

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, May 13, 1997 8:00 p.m.
Date: 97/05/13
head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order. For the benefit of those in the gallery this is the less formal part of the Legislature. We are a little freer to move about the Chamber, hopefully not in a disturbing fashion. We do try and attend to the custom of only one member standing and talking at a time. Tonight there will be a report of a committee, so it'll be a little more structured than is usual in committee stage.

May we have unanimous consent to briefly revert to the Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to look up into the gallery and see some familiar faces. We're very fortunate to have with us this evening observing the workings of committee a group of young, energetic Albertans that I had the opportunity to address earlier this afternoon, as have a number of members of the Legislature, both government members and opposition members. I would like at this time to acknowledge and welcome all members of the Alberta Forum for Young Albertans, who are in the Legislature visiting with members of the Legislature all week long and who this evening had dinner with their MLAs in the Leg. cafeteria. I would like all members to give them a warm welcome.

head: Main Estimates 1997-98

Community Development

THE CHAIRMAN: Again, this is the convention that was worked out some time ago, 20-25 or some combination thereof, and hopefully we'll keep it all straight.

To begin this evening's consideration of these estimates, we'll call on the Minister of Community Development.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here tonight before the Assembly again with I guess the wrap-up of the estimates of the Department of Community Development. I'd like to acknowledge in the gallery my deputy minister, Julian Nowicki; Dr. Bill Byrne, ADM of cultural facilities and historical resources; Murray Finnerty, ADM of community and citizenship services; Rai Batra, executive director, administrative services; Ken Wilson, executive director in the seniors division; Dave Arseneault, also from the seniors division; Gordon Turtle from our communications area; and Brian Kearns, executive director of program services for AADAC. And no, there are no more people left in Community Development; they're all here tonight.

We had a very good debate on the estimates in committee. I will just highlight a few areas. Mr. Chairman, I will be asking the chairs of the various groups under my ministry – the Seniors

Advisory Council first, Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, Multiculturalism Commission, and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission – to say a few words about their areas of responsibility.

I have provided the members with written responses to the questions. I am not sure if you have them all yet, but I know I've signed them off, and they're probably in your baskets. If there is anything that you feel wasn't covered, please let me know.

I do want to just take a moment to clarify a couple of issues that were raised at committee level, in particular AADAC, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. The chairman of that commission will have some comments. Again, I want to remind all members of the opportunity to review the document Towards an Addiction-free Alberta: a Reconsideration of the Role and Mandate of AADAC. As I mentioned, we have fully accepted the recommendations of that committee, which was chaired by Mr. Brassard, who was the MLA for Olds-Didsbury at the time. Mr. Brassard and his committee concluded that AADAC has a strong leadership role to play in helping Albertans, and I don't think any of us dispute that finding. Consequently, we didn't hesitate to embrace and accept all of those recommendations. I think that outlines the importance of AADAC to us.

I should also remind members that AADAC is a model across Canada and in fact the world. We have many requests from other countries as well as other provinces for our people to go and assist them in developing a program similar to AADAC in their country.

Another area of leadership that we discussed quite extensively the other night is the area of seniors. As I've indicated, our income support programs are among the most generous and effective in the country. I did table a news release today that I hope members had an opportunity to review. It does give some statistical information, sort of a year in review. I see one hon. member looking, but it was tabled in the House earlier today, and I'm sure you'll get a copy of it.

It's really, I think, heartening to all of us to see the number of seniors that have been helped by those changes that were made to that program over the past year. Again, I pay tribute to the seniors' organizations, led by the interagency council, and the Seniors Advisory Council for assisting us in meeting those most pressing needs. As I also indicated earlier, we've not finished the job. We're going to continue to consult through the interagency council, through the Seniors Advisory Council, and continue to make sure that we are addressing the needs of seniors in this province.

I was asked how we're going to respond to the increased numbers of seniors. Of course, that will be a challenge for us, but as we monitor our programs, we will adjust them accordingly. I think we want to stay flexible but also offer stability in those programs to seniors. I think that's of most importance to them. Certainly the fact that we have fiscal stability in this province will aid us in being able to respond to our seniors.

One of the areas that I want to just mention again briefly is libraries. Our library system last year met at 309 service points the information needs of 2.5 million Albertans. That tells me that libraries are needed, and we'll continue to work with them. A highlight of last year, which will be implemented over the next four years, is the electronic network LINC, and we were able to commit \$4.8 million to that. That will connect all libraries wherever they are in Alberta on the information highway.

The other area I want to touch on just very briefly is the arts, an area of importance to our province, certainly a large contributor both economically – up to \$2 billion of activity in that area in our province – but maybe even more importantly to the quality of life and the opportunities it gives to burgeoning artists in commu-

nities in our province. The arts community was spared from funding reductions. I think that shows how much importance this government shows to the arts. I have to just quote an interesting item from *See* magazine. Some of you who are familiar with the arts community would know this. I'm quoting it verbatim from the March 20 issue, where a community arts organizer was quoted as saying: it's so tricky because the Liberals are in power federally, yet CBC cuts continue; but the PCs are here in Alberta, and they haven't taken a dollar out of arts funding. I thought it was an interesting quote.

The record is clear. The arts community understands that. I don't want to be smug about it. It's something that we think is important to this province, and I know that survival in a competitive market is not easy for our arts community. Certainly we all felt the loss of the Phoenix theatre in the last year, but the facts are that between 1993 and '97 the Alberta Foundation for the Arts provided well over \$420,000 to that theatre and offered operations assistance and a line of credit. I think we did everything we could to keep it open. Ultimately, I think the success of any theatre group rests primarily on its ability to produce shows that the community is willing to support. Box office viability and sound management, not government grants, determine in the long run whether a theatre group will survive. Creativity must not be reserved for the stage; it must be evident behind the scenes as well. I think that our arts community are understanding that.

Certainly through the stability fund we are able to offer some assistance to groups, and they are very appreciative of that. I don't think that adopting good business practices has to compromise artistic integrity. I've had a lot of opportunity to discuss that with the arts groups, and I think they agree with that. I certainly hope there are no more closures in our theatre community. I hope they learn to work together – and they are – but the managers, the staff, and the volunteers will make that determination, not us.

Mr. Chairman, I had planned to use about 10 minutes and leave the balance of the 10 for the three groups who are under my area of responsibility. I will listen carefully to the questions that are posed by the hon. members opposite in their comments and, again, will respond to them in writing. As I've said before, my door is always open, my telephone gets answered if you stay up late enough, and my calls get returned.

So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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

8:10

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for allowing me to explain to the Legislature the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund. On July 15 of 1996 our government proclaimed the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act, and this new Act created the Human Rights and Citizenship Commission and established an education fund. The fund is to be used for education programs, services, and grants that are related to the purposes of the Act.

I have the pleasure of being the chairperson of the education fund. What I'd like to share with you this evening are the purposes of the Act, and that is to forward the principle that every person is equal in dignity and rights

without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status,

to promote awareness and appreciation of the racial and cultural diversity of Alberta society, to promote an environment in which

all Albertans can participate in and contribute to the cultural and economic and political life of Alberta, to encourage all sectors of Alberta society to provide equality of opportunity, and to research, develop, and conduct educational programs that are designed to eliminate discriminatory practices related to

race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status.

Those of course, as you know, Mr. Chairman, are lifted directly from the Act.

Now, the purposes of the education fund advisory committee – and this is just specifically the purposes; I'm just going to allude to four – are to provide advice regarding the program funding grants and other financial assistance and review applications for grants and make recommendations to the minister. We also provide advice, Mr. Chairman, to the minister on issues related to the educational objectives of the Act and undertake specific projects identified by the minister. That's just a short summary of what the committee reviews. I'd welcome any member of the Legislature to contact our committee if you're interested in the application process for grants or programs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Madam Minister.

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Chairman, it's a pleasure for me to be here this evening and to be given a chance to speak on behalf of the Seniors Advisory Council. I am pleased to have been asked to serve as the chair of the council and to work with the Hon. Shirley McClellan to address seniors' issues.

Mr. Chairman, I believe in the mandate of the council and feel I have been given the exciting opportunity of listening to seniors, gathering and analyzing feedback from them, and reporting their views to government. I'm anxious to help the minister with the process of continually monitoring the impact of government programs on Alberta seniors. I think it will be important to maintain our dialogue and establish relationships with seniors across the province. This process can be used as a mechanism for gathering feedback, which can then be used in the process of developing policy and programs.

I recently met with 10 members of the Seniors Advisory Council. All members agreed on the importance of holding a planning meeting in the near future. At that meeting, Mr. Chairman, we will be reviewing the focus and mandate of the council and determining what activities to undertake. Our goal will be to meet the expectations of Alberta's seniors and this government. We will also be looking at ways to serve the entire province more efficiently and effectively.

The council's budget for 1997-98 is unchanged from last year. I believe this shows the government's commitment to the council and acknowledges the council's important role and function.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the members of this council. Their efforts are of a great value and allow the council to continue to aid the government. Myself and other council members are committed to operating as effectively and efficiently as possible, to representing seniors' views, and to providing advice to the minister and to the government. I look forward to meeting with seniors and organizations that represent them to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing seniors.

Thank you.

MRS. BURGNER: Mr. Chairman, this is a privilege for me to stand as the new chairman for AADAC. I appreciate having the comments following the new chairman of the Seniors Advisory

Council, because in taking over this commission, there is a major linkage with respect to our elderly and aspects of abuse with respect to medication that is carried over, and I feel very comfortable moving into this milieu with this responsibility in my previous experiences.

I would like to draw everyone's attention to the Budget '97 update, because I appreciate that our time tonight is somewhat limited. In the discussions on the AADAC budget and goals on pages 112 and 113 I think it very clearly spells out that there's a \$29 million commitment from this government to deal with the issue of substance abuse in all its aspects. They outline a number of goals.

It's unfortunate that our young students have just left this evening.

AN HON. MEMBER: They're up there. They just arrived.

MRS. BURGNER: There we go. Okay. I watched one gallery empty. It is very important that our young people embrace the issues that we commit these dollars to, because surely the future of our province rests on the ability to manage substance abuse in all its aspects. We have a major goal in place which is to not only control the abuse aspect but also to look at the education components to minimize its development, so I'd like all of you to be cognizant of that. As has been mentioned by my other colleagues, there's an opportunity to contact our commission if we can be of any assistance in following through on our goals and outcomes. Clearly, prevention is the most important aspect.

In the mandate review report of AADAC that was completed by the MLA committee and released in February, there was an endorsement of the value of AADAC, and I would like to reinforce that in my comments tonight. I recognize the fact that there is a significant dollar aspect to the commission that can be expended that shows the commitment of this government. We also recommended that the mandate review committee would maintain its arm's-length provincewide agency and provide leadership in addictions, and I think you'll see in initiatives over the next few years a continued commitment to that mandate review.

There is a 2 percent increase in the grant from government, and this increase will be used to increase grants to all community-funded programs by 1 percent and to provide additional counselors in places like Lac La Biche, Athabasca, Whitecourt, Drayton Valley, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Brooks. In addition, funding from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission to AADAC will provide for research, prevention, and treatment of problem gambling. The budget will be increased by 23 percent, with a projected increase of 48 percent over the next three years of our business plan. This increase is to provide an inpatient gambling program for native people at Poundmaker's Lodge and to continue inpatient programs at Thorpe Recovery Centre in Lloydminster and South Country in Lethbridge. AADAC will be developing day treatment and weekend programs for gamblers and extending its reach through a home page and other educational programs for gamblers and their families across the province.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I would just like to state that AADAC's budget demonstrates strong government support for prevention and treatment of problems related to alcohol, drugs, and gambling. Our commission is very accessible, and we look forward to hearing from all members on these issues.

Thank you.

8:20

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister and the chairpersons of the various councils under Community Development. I am disappointed that I didn't get the written answers to the questions, and I hope you'll forgive me if I repeat something you've already answered in those documents. I have reviewed the *Hansard* from that debate, and anything you've already answered I obviously am not asking again.

During that debate I mentioned that women seem to have disappeared from the government. We had a little bit of a smile about that, but I'm quite serious. We used to have a Women's Secretariat, the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and a number of programs that came through those two agencies, and there's not a word about women.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, I wonder if we could carry on lively debates in the lounges or out on the balcony. It's getting difficult for some people to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Edmonton-Centre, continue.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. All right. Women. Women do seem to have disappeared. The word is not mentioned anywhere in the budget. The programs are gone. The minister did say that there were some programs that continued to be run, and I'd be interested in what those programs are that Community Development provides on behalf of women specifically. I had mentioned a few programs I knew had run in the past and wondered about the Stepping Stones program for instance. What is this government doing on behalf of women, and specifically since it falls under Community Development, what in that department?

Regarding the Jubilee auditoria, I'd asked a number of questions there, some of which were answered, but my question about why the budget for the auditoria was cut in half has not been answered. I think that's of interest to people.

Provincial service organizations. For this we're covering the areas of arts, sports, and recreation. These agencies have continued to contact me, and they're very concerned. They have taken over a number of government programs. I mentioned before that they were funded exactly the line item for the program but not the administrative support that was coming from the department staff who perform different duties for the program or were there for advice to people that came in to ask questions about it or to offer expertise to the groups that are now running the programs. That money was not transferred as part of the grants to run these programs. It is costing the groups that are doing this, and they have a great concern about this. They're missing that support, and they felt that they should have had the money for the administration transferred along with it.

I thank the minister for her recognition of the importance of arts and culture to the province of Alberta, but I will beg to differ on something. The exact money grants to various agencies for the most part has not been cut, but again the administrative support that was available through the various foundations and the Community Development staff has definitely been cut. I can think of two positions that I think have been cut in the last six months. Those positions and the expertise that those people had really contributes to that sector, and to have the staff positions - there have been a number of them cut over the last any number of time, the last five years, the last 10 years. That's really affecting this sector. They are either having to go without the expertise and make the mistakes or pay their own people additional money or overtime or however it works out to try and cope with that additional burden.

I want to make that one really clear. These groups do feel as

though they are under siege. I know that you are working hard to develop a good, ongoing dialogue with the groups. I think you met with some sector or some group yesterday or the day before. But I'm surprised how many are phoning me and saying: "We feel under siege. We don't know what's going to happen to us in the future. We don't know what our grant amounts are going to be. Are we supposed to keep going, producing the same thing that we've been producing and providing the same programs we've been providing when in many cases the dollars have stayed static?" My example there is: many of them are still purchasing in 1992 dollars, 1987 dollars. Well, when they go to purchase supplies, it's not as though they can say to the supplier: "Excuse me, but my grant money is in 1992 dollars. Could I please buy that scenic paint in 1992 dollars?" It doesn't happen. So they are experiencing an erosion in what's going on. I'm sure, given our pride in what the arts and cultural sector contributes to Alberta, we would want to be supporting this sector.

I have asked a number of different individuals and had different answers: will the arts and cultural sector be included in the Growth Summit? I think this is a critical question. We know how much it contributes to the economy. You yourself mentioned \$2 billion. Certainly it generates the presence of a lively and active arts community, generates a vitality that attracts business. Corporations will not move here unless they know that their staff are going to be able to be involved in the opera and symphony and theatre and ballet. I think that this sector definitely needs to be included. How could it not be when it's the third-largest industry in Alberta? I think not to would be a huge oversight. If I might also point out, I hope it would not fall under the social side of things. Although this is quality of life, it also has economic factors to it. As we know, it only costs \$20,000 to create a job in the arts and cultural sector. So this is a good place to look for job creation and for support for that.

Just a brief example. For instance, when Syncrude moved into Fort McMurray, there wasn't much of a cultural scene there. They have invested over the last 20 years significant amounts of money with the understanding that they needed a vibrant local arts scene. They've also really contributed to arts and culture throughout the province to make sure that that was growing and developing. They also do their best to bring different kinds of cultural events into Fort McMurray. So there's another example of that.

The multicultural community. What I'm hearing is that they may have agreed to relinquish their funding for the four Ds – the dance, diet, dialect, and dress – but they did not expect to disappear from view by being rolled into citizenship with the Human Rights Commission. They do feel that they've sort of disappeared off of the agenda. The words are not spoken, and there doesn't seem to be a pride and a focus and a support for them. That's how they're feeling. I still had a question: what is the breakout of dollars to each of those sectors, and what is the long-range approach to multiculturalism in this province? Will we be upholding the cultural mosaic, or are we looking to move in a different direction with it? If there could just be a bit more specifics about what's happening. Certainly, these groups feel a little bit at sea. They're not sure where they're supposed to be going in the future and what kind of support will be there for them.

One of the questions I had asked was about children's services. What is this under Community Development? It's one line in the budget. Is this to give art classes to children? Is it to take them on cultural field trips? Why is it just one sentence? Has there

been a program that's been developed? Is it a partnership? How much money and staff is allotted to it, or are we expecting partnerships with the groups under the umbrella of Community Development? Are they being expected to contribute from their existing budgets to do whatever it is with this program around children's services? There's very little information.

I wish to commend AADAC, by the way, for their program recognizing different treatment for men and women under the addictions counseling. We know now from our research in the medical profession that men and women react differently. They show different symptoms for diseases, heart disease for instance. Medication affects them differently. I commend AADAC on developing this gender-specific drug rehab and counseling. It's a good idea. I think it will work for you, although I'm not always in favour of separating men and women obviously, but this one we have research and scientific statistics to back up that this is the approach that needs to happen.

8:30

I had also inquired about the lottery licence renewal and how long it was going to be renewed for. Again, that's part of the instability that the community is feeling, if they don't know how long they're supposed to plan for and where the money is supposed to be.

I know the minister during the debates had spoken glowingly of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the staff there and the relationship with the community. That is one of the specific areas where staff has been reduced, and we're really missing those people. Certainly the community feels that way, that although grant money may not have been cut specifically, losing those staff positions is making a difference.

In closing, I think each division has groups that are trying to raise more money, and I think we should be proud of what all of the groups under the umbrella of Community Development have been able to do. Certainly some of them started out with 90 or 100 percent government funding. They're now down, as you point out, Madam Minister, to under 25 percent for most of them, which is really quite an accomplishment. I don't think you could find many other areas where you could say that. I do want to make the point that these organizations, whether they be a youth hockey team or an arts, cultural, or multicultural group, are now competing in a fund-raising sector in which they don't have the resources that some of the newer groups in that sector have.

In particular, I'm talking about fund-raising for health and education. It's very difficult for them to compete with that, especially when those groups come with such large amounts of setup money and they're doing million-dollar dream homes. You know, a boys' hockey club just can't compete on that level, yet they're having to do more and more bingos, casinos, raffles, and chocolate bars, all of that stuff, and it takes away from what they're actually trying to do. They're being forced to compete in a sector that is getting far more aggressive and has a lot more front money. So I just wanted to point that out to the minister.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I think one of my other colleagues wishes to address another subject.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A number of questions to the minister. Before my specific questions I've had a chance to review what was said on May 1, '97, and specifically the questions raised then by my colleague from Edmonton-Centre. I'll repeat and incorporate by reference all of those excellent

questions she posed, and I look forward to seeing the responses.

Before turning to the Human Rights Commission, I wanted to just touch on library funding. I note that for the 277 public libraries in this province, probably one of the most undervalued resources and one of the most worthwhile things that we have in this province, their funding has effectively been frozen; as I understand, about \$12.28 million since the turn of the decade. I saw something the other day that indicated that since 1989 the population served by our public library system has increased by 209,792 people. So it's a 9 percent increase, and I'd be interested in what the minister's plans are to address that. That's the one resource for people who don't have deep pockets and don't have to travel long distances. Public libraries are accessible, and now that the freedom of information directories are there, it becomes a valuable tool for people also finding out about the inner workings of government.

Now, I'll just leave FOIP alone, and, Madam Minister, through the Chair, I wanted to touch on the Human Rights and Citizenship Commission – sorry; the advisory committee. It was interesting that the Member for Calgary-Cross talked about their giving advice to the minister. It's an interesting thing because if one looks at section 16(1)(h), the purpose of the Human Rights Commission is to advise the minister on matters related to this Act. I have occasion to talk to a lot of people in that community who are served by both the education fund, chaired by Calgary-Cross, and by the Human Rights Commission. The feedback I get frequently is that we've got a Human Rights Commission that has sort of turtled and is now focused on the most mechanical, narrow construction of our human rights' legislation and seems to be absolutely fixated with addressing a backlog but little in terms of those progressive leadership kinds of things we want to see. When we still have a taxi industry, for example, in the city of Calgary where you can specifically order a Caucasian driver, it seems to me that we've got a long ways to go, Madam Minister, in terms of promoting human rights.

So we've got the Human Rights Commission that is taking an incredibly small "c" conservative approach to administering the Act, and you've got this advisory committee over here advising you on how to spend the fund of \$1.1 million. Some questions flow from that. I'm interested in knowing the specific criteria that are employed by the advisory committee in terms of what applications they request and then pass on to the minister with recommendations. I'd ask for a list of those groups that have received funding under the education fund. I'd also like a listing of those groups who have applied and been refused access to the fund. When I see that, I might have some other advice to offer the minister and the Member for Calgary-Cross, but I'd like to see if it bears out what I've heard from a number of groups and organizations that have experienced some frustration in that respect.

Just turning to the Human Rights Commission for a moment, I'm interested specifically with respect to section 23, the human rights panel. Madam Minister, we've got some serious problems here because what's happened is that in the last year the focus has been predominantly one of resolving a backlog and settling cases. If I had a nickel for everybody who came to me and told me a story of finding, as a consequence of an investigation, that there had been discrimination in the areas of either employment, accommodation, or advertising for employment, yet then there was a proposal of a \$500 settlement offered by an employer or landlord – what people would report to me is that they were told by the commission: you'd better take the \$500 because that's the best you're going to get.

After a while you have to start asking: what's the point in the

Act if people continually are being nickel and dimed at the director level? That then begs the question: how many human rights panels have been convened in this province since the new Act went into force? I'd like to know the average length of time until there's been a disposition by the panel. I'd like to know in how many cases the decision of the director has been overturned by a human rights panel. I'd like to know specifically what the cost has been of the panel, because that's not broken out in the material we've got in front of us. If we look at the program, it's at – I've got too many sticky tags here. In any event, the minister knows far better than I do where the item is. I'm interested because there's no breakout in terms of what the enforcement machinery is costing Albertans, so we have no basis to be able to evaluate the efficiency, the effectiveness of our human rights enforcement system.

When I look at the education fund, a couple of things that I find curious. Administration is \$37,000, and program delivery – I'm looking at page 99. This is the income statement. This may be apparent once I see the criteria that are being used by the advisory committee, but I'd like to know how many recommendations from the advisory committee for funding have been refused by the minister. I'd like to know what the minister's response is if I suggest to her that many groups have formed the opinion that the kind of funding you get from the human rights, citizenship and multiculturalism education fund is generally for doing exactly the same kinds of things that prior to the creation of this fund had been funded from the multiculturalism fund, and that proposals which have come to you through your advisory committee for long-term studies into tolerance, racism, acceptance issues and those kinds of things have been declined for funding, which on the face of it seems to be odd, Madam Minister. Those would seem to be exactly the kinds of things that one would think your department and the education fund would be supporting.

Now, the other thing I wanted to ask the minister, through the Chair. I don't know how many human rights panels have been constituted in the province, but I'm interested in finding out how many people have been appointed to these panels. The chief commissioner has to be one of them; it must consist of one or more members of the commission. I'm just interested in the breakdown in terms of those people on the commission. How many have served on a panel, and how many times?

Those are my questions. Thank you.

8:40

THE CHAIRMAN: The time now being up, after considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Community Development for 1997-98, are you ready for the vote?

Agreed to:

Operating Expense	\$252,105,000
Capital Investment	\$110,000

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Environmental Protection

THE CHAIRMAN: Since this is a report of the designated supply subcommittee, we'll call on the chair of that subcommittee to begin. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. BOUTILIER: The question is being called. I would like to make some nice comments here about the entire committee's work last week. It's my pleasure to report on the meeting of the designated supply subcommittee on Environmental Protection. We met on the evening of May 1 at 6 p.m., and with the unanimous consent of the committee we were able to conclude our business by 8 p.m., following the opening statements of the minister and the mandatory two hours of questions by the opposition. The committee was comprised of 12 members: eight on behalf of the government, three representing opposition Liberals, and one representing the New Democratic Party. The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection and several of his senior officials from his department participated in providing some detailed responses to some very good questions. The deputy minister, Peter Melnychuk; the executive director of finance, Bill Simon; the ADM of corporate management services, Ron Hicks; the ADM of environmental regulatory service, Al Schulz; the executive director of forest management, Craig Quintilio; and the ADM of natural resources, Jim Nichols, were all there helping and answering some questions through the minister. The members of the opposition had the opportunity to ask questions of the minister with respect to the '97-98 budget estimates. I would like to thank members from both sides of the House for their cooperation in making the meeting run very efficiently.

We covered a great many topics during our evening of questioning. I'd like to give you a brief overview. We heard from the minister about Environmental Protection's business plan for '97-98. It builds upon the key directions and initiatives outlined in previous budget plans in '97. It puts the department in a position of strength to enter the next century. In more relative terms the business plan sets Environmental Protection's courses for the next three years and incorporates the activities of the Natural Resources Conservation Board and the Environmental Appeal Board. It dedicates resources to the efficient, effective, and responsible delivery of the ministry's core business and the wise management of Alberta's renewable and natural resources and the management of environmental hazards that may pose risks to people, prosperity, and resources.

The committee heard that over the next three years, Environmental Protection will continue to streamline, reduce overlap through regulatory reform, and work with the multistakeholder groups on long-term strategies such as the forest conservation strategy and special places. The 1997 to 2000 business plan will see the ministry budget reduced by \$50 million from the '96-97 budget estimates of \$346 million, and this will reduce total department spending by \$136.1 million, or 31.5 percent, from the '92-93 levels. The '97-98 budget of \$317 million also includes a reduction of \$29 million and 254 full-time positions from the '96-97 estimate of \$346 million. Now, the '97-98 budget will see 3,326 full-time staff positions dedicated to provincewide delivery of high-quality environmental programs.

Now, in addition to the questions on fiscal issues, the minister also fielded questions on other topics, and many of them, I might add, were very complimentary. In regards to the department's efforts at public consultation, the minister was congratulated on his review of the Water Resources Act and encouraged to use it as a benchmark for future efforts. He was also complimented on the breadth and knowledge of his answers. Other questions which were asked were along the lines of such things as what actions his ministry had taken on issues of regulatory noncompliance, the

kinds of regulatory change which he is pursuing, and comments on present and future public consultation initiatives.

So in presenting this report, Mr. Chairman, I cannot deal with every matter that was considered by the subcommittee, but I have provided an overview of some of the issues that we discussed, very good questions by both sides. I encourage all members, if they're interested in reviewing the meeting in more detail, to consult *Hansard*, issue 14. I can say from my experience in listening to the discussions, the issues and topics surrounding Environmental Protection were broad and varied, and every part of our lives was covered.

In closing, I'd like to thank the minister, his officials, the members from both sides of the House for a very informative session.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before I recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, just to confirm: my understanding is that the House leaders' agreement is such that we don't have this taking up of the minister's or the chairman's time. It's a 20-20-2 straight, hard and fast. Okay?

MR. BOUTILIER: Yeah. I don't intend to speak again.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's my understanding from the agreement. That's what it says here, so if there's a change in that . . . Hon. Government House Leader, could you verify that this agreement does have discrete periods of time for the designated supply chair and for the opposition?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Twenty minutes for the chair, 20 minutes for opposition, and two minutes for the NDP, if they wish to use it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Having said that, we'll reset the clock and invite the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to begin his part of this consideration.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a great pleasure that I get to kind of summarize the issue in the budget on the department of the environment. I want to thank the minister first off for the effort that he took to provide the critic on our side with the business plan. They asked for the detailed business plan that wasn't available in the documents. They've asked that I express real appreciation for the fact that you've taken the opportunity to provide us with this. I've got a couple of questions that arise from some of the issues in there, but I want to deal with a couple of issues that came up since the designated committee met, that we would like to address. Then I've got a couple of other colleagues that want to have a minute or so for a couple of questions each. Then we'll split our 20 minutes on that basis.

8:50

The initial issue that I want to bring up deals with the implementation or the use now of the administrative penalties. Rather than charging a violator of any of the environmental regulations and proceeding with the court or whatever else the process was, now you go into the administrative penalty issues and basically go through a process where a fine, titled an administrative penalty, is levied against a violator.

Some of the issues that come up with this are in terms of how those dollars are allocated back to the department. Some of the things that came up that differentiate this process from the prior,

you know, laying a charge and going to court kind of thing – under the previous system when a violator broke one of the environmental regulations, the public was aware of it as soon as the process was taken into a challenge, into a court situation. Now when it goes through the administrative penalty process, I think it's the environmental review group, the Environmental Law Centre that does the administration of that. Until after the company goes through the appeal period, there is no public awareness of the fact that that violator of a regulation or violator of an environmental condition is actually being challenged or being considered for a penalty. So there's in essence no opportunity for, you know, the public to be aware of what processes are going on until after the end of the appeal period, whereas under the court system that you had before, whenever the briefings were filed in the courts, the public was aware of it, so they could become involved and aware of what was going on while the process . . .

MR. LUND: So you could be hung before you go to court.

DR. NICOL: Well, the court system works that way, Mr. Minister.

Anyway, you know, it's that kind of an issue. Even after the hearing is brought down, until the appeal period is over, there is no public release of it. So this is just little bit of a different process. There are some questions being raised about, you know, the public's right to know, I guess, as much as anything in connection with this.

The groups, then, that are involved here would like to know if there is a process that they're not aware of to get information, say, once a penalty has been levied, you know, during the appeal period that exists for them to cover that. So this is one of the kind of issues that they would like to have addressed in connection with that.

Some of the other things that I wanted to deal with now dealt specifically with issues that arise out of the business plan that you have. I know it doesn't deal directly with the budget, but the business plan is part of the budgeting process now. In your goal 1 where you want to "protect and maintain Alberta's high quality air, land and water," the issue that comes up there is that you're going to under strategy 1.1 rewrite land treatment guidelines for industrial waste. I was wondering if included in this strategy and this budget line item there were any initiatives being put in place to monitor some of the programs that are out there now, where they're taking the sludge out of the urban waste treatment plants and plowing it into farmland, how this is being monitored dealing with potential groundwater pollution, runoff? Are they getting good penetration of bad materials into the ground? How is that going to affect basically the quality of that land?

We've seen examples in some situations where intensive livestock operations are using, you know, specialty products, and their feeds have really reduced the productivity of agricultural land by overapplication of heavy metals and some of the other contaminants to the point that the productivity of the agricultural land has gone down. Is that being monitored to make sure that that kind of thing doesn't happen as these urban sludge disposal processes take place on these agricultural lands? It's not a criticism or a complaint about that process. It seems to be working very effectively. I know the city of Lethbridge is doing it. The city of Calgary is doing it. They find it very effective, very cost-effective. We just have to make sure that over time we're not in some way damaging the quality of the land base that

those wastes are being applied to. So I'd like to get some clarification on that.

Then in your second strategy, 1.2, you're talking about monitoring and taking action "to maintain the quality of Alberta's air, land and water." Mr. Minister, one of the big issues that comes up in the public all the time is CO² emissions, and I was wondering if at any point in time you had considered as part of this strategy developing kind of a CO² balance model so that we know what our level is now. Any increased additions to it would raise the balance. Any strategies that you undertake – like, one of the things that's very attractive in your program here is the number of new trees to be planted this year. You know, that in essence would be a sink for that carbon dioxide, an absorber of that carbon dioxide so that it would give us a positive balance in that CO² model, these kinds of things. We could then deal with strategies, the voluntary compliance programs that are in place. These would all contribute very positively to maintaining that just to see where we stand in terms of some initiatives. I know it's very difficult to pick a specific measure, you know, go out and take 10cc of air, and say "What is the concentration there?" It's so time-sensitive, you know, whether a car just passed or whether you just exhaled before you took the sample. But if we could do some kind of monitoring in terms of an industrial development, environmental balance – you know, the tree planting – just to get us an idea of where we're going and whether or not we're pointing in the right direction, I think that would be a good indicator as well.

When you talk on page 7 of the business plan about the "number of waterborne disease outbreaks attributable to the failure of licensed water treatment systems," this is a new measure that you're considering. Could this in essence ever be used possibly as a kind of a public warning system with the Ministry of Health in terms of some of the public health efforts that are out there to try and monitor water quality and make sure that we're not getting infectious organisms into the water supply that comes in?

The next one that I wanted to deal with is under strategy 2.2, where you're talking about streamlining the regulatory process. One of the issues that you talked about there is working

with Environment Canada to have provincial responsibility for environmental protection recognized in the proposed Canada Environmental Protection Act.

In that context, how do you see the balance that has to come up between a local community, the province, and the federal government? If you're going to have total authority at the provincial level, what about issues that come up at provincial border sites and deal with that kind of thing?

You know, we have to have some kind of a co-ordinating mechanism at the federal level. The minister is probably aware of a lot of the debate that went on during the construction of the Oldman River dam in southern Alberta: who legitimately has a right to come in there and address issues of environmental sustainability, water quality, water levels, the whole issue of the water management aspects of the dam? How far afield do you go in terms of people who have the right or the opportunity to say, "We want to have input"? This is basically the same issue in terms of a province versus the federal government versus local situations. I was just wondering a little bit about that.

9:00

A final couple of comments. I noticed in strategy 2.3 you're talking about rebuilding the "real-time weather and stream flow data acquisition system." Was that part of the system that was

destroyed in the '95 flood that was up in the Oldman River drainage area, where they were all washed out and that with the rains that came that year because of the heavy runoff that brought it out? I know a lot of sensors that were built into the snowpack and built into the streambeds were lost. Is that the kind of system this would entail on a broader scale? Is that kind of what it was doing? That one seemed to have worked very well until it hit that extreme washout situation, and then it wasn't there to help. I hope those extreme flood conditions are considered when you build that system.

In that same area you're talking about effective wildlife damage mitigation programs. Is there any consideration being given there to dealing with them on a cost-share basis, much like they do crop insurance for hail and that where farmers have to buy a premium to get some shared coverage on it? I've had a number of my constituents ask about that when they come out to visit me at my farm and see 100 or 150 deer sitting in my alfalfa field. They ask: who cuts the most out of it, the deer or me as the farmer? We end up debating who gets the better part of it some years. So we have to look at it in terms of how that works in with a balance in terms of farmers who like to establish their farms adjacent to natural areas. Mine's right on the Oldman River, so I get the movement of those animals all up out of the riverbed. I assumed some of that risk because I like living there.

The other part of it that I just wanted to close with before my colleagues come up is in connection with your water quality table that's on page 18 of the business plan. I noticed that downstream from Lethbridge "not acceptable" is the classification for the recreational uses of the river there, yet we see a number of canoeists going by our farm every weekend and evening. Is there any mechanism that's available through your program to post warnings or to make people aware of the fact that there may be a health hazard or whatever associated with recreational use of that stretch of the river? Even though I've lived there for a number of years, I've never been aware of the fact that it potentially is dangerous. We go down there quite often and walk on the edge of the water and do all kinds of things along the river for recreation, and it's nice to know now that maybe I shouldn't be putting my toe in the water.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to turn the table over to some of my colleagues for a couple of minutes.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you kindly, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions that relate to this department and specifically with regard to some of the forestry that is under the minister's portfolio. It's come to our attention – and I'm sure the minister is aware – that Al-Pac has been given a contract of some \$2.5 million in order to complete an inventory presumably of all those lands they have lease rights on. This is not a bad thing, the duplication of service between a company doing their own inventory to manage their FMA and either another private sector in contract with the government or the government. The only difficulty is that we'd like to have a firm position of the government on audits. Is it a spot audit? Is it a regular audit? Do they get together on a quarterly basis to understand what the company's program is that is being administered by the company on behalf of both the government and the company? Just a detailed account of how the government ensures that the auditing that is done by the company or the companies, plural – I suspect there are others – in the province under the same arrangement . . . The

question quite simply is what that auditing system entails: a detailed analysis of the number of people, person hours, I suspect, or person-days in one audit and what their assignments are, how senior they are, all those things that relate to that, just so we can assure ourselves and therefore some of the public that the audit function is being handled and that the true inventory on an ongoing basis is kept up to date such that the annual allowable cut is a number citizens can have some confidence in to know that the forest is not being depleted any faster, that it is regrowing, and to make sure that for the generations to come the forest will be there actually for recovery.

One other area in the same area is Sunpine. We're not too sure, but somehow or other the difference between the original government assessment of their proposed FMA – the original inventory was less than that which the company found. How did that occur if the original audit was done by the government and then subsequent inventory auditors found that there was more? How did that occur? That's not the case?

MR. LUND: Detailed studies.

MR. WHITE: A much more detailed study. The minister has mentioned a much more detailed study. That being the case, then I'd be satisfied with that.

There's another area I'd like to talk about too. The preliminary management plan of the Sunpine FMA specified that a public advisory committee was required, in fact met only the last time in June of '96. Under the detailed management plan there is mentioned a public involvement plan but no mention anymore of a public advisory committee. Are the FMA holders, in the minister's opinion, required to have these public advisory committees, or are they not?

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'd allow another member to have their say.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you. Mr. Minister, I'd like to let you know now that the subcommittee we went to with you and your staff was the best one I've sat in on in a month, so I thank you.

I had the privilege this morning to speak to young Albertans on the environment. We should be actually listening to those young people quite often, because they had some good questions to MLA Coutts, myself, and the representative from the NDP.

Two items I want to mention. The last full state of the environment report was in 1994. Do we get another one within the next year or so and not beyond 1999 hopefully? Okay.

The last item – and I don't want to bring this up in question period again.

MR. LUND: Please do. The TV is on and then I get a chance to tell the people to watch out for elm disease.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay.

The final item is under maintenance contracts for parks. It says that elm wood from Alberta can be sold in the provincial parks. I'd like to know if you can revise your maintenance contract to say: prohibit sales of any elm wood. The reason for this is that the storage of this over the winter is when the beetles actually come out and do their job. We want to keep the population of beetles to a minimum to reduce the chance of Dutch elm disease spreading if it does reach Alberta. I would like to emphasize the

point of the hundreds of volunteers in Edmonton and Calgary that have actually gone out and gone through different people's backyards to take accountability of this. I just want to emphasize that, and that'll be all I'll say.

I thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have for consideration, then, the estimates for the Department of Environmental Protection. After considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Environmental Protection for the year 1997-98, are you ready for the vote?

Agreed to:

Operating Expenditure	\$272,057,000
Capital Investment	\$6,444,000

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

9:10

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Family and Social Services

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll call upon the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow to begin our estimates on that department.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to report on the designated subcommittee of Family and Social Services. The subcommittee was comprised of 12 members. Eleven were present for the meeting held on Friday, May 9, at 8 a.m. The hon. Minister for Family and Social Services was accompanied by the following departmental officials: Deputy Minister Don Fleming, Duncan Campbell, Frank Wilson, and Bob Scott. The hon. minister without portfolio responsible for children's services was also in attendance. Unanimous consent was given by the committee to block the opposition's time for questions into one two-hour block. This procedure was followed. The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services gave a 15-minute overview of the estimates. His presentation was followed by the minister without portfolio's update on initiatives for children's services.

Mr. Chairman, I will now provide a brief overview of the main points of the discussion. The minister noted that Alberta's share of the federal government's Canada health and social transfer payment decreased by almost \$73 million. At the same time the ministry's 1997-98 budget will increase by \$15 million, resulting in a net \$88 million investment increase by the government to help needy Albertans.

The ministry's estimates reflect savings in the welfare program that will continue to be reallocated to high-needs areas such as the assured income for the severely handicapped, services to persons with disabilities, and child welfare services programs. The minister noted that welfare program savings are not a result of decreased benefits. They are a result of the government's success in providing opportunities for people who were dependent on welfare but are now able to receive training and get jobs. Demonstrating the government's commitment to assist those Albertans who need help, the ministry will increase spending by \$21 million in the assured income for severely handicapped program, bringing total spending to almost \$220 million. As well, the budget for services to persons with disabilities increased by \$12 million to almost \$248 million, while child welfare

services, which is another high-needs area, will increase spending to \$242 million.

During the meeting a significant amount of time was devoted to questions and discussion of the estimates for program 3, social support to individuals and families. These are the programs that give children and families and the handicapped a chance to become participating members of society.

The minister was able to clarify and provide the rationale for estimate numbers for various ministry programs. Many of the questions and resulting discussions helped members of the subcommittee to gain a better understanding of the contributions this ministry makes to our province.

The minister without portfolio responsible for children and families provided a number of comments and clarifications regarding the redesign of services to children and families. The minister responsible for children emphasized the government has not yet decided on a funding formula and that parents and interested Albertans will continue to have opportunities for input.

Finally, there were a number of questions asked by the opposition members of the subcommittee which required some detailed research for answers. The minister has made that commitment to provide written answers for all these budget-related questions that were not answered that day.

There being no questions from the government members, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting prior to the required four hours. Receiving unanimous consent to the motion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m. A full report of this meeting is in *Hansard*, issue 16, for May 12 on page DSS59.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the two ministers for their presentations, co-operation, and forthrightness in answering questions. A thank you to the Department of Family and Social Services staff for their participation, and I would like to thank all the members for their co-operation and their courtesy. It made a very excellent supply meeting.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to begin with some introductory remarks and indicate that contrary to the chairperson's summary of the committee discussions and debates, there were a significant number of questions and requests that have not been answered. In fact, I find myself this evening not being in a position to support the estimates and budget projections as they have been proposed, because we do not have answers in partial or complete form to many of the questions we asked. I would indicate that our dialogue at the committee level nonetheless was constructive, was courteous, but in the end I think as opposition members we are still left asking a lot of questions, questions that for the record I will recite this evening, questions that in our initial discussions spoke about the philosophical directions of this government with respect to Family and Social Services.

Elements of that philosophy that were raised during the committee discussions related to areas such as privatization. It was specifically asked if the minister would share with the committee the specific aspects of his department that have been proposed for private contracts. This followed on the heels of the minister making a statement in his introductory remarks that primarily the system would be configured to maintain "the theme of reduced welfare spending with savings redirected to children and the disabled." That left many questions in my mind, Mr.

Chairman, questions about other aspects, other recipients of Family and Social Services support that are not captured in the categories of children and the disabled. So that question was asked, and it has not been answered.

I would also like to restate the questions by my hon. colleagues during the committee meetings. We asked the hon. minister how many investigators there were in child welfare in the province and in terms of each region. The minister committed to provide that to us in writing. We have not received that.

We asked as well with respect to a very serious concern about the transportation of apprehended children. My colleague gave an example of an incident in her constituency where a very young child was apprehended, removed from the parents, and obviously needed to be so, but was transported by taxi to the home in which the child was going to be kept. She asked in that context if the minister would share the criteria that were being utilized by the department for the transportation of apprehended children given that it is contracted out. She also asked if the minister would share the kinds of problems that had arisen in light of the fact that these services are now being provided by private contractors. It was indicated by the minister that he would share that with the opposition, and we have not received that.

We asked as well questions about how many children that were apprehended were now being housed on a monthly basis in hotels. We have evidence to suggest that this is happening, and it appears to be happening frequently. The minister gave us some numbers, but nothing that he was substantiating. He basically gave a verbal response, and we are awaiting confirmation of those numbers.

There was a whole series of questions about handicapped children's services and an increasing level of concern across this province about what exactly is proposed for handicapped children's services. Many suspect it's going to be privatized. It would be helpful if the minister could answer in the context of the first questions he was asked: what elements of the department are going to be privatized? Is handicapped children's services among them? The Child Welfare Act does not make that a required area of service; the funding is discretionary. So I think parents of disabled children have good right to be concerned, Mr. Chairman. Again I would reinforce that in the questions asked in the context of handicapped children's services, we have not received written verification from the minister to say in fact what is going to happen.

9:20

The whole aspect of the funding model for children's services is as well very much up in the air. There was a full series of questions asked about the model: its design, its elements, its weighting, the hypothetical figures that the steering committee and the consultant are putting out. The minister raised a very sort of contradictory point around the role of Jonathan Murphy in the development of that design. This was in direct contradiction to the information the steering committee and the consultant were giving to citizens at the discussion consultation meetings.

I specifically asked, arising from that, if there was some degree of involvement by the Population Research Lab, why was the department contracting a statistician from Ottawa? I asked for a copy of his contract, and I asked for the elements of his contract as well as what his contract fee would be. If the Population Research Lab is in fact taking the lead in designing the model, then I see no need for the consultant to be in place. Again that information has not been provided, and I'm still awaiting it. I would indicate, Mr. Chairman, that when I attended the first consultation meeting about the funding model, which was in mid-

April, I asked for that information at that time of the committee chair. So I've asked twice now, and I have still not received the information.

There are still many, many questions. The opposition doesn't have the answers; the public, private citizens don't have the answers. It appears that if the minister has the answers, he's not willing to provide them, at least not in such a time that we can have them and review them before these allocations are put to a vote.

As well, we raised questions about the contrast, I guess, the increases to minister's office, minister without portfolio. We asked if there could be a detailed list of expenditures provided for the office of the minister without portfolio to justify a 21 percent increase. There wasn't a specific response made to that question in committee. It was committed that anything outstanding would be provided in writing, and it has not.

There is a degree of concern as well that is increasing about the proposed regionalization of children's services. This is not specifically just with respect to handicapped children's services. Exactly what are the objectives with respect to regionalization, how is the ministry going to impose the standards, how will the ministry undertake to do this when many of the service plans of the regions are not completed, and how will the ministry ensure adequate access, consistent access, and appropriate appeal and investigative mechanisms when many of the investigative appeal mechanisms and access recommendations contained in the Children's Advocate report, the Auditor General's report, the Ombudsman's report, and the Provincial Health Council report have not been encompassed within the departmental fiscal plan?

So we're going to regionalize, and mark my words: it will be the same story, the same plan as has been in Health. We'll have the rationalizations made that now we can't justify why there isn't money or why there aren't decisions being made because it's the region's responsibility to do that. I would remind the hon. members that granted while health is very important, we are dealing in this particular department and area with children's services. To me, it reflects a significant degree of irresponsibility to propose regionalization for services of our most vulnerable population without these recommendations being incorporated or funded.

There was a lot of conflicting information about the number of employees actually employed in the department by program. We asked for those specifically in terms of numbers of full-time, part-time, and casual and contract employees. It was committed that that would be provided to us. Again, we have not received that information and are not in a position to make decisions with respect to that. The minister did provide that they had increased staffing within children's services but had decreased because of administrative efficiencies in other areas. Quite frankly, I'm still confused about exactly where we're at with respect to employees.

Another area that was raised was the whole area of the stress, the abuse, the increasing violence against social workers and other employees in this sector. It is being monitored by organizations involved. There has been an escalation since 1993, when the whole restructuring of Family and Social Services occurred. We asked the ministry: what are you doing about this? Are there employee support programs in place? I outlined today in question period some of the things that individuals working for this department are being subjected to. We did not get concrete answers with respect to that. We asked for follow-up answers in writing, and we do not have those.

We also asked the question about the gag order. The minister

maintains there is no gag order. He restated that fact today in question period. I would say with all due respect that the information from people in this sector suggests otherwise. However, we believe that if people are being subjected to unacceptable levels of violence, abuse, if they are not being supported by the department, at the very least they should be able to speak out. It would appear that there is a policy within the department to keep a very tight lid on the can so that none of those problems, whether they're administrative, whether they're client, whether they're caseload related, come to light. That's my suspicion, Mr. Chairman. This is actually a system that is riddled with problems at every level, and the objective and the unwritten policy, the unwritten message to people and clients is to keep your mouths shut. Actually, keep your mouths shut and co-operate, or perhaps in the regionalized system you won't be eligible to get a job.

We asked about the discrepancies between employment training and the reduction in supports for independence. Those specifics have not been provided. We asked if the minister had done some statistical tracking and could provide information to verify that the courses that were being provided through the employment training were actually allowing people to be employed in meaningful jobs.

That brings me to another significant area with respect to lack of information and lack of accountability. It relates to the department's internal tracking, their information systems, and their investigation and appeal processes. The minister alleges that they are there. They are not, obviously, sufficient to justify a budget line. I did ask for those specific appeal and investigation mechanisms and how much they were being funded, and we have not received that information.

There are inconsistencies as well with respect to what our constituencies are telling us about the AISH program and what the minister alleges to be the case. Again, it does not appear that we are going to be given any additional clarification before the motion is moved.

9:30

Another interesting issue that was raised was about an unwritten policy, supposedly stemming from the department, that people are now not being allowed to be eligible to act as foster parents if they are relying on that as their sole source of income. Basically, we asked the minister if he could comment on that, if we're seeing any proposed changes there, and what the rationale was. Again, there was not a comprehensive response. It was not concretely stated as to whether or not there was or wasn't a policy with respect to that directive. So it appears to be subjective, and that was another criticism, analysis that we made, that many of the departmental performance measures appear to be subjective and opinion based. Superficial analyses are what they are.

We had a commitment from the minister that he would answer follow-up questions following the committee, because the opposition members were limited to our two hours. Even though government members, lo and behold, had absolutely no questions to ask the minister about any aspect of his department, the opposition of course was not able to use that time. So we had additional questions that had not been asked, and the minister committed to provide those in writing. Obviously, as of 9:30 this evening the minister's commitments are not holding a lot of water.

Apparently the minister proposed that there were 600 organizations and about 6,000 employees within organizations providing services within the system. We asked: where were the dollars that were allocated for those organizations? Were they allocated separately? What kind of administrative procedures were being

put in place with respect to those 600 organizations and 6,000 employees? No further information has come to light with respect to that. As a result, it would appear that the government wants to keep the opposition and private citizens, concerned stakeholders, and others in the dark with respect to that.

We saw cuts in some surprising levels in the budget – cuts to the Children's Advocate of 11.4 percent, cuts to the children's commissioner of 30 percent – surprising, surprising decisions, based on the fact that we're going to regionalize the system and put this down to a community level, a decision which in Health has resulted in significant problems and a significant increase in appeals, to the degree that we have now five different appeal mechanisms in place in health care in addition to the Ombudsman and the Provincial Health Council being used to a significant extent. But in Family and Social Services it would appear that children's needs and children's appeals are not sufficient to warrant even the maintenance of funding at the pre-1996 level in those two areas. We asked questions as to why that was, and again we are left with no answers. We asked questions surrounding the minister's alleged position that increases were based on utilization. The Children's Advocate's report in 1993 refused to condone utilization as a sole purpose or tool for budget allocations.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I would have to indicate that while the discussion at the committee level was very nice, I am still left to a large degree without the specific information I require to be informed and to vote in an informed way on the Family and Social Services budget.

Thank you.

Agreed to:	
Operating Expense	\$1,357,149,000
Capital Investment	\$240,000

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you. I move that the committee do now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, reports approval of the following estimates, and requests leave to sit again.

Community Development: \$252,105,000 for operating expense, \$110,000 for capital investment.

Environmental Protection: \$272,057,000 for operating expense, \$6,444,000 for capital investment.

Family and Social Services: \$1,357,149,000 for operating expense, \$240,000 for capital investment.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Third Reading**

[The members indicated below moved that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

4 Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 1997	Stelmach
9 Election Amendment Act, 1997	Havelock

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Committee of the Whole**

9:40

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 1
Freedom of Information and
Protection of Privacy Amendment Act, 1997

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. We had had some interesting discussion the other evening with respect to some of the shortcomings in Bill 1 and had listed a number of them. The one that kept on coming up repeatedly was a concern with respect to section 2 and the deletion of private colleges from the scope of the freedom of information Act.

In furtherance of the concerns that had been raised, Mr. Chairman, what I now want to do is move an amendment to Bill 1. This is an amendment that was distributed to all members last evening after being initialed by Parliamentary Counsel. It's short, and I'll simply read it so that we're clear that we're all reading the same text. The amendment to Bill 1 is that Bill 1 be amended in section 2 by striking out clause (a).

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, we don't have the requisite number up here. That's perhaps because of your foresight in making sure that everybody had copies ahead of time. We now have secured one copy, but we'll need ultimately further copies. Everyone else has them, so we'd invite you to go on with your amendment, which is known as A1.

MR. DICKSON: Fine. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I was hoping that the four signed copies I'd delivered last night would somehow find their way to a file. Maybe record management has got to start in the Legislative Assembly before we're able to carry it to private colleges.

In any event, the purpose of the amendment is simply this: to say that private colleges that receive over \$8 million in taxpayer funding are subject to the freedom of information Act. Now, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, certainly in listening attentively to some of the concerns that had been raised in second reading, addressed this. So it might be interesting to look at some of the comments that that member made on page 493 of *Hansard* on May 12 in arguing around this.

Now, one of the things that she suggested is that "private colleges receive much less funding than public colleges from the government." She refers to the fact that for operational purposes private colleges [receive] \$8.9 million compared to public

postsecondary funding of \$735 million, and that equates to 1.2 percent of government funding for postsecondary institutions.

Surely, Mr. Chairman, whether it's 1.2 percent of government funding or not, it's still 8.9 million taxpayer dollars. Where's the Provincial Treasurer when we need him, who likes to hold up and wave his loonie around? Maybe it's a quarter now, given government bookkeeping. The Minister of Energy may be able to help us, because I heard him jingling on the way into the Chamber earlier this evening, and I suspect that he can hold up a coin and remind us that \$8.9 million is still a heck of a lot of money.

I know that the Member for Calgary-North West, who has spoken eloquently on fiscal prudence, understands the importance of \$8.9 million. I'm confident that that Member for Calgary-North West, not only as a newly elected representative for the area but as my MLA, is going to be anxious to make sure that every one of the those \$8.9 million is going to be spent in an open and a transparent way. I'm going to be watching carefully to see how my MLA votes on this matter, and I'm hoping he'll join us in debate, because we have a chance to have two voices.

After five years in this Assembly it's interesting that we suddenly see these focuses and issues come to the fore. Like the Member for Calgary-Currie, I have a chance to have two votes in the Legislature, hon. Minister of Energy. The point . . . [interjection] I didn't say they went the same way, Mr. Chairman.

The difficulty is in terms of the numbers. It just doesn't carry any weight at all to say that it's only \$8.9 million. Clearly, that's an argument that doesn't take us very far at all.

Now, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed also took us to section 88 of the Act, in fact 88(2), wherein "the Lieutenant Governor in Council may delete a body designated under subsection (1)(a) only if the Commissioner is satisfied that . . ." and then there are some stipulations. The point to be made is that we're not dealing here – section 88 hasn't been invoked, because if section 88 had been invoked, we would be dealing with an order in council, but we're not. So section 88 is of little assistance to us. All section 88 was for was to set some minimal requirements before agencies could be dropped from the scope of the freedom of information Act. In fact, some of us had wanted a much more limiting condition, and arguably this was the best that I could negotiate with the Member for Calgary-Shaw back in 1994. But that doesn't answer the question why in 1997 the government is attempting to shed something that receives this degree of government funding.

The other thing I think is fair to say, and maybe the member – I'm not sure what members are in the Assembly tonight. I see the Minister of Environmental Protection. Maybe he can refresh my memory and tell me, when we discussed section 88(2)(b), whether it was within his contemplation – and he was certainly much wiser and much more experienced than the rest of us on the panel. I'm hoping that minister's going to get up right now and illuminate all members as to what was in his mind when he signed off on what was going to be section 88(2), whether he turned his mind to it, and if he did, then my question would be why nobody raised that. We sat around the table, we had many meetings, and we were trying to wrestle a set of unanimous recommendations. You know, try as hard as I can, I just can't remember somebody saying: "Oh, hold it. Hold it. Private colleges might be covered, and they shouldn't be."

We knew what private colleges were supported by Alberta taxpayers in 1993, when the all-party panel made its unanimous recommendations. We knew what private colleges were funded by the taxpayers of Alberta in the spring of 1994, when the first

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act was passed. We knew what private colleges were covered in 1995 in the spring session, when we went back and the government amended the freedom of information Act. So why is it that now the government comes forward and, in the flagship Bill for this brand-new session after the government's triumph in the election on March 11, wants to take it out?

The first two reasons offered by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, then, would seem to provide really no authority for the government at all. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed also offered – well, she offered several good reasons, and I think I've covered the reasons as she described them. I would think all members would agree, in looking at those, that they don't get us very far.

She also made some other observations in terms of what exists in other provinces and I think made some observations that she felt private colleges were not included in some other jurisdictions. The short answer to that is that self-governing professions aren't covered in Manitoba, they're not covered in Ontario, and they're not covered in Nova Scotia. All of those jurisdictions have a freedom of information law. So what? What we went into, the mandate and the instruction we got from the Premier of this province, was to go forward and create the strongest Bill in Canada. Isn't that what he said? The strongest Bill in Canada, and it was the freedom of information.

9:50

So why is it that it was good enough to include private colleges in 1994, good enough to leave them in 1995 when we dealt with it, and now in 1997 the government comes along and wants to take them out? Is that what Albertans asked for? I think not. In fact, if we review the 50 written submissions that the freedom of information panel received – I went back to look at this, hon. members, to see what people did say about private colleges at that time. Was there some Albertan at that point who said, “We want out; we don't want to be covered”?

I went through them, and we had a lot of submissions on what should be covered, what would be a public body. The Calgary Business and Professional Women's Club said

freedom of information, by very definition, must cover every branch of the government no matter how distant it is from the department operations. There can be no exceptions.

We had representations on this issue of universities and colleges from the Alberta records management association, with representation from a host of agencies and institutions across Alberta. We had representations from a Ms Angevine. We had representations from the Alberta Wilderness Association. Each one of these submissions said that all colleges, private and public, should be covered, that all universities should be covered. We had the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, the Freedom of Information and Privacy Association. Mr. Anderson, a solicitor in Calgary who took a particular interest in and has published a number of works on freedom of information, argued that colleges and universities should be covered.

So as I look through the list, I'm trying to find who it is that said that private colleges should come out. You know, no surprise, Mr. Chairman; I couldn't find anybody who was trying to make that point. In fact, when I looked further, I found on looking through some papers a report from the province of New Brunswick in November 1990, a Discussion Paper on the Right to Information Act in that province. They went through doing a survey of other jurisdictions in Canada and wanted to find out what other organizations should be covered in that jurisdiction.

They went through, and it's interesting if we note that . . . [interjections] The Minister of Energy thinks that we're close to the end of this. This is only the first amendment, hon. Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy appears to be cranky, but the point is that we've got \$8.9 million.

DR. WEST: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Energy is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

DR. WEST: Under 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing motives or conversation which may incite disorder in the House. The hon. member obviously was rambling on, and he couldn't find the page that he wanted to refer to so he was ad libbing and of course then started referring to members on this side of the House, specifically myself. I think he should be called to order on that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on the point of order.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, the last thing I wanted to do was to incite anything in the House other than a positive vote for my amendment. If I misread either the expression or the body language of the hon. minister, I absolutely withdraw the observation I made. I'm happy to withdraw the observation I made about the Minister of Energy.

THE CHAIRMAN: The observation that was objected to has been withdrawn, hon. minister. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo might also consult 23(b): “speaks to matters other than . . . the question under discussion.” If he would return to his amendment so that we may ultimately have further debate on it, that would be helpful.

Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much for the direction, Mr. Chairman.

Debate Continued

MR. DICKSON: The point I was trying to make in looking at the November 1990 report from the province of New Brunswick, when they were wrestling with this question of what public bodies should be covered by the Act, they did a survey of the provinces across Canada in terms of what would be covered. It's interesting. What we find there is that there are certainly different approaches taken in different jurisdictions, but what was determined and what was ultimately recommended was that the Right to Information Act in that province, they found, did not go far enough. On page 21 of the report, the specific recommendation, “Right to Information Act be extended to schools and school boards, public hospitals and municipalities.” In fact when we look further, it's clear that they weren't making a specific exception for private colleges.

I will clearly acknowledge that in some jurisdictions they had chosen right from the outset not to cover private colleges and simply to exclude them from the scope of the Act. But the point is that in this province we didn't do it. We didn't do it. Why would we come along three years after we pass the Act and take them out? It just makes no sense. We haven't heard an explana-

tion as persuasive from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who attempted valiantly to defend that portion of Bill 1. We've certainly not heard any other explanation from members opposite. It just seems to me that the point of the Act is to be as comprehensive as possible.

The other thing that I recall the Member for Calgary-McCall saying is that she made the observation that there are other ways you can find out information about private colleges. She said there are some reports that will find their way into the department of advanced education. Clearly, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed may not have had the chance to attend the training session that the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services' freedom of information branch puts on for new civil servants and government employees, because right at the start of that, right after we see the video of Premier Klein talking about how he's associated with freedom of information – this video is a fascinating thing to see, Mr. Chairman, and maybe MLAs should have a chance to look at this freedom of information orientation video.

After you hear the words of the Premier, we then launch into a discussion about this new culture of openness that's trying to be developed in the province of Alberta. What follows is that we're trying to make it more accessible and easier for Albertans to be able to access information about how their tax dollars are being spent. What we find is that if Albertans are going to be put to the point where they want information about a private college or a university, they have to go to the minister of advanced education and make an inquiry of the freedom of information co-ordinator with that department and then find out what kind of reporting documents have come from that private college to the department.

You have to be able, firstly, to know what kind of documents there are, and then you have to be able to access it and review the document. There is a good chance that the information you're after isn't going to be in that document. So how do you reconcile the Premier's announcement on that FOIP orientation video to new government employees with a process that the government wants to implement which means that you can't go directly to the source to get the information, to get a copy of the document? You have to go, Mr. Chairman, through a circuitous route. You have to go to the department of advanced education. That doesn't sound to me like it's very efficient. It's going to build in more delays, and it takes us in exactly the opposite direction that the government ostensibly wanted to go in 1994 when they brought in the freedom of information law and that was passed.

10:00

Mr. Chairman, in terms of dealing with the amendment, the proposal that is embodied and centred in Bill 1 is so inconsistent with the purposes stated in the Act itself. One would have to think that there must be some other particular question, some other agenda, some other reason for doing this. In fact, I'd ask the sponsor of the Bill, either the minister or the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, to share with us representations that they've received from private colleges that just set out why they think, on the one hand, that they can take 8.9 million tax dollars yet, on the other, not have to be subject to the freedom of information Act. I don't know. Is there some vigorous lobby to that effect? If there is, let's see it. So far the first notice that the members of the Assembly have had has simply been the introduction of Bill 1, and that's the reason for amendment A1.

I went further through other materials that we'd received at the time the all-party panel was putting together their report. I was looking at submissions from the Edmonton Friends of the North,

the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, city of Edmonton, submissions by the Riel Policy Institute, some individuals, Peter Abramovicz, Jane Schultchen. There was a whole number of people right across this province, in Lethbridge, in Calgary, in Edmonton. We had hearings in Medicine Hat. All of those people came forward and made submissions, and I can't find any one of those submissions that talked about treating private colleges differently than any other educational institution. To be perfectly clear, Mr. Chairman, if the private colleges want to renounce the funding . . . [Mr. Dickson's speaking time expired]

Mr. Chairman, I'm sure there will be other people speaking and asking questions as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat on the amendment A1.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to rise to speak against this amendment tonight. I think that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo acknowledged the remarks that were made by Calgary-Lougheed, and I think that there are probably a couple of other areas that maybe were not covered by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I'd like to cover those as they relate to private colleges.

I think there's a distinct difference between a private college and a publicly funded college, which the member is not acknowledging in his amendment. One of the main differences, Mr. Chairman, is that private colleges receive no capital funding whatsoever. While they receive limited government funding from the point of view of instructional grants, they receive no capital funding. So they are distinctly different from public colleges from that perspective.

The other area that makes them different is the fact that unlike the public colleges and universities, their boards are not appointed by government. They are not directly accountable to government. They have an arm's-length relationship to government, although they do report annually to the minister of advanced education.

Finally, there's something that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has not acknowledged in his comments to this amendment, and that is that the roughly \$9 million that he referred to repeatedly is already covered. That portion of their funding is already covered by freedom of information legislation. It comes up in a number of ways in the Legislature. It comes up in review by the Public Accounts Committee, and it would also be subject to freedom of information on that portion of the funding that goes to the private colleges.

So for that reason, Mr. Chairman, I see no reason to support this amendment, and I urge all members to vote no to this amendment.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm speaking in support of the amendment. The term "private colleges" is really a misnomer. They aren't private in terms of the amount of public money that they spend. I don't care how you cut it; they draw on the public purse for a large part of their financing. Close to \$9 million is not to be sneezed at. The activities of those colleges should not be masked from the public because a portion of their funding is private.

If the legislation and this amendment are not supported, we could have students in the cities such as this one registered in identical programs, one at the University of Alberta and one at

Concordia or at a so-called private institution, both registered in B.Ed programs, one student and their parents being able to access private information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and a student in the identical program in one of the so-called private colleges not being able to access the same materials. That just does not seem to make sense, particularly when these institutions hold so much information that is so crucial to the lives of the students and to the staff that are involved in the activities, the educational programs that they're offering.

The information that they have relates back so much to the original purposes of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. That's to give them access to personal information about themselves held by a public body and for corrections to personal information. If institutions are holding the information about a student or about an instructor, regardless of what institution they attend – fully public funded, partially public funded, no matter – they should have access to those records and also to ask for independent reviews of decisions. Those institutions, like all postsecondary institutions, make important decisions about students that very much affect their futures, affect their employment, affect their standing in the community. Those decisions ought to be open to those who might complain about them, and there should be some recourse to have those decisions reviewed.

The amendment is a strong amendment, and it's a much needed one. It's one that deserves the support of this Assembly.

Thanks very much.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would rise also to speak in support of the amendment. I think that there are some interesting contrasts with respect to the government's approach to freedom of information. I had a significant amount of fun and considered it a privilege to speak to this Bill the first time. I would like, though, to put it in context.

I believe one of the hon. members from the government side said that the rationale for the government not including private colleges under freedom of information is that basically they get insufficient dollars – \$9 million, not significant – in terms of taxpayers' contributions and that their boards are not appointed and therefore not accountable to government. I would like to propose that, you know, I would see this government using the same analogy in the health care sector. We continue to wrestle with the difficulties in getting information out of the regional health authorities, and it would appear that the government is proposing the establishment of private bodies not unlike private colleges in that sector. Mr. Chairman, is this an indication, the approach to this particular amendment – will our experience in health care be in the future that even if we get the regional health authorities in, the private charities and private organizations offering services are going to be exempt from the Bill? I think it sets a precedent. I don't believe it's a healthy precedent.

10:10

I continue to ask the question: if they are so firm and so committed to being accountable, why is this government afraid to make the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act apply to all government services regardless of the amount of money those services receive? I think citizens in this province have an entitlement to information on those sectors regardless of the money and regardless of how their governance structures are formed. I don't particularly see that the rationale provided that

they get insignificant dollars, when the figure is in fact almost \$9 million received, and that their governance structure is not appointed by government should be justification for why they shouldn't continue to come under the freedom of information Act.

So I would provide those points in addition to those made by my other colleagues with respect to lending my support to this amendment. Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make sure, if there were a Conservative member who wanted to speak to the amendment, that they would have an opportunity.

Just moving on, I wanted to go back through and touch on a couple of things I didn't have occasion to before. Firstly, going back to May 12, 1997, page 493 of *Hansard* and the submission there that the Private Colleges Accreditation Board would receive reports from colleges. I think it's quite clear, Mr. Chairman, that those reports may well not cover all of the material that Alberta taxpayers or students at the institution or somebody living in the same community as a private college may want to be able to access. I haven't had the benefit of looking at one of the reports the Private Colleges Accreditation Board would receive, but it's pretty clear – I assume it would be for a specific purpose. I assume it follows a specific format. If an individual Albertan wanted some information, they wouldn't readily be able to access it.

Now, the other comment made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed was that

the four degree-granting private colleges in Alberta provide three-year business plans and reports on the use of public funds to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

Well, you know what's interesting: I don't remember ever seeing one of those reports being tabled in this Assembly. Now, maybe they have been routinely, and I simply wasn't paying close enough attention, but I simply can't recall one of those reports being tabled. Once again, why do we make it so tough for Albertans to find out how that \$8.9 million is being spent? Why should they have to try and get a copy of a report that's being filed by a private college and then sent in to a department and count on the department being the access source?

I guess the other thing about this is that it seems to me that runs up costs. What I think has always been acknowledged by the government and others is that freedom of information is absolutely the most expensive way of providing Albertans with information. The point should be that it's there as a backstop, as a safeguard when people want information and they simply can't access it. So why would you then build in extra costs in the department of advanced education to have to collect information from private colleges and then make it available through the vehicle of the department of advanced education to Albertans who want that information? It just doesn't make good sense at all. It doesn't make any sense at all.

Now, the other point I think I touched on before was that British Columbia and Ontario may well not cover private colleges, but in both cases that was a decision made by the Legislatures in those provinces at the time the freedom of information Act first came into force. It wasn't a decision made after the fact.

Just in terms of going through the other submissions that had been received to find what Albertans had told us, and arguably the consultation in late 1993 culminating in the report filed in

December of 1993 is the closest we've got to a real, broad public consultation. If one looks, for example, at the submission by FIPA, the Alberta Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, who made a very long submission in terms of freedom of information, FIPA certainly thought it was important to address this and address it by inclusion, not exclusion.

Mr. Chairman, I think those were the key points that I wanted to make. I think the division between the position of the government and that of the opposition is as clear as can be. I think the primary arguments have been put forward. I'm not sure; there may be other members who want to speak on this amendment. If there are, then perhaps I'll take my seat to give those members that opportunity.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee do now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

10:20

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain Bill. The committee reports progress on the following: Bill 1. I wish to table all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

[At 10:21 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]