. I think that in any other sector, whether it be private or public, when substantive decisions are being made, there is an element in the process that allows for the distribution of information about rationale. That does not occur with government Bills, and I would suggest that on this particular Bill it would be of assistance for those of us that are undertaking to debate it.

I would like to make mention of the comment that was made by the hon. Member for St. Albert basically attempting to raise reassurances to the members of the opposition that this Bill was not in fact intended to allow the friends' groups to assume any type of management responsibilities. I raise that question because, number one, I cannot find any references in the amendments that provide any guarantees that that will not happen. Currently in section 2 of the Act the minister has the authority to provide for the regulations regarding the naming, the management, and the handling of historical resources. Given the fact that that's being repealed, then where does that fall? I don't see anything by way of any type of background or information that says where that falls, so there is a reasonable speculation that the friends would assume that function.

It should also be noted in 10.2 that "the Minister may use the Fund . . . to provide operational grants to non-profit organizations." Again, I would ask: where is that proposed function going to go?

Further along the line of accountability and the questions about who will manage historical resources are the proposed changes to section 3. It would be our view as the opposition that those changes do implicate the accountability of the friends' groups, and in particular we would ask why the minister would be suggesting that the level of accountability for how moneys within the historical resource fund are distributed. The supplemental question, then, that follows that one is: what exactly is the historical resources fund going to do, and what are the plans for

that if in fact admission fees are not going to be routed any longer to that particular group?

I think I would conclude that there is a degree of lack of information that would suggest that this is a further initiative to privatize an aspect of Alberta's history and resources that is very, very important. I would raise the question and a concern to echo concerns made by my other colleagues. Having attended on the weekend a Jewish community remembrance ceremony for victims of the Holocaust, it brought to mind how important it is that the history of not only our province but other significant events that have occurred in the world that have affected Albertans . . .

THE SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, but under Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must now put the question on the motion for consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

head: **Consideration of His Honour
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.

[Motion carried]

head: **Government Motions**

Address in Reply to Throne Speech

16. Mr. Havelock moved on behalf of Mr. Klein:

Be it resolved that the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

[Motion carried]

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, in light of the hour I move that we adjourn the Assembly until 8 o'clock this evening in Committee of Supply.

THE SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with the motion by the hon. Government House Leader?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:17 p.m.]