

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Monday, May 26, 1997 1:30 p.m.  
**Date:** 97/05/26  
 [The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to day 24 of this session. The prayer today is one that is said in the British Columbia Legislative Assembly.

Let us pray.

As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, we ask for divine guidance so that our words and deeds may bring to all people of this great province hope, prosperity, and a vision for the future.

May the deliberations in this Chamber be characterized by temperance, understanding, and reason to the end that we may better serve those who have made the members of this House guardians of and trustees for all the citizens of Alberta.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, in response to questions raised in the Legislative Assembly last week I'd like to table two documents outlining some of the initiatives currently undertaken by apprenticeship and industry training to encourage registrations in apprenticeship. We have a four-year information sheet about apprenticeship in Alberta which provides some quick facts about apprenticeship training, and then a qualification certificate program brochure providing more details on how a tradesperson not formally completing an apprenticeship program can obtain recognition in a trade if they have the requisite work experience, knowledge, or skills.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table this afternoon copies of correspondence – I think in total there are 39 letters – mostly from Scarboro residents in Calgary concerned about education funding and lack of support for public education in that city.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a letter sent to me by Mrs. Sandy Kordyback expressing her concerns about the lack of funding to public education and her concerns over Bill 209. Actually, I believe she is in the gallery visiting today. I'd like to table these.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a letter written to the Minister of Family and Social Services and CCed to me from Merrill Kemp on the regionalization of children's services.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Assembly

four copies of a document from which I quoted during question period on Thursday, May 22.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Alderman Paul Hartigan. Mr. Hartigan is an alderman for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, which also includes the city of Fort McMurray. Alderman Hartigan has a long, distinguished record of municipal public service, and I considered him to be a very good friend and colleague during my terms on the city council as mayor. He's seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. I'd like to ask Paul to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you in the gallery today Chris Smith, who is our former candidate for Edmonton-Highlands, and her mother, Valentina Latreille, who is here with her today. I'd ask that they rise in the gallery and receive our welcome.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature here 17 very bright and athletic students from the Thorsby high school. They are accompanied today by their principal Mr. Al Bratland. I believe they're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 31 special guests, students from Waverly elementary school in Stettler. They're accompanied today by their teacher Mr. Hank Boer and parent helpers Mr. Ireland, Mr. Graham, Mr. Verhoeven, Mrs. Potter, and Mr. Wallace. I would ask that they stand in the public gallery and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

MRS. TARCHUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you 14 students from Chinook Winds Adventist Academy. They are accompanied today by teacher Miss Marilyn Ilchuk and parents Mrs. Linda Coatsworth and Mr. David Walls. They are sitting in both galleries, and I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly grade 6 students from Neil M. Ross elementary school in St. Albert. They are here today with their teachers Joan Crockett, Sandy Kordyback, and Cathy Bagden. I'd like them to rise – they're in

the members' gallery – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Keith Molberg. Keith is working in my office as a summer student this year. He's a very talented young man who is taking his bachelor of music through the University of Alberta. He is going into his third year and has played several times with the Red Deer symphony orchestra. I would ask Keith to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Terri-Lynn Bradford, who was our candidate in Calgary-Buffalo in the last election and was only short 175 votes in regards to possibly sitting in this particular Assembly. I'd like her to rise and please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Mr. Speaker, tells me that it was in fact 195, better than St. Albert, 16.

head: **Oral Question Period**  
**Child Welfare**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, since the Premier took office, at least 38 employees of the Department of Family and Social Services have been disciplined for speaking out against government policy. Employees having the courage to speak out are now subject to verbal threats, disciplinary action, and surveillance during their free time by the Department of Family and Social Services staff. Does the Premier endorse the Department of Family and Social Services taking subversive action to silence its employees on issues that are of such importance to them?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we don't support subversive action, nor do I think any subversive action is going on. Clearly, it is the responsibility of the government to set policy, and I would suspect that those people who expect to work for the government would abide by that policy. That indeed is the function of the administration; that is, to carry out the policies of the government.

Relative to the specifics related to the complaints, Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services supplement.

1:40

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regards to the specific complaints that the Leader of the Opposition has raised, first of all, in my tenure as minister there has been no one – I repeat, no one – that has had any implications taken against them.

MRS. SLOAN: Point of order.

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, what happened in Lethbridge was that two members of the administrative staff went forward to find out

what the staff was actually saying about them, which I certainly don't condone if used against them. However, it is part of their job to find out what is being said.

MR. MITCHELL: They were on an information picket line, Mr. Speaker. They could have walked up and asked them.

Does the Premier, then, endorse the department telling employees to shut up or to resign, or if they don't do either, they then won't get a recommendation for jobs in the new regionalized child welfare system?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I personally have never heard the minister – that is, the policymaker relative to his department in conjunction with Executive Council – tell any employee of this government to shut up. I just don't believe that this particular minister or the minister before him or the minister before that would use that kind of language, but again I will have the hon. minister supplement.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If I can, I would like to quote from a document, and what I will say is that (a) "there is no gag order" issued by the minister or the Department of Family and Social Services, and (b) I have also stated that there is a legitimate role for union representatives to make presentations that impact on their membership and working conditions. This is quite acceptable and a part of union/management dialogue. We want to operate in a positive working environment. That was said on February 15, 1996, and nothing has changed since that point.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, if the minister is saying that his employees have the chance to make representations to him through their union, then why is he refusing to meet with AUPE, which has requested to meet with him on this very issue?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, first of all, with AUPE I have not received any formal application to meet with them. Today on CBC Radio I basically stated that if they want to come and meet with me, I would be more than happy to meet with them. As a matter of fact, I actually went further and stated that it would be the end of this week or the first part of next week. So I don't know where this is coming from. I don't know where the Liberals are getting this from.

If I could just reference what has happened in Lethbridge, Mr. Speaker, I was talking to the region 1 steering committee, and what they have stated is that they have on numerous occasions attempted to have input from the social workers down there, and the social workers have refused. We have tried to get input from these people, and we've been trying all along for three years.

#### **Provincial Parks and Recreation Areas**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister of environment's announcement that he is privatizing well over half of our parks and recreation areas clearly indicates that he cannot understand and he cannot fathom that there are things that are bigger than commercial development and bigger than money. These things hold a richness that this minister simply will not even contemplate, and one of those is the value, the heritage that we have in our public parks. Will the minister please confirm that the reason he is not taking a broad-based consultative process on the question of whether to privatize our parks is because he knows the answer he's going to get and it won't agree with the position that he's taken?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not been looking or reading or listening to what has been going on for a number of years in this province. The fact is that in all of the areas that Environmental Protection operates – and there are some 540-plus sites within the province of Alberta – there are specific themes to those various sites. The four goals that we established are heritage and preservation and then, of course, recreation and tourism. Now, we have divided the sites up into two categories, the one the preservation and natural heritage, and we are going to put our emphasis on those sites.

Incidentally, that accounts for 97 percent of the land base that is operated within the parks and the recreation facilities within this province. Of the remaining 3 percent, 92 percent have already been operated by facility operating contracts or fee for service.

Mr. Speaker, we are simply completing working on those 3 percent, and we're going to put our emphasis on the ones that require the protection, the natural heritage and the preservation. With the special places program going forward, where we are protecting a lot more land, we will be requiring even further concentration in those areas. So that's what it's all about.

MR. MITCHELL: Kananaskis park will be starting at Calaway park, Mr. Speaker.

Is the minister not aware that the 3 percent he's referring to actually accounts for 50 percent of our parks and recreation areas, all of which will get more privatization and more commercialization as a result of what he announced last week?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, what we are doing towards the privatization, as he calls it, of services is the services within the park area. Now, there are some provincial parks that have more than one component. In those areas that would fall into the recreation/tourism, yes, we will be completing the contracting out of those services.

You know, with the changes in the way that we do business nowadays, we are getting out of the business of growing. There is no need in the world why we have to have a park ranger, a well-trained, well-qualified individual, out cutting grass. I guess that's what the hon. member would like to see happen.

MR. MITCHELL: The issue isn't cutting grass; it's how high the roller coasters will be in these parks, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister, who seems to disregard the fundamental values at stake in this issue: can he at the very least release a full report on the plan for privatization, a full list of the areas that are going to be subjected to this privatization, and put the plan on hold until Albertans can properly be consulted?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, once again the fact is that where there will be some investment by the private sector, if it's beyond upgrading of what is already there – and of course we have an infrastructure in a lot of these facility areas that is in excess of \$300 million. That infrastructure gradually wears out. We need to have some more upgrading in those areas. If in fact an operator wants to build something that is new – the hon. member talks about roller coasters – well, that would not happen without the approval of the department and without public consultation. If someone came forward with that sort of an idea, we'd go through a consultative process to determine whether in fact the public supports it. Then it would have to meet with the approval of the department. So we're not selling parks. We are going to

continue to write all of the requirements, all of the operating agreements. We have written in those all of the standards that we require people to meet. So there's not going to be a dramatic change to the public out there.

As a matter of fact, it's interesting. I had one park ranger tell me that when the opposition tried to make an issue of this about a year ago, one couple came up to a park ranger and said, "I sure hope this park never gets privatized." The fact was that it had been operating under a facility operating agreement for some five years prior to that.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, the minister is happy to talk the talk about public consultation, but he certainly won't walk the walk. The 1997-98 operational plan for the Department of Environmental Protection states: "We [will] provide Albertans with the opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect the environment." The department's public involvement guidelines state that the public has a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Will the Minister of Environmental Protection admit that he is in fact ignoring these directives and is only allowing site-by-site consultation about the management of individual parks that are privatized as a very isolated process so that Albertans do not have an opportunity to give their views on the basic principle of privatization of parks?

1:50

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in answering some of the questions of the Leader of the Opposition, before we do anything more – currently there are some 92 percent of the services to the public within the overall parks system. Bear in mind that this includes many campgrounds that are not even connected to a park, but they fall in this broad category of park. Ninety-two percent are currently under some type of facility operating agreement or fee-for-service type of agreement. So the few that are left, the 8 percent that we're talking about, are not going to be handled any differently. We get feedback from the public constantly on all of our parks, and we are not finding a problem in the ones that we have operator's agreements with.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, how can the minister assure Albertans, as he did in the Legislature on March 18 in 1996, that even though he is outsourcing, "we will be protecting the parks, and they . . . will be there for future generations in the pristine state that they are currently in," when in your previous answer you just said that you'd be prepared to listen to consultation about further development in these parks?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. We have been going through a lot of consultation about what needs to be done in parks and the overall park area. I'm sure that what the hon. member is referring to is our further consultation in Kananaskis park, and it sounds like she's criticizing that. But it's interesting that on May 23 in one of the papers she is quoted as saying: Liberal environment critic Debby Carlson said she's glad the government is extending the deadline for more public consultation on Kananaskis.

MS CARLSON: And what he needs to do is actually listen this time, because 80 percent of those people said to stop this and to stop it right now. He's got to hear it twice before he moves on it.

Will the minister just agree to public consultation and stop

railroading privatization through areas that Albertans believe it is his job to protect?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that when the Blues come and when *Hansard* comes, the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member will read what I said in answer to the very first question. I don't want to go through the whole thing again, but the fact is that through this plan we are going to be spending and focusing more on the protected areas, the very areas that she talks about, the 97 percent of the land that we have taken care of under the parks system.

### Children's Services

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the opposition to the plans for privatizing and regionalizing child welfare services is large and growing, now including organizations such as the Alberta Foster Parent Association, the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities, and even the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. In filing four copies of this letter, I would like to quote from one of them, the Alberta Foster Parent Association, in which they say:

In the area of Child Protective Services, our members would like to see the Department of Social Services maintain control. This would bring objectivity to decision making, would not be "money-driven," and would ensure protection to children from community biases.

My question in that context, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Rather than spend another \$7.5 million in this fiscal year on a slanted consultation process, why won't the minister simply drop this crazy notion of privatizing child welfare services?

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the so-called crazy notion of privatizing child welfare services and services to children originated approximately three years ago. This so-called crazy theory has been endorsed by over 12,000 people in Alberta. This so-called crazy theory is something that is going full ahead, and it's something that is going to be very positive for the children of Alberta.

MS BARRETT: Well, obviously the minister hasn't spoken to the frontline workers and agencies designated to get these jobs. They don't want them, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister then attempt to justify the creating of a bureaucracy, which is exactly what he's doing with the 14 new authorities?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, what we have done in the creation of the children's services initiative is tried to cut down on the bureaucracy. What we are doing is putting these services through to the community and allowing the community to decide what is going to happen to children in each specific community and in each specific region. This is a very good initiative, and I would ask the hon. minister in charge of children's services to comment on this.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to. As a matter of fact, the community has been coming together for the last three years to be able to pull together a plan that would attempt to help where the children's needs are. One of the greatest things that we've been hearing about from all the people, all the 12,000 people who have been involved, is that this is probably the best thing: to be able to give authority and responsi-

bility for people's children back to them. It's something that we are looking forward to. The community is looking forward to it. Twelve thousand people can't be wrong.

MS BARRETT: But they don't want privatization, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Family and Social Services: given that the Department of Health has agreed finally to review the establishment of the regional health authorities, will the minister at least put on hold his plans to regionalize until that review is done and any quirks that are in the system can be identified and addressed?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, the children's services initiative is moving ahead very quickly. It's moving ahead in a very positive sense. We are presently receiving the service delivery plans from the regions, and it's very difficult for me to comment until I've seen exactly what the regions want, exactly how the regions are going to deliver the services in their areas.

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

### Western Premiers' Conference

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier. The 1997 annual Western Premiers' Conference is being held in Campbell River, B.C., on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of this week. This conference is very important to Alberta and to all of the western Premiers to be able to form a consensus and be united when they're dealing with the federal government. My question is: what are the Premiers going to be discussing, and what are Alberta's priorities?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll be discussing a number of issues, of course. We will be focusing on the economy, youth unemployment, transportation, internal trade barriers, breaking down those trade barriers, agriculture, and trade. Foremost on Alberta's agenda is the whole issue of so-called flexible federalism; that is, continuation of our efforts to achieve the restoration or the devolution of constitutional authority to the provinces, where it rightfully belongs, not only in the area of natural resource management – and this includes the whole area of environment management as well as the development components – but also those clear constitutional issues as they relate to health, education, and social welfare.

MR. FISCHER: My supplementary question is: what does the Premier expect from the conference with regard to social policy renewal?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, there was a process put in place, and that process was to involve Alberta, the Premier being the chairman of the provinces council, taking the lead along with the federal government, Mr. Pettigrew, and our Minister of Family and Social Services to arrive at a formula to achieve a rebalancing of federal roles and responsibilities relative to social policy reform. We are making some progress in that regard, but it seems that whenever we take a step, someone comes to Alberta, and the federal government seems to be forcing us to take two steps backwards by clearly interfering and making statements of an arbitrary nature that fly in the face of the kind of flexible federalism that we're trying to achieve. That issue indeed

will be discussed at the Premiers' conference in Campbell River.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### **Children's Services** (continued)

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the minister without portfolio responsible for children. For at least the last year regional meetings and consultations have been going on across the province with respect to the regionalization of children's services, yet to this date we have not had one report or minutes filed with respect to those meetings in this Assembly. On May 1 the Minister of Family and Social Services stated that minutes were being kept and on the 22nd said that he would be happy to table them in the Legislature. To the minister without portfolio: will you commit today to table all minutes, reports, and regional service delivery plans that relate to the regionalization of children's services?

MS CALAHASEN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, all the information that has been compiled has been kept by each region. Each region has determined what they're going to do with the information. They haven't finished their compilation of information as they have been going through the meetings that they've been holding throughout the whole province. As each region completes their service plan and continues towards their final plan, they will need that information to be able to work with. At this stage of the game I don't have any information that's complete in terms of all the information available.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. Will the minister update us on the development of provincial standards, then, for the delivery of children's services, and when can we expect those to be tabled in the Assembly?

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have a standards committee who have been working on standards, and each of the standards that are coming forward have been worked through a committee. The committee has not completed its information on the standards. They've been working very, very hard to be able to ensure that the standards are going to be maintained, to ensure that as a matter of fact throughout the province we'll be able to possibly enhance the standards. There'll be givens in terms of the standards that are already there, but each region will be coming forward with those standards, and I'd wait until those standards are coming through the regions.

MRS. SLOAN: Given that the minister won't table minutes and has not completed the development of standards, what steps is she taking with respect to the formalization of monitoring and evaluation frameworks before the regions are actually put in place?

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, anything to do with the evaluations and all the work that's being done relative to the regionalization and all the information through the steering committees is being developed presently, and each group has been working on each of these areas, whether it's evaluation, monitoring, or anything to do with standards. They have been working on these, and until we get further information, I'd say she should hold on.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### **Tradespeople's Training**

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. As Alberta as well as West Yellowhead is experiencing significant economic growth and apprentices and journeymen are required to fill these skills, will the minister tell this Assembly how Alberta's new qualification certificate program will help to fulfill these needs?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question from the hon. member falls along the lines of the information that I tabled earlier today in the House and subsequent to a question last Thursday. I understand and appreciate that you would want me to deal with this item before we arrive at a point of satiety, so I'll attempt to be brief. In answer to the hon. member's question, it is difficult to anticipate just how successful we'll be, but I can say that we've already had 50 people apply for recognition under this program. Considering that this is quite a new program, I think the response shows that this will turn out to be a way in which we can really help some work experience people within our province.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is: will the examinations under the qualified certificate program be the same as those written by apprentices and those participating in accredited courses?

MR. DUNFORD: The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is no. The examinations under the qualification certificate program test competencies gained from years of work experience. We all know that examinations for apprentices and those participating in accredited courses test objectives that were covered in formal instruction, some of it received in the classroom and some of it in the workplace. So the tests will be different.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question: will they be eligible to receive the Alberta and interprovincial standard certification; in other words, the red seal?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer yes to that question. Successful candidates will receive an Alberta qualification certificate and in most cases a red seal.

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

### **Safety Code Enforcement**

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are still more problems in the Department of Labour. Privatization and deregulation are not working. The Safety Codes Council is having trouble dealing with the confusion in the construction industry as to the requirements of the code and the expected level of public safety. This means private inspection agencies cannot do their job. My questions today are for the Minister of Labour. Since the construction industry and private inspection agencies are frustrated with your department's apparent lack of skill in developing these programs, what action will you take to correct this and ensure that the Safety Codes Act is properly administered?

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are in fact not more problems in the Department of Labour. There is a better working relationship existing now between all the groups that are very much concerned about workers' safety. I would reference just the fact that the Building Trades Council wrote the minister's statement for the national day of mourning for workers lost on the job. We have an ongoing working relationship. We have structures in place that allow for dialogue, that allow for building, that allow most importantly for finding solutions.

So when the hon. member states that there are even more problems in the Department of Labour, I would say that there are even more problems in the critic from the opposition bench understanding the real issues of labour and the importance about looking at how labour works in concert with this government and, more importantly, how labour that is both organized and not organized functions in Alberta. For example, Mr. Speaker, Albertans' earnings are about 10 percent above the national average in Canada. Alberta enjoys one-eighth the number of days lost due to strikes. Recently there was an agreement signed by a number of trade unions and Syncrude that was called the project agreement, which talked about ways that organized labour and management could work together to bring more productivity, more wages in the pockets of the workers, and a better and more efficient process to construction projects throughout this great province.

2:10

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, the Rangers could have used a stickhandler like that last night.

He doesn't understand my question. The Safety Codes Act, Mr. Minister. Why is your department not enforcing section 41 of the Safety Codes Act, which requires a stamp from an engineer or an architect on approval of all designs before they're issued for construction? Why are you not dealing with this?

MR. SMITH: I think the kind of stickhandling that's being done over on that side of the bench indicates why the Rangers aren't in the finals.

Mr. Speaker, wanting to move the puck out of this side, I can tell you that the Department of Labour works very closely with delegated administrative organizations that administer the Safety Codes Act, that there is a group that works in concert, and that there is a close understanding between what is legislated, what is enforced, and what is understood by those in the private sector.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that the minister associates me with the likes of Mr. Gretzky and Mr. Messier.

Since we now have residential roof trusses and floor joist systems being installed without proper engineering input, what is the minister doing to ensure that inspection agencies can ensure that the code is being enforced and public safety is not being jeopardized?

MR. SMITH: Public safety is not being jeopardized. In fact, if you take a look, Mr. Speaker, the Safety Codes Council is more than just labour; it's industry, labour, municipalities, educators, volunteers. They're all involved in this. They develop and they monitor the system. They talk to me. The door is open. I've had no formal discussions with this critic to tell me what the problems are that he sees. I think he uses this as shots from outside the red line, and shots from outside the red line don't score in this Assembly. In fact, those people tell me that the problem is working. Section 41 is in fact being reviewed by

council, and I would very much suggest to you that the member is offside.

### Bank of Canada

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. I was interested to hear that the governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Gordon Thiessen, was in Alberta to meet with you and with the Premier and to speak to the Chamber of Commerce. My question is: could the Treasurer please provide details of this meeting for those of us here?

MR. DAY: Well, it was an interesting meeting and somewhat historic from the context of the previous history of the Bank of Canada's governors. I think, Mr. Speaker, that generally people have seen the Bank of Canada and its governor as being in somewhat of an ivory tower and a cloistered situation coming out of central Canada. This particular governor – it was quite interesting – is actually making some very clear steps to first of all establishing regional offices across the country so that there can be a dialogue between regions and the bank in terms of the effect of monetary policy.

We couldn't recall when that had been done before, so the Premier was wanting to and did give credit to the Bank of Canada, if I can use that term, and its governor in terms of establishing an opening dialogue and a listening policy. It was very significant from that point of view and I think will continue to be significant from the point of view that the bank wants to know how regions are affected by an interest rate move and what that does to the various aspects of the economy, and they want to know it face to face. So it was a very productive time between the Premier and the governor.

MRS. O'NEILL: My supplemental again to the Treasurer: can he share with us the government's position on rising interest rates, and was that position passed on to the governor?

MR. DAY: Well, the Premier made it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that a rise in interest rates – it was spelled out very clearly to the governor what that does to our business and to our economy. It's very disappointing to hear the Liberals across the way laughing and ridiculing the fact that the governor of the Bank of Canada specifically wanted to meet with our Premier and to hear directly of the effects of monetary policy on our exports, on our manufacturing.

I'll tell you what was also interesting, Mr. Speaker. The governor commented very clearly on the aspect of Alberta being the government leading – leading – the issue on radical debt reduction and reduction of spending and in fact how that lead two and three years ago has affected other parts of the country and other governments. It is this effort of governments lowering their debts, aggressively attacking their spending that has been the primary reason that the Bank of Canada has been able to withstand the pressure to raise those interest rates. He very clearly spoke about our Premier's role in this and about our government's role, and I think it's something that all Albertans should be proud of because all Albertans took part in this.

MRS. O'NEILL: My second supplemental again to the Treasurer: did the governor give any indication of his assessment of the economic forecast for Alberta in the coming year?

MR. DAY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's also equally important,

because it was indicated by the governor to the Premier that his assessment is like the assessment done by other accrediting agencies and conference boards: Alberta, from the perception right across the country, will continue to lead in the areas of economic growth and fiscal responsibility in fact right into the next century.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

### Organized Crime

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is the only province which does not direct funding specifically to combat organized crime. Reports indicate that the Hell's Angels intend to establish their outlaw motorcycle gang in Alberta this year. To the Minister of Justice: will the minister now follow other provinces and direct funding specifically to deter motorcycle gangs from seeing Alberta as a safe haven to establish a chapter?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll answer this question I think a fourth or fifth time. I'll be meeting with the chiefs of police and K Division on June 9 to review this matter. We will be looking at funding issues. We'll be looking at the status of the problem in this province. Again, as I've said before, it's certainly nothing compared to what British Columbia or Quebec are facing right now. As I've also stated publicly, if additional resources are necessary, we will first look within our existing budget. If we feel that we need something beyond that, that's an issue I'll have to raise with my caucus colleagues.

MS OLSEN: That's good because I don't see any funding allocated.

Given that the federal government has recently taken action with their new gang legislation, will the minister undertake to assign a prosecutor from his department to work full-time with police to prosecute offenders?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I'm not going to assign anyone to a particular issue unless and until we've determined, one, whether it's a major problem in this province and, secondly, what steps we should be taking in concert with the police departments. I think it's a little premature to be doing that at this stage. Nevertheless, if we feel that it's necessary to assign individuals to work with the police, certainly we will.

MS OLSEN: Well, this province has yet to buy into an ounce of prevention.

Will the minister provide the resources necessary to ensure that Alberta is part of the national co-ordinated effort to combat gang activity?

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, if necessary, yes.

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

2:20

### Waverly School

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon I introduced students from Waverly school. This is a difficult time for students, parents, and teachers at Waverly school as the school may well be closed next year. Can the Minister of

Education please explain how the provincial school closure policy process interacts with the Clearview regional board's own policy and, further, how this relates to input received from the affected parent council?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, closing a school is never an easy decision for a board to make, but sometimes school boards and communities do have to make those tough decisions. Before closing a school, the local school board must organize public meetings and discuss the possible closure with the parents and the people, the students who are affected. The board must then look at the impact that the closure will have on the students, on the community, and on the school system, and it must investigate alternative possibilities. Members of the community have three weeks after the public meeting to make presentations to the board, and after holding public meetings and hearing presentations from the community, the board will then debate the issues and vote on whether or not the school closure will go ahead.

At the conclusion of all that, Mr. Speaker, the board will then submit a request to the Minister of Education for the closure to proceed. My responsibility as Minister of Education is to be satisfied that the provincial and local policies respecting the procedures have been correctly followed.

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education tell the students present today his involvement to date in the proposed closure of Waverly school?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, on 18 April of this year I did meet with parents of the Waverly School Council and with the Member for Lacombe-Stettler to discuss their concerns about the closure of Waverly school. This certainly gave me a firsthand opportunity to hear how the closure of the school would affect the community and the local students. At this time there are some 220 students that attend Waverly school. It is, in fact, a fine school. There are two other schools in Stettler that together serve the local student population.

Again, this is not an easy decision to make, but everybody does want what is best for the students, recognizing that we do have to focus our resources. After evaluating their options, the board is proposing to close Waverly school and has requested my approval to proceed with that.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Understanding, Mr. Minister, the full ramifications of this decision and the effect on the entire community, when can parents and students expect a decision from you, and is there a time frame set out for this in legislation and/or policy?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I hope to make this decision very soon. My expectation would be that later on this week is the time when I will be making the decision. I've not yet had a chance to fully review the material on the Waverly school closure. However, I will undertake to do so this week and make a decision.

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

### Prince Rupert Grain Terminal

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last week the Provincial Treasurer indicated that Ridley Grain owes Alberta taxpayers \$145 million in loan payments as well as \$125 million

in debenture payments, but he did add that Ridley Grain had in fact paid back \$11 million against the debenture. So we have a combined net owing of about \$259 million. I'm also encouraged that the Premier has asked the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism to examine ways to boost exports through this Prince Rupert grain terminal, but other fundamental issues, such as freight rates, lease costs, and cash flow distribution, still have to be addressed in order to ensure that Alberta taxpayers receive the full \$259 million owing to them. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Mr. Treasurer, with regards specifically to the \$125 million debenture only, will you confirm that Alberta taxpayers rank fifth in the collection line for payback of that amount?

MR. DAY: I'd have to check on that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Sorry. I missed your answer.

MR. DAY: If your members hadn't been making so much noise, you would have heard the answer. Do you want me to repeat it? I said that we'll have to check on that.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Thanks for that undertaking.

Given that \$259 million is on the line here, will the Treasurer now consent to tabling the actual financial arrangements between Ridley Grain and the government of Alberta, not just excerpts from public accounts or one-line entries from the heritage savings trust fund but the actual financing arrangements, so that Alberta taxpayers will see what happened there?

Thank you.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, this operation was first started in 1981. All documentation through the 80s and definitely into the 90s and certainly under this administration were made publicly available. Day after day after day the same questions keep coming. I think the safest thing to do would be first of all, of course, to once again invite the member opposite to come and sit down any time and look at whatever questions or documents or whatever appear to be missing.

I'll just continue to respond as I have every single day on this, Mr. Speaker, as far as you want to let me go. Today I'll quote from *Hansard* of Wednesday, May 21.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to table again and again and again information related to this particular account. In 1981, 16 years ago, when the hon. member was probably still in high school or maybe a young university student, the government of the day, in wanting to protect Alberta's interests, invested very significantly in this particular facility.

To go on: "As a matter of fact, there was a \$106 million heritage fund loan and a . . .

THE SPEAKER: Okay, hon. Provincial Treasurer. If it's in *Hansard*, we can find it.

The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

#### Crown Prosecutors

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Justice. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Please proceed, hon. member.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. I didn't know if we had the floor here.

The Crown prosecutors, Mr. Speaker, play an important role in Alberta's communities, so consequently I was a little concerned to hear media reports about a potential work-to-rule action being taken by the Crown Attorneys Association of the province. Can the minister provide some information regarding the past weekend's convention with respect to their motions, resolutions, and other debate?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I find it quite interesting that the comrade from Edmonton-Norwood was thumping her desk with respect to the possibility of work-to-rule action. I am certainly concerned about this issue. We have yet to receive any formal communication from the Crown Attorneys Association regarding any work-to-rule action they may wish to take. I would certainly hope that they would contact my office prior to that time, and we could discuss it. Again, as I have indicated, I am very concerned about the issue. I might also add that this past weekend the deputy minister attended the association meeting, and I'm scheduled to attend their fall meeting.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister provide a status update on this recruitment process which you have provided information on and where these positions could be allocated especially with respect to the efficiency of any potential increases in workload and work output?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We are planning to hire 18 additional Crown prosecutors with support staff. I believe the number of support staff would be five. The budget must be passed prior to us actually initiating on a full scale our recruitment process. We're anxious, certainly, to proceed, to respond to the legitimate concerns regarding the increased complexities of litigation and the workloads. In fact, some time ago the department recognized that the Crown prosecutors are facing increased strains and workloads, and that's the reason why an additional million dollars was allocated through the budgeting process to higher additional Crowns.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Giving that the Crown prosecutors of Alberta feel that they are overworked and underpaid, would you provide the Assembly with some information or an update on how their working conditions and remuneration will be addressed?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, to begin with, it hasn't been established whether or not the Crowns in this province are underpaid. What we've done is initiate a study, being conducted by Price Waterhouse, to determine how those Crowns compare to Crowns throughout the country. We're awaiting the results of that study. We hope to have it by the end of June. Once we have that, then certainly it will be an issue which will be discussed during the Growth Summit, because of course we can't in isolation simply address the Crown attorneys' remuneration issue. It's a governmentwide issue looking at a number of departments. Again, we are concerned, and the moment we have the report, it will be given to the Crown attorneys to also review, and we'll respond as quickly as we can.

THE SPEAKER: The time for question period has now left us. Might we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests before we deal with points of order?



HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

head: **Introduction of Guests**  
2:30 (reversion)

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 50 students from the Innisfail junior/senior high school. They are accompanied by their teachers Grant Klymyk and Ken Griffith and parents Lynn Norman, Anne Trembath, Bruce Heaton, Alan Quartly, Dwayne Tyrkalo, Rob Bayne, Sonya Hall, Steve Cota, and Dale Minaker. I believe they're in the members' gallery and the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you members of the St. Martin school grade 6 class, which is a Ukrainian bilingual program. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Markiana Hryshuk, and two parents, Mrs. Slavutych and Mrs. Koreen Wincentaylo. I would ask the students and their teacher and accompanying parents to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair has been advised that there are two points of order today. We'll deal first of all with the purported point of order from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

#### **Point of Order Provocative Language**

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under *Beauchesne* 417, which indicates that "answers to questions . . . should not provoke debate." The minister made the statement in his answer that during his tenure no departmental employees had been disciplined. This statement implies that the hon. minister has no knowledge of grievances arising out of disciplinary actions taken by his department against child welfare workers or social workers within the past 30 days. I believe the comments were provocative in nature. They certainly stimulated debate and to a degree do not reflect the whole story.

Thank you.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately any time anyone on the front bench answers a question here, it provokes debate because the opposition doesn't seem to like the answers. I think the minister was quite forthright and straightforward in responding.

Quite often an answer will be given which is in response to a question which is delivered in such a way that the only manner in which someone can respond is perhaps being a little provocative and forthright. Therefore, I really don't believe there is a point of order with respect to this.

THE SPEAKER: Is the hon. Government House Leader suggesting that it's okay to be provocative?

The Chair, in reading the Blues in this matter, was quite prepared to rule on this purported point of order. I was just going to quote, though, from the Blues in terms of what the hon. minister did say, and the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services did say:

With regards to the specific complaints that the Leader of the

Opposition has raised, first of all, in my tenure as minister there has been no one – I repeat, no one – that has had any implications taken against them . . . What happened in Lethbridge was that two members of the administrative staff went forward to find out what the staff was actually saying about them, which I certainly don't condone if used against them. However, it is part of the job to find out what is being said.

The Chair listened very carefully to the exchange on the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services, and when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview stood up on her purported point of order, she used words other than the type of words that were used by the hon. minister. The Chair finds that this is not a point of order and would certainly hope that no hon. member would want to suggest that one should be provocative either in the questions that they do raise in the House or in the answer that would be forthcoming to the question.

The hon. House leader for the Official Opposition on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Omnibus Bills**

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I contacted your office by way of letter to indicate that I would be raising this particular point of order. I believe that there are some government public Bills on the Order Paper that offend parliamentary practice and certainly tradition in this Assembly and elsewhere.

I'm going to be making particular reference to a few sections of *Beauchesne*, to begin with, sections 634, 626, and 627. Taken together, it is my conclusion that these sections outline how government Bills 16 and 17, which now stand on the Order Paper for the first time awaiting second reading, as well as Bill 11, which of course we've already done some debate on, transgress the established practice of this Assembly. These Bills are omnibus Bills in that they deal with several items. They are Bills that do not share a common theme. In fact, the only thing that these Bills have in common is that they seem to be the purview of a single minister. Other than that, they deal with very separate and distinct statutes.

Mr. Speaker, I'll deal very briefly with Bill 11, because while we noticed that Bill 11 offended these sections of *Beauchesne*, we were willing to endure the debate on that given that this may have been an exception. Bill 11, of course, the registries amendment Act, would make changes to the Builders' Lien Act as it relates to the amount of holdback, it amends the Government Organization Act as it relates to registries and document handling, and it amends the Vital Statistics Act as that Act relates to the role of district registrar. So you can see where there isn't a common theme, and in fact the section amending the Builders' Lien Act was a section that was rejected once already, forming part of the miscellaneous statutes amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, I really want to focus my comments on Bills 16 and 17. To set the stage for that, I will first quote from *Beauchesne* 627, which reads:

A bill may have two titles, one long and one short. Both the long title and the short title may be amended, if amendments to the bill make it necessary.

(1) Long Title – The long title sets out in general terms the purposes of the bill. It should cover everything in the bill.

(2) Short Title – The short title, under which the Act is cited amongst the statutes, is set out in the first clause: "This Act may be cited as the . . ."

et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at Bill 16 to begin with, what

you see is a Bill that is titled the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 1997, which in no way would give any reader, no member of this Assembly, any taxpayer of this province any indication what is the true intent and nature of Bill 16. Bill 16 amends the Domestic Relations Act to include the new federal child support guidelines. It amends the Judicature Act to allow for weapons screening in courthouses. It would further amend the Limitations Act to suspend the limitation period for child victims of sexual assault. It then goes on to amend the Provincial Court Act to change the monetary jurisdiction of small claims court. Then, finally, it would amend the Provincial Offences Procedure Act to provide for the imposition of a surcharge on several provincial offences.

This is a catch-as-catch-can Bill, Mr. Speaker. In no way does it provide any consistent theme, does it provide any notice by the title or even by the content that it is following a pattern or a plan or a policy or a program. It is simply a matter of the Minister of Justice, in this case, putting together a number of items, packaging it all up into one Bill, and then foisting it upon the Assembly for debate. Clearly, this Bill should not exist. In fact, we should be dealing with up to five separate Bills where the purpose is clear, because we have to deal with them as distinct legislative proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make quick reference to *Beauchesne* 626, which talks about the form of a Bill. It reads in subsection (1):

Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill.

Bill 16 clearly fails the screen that is put forward in *Beauchesne* 626.

#### 2:40

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to make brief reference at this point to *Beauchesne* 634, which deals directly with omnibus legislation. It reads in part:

Speakers have expressed deep concern about the use of omnibus bills, and have suggested that there must be "a point where we go beyond what is acceptable from a strictly parliamentary standpoint."

Mr. Speaker, this omnibus Bill is perhaps second only to the long shadow cast by the omnibus Bill known as Bill 17, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act. Bill 17 would amend first the Charitable Fund-raising Act. It would then amend the Debtors' Assistance Act, followed by proposed changes to the Municipal Government Act, then the Real Estate Act, and then finally the Residential Tenancies Act. Once again, no clear theme or thread except for the fact that one minister is responsible for all of these statutes.

Mr. Speaker, if we were to deal with omnibus legislation on the basis that each and every minister could package all of their Bills together at once, then we would be dealing with the most unwieldy and most undemocratic and most unknowable legislation. These Bills tend to be confusing enough as it is for the average Albertan to follow.

The Minister of Health is responsible for somewhere between 20 and 30 pieces of legislation; the Minister of Justice, six or seven dozen pieces of legislation; and the Minister of Municipal Affairs more than a handful of different statutes in her purview. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the parliamentary tradition would demand that when you are dealing with severable issues, you come forward with distinct and separate legislative initiatives. This hasn't been done with Bill 11, it hasn't been done with Bill

16, and it hasn't been done with 17. It is time to put a stop to this practice. It can no longer be justified that just because there is a single minister responsible, they should not be forced to do their homework and bring forward Bills independent of one another for informed debate in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we see this kind of omnibus legislation as a hallmark of legislative proceedings in the United States of America, and I would hope that it is not the intent of this government to Americanize not just our health care system but also our Legislature by bringing forward legislation in this form and content.

Mr. Speaker, I will also at this point raise very quickly for your consideration *Beauchesne* 557(1), and while I'm doing so, I will make a brief reference to a ruling by our previous Speaker on the point of dividing a motion. Now, not directly on the same issue as the contents of a Bill, but I think that this Speaker's ruling is relevant. It was rendered on February 27, 1995, and it will be found on page 204 of *Alberta Hansard* for that year. The question put was

that under Standing Order 40 the Legislative Assembly recognize February 27 to March 5, 1995, as Freedom to Read Week and acknowledge the negative impact that censorship has on lifelong learning.

Speaker Schumacher at that time ruled, after referring to *Beauchesne* 557(1), that this was in fact two distinct motions. The Government House Leader of the day quoted that motion, reading as follows:

A motion which contains two or more distinct propositions may be divided so that the sense of the House may be taken on each separately. The Speaker has a discretionary power to decide whether a motion should be divided.

Speaker Schumacher ruled, in fact, in support of dividing that motion.

Now, if something as related as censorship on lifelong learning and freedom to read, if something that is as closely related as those two themes can be ruled in this House to be distinct and therefore severable for debate, then it seems clear that when you're dealing with a Bill that on the one hand would amend the Domestic Relations Act to include new federal guidelines and on the other hand deal with the Provincial Court Act to change the monetary jurisdiction of small claims court or the Provincial Offences Procedure Act for the purpose of an imposition of a surcharge – it seems to me that these are clearly further apart and less closely related.

Based on this understanding of *Beauchesne* and the sections that I have put forward as well as, of course, Speaker Schumacher's ruling on the level of tolerance in this House regarding what can be read together and what cannot be read together, it seems to me that even though we have allowed Bill 11 to sneak through and wind its way through the legislative process, we can right that wrong by stopping the proceedings on Bill 16 and Bill 17 at this time and by encouraging the government to come back and introduce legislation in its proper form with proper title and content into this Assembly for debate.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief because quite frankly, while argued eloquently, none of the points raised by the House leader for the opposition actually have any relevance, and I would refer you to *Beauchesne* 634. I'll quote specifically:

Nevertheless, the practice of using one bill to demand one decision on a number of quite different, although related subjects, while a matter of concern, is an issue on which the Speaker will not intervene to divide the bill.

That, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in my view preserves the

right of the government to table whatever legislation it sees fit to have considered by this House, and certainly there are a great number of opportunities for the matter to be debated and issues to be raised by the opposition. Unfortunately, it seems that we've spent a good deal of time on something which according to *Beauchesne* is quite appropriate and suitable with respect to this House.

I don't believe there is a point of order, and I hope you'll rule that way. Thank you.

MR. SAPERS: May I respond to that point very quickly?

THE SPEAKER: Well, we're not really in a debate.

Of all the purported points of order yet to have come to this Assembly in the 24 days, the Chair finds this one the most interesting and the most fascinating, fascinating and interesting because of the merits of all the arguments essentially. What we have here scheduled for today, as far as we can determine, in terms of the schedule put forward by the government is that Bill 11, the Registries Statutes Amendment Act, will be called this afternoon. Then for this evening scheduled are Bills 16 and 17. The name of Bill 16 is the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 1997, and therein it contains, as rightly pointed out by the House leader of the Official Opposition, excerpts from a variety of Acts. A variety of Acts. More than one. The same applies to Bill 17, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act. Again, excerpts from a variety of Bills, all which might be independently addressed and brought forward.

Now, the citations that were used today. *Beauchesne* 626 and 627 basically deal with the form of the Bill and basically deal with the title of the Bill. Well, as far as that goes, the titles of these two Bills, 16 and 17, are such that they can in fact cover a variety of things. So the Chair has great difficulty finding out and determining the merit of the use of those two citations with respect to the argument put forward.

In moving to *Beauchesne* 634, which has been quoted by both of the two speakers today, the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader, the notation with *Beauchesne* 634 deals with omnibus Bills. The tradition – the tradition – with respect to an omnibus Bill is that he who chooses to introduce an omnibus Bill consults with the opposition in the Legislature on the contents of the omnibus Bill, and agreement having been reached, the omnibus Bill is then brought to the House and introduced as an omnibus Bill. In the past in this Assembly, on numerous occasions, the omnibus Bill was never debated. The omnibus Bill is introduced and is moved through first reading, is moved through second reading, and in fact even arrives at third reading without any debate on the contents thereof. If the Chair can recall from his own presence in this Assembly for some 18 years, he has seen and experienced a variety of omnibus Bills being the last Bill on the agenda to be dealt with, one usually on the last day of the sitting, and can even recall such omnibus Bills moving through three stages in the shortest of all time and all opportunity.

2:50

But what we have here are not omnibus Bills, so the citation with respect to 634 is a rather interesting one. Both the Official Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader chose to quote under *Beauchesne* 634 as to the merit of their argument with respect to an omnibus Bill. The Chair's understanding is that neither Bill 16 nor 17 fall under the category of omnibus Bill, and certainly it's very, very clear that the Chair would be very, very reluctant to intervene in the division of an

omnibus Bill. At that point there had been agreement between the government and the opposition as to the contents of the Bill.

So why would the Chair choose to intervene or the Chair not choose to intervene in the case of an omnibus Bill? The Chair to this point in time has not been asked to intervene, as far as he can determine, with respect to Bills 16 and 17 and any other citation with respect to this but would like to suggest that the potential for some degree of disharmony could certainly come in terms of the merits or the arguments with respect to what's contained in Bills 16 and 17. The Chair finds it very difficult to ascertain a ruling other than to allow this to go forward as not a point of order on the basis that there seems to be consensus that Bill 11 will proceed, because we've arrived at that point in time, but Bills 16 and 17 should not proceed because there's still some time to look at this.

Now, a ruling can be deferred on this matter, and that ruling might wait several days. But it would have been very helpful, I think, if perhaps we might have had a little more time to deal with this and would suggest at this point in time that one would anticipate that the Chair would anticipate some pretty heated debate on the basis of the contents of both Bills 16 and 17 as they proceed because of the multiplicity of the information contained in these Bills and the excerpts and variety of Bills contained therein. Only time will tell as to really determine what will occur tonight or in subsequent days with respect to the debate on both Bills 16 and 17.

As far as dealing with it today, I repeat again that of all the purported points of order that have been raised in the last 24 days, this certainly is the one that would have a parliamentarian give the most and the greatest attention to. I appreciate the contributions from both the Official Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader and will await the determination of events as hon. members choose to deal with these Bills as the hours and the days and perhaps even the months go on with respect to these three Bills.

head: **Orders of the Day**  
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
 head: **Second Reading**  
**Bill 11**  
**Registries Statutes Amendment Act, 1997**

[Adjourned debate May 20: Mr. Renner]

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

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give some of the answers to some of the questions that were posed in the introduction of second reading. The registries, as you know, are made up of a diverse number of functions. Amendments to several statutes were packaged together as they have a common thread: they all affect a registration process. The primary principle behind this proposed amendment is to improve service to Albertans, to improve the efficiency of the registration process, and to enhance the security and privacy of personal information.

I'm going to just quickly go through some of the major points regarding the Builders' Lien Act. The request for this change has come a long way. In the mid '80s the Joint Government/Industry Task Force on Builders' Liens produced a report called the Knaak report, which made numerous recommendations for changes. The report included the construction payment Act, and the Act was introduced but didn't go through because there was no unanimous

consent. This shows that there are very diverse interests represented and it's hard to get unanimous consent to any changes.

There are three main groups, and I mentioned these earlier – residential; industrial, commercial; oil and gas – and then there are different sectors within each group: the main contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, ultimate consumers, et cetera. Since the failure of the construction payment Act, there have been numerous attempts to make improvements, but no consensus was reached.

The latest attempt is an industry task force which was established in 1995. It consisted of the following representatives, and I'll mention those in a minute. These representatives were responsible for consulting in the sector they represented and communicating back the views to the task force.

Out of the various potential changes the task force unanimously agreed to a reduction in the holdback, including members of the small trades and the contractors. The task force asked the government to proceed with this reduction in holdback as a sign of good faith and to show that the government is interested in amending the Act if there is unanimous consent.

This reduction in holdback will improve the cash flow for small contractors. Instead of getting their payment less 15 percent, only 10 percent will be deducted. This will help the unsuspecting homeowner who may not realize he or she has to hold back money when making a payment to a contractor. A lot of people simply didn't realize that they shouldn't be making the full payment when the job is half done, and that's the reason they have the consumer sheets available, to get that information out. A comment by the Member for Edmonton-Centre about only paying at the rate that the work is done is correct, and that's what the tip sheets say. Every time you make a payment, you should be holding back 15 percent. For example, if you have an interim bill of \$5,000 and that's the value of the work done, you would pay the contractor \$4,250 because 15 percent would be \$750. The tip sheets will be revised once this amendment is passed to reflect that for the \$5,000 bill the new holdback would be \$500 instead.

The deliberately built-in lead time in the Bill for these changes takes time, and by specifying September 1 as the effective date, this would give a chance for the things to be put in place.

Mr. Kerry Powell, who is the chairman of the industry task force, has committed to notifying the industry of the change, and government will be doing its part by updating the consumer tip sheets.

The groups that were represented on this task force were the Alberta Construction Association; the Alberta new home warranty program; the Alberta Home Builders' Association; the Canadian Bankers Association; the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors; the Surety Association of Canada; the Canadian Bar Association, Alberta branch; the Canadian Federation of Independent Business – and this is the group that represented the small contractors and small businesses – and Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Now, talking about the Government Organization Act section, one of the questions was that these things were being added so that private agencies would be able to make more money. This is not true. The changes are being made to the Government Organization Act to allow the services that are now being performed only in Edmonton to be available across the province. The motive is to improve services to Albertans by bringing the services closer to where they're needed.

There was a question about why the law firms were involved in accreditation. Actually, about 70 percent of the corporate registrations start with professional services offered by the

lawyers. As part of the service the information necessary is captured by the law office and mailed or couriered to the government office. The new corporate registry business model will allow accredited law offices to enter the information directly into the corporate register, thus reducing steps and time in registering a corporate transaction. This idea was identified as part of the re-engineering of the corporate registrations and was confirmed in consultations with the Law Society. For example, if there's a large law firm, they would have perhaps one person who has gone through the accreditation process and training and would be able to accredit the corporate registration for their clients.

The requirement for a person to sign a document. In many cases this is simply the filing of a notice document which outlines facts that have happened elsewhere, perhaps minutes for a meeting or addresses of people on the board.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: A point of order?

MR. SAPERS: Yes, a point of order.

#### Point of Order Speaking Order

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt the member, because I was paying attention to the answers. Some of them were questions that I raised myself. My difficulty is that as I understand it, there was a supporter of the government last recognized on Bill 11 when we adjourned at second reading before. There were some members of the opposition who were wanting to be recognized by the Speaker when the Speaker in fact recognized the Member for Calgary-Bow. My recollection of the order of debate on Bill 11 is that the member currently speaking has spoken once before at this stage of the Bill and, as the mover of the Bill at second reading, would now be in effect closing debate. Now, the normal business of the House is government, opposition, government, opposition. So I'm curious as to why a member of the opposition bench wasn't recognized when Bill 11 was called for second reading.

3:00

THE SPEAKER: So is the Chair curious. The Chair rose after calling Orders of the Day, after having discussion with respect to contents of various Bills, rose at this point in time and looked to the opposition side and saw the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert in her chair. The Chair looked at her, waited for her to rise. She didn't. She pointed that way, at which point the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow had risen, and the Chair didn't see any movement with respect to the hon. member, didn't see anybody else in the whole wide range of his eyes moving at all, and recognized the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

The Chair, just at the moment when the hon. Official Opposition House Leader rose on his point of order, was penning a note to the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert indicating to her that the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow was in fact closing the debate. The Chair has penned in his note that he had looked, with a great deal of attention, at the eyes of the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, did not see her rise, saw her point her finger in a nice way, in a nice positive way, to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, who had risen, and pointed out that the following people have already spoken – the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow has already spoken on this matter, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has, the hon. Member

for Calgary-Buffalo has, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood has, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has, and the hon. Member for Medicine Hat has – and he would have recognized her. Hopefully it doesn't cause any great disharmony, but the Chair had done that, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow has been proceeding for at least five or six minutes on this matter. So the Chair believes that we are at the conclusion of debate here on second reading.

**Debate Continued**

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the other questions that were asked. The requirement for a person to sign a document: why this has been removed. As I said, in many instances the filing requirements are notice documents which outline facts that have happened somewhere else, and in these situations a signature is not mandatory. Instead of having to provide a signature, identification of the person providing this information will be collected. This will provide greater certainty of the identity of the individual reporting the information.

One of the other questions was: what are the criteria for determining if a registry should be designated? At this time only a corporate registry will be designated as a registry to which 6.1 applies. A corporate registry is a public registry, which makes it a suitable candidate for having greater involvement of the key stakeholders.

The questions on the signature or seal of a statutory officer. A statutory officer is a senior government official, usually at the ADM level, appointed under specific legislation, and the position is normally held by the registrar. The duties and responsibilities of the registrar are set out by statute administered by the government of Alberta. In many cases other provinces actually use the seal only. Statutory functions are prescribed by statute and these functions include, for example, the issuance of a certificate of incorporation of an Alberta operator's licence; in other words, the driver's licence.

The proposed amendment in Bill 11 does not affect the creation or the appointment of a statutory officer or any of those functions. The amendment does provide the option of replacing the signature of the registrar with a seal of office, and this would enable the government to make more effective use of the documents requiring the registered seal of office.

Enabling the minister to make regulations. One of the questions raised was that Bill 11 will enable the minister to make regulations that will supersede the need for legislative considerations and reduce public scrutiny of the regulatory changes. The government of Alberta is determined to reduce redundancy and streamline legislation to provide an effective and efficient mechanism for all Albertans to manage their affairs. The amendment to Bill 11, the Registries Statutes Amendment Act, 1997, enables the minister through regulation to effectively respond to the needs of Albertans. Today's global economy and the constant changes occurring in technology demand that individual and corporate needs are met in a timely and effective way. Many of these changes relate to administration efficiencies, and through regulation the government has the flexibility to adapt to an ever changing environment.

The authority of the minister to make regulations is not taken lightly and is done only after careful and cautious consideration of all the issues. Whenever a regulation is made, considerable consultation is made with all stakeholders and interested Albertans. The regulations also undergo intense study by government officials. It is through this mechanism that the public is able to

provide the much-needed input and direction before a regulation is made.

Vital statistics. Perhaps this is the one where there was the most misunderstanding. There really are privacy concerns in respect to personal information in the vital statistics registry. It's important to know what is actually being proposed in the amendment to the Vital Statistics Act. What is contemplated is that parties such as funeral directors would be able to submit information regarding deaths by electronic means rather than paper documents. Alberta Registries has just completed a very thorough review of all the aspects of the vital statistics business, and a number of business inefficiencies were identified, one being that the present registration management system is old and ineffective. Since 1994 registry agents have been successfully entrusted with the delivery of registry services and products, including applications for birth, death, and marriage certificates. The only change that this initiative allows is for faster service through the on-line entry of such requests. There has been no change in the business being done, just that it will be more efficiently done.

Due to the privacy and security of the information collected by vital statistics, only a limited number of new clearances will be made available to the private sector. Information for the registration of deaths will be captured electronically at the funeral homes, and funeral homes will have computer access to burial permits and will be able to print them on-site. Registries will implement strict security measures to protect the public and the integrity of vital records and certificates, and the strict security measures will lessen the likelihood of any fraudulent creation of certificates, which will certainly limit and restrict those activities. Registries will implement strict security measures on access to information and services to ensure that only certified agents process services for which they are authorized.

I would urge all of the Assembly to support second reading of Bill 11. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow has moved second reading of Bill 11, the Registries Statutes Amendment Act, 1997. Does the Assembly agree to the motion for second reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:09 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the Chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Hancock	Melchin
Boutilier	Herard	O'Neill
Burgener	Hierath	Pham
Clegg	Hlady	Renner
Day	Jacques	Svertson
Doerksen	Johnson	Smith

Ducharme	Klapstein	Strang
Dunford	Laing	Tannas
Evans	Langevin	Tarchuk
Fischer	Lougheed	Taylor
Forsyth	Lund	Thurber
Fritz	Mar	Trynchy
Gibbons	Marz	West
Gordon	McClellan	Woloshyn
Haley	McFarland	Yankowsky
<b>3:20</b>		
Against the motion:		
Barrett	MacDonald	Sapers
Bonner	Massey	Sloan
Carlson	Olsen	Soetaert
Dickson	Pannu	White
Leibovici		
Totals:	For - 45	Against - 13

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

### Bill 15

#### Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act, 1997

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this afternoon to move second reading of Bill 15, the Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act, 1997.

This Act defines abuse, requires only successful applicants for employment and new volunteers to provide a criminal records check, provides a penalty for false claims of abuse, and provides a date following which occurrences of abuse must be reported. It clarifies the law enforcement agency referred to in the original Act as being the police service.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin my address on this request for second reading by reviewing for a few moments the original and as yet unproclaimed Act, the Protection for Persons in Care Act of 1995. The original Bill had been introduced some years ago by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, and following his appointment to cabinet I agreed to sponsor the Bill. After many changes it was passed unanimously in May of 1995. The Protection for Persons in Care Act required caregivers to report incidents of abuse of vulnerable persons who were in care and provided for protection of those persons who report in good faith. Vulnerable people are at a greater risk of abuse, and therefore if abuse occurs, those observing such abuse have a duty to report, with failure to report being an offence with a specified penalty. The Act provided for reports to be made to the Community Development minister, who then directed the complaint for investigation to the appropriate department. The report must be made and conducted in a timely fashion.

This Act, when it is amended and proclaimed, will provide Albertans with a beginning to protecting persons in care. Mr. Speaker, it's a starting point for dealing with the abuse of vulnerable adults.

I'd like to thank all who helped with the amendment Act and indeed with the original Act, Mr. Speaker, such as the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the Elder Advocates group, and other advocacy associations as well as the members who spoke in support of the Protection for Persons in Care Act. There is quite a lengthy list of those from both sides

of the House. I'd particularly like to express appreciation to all of these people but especially to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, who handled the public consultation process while I awaited an angioplasty operation.

The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act, 1997, is the result of these public consultations earlier referred to, which were held in the summer and in the fall of 1996 with key stakeholders. These stakeholders included the service providers, advocacy groups, professional groups, and indeed persons in care and members of their families. The consultations then, as I mentioned, were led by the Member for Calgary-Bow. Members from both sides of the Assembly attended those meetings along with over 500 individual Albertans, and they received about 70 written submissions as well. The amendments that resulted from these consultations will improve the implementation and the operation of the original Act, as they clarify a number of sections within the Act.

We are proposing in Bill 15 five amendments. First, a definition of abuse is proposed. I'd like to share with hon. members that when we were going through the earlier versions of this Act, the best legal advice that we had at the time was don't define abuse because then it will provide lawyers with reasons to say: well, this isn't a case of abuse because it didn't fit what you had in the Act. However, two years afterwards, after the Bill was passed and not proclaimed, it became probably the number one reason why. The lawyers now all say that we should define abuse, so we are providing a definition of abuse. This inclusion will then assist individuals in identifying actions and behaviours which need to be reported. The proposed definition includes physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse; in addition, intentional inappropriate administration or prescribing of medications. Now, the tricky wording of that is so that we don't get into second-guessing what doctors should or should not prescribe, but it's the intentional, inappropriate administration or prescribing of medications that we're trying to get at.

It also deals with intentionally failing to provide a "necessity of life without a valid consent." So we're not trying to override personal directives and those kinds of legal documents.

Finally, the term "police service" will be substituted for "law enforcement agency" so that we don't get a game warden or a bylaw officer being called. It will be the police service where there is a breach of the Criminal Code. So the term "police service," then, is substituted for "law enforcement agency" to ensure that incidents are reported to the appropriate agency if that happens.

It's proposed that successful applicants for employment will be required to provide a criminal records check. When you looked at the Bill, it looked like any applicant. If you had 200 people applying for a position, they presumably all would have to have a criminal records check. That's clearly not what was intended, but that's what it looked like. This amendment hopefully clarifies that particular effort so that only successful applicants and new volunteers are required to provide a criminal records check. So that gets around all applicants providing a criminal records check.

The volunteers are added in here as well to provide a criminal records check in order to ensure that all individuals who come in contact with persons in care are properly screened. This requirement will supplement other necessary screening and recruitment practices currently in place in all these various institutions.

A clause addressing malicious reporting of abuse is added, and it will include penalties for anyone who knowingly makes a false or malicious report of abuse. This will ensure that the Act is not

used inappropriately and staff members are protected against false complaints.

Finally, a clause will be added stating that only abuse occurring after the proclamation must be reported under the provisions of this Act. Existing mechanisms such as the Health Facilities Review Committee can be used to investigate incidents occurring before the proclamation of the Act.

The Protection for Persons in Care Act and the amendments introduced through this Bill, Mr. Speaker, represent a major step in addressing the abuse of Albertans who are vulnerable. However, this is, as I said, only a starting point. Our goal is to implement the Act and amendments and then use the lessons learned from experience to address other aspects of abuse, especially elder abuse. This is a serious but very complex issue, and we must find a way to address the balance between autonomy and protection. This government is determined to create an environment where Albertans, especially vulnerable Albertans, can live with dignity and respect and continue to make contributions to their families and their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind all hon. members that this came in, first of all, as a private member's public Bill and, because of some of its apparent and real deficiencies, over time was accepted by the government. Now we're coming back with, hopefully, the amendments that will enable it to be proclaimed.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments of all hon. members who wish to speak to Bill 15. Thank you.

3:30

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address the Bill basically in two components, first of all making some responsive remarks with respect to the hon. member's statements or address to the Bill, and then I would like to speak with respect to those aspects of the amendments that are supportable and those which are opposable and my reasons for both.

In the hon. member's preliminary remarks with respect to the original Act and now this amendment Act, he spoke about public consultations that had occurred with respect to both, the most recent of which occurred in the summer and fall of 1996. He cited a variety of people who had taken part in that: providers, persons in care, members of the Assembly from both sides of the House, and I'm anticipating a variety of agencies and organizations. To my knowledge – and I may be amiss in this – there has not been a report of those consultations tabled. I would find the record of those consultations of interest, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the amendments proposed with the intent that this Act now go forward for proclamation.

I think this is something, with all due respect to the government, that we're seeing frequently. We're certainly seeing this type of nonaccountable reporting, as I guess it could be viewed. We've now seen, certainly in almost every sector, public consultations being undertaken – whether it's health care, whether it's social services, whether it's persons in care – and we do not see as Members of the Legislative Assembly a conglomeration of those consultations provided. I think it's an area that's prudent to address, certainly for all members' interest. Particularly for those that are not able to attend the consultations, it would be useful documentation to review not only in preparation for Bill debates but for other aspects of our work.

The amendments that are encompassed in the Bill that is before us, Bill 15. The hon. member outlined the components of those amendments, the definition of abuse. He cited physical, emo-

tional, sexual, and financial, and also an interesting one, which I will come back to, with respect to “intentionally administering or prescribing medication for an inappropriate purpose.” That one is particularly provocative. I would like to speak to that a bit further in my remarks. Also, the segment of the amendments that change the terminology, when we're speaking to enforcement of the Act, to “police service” from “law enforcement,” and the incorporation of criminal record checks for employees and volunteers.

The hon. member also made comments with respect to what I guess I would view as a fragmented whistle-blower clause that is intended to be encompassed. In fact, it goes so far as to say that employees who do not report circumstances of abuse are reportable as committing an offence. It's very much a mixed bag whether or not that is a progressive amendment or something that will be restrictive in nature in terms of its implementation.

To move, then, to the specifics of the Bill, I would indicate that I believe one aspect of the Bill that is supportable is the fact that the government has taken the steps to define abuse. I think that was something, certainly from the documentation received by the opposition, that was identified very early on in the consultations on the first Bill, so it is commendable that that action has been taken. It is concerning and opposable that the definition does not go so far as to include neglect or abandonment. I would speculate that there are instances of acts committed that would be better defined as neglect or abandonment. This Bill does not cover those aspects, and they are not covered in the definition for abuse that is currently in the Bill. With respect to the aspect that talks about “failing to provide adequate nutrition [or] adequate medical attention,” I suppose that could be termed neglect more so than abuse. I guess I'm concerned about the absence of that, the absence of a comprehensive definition section being incorporated. So neglect and abandonment, in my view, both need to be incorporated in the definition section also. We will endeavour to bring forward amendments to encompass that within committee.

I would also propose that the Bill is supportable because it does to a small degree define whistle-blowing protection. What is curious to me is that we see the government taking actions in this Bill – and we saw it previously in the secondhand smoke Bill – incorporating small nuances about whistle-blowing protection, yet in some of the major departments, like Family and Social Services, in fact the opposite is true. There is factual evidence that employees are being disciplined for reporting violations, reporting risks, reporting failure of government departments to report, so it's very conflicting. The fact that this is now a government Bill to me lends to some degree that the government must be supportive of whistle-blowing protection, if they're willing in the context of the Protection of Persons in Care Act and in the context of the secondhand smoke Act to incorporate sections on that matter. But why, then, do we leave these huge gaps for other departments that are still without this type of legislated protection and take contrary actions to protecting employees, in fact incriminating employees, that choose to speak out about government policy?

I believe the Bill is also supportable in terms of its requirement for criminal record checks for both employees and volunteers. One concern, however, that arises with that is who will incur the cost. I do not believe that that particular section is addressed within the amendments proposed. Is it going to be the employer, or will it be the worker or the volunteer? I think it would be prudent that a responsible employer would not mind bearing the costs for such a check to ensure the safety of their residents.

To turn in terms of the sections that make grounds for opposing the Bill, I would like specifically to speak about the amendments not addressing care being provided by private group homes or by relatives of seniors, whereby the senior is actually being cared for in a relative's home or by physiotherapists, chiropractors, lawyers, or accountants. Again, to me we seem to be appearing to want to say publicly that we're willing to take all steps and measures to protect people, persons in care, yet we do not incorporate amendments to cover those sections. Specifically, why would we not incorporate private group homes? That, I think, cries out for some incorporation, and I think we want to ensure that that in fact is encompassed within the Act. There is equal justification, I think, to incorporate private providers. Perhaps they may not be private group homes, but listing the number of professions that are involved – there is, I believe, a need to further explore that.

**3:40**

Specifically, though, under the section that the hon. member referred to in terms of defining abuse, I do not understand why in that particular section physicians have been singled out. I believe it's section 1(a)(iii), where we talk about “administering or prescribing medication for an inappropriate purpose.” Within the medical profession we already have the provision of being able to take someone who commits such an act before the College of Physicians and Surgeons. If you're saying in the other section that you are going to bind employees or people providing care to report offences, then why does the government see the need to drive a wedge between the college's ability to investigate and rule on that and to compound or build an additional investigation process within the Act itself just for the physicians? I don't understand the rationale there, and I think the safeguards exist in the professional legislation. I would welcome some further dialogue on that specific section. The rationale and why what exists is not sufficient in this case. It is certainly sufficient – I believe there is probably factual evidence to substantiate that it's been utilized under the college. Is there some question or speculation about the College of Physicians and Surgeons doing inadequate investigations? That is not to my knowledge the case. So I would raise questions with respect to that particular section.

I also wanted to raise a point, a question, with respect to amendments intending that the agency would have a duty to protect the client's level of safety. My question with respect to that is: what does that actually mean, to protect the client's level of safety? We don't define safety, so in reading that, just in contemplating there potentially being investigations or legal action in the context of this Bill, I thought: what exactly is it that we're tying to nail down? Are we saying that we want to protect and ensure the well-being of these people? The Bill does not say that. The Bill says we want to protect the client's level of safety. Are there multiple levels or is it a singular level, and what is that? I do think we have to be specific.

The hon. member said that initially they didn't want to put in a definition of abuse because they felt it might lead to multiple or complex legal actions or confusion. I don't want it to be inferred that I'm not supportive of putting in the definition of abuse, but that particular section raises questions in my mind. I'm wondering if there could not be perhaps a better way of phrasing that.

In those specific areas I would want to say that I'm hoping we can have some further dialogue. Again, I think it's commendable that the government has taken the steps to bring these amendments forward to try to further strengthen this Bill.

Just a fourth point with respect to why the legislation potentially

should be opposed. It would be my view that the legislation could do more to empower the victims to prevent that abuse. I spoke in terms of what constitutes a reasonable level of safety and that we hopefully are striving to achieve more than that. The areas described in section 1 which would have to comply with the legislation are ones that are already under the provincial jurisdiction or designated as an agency. Potentially we could expand that, though, to include unlicensed facilities with at least three people. I did mention relatives' homes and private group homes, but perhaps there's a need to go even further and incorporate the inclusion of unlicensed facilities with less than three people. Certainly it is my belief that those types of facilities are on the increase, and the government has promoted the growth of those types of facilities in the province. I'm aware of at least one in southern Alberta, but my understanding is that there are certainly more than those. What are the justifiable reasons for those not being encompassed in the Bill?

A fifth area of concern relates to the role of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee in reporting a case to a law enforcement agency only after the investigation has occurred and only if the offences, in their opinion, constitute an offence under the Criminal Code. The time period that I believe the Bill suggests is 30 days. In my humble opinion that seems somewhat long. So it certainly may be an area where improvements could be made by further amendments just to clarify that, if the government is so willing.

I am aware that there have been actions undertaken by a number of provinces with respect to this. I am not aware whether or not this government, in addition to the consultations they've concluded in the province of Alberta, did in fact consider or incorporate any actions taken, any legislation sections that exist within other provincial jurisdictions. I would be interested to know if that in fact has been the case.

Just in the context of that, I think one of the areas in Ontario that's very strong and should be considered but is not encompassed in the current amendments to this Bill is the ability for vulnerable persons to have an advocate, to have a right to an advocate to act on their behalf, and that also gives the entitlement that the advocate has access to their records. That to me would be another very progressive amendment to be made. While there might be some concern around confidentiality, it's very specific that the client would be seeking the advocate and giving approval for that advocate to have the information. So I think it's also an area that's worth exploring. Again, if our ultimate objective is to increase the safety of persons in care and empower them in that respect, I think the ability for them to appoint an advocate to act on their behalf would be a prudent one.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared at this point in debate to conclude my comments and look forward to the remaining discussion on the Bill.

**3:50**

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

**MS BARRETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly am in agreement with the sponsoring member that the definition of “abuse” was very useful. I followed this Bill last year. As everybody knows, I download *Hansard* and I get the Bills and I read them. I must be kooky sometimes. Anyway, I did follow this Bill, and I was one of the people who, even though I had no idea I was going to get back into politics, was thinking, “Come on, you guys; go for definitions.” So far so good.

The amendments here are good. As the Member for



Edmonton-Riverview said, there could be some additional amendments that might be useful. So I feel confident with these amendments as a person potentially down the road needing to be in a care facility that my rights are going to be looked after.

However, that said, I'm not sure I'd want to be a worker in a facility with rules like this, not because the definitions are so tight – they're good – but because it would be pretty easy under some circumstances to be falsely accused of one of the types of abuse by a person, for example, who is not mentally competent. An Alzheimer's patient comes to mind right now.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

What I'll do is just briefly describe my own personal experience here. My mother is now in a palliative care home. Well, one week ago tonight she went in. When she was at home with me, I was responsible for providing her medication. She's on a lot of serious drugs, let me tell you, codeine and morphine, and now she's on one even more powerful than those. Anyway, if you give her the morphine, the MS-Contin, when it takes effect – I don't know; it's like getting instantly drunk or something, I guess. My Mom is out of it for five or 10 minutes.

During that time – and I'm not joking about this. This is a true story. This happened, oh, 10 days ago. So you give her the MS-Contin. Ten minutes later she doesn't have all her faculties. She asks me for some MOS-5, which is a liquid form of morphine. Hey, boy, suddenly I know lots about drugs that I didn't used to know. So I said: "No, Mom, I can't do that. I just gave you your MS-Contin, and that is really powerful stuff. You had two of them. I think that's 60 milligrams. It's time released. I can't give you that liquid morphine now for at least two hours." And do you know what she did? I don't blame my Mom. I mean, my Mom is deathly ill, and she's under, you know, serious drugs. She called me a savage. You know, I really felt bad because I couldn't get through to her: "Mom, I can't do this. The doctor would murder me if I did. I can't do this. I have to wait the two hours." She was calling me all kinds of names. She was really mad, and it took her probably 20 minutes to calm down. By that time, I'm sure, the instant hit of the morphine had come through and the time release was now stabilizing her.

Well, I knew at the time that this Bill was coming forward, and after that I thought: gee, you know, I wouldn't want to be working in the health care system, having to deal with patients that might accuse me of all kinds of abuse or neglect and have no real protection for myself. That's the reason I tell this story.

Now, as of a week ago tonight I've become familiar with the palliative care centre at a local hospital, and I see a lot of patients that are in similar circumstances. They've either suffered very severe strokes or they are out of their mind with pain or under the pain medication, that is given very liberally, thank goodness. I'm very grateful for that, because patient comfort should be the number one objective in palliative care. I'm up there, you know, several times a day, helping out, and I see the kind of care those patients need, and really, you know, any one of them – it hasn't happened, thank goodness – could at any time cry wolf. What would a worker do if the worker had been alone in the room with the patient at the time that the patient cried wolf? So I think I've made my case.

You know, I don't know what's going on around here, but the statutes up here aren't updated. The Act that passed last year isn't in the statutes book, so I must admit that I'm flying from memory on this, quite frankly. In any event, at committee perhaps we could have a thorough discussion of this and see if there's some way that the workers in the system could enjoy some

kind of support in the event that accusations are being made by people whose mental faculties are not what they may have been in the past. In particular, I know a lot of people who work in long-term care – in fact, I've got one sister who does; she's a member of the guild – who are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and all kinds of other workers in the system, who I think deserve the kind of protection that I've outlined as being occasionally necessary.

All that being said, I will come equipped with my amendments to committee. In the meantime, I think the Bill is an advancement over the original Bill, and in principle, even though I won't be here to support it – it is now about five to four and I had a meeting at a quarter to four, so I won't be here to vote on it – I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that the sponsoring member would have my support at this vote, maybe not at committee.

Thank you for listening.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to make a few comments on Bill 15. I guess it's even kind of sad in this province that we have to have legislation to make sure that people that are in care are protected. I guess, sadly, that's a reality of the society we live in.

Now, I think the sponsor of the Bill indicated that it never was proclaimed, and I guess I want to hear that again from him as to whether it was or it wasn't and that that's why we're back. I appreciate some of these amendments. As has been indicated by Edmonton-Riverview, we may add a few more to make it even stronger.

A few questions I have about it. Does this Bill only apply to buildings that are under governmental control? Are there other group homes that aren't within that? If they aren't, can we make them part of this? I guess I'm thinking of private group homes or homes that are keeping relatives. Everyone knows – well, maybe everyone doesn't know – that often if you are caring for someone in your home who needs a great deal of care, there can be great stresses. People may not intend to abuse, but they may. I know this ties into even respite care, which is not part of this Bill, I realize.

When I was much younger, in the summers I worked at Camp He-Ho-Ha, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with. That was a wonderful eye-opener for a young, healthy teenager, and I gained a real appreciation of how fortunate I am. From that experience I met a lot of people who were in care in different institutions, who were also being cared for by their parents or by relatives, and who definitely needed protection. So this Bill's been awhile in the works, and I'm grateful. Hopefully, after these amendments it will get eventually Royal Assent.

I found it most interesting that the government is willing to protect whistle-blowers who work in group homes – bravo; good for you – but, interestingly enough, won't protect their own when they would like to point out deficiencies that are going on within departments. A bit of an oxymoron there, but that does happen with this government, as we all know. So I'm grateful that there is whistle-blower protection for people who do report abuse. Maybe that could be included far more extensively within the different departments of this government as well. I think this is a good attempt to protect employees who report these cases of abuse. Children and adults with disabilities are frequent victims of abuse, and caregivers are often those perpetrators. The sad part of this is that most of it would depend on, then, who the witness is, because you'd need a witness in most cases – well, not

most but many – because many people cannot communicate that they are being abused or that they're being forced to eat food they don't want to eat.

4:00

I guess it's incumbent on legislation to protect those who do talk who work there, and I guess it's incumbent on all of us to make sure that family and friends are well taken care of. I would venture to say that most people do that. However, there are people out there who just don't have people who can advocate for them. As I understand it, in an Ontario piece of legislation they do appoint an advocate; you can appoint an advocate or have an advocate appointed for you. Maybe that's something we should think about amending. I wouldn't hold the Bill up on that point, but it's certainly something worth considering.

I had some questions about if it should be expanded to include unlicensed facilities, and I guess that's with less than three people. Maybe that's not possible to do; I don't know. If you have to register that you are caring for people, must you be licensed? Or if you have less than three people, then maybe you don't have to be licensed. I don't know how you can apply that. Maybe it's not possible, but I think it's something we should look at.

I just have a few more. I appreciate the fact that the term "abuse" is now defined. An interesting change I found was that it was written that the criminal records be checked, and now it's for those who actually were successful in getting the work, which maybe waves a red flag. Was that a problem in group homes? Were there many people hired that had a criminal record that suddenly . . . No. I'm glad to see the sponsor shaking his head, even though he is in the Speaker's Chair. I think that's a valid check that certainly should be done for people who are caring for the most vulnerable in our society.

I believe there are a few more comments to be said, so with that I will make my remarks short. I appreciate your time on that, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNEN: Thank you. [interjections] Some confusion, Mr. Speaker. I don't have anything at this point. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Speaker, I speak to this Bill because children and adults with disability are frequent victims of abuse, and they have more chance of being abused because of what we do not have in place today. Abuse by paid caregivers is 45 percent more likely to go unreported to the law enforcement authorities than abuse by other persons. Abuse in an institution is 52 percent more likely to go unreported than abuse in other settings. Studies show and suggest that two-thirds of known sexual abuse in institutions is unreported. Fear of consequences of reporting has been identified as an important influence.

The Bill intends to acknowledge the problems that exist in the area of vulnerable persons or persons in care. Children and adults with disability are frequent victims of abuse, and there are greater possibilities of these Albertans being abused. Caregivers are too often part of this abuse. Caregiving agencies sometimes do not report the abuse due to neglect by the public, exposure, and lawsuits, et cetera. Sometimes victims of abuse lack the abilities to fully report the abuse or are easily intimidated by others not to do so.

Areas that should be addressed in the Bill seem to be focused

on complainants, agency protection, not on the victims. The right of the protection of the victims is simply stated in section 4(1): "Every agency shall have a duty to protect the [clients'] . . . level of safety." The Bill may adequately represent the complainant's position, but it does not go far enough to address the needs, the safeguards required in protecting the vulnerable person in agencies or facilities.

The legislation could do more to empower victims, prevent future abuse of vulnerable persons. What constitutes "a reasonable level of safety"? One would hope that there would be more than just a reasonable level of safety being provided to the individuals in care. Reasonable safety sounds like a construction site. Perhaps abuse, neglect, and abandonment should be clearly defined. The areas described in section 1 which would have complied with the legislation are ones that are already under provincial jurisdiction or designated as an agency. It should also be expanded to include unlicensed facilities with less than three people. Since the number of these types of facilities will certainly increase during the current political climate in Alberta, we hope that this is looked at.

Another issue is the role of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee in reporting the case to a law enforcement agency only after an investigation has occurred only if the offence "could, in its opinion, constitute an offence under the Criminal Code." The time period of 30 days to report seems too long. The area about the opinion of the social committee to determine if it is an offence pending investigation should be changed to: if the reported abuse constitutes a criminal offence, if confirmed, it must also be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities immediately. Perhaps when a report is deemed warranted, an immediate oral report should be made to the law enforcement agency.

I do appreciate these amendments, but I trust our caucus to bring more amendments forward. Whistle-blowers is an unusual way to perform or act or govern in this province, but under the circumstances of these vulnerable people, who else will stand up for them? The workers need watching but also can be part of the protection of the residents and the most important.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I've finished speaking, and I'd like to adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has moved that we adjourn debate on Bill 15. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

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

4:10

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

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

**Bill 14**  
**Appropriation Act, 1997**

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd invite the Provincial Treasurer to start off this afternoon's comments.

MR. DAY: Question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Every time they say "question" on that side, it compels me to stand up. I guess one should spend a few minutes speaking about this Appropriation Act. When you think of it, it's passing a fair chunk of coin into legislation by this government, almost \$12 billion. You know, some of it is for different government ministries and the Legislative Assembly. Some of it is for capital investment.

In this whole convoluted process of budget estimates I actually got the opportunity to sit in on the estimates of the minister of – I'd like to say capital investments, but that's not it – Public Works, Supply and Services, though something else was going on at another time, so I was unable to be at the one at the same time, which seems to be the problem in the whole process of debating estimates to get a clear picture of where money is spent. I do appreciate that we had time in that one committee to speak back and forth with the minister, and it was quite good. Regretfully, though, I couldn't be at all the committees because many of them were at the same time. I hope that in the next session, when we debate budget estimates, the government won't be as arrogant as they were about the "Well, you guys can get in your questions whenever and they're not really important" kind of attitude and change the process for debating estimates.

I want to speak for a minute about the \$123 million for payments made under the lottery fund. Quite honestly, many of the projects out in my riding where money has gone from the lottery fund have been excellent, excellent projects, because the community is involved in it. They put the time and effort or the matching dollars into that grant, and I think that speaks highly of community spirit. Probably my riding has one of the highest applications for those, because they are such energetic, enthusiastic, and community-minded people, and I appreciate that. I would like to see, though, that whole approach to lottery dollars put to the municipal level and for them to make recommendations, to be more involved in it than just at the whim of a minister, because that's ultimately what it could end up being. Of course it never would be, with the Minister of Community Development. If she were in charge of it, I know it would never be that way, but she may not always be the minister. In fact . . .

DR. TAYLOR: Oh, don't suggest that.

MRS. SOETAERT: Say it isn't so, but it could be so. Stranger things have happened.

DR. TAYLOR: I hope you haven't got your hopes up.

MRS. SOETAERT: And we would always hope that Cypress-Medicine Hat is never in control of lottery dollars. [some applause] Mark that as a round of enthusiastic applause in the Assembly.

DR. TAYLOR: One person agrees with you.

MRS. SOETAERT: I just would like to keep going here. I want to speak for a moment about "capital investment . . . cost of construction or purchase of provincially-owned land, buildings, equipment, highways, bridges, dams and other assets." Well, we

all know what I have to say at this point, and that is that I would hope money will be spent on highway 794. In fact, there was another accident this last weekend on that highway. I know many think that maybe I bring it up . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Ad nauseam.

MRS. SOETAERT: Ad nauseam. It's to, hopefully, make a point not only in this Assembly but certainly with Sturgeon county and how they should make it a priority. They're waiting for the government to make it a primary highway. It's a secondary highway, and they should invest in it. However, that being said, I know that that will be under transportation estimates time and time again until it gets fixed. Sad to say, another person was hurt again this weekend.

I want to speak for a moment about where I would have liked to have seen a few different things within this whole process. If this whole process is to set up accountability and a framework to clarify the government's commitment to performance, maybe the Treasurer could possibly release the instruction manual, which is prepared by the department of Treasury budget management, that establishes guidelines for ministries in the preparation of the three-year business plans and annual performance reports. Maybe that would be a responsible thing to do. Then we could even hold you responsible for meeting your goals and objectives and developing quantifiable outcomes and output measures. I think that would certainly improve the effectiveness and the efficiency. You have to be serious about outcomes and outputs.

Some of the things, regretfully, that were not addressed in this budget that certainly should have been was the fact that we spend the least amount on health care and education and social services of any other province in Canada. We all know the problems. I've had two calls again this week about seniors who cannot access long-term care beds in Capital because they live – I know the ministers always shake their heads and say: no, it doesn't happen. But it does, and unless I phone and lobby for a person to get on the Capital list, they don't get there.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Good MLA.

MRS. SOETAERT: I know I'm a wonderful MLA, and I do that for people. But is that the way people should access long-term care beds? No. Do people get to jump the queue because I do that? Yes. Is that right? No. I will always advocate for my constituents who cannot access those beds in WestView or Capital, but the point is that I shouldn't have to. The point is that those beds should be available to them. I would suggest that the waiting lists for long-term care beds wasn't addressed in this budget, and I certainly would have liked to have seen it.

I'm also concerned about education and the lack of dollars that we see there. I think we will see the results of this lack of funding in a few years if not sooner. That's the difference between education and health. When you can't get a bed, you see it right away, but when kids are shoved into a classroom, after a couple of years that's when you start to see the effects of these cuts. I venture to say that wasn't addressed in this budget at all.

I'm also concerned with the social services budgets and the new boundaries that are going to affect them. Implied in one of the member's statements was that there would be six social services regions and they would be coterminous with the health boundaries. Now, that raises a flag and says to me: is this government changing the health boundaries? If they are, what kind of money

is going to be needed to change, number one, all the signage and naming and letterhead and equipment from what it was. It doesn't make sense. If these boundaries are seamless, do we have to worry about fewer health authorities? We wouldn't have to if the boundaries were seamless, but they're not. They become brick walls in many cases, and regretfully I don't see any money being addressed to that.

DR. MASSEY: There goes your question.

4:20

MRS. SOETAERT: There goes my question for tomorrow, but that's okay. The Minister of Health isn't here; i.e., he's here but isn't responding right now.

I want to speak to a few things. How many cushions are in this budget? Like, at the end of the year is there going to be a big announcement again that says: "Oh, my gosh, aren't we wonderful? We have a surplus." I'm glad there's a surplus, but in the meantime, what's happened to education? If you're going to have a surplus, invest in our kids. You haven't done that with this budget.

DR. TAYLOR: Education's getting better.

MRS. SOETAERT: Education's getting better, the minister of – whatever he gets paid nothing for – science and technology says. I'm sure science and technology is important, but what the minister's doing within it, we have to wonder.

I was talking about a surplus.

DR. TAYLOR: You were talking about education.

MRS. SOETAERT: I was talking about education and how you've underfunded it and at the end of the year will say, "Aren't we wonderful?" But in the meanwhile, Thorsby school won't get the renovations they more than deserve. In fact, they're willing to be within that budget. [interjection] Their MLA is fighting for them, but I think it's falling on deaf ears. So if we properly spend our dollars – this surplus is wonderful but not at the cost of our children. Our children are becoming crowded in classrooms. Our children with mild to moderate needs are being neglected.

DR. TAYLOR: Well, why is that?

MRS. SOETAERT: Because they don't have the dollars to fund . . .

DR. TAYLOR: Of course they've got the dollars.

MRS. SOETAERT: I've encouraged debate, and I welcome that, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure the member opposite will lurch to his feet to respond to me.

The reason our kids are crowded in classrooms, the reason they're not being taken care of . . . [interjection] It's because some government members like to pick on teachers instead of encouraging them. [interjections] He's just said: they're not teaching. Well I happen to know that they work extremely hard with overcrowded classrooms, with kids with all kinds of needs, with behaviour disorders, with all kinds of needs and fewer dollars.

I know that every school in Sturgeon is losing at least two teachers, yet the enrollment is the same next year. [interjections] That has nothing to do with what teachers want to get paid. It has everything to do with properly funding public dollars. Now, the

Member for Calgary-Glenmore asked me the other evening: why don't teachers like the Conservatives? I quickly told him: they took away 5 percent, they undermined them by saying they're not worth it, and now they won't give them back the 5 percent. They always dump it on the school boards: well, they aren't doing their job. We all know it's the government that's underfunding education. [interjection] People like Cypress-Medicine Hat continually teacher bash in here, as he walks away with his big stipend.

DR. TAYLOR: I'm married to one; my wife's a teacher.

MRS. SOETAERT: Mr. Chairman, through you. About Treasury.

MR. DAY: I'm listening.

MRS. SOETAERT: I'm glad you're listening, Treasurer.

There comes the other area that we have to be concerned about, Justice. The minister always stands up and says that if we need money, well, we'll find it somewhere. Yet we're passing this legislation without looking at that, without considering that we need more . . . [interjection] I didn't say money. We need more Crown prosecutors, experienced ones, and you can't expect them to work for peanuts. You know what you get when you feed them peanuts. You get the minister of science and technology.

In a budget you have to look at more than just the bottom dollar. You have to look at the human deficit: what we're losing in experienced Crown prosecutors, what we're losing in crowded classrooms, what we're losing in people waiting to get access to health care facilities. In the long run, if we took care of them, if we had proper funding, it would save us money. That, of course, would mean some vision, something this government truly doesn't have. So with all these cushions that have been built into this budget, you can stand on your little podiums in your constituencies and say: "Aren't we wonderful? Oh, my goodness, we've got a surplus." Meanwhile, Thorsby didn't get the school renovations it deserved. Meanwhile, people are waiting to access beds. Meanwhile, kids are crowded into classrooms. Meanwhile, Crown prosecutors are overworked and underpaid . . .

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

#### Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. PHAM: Yes. Will the hon. member entertain a question?

MRS. SOETAERT: Citation?

MR. PHAM: *Beauchesne* 482. I would like to ask the hon. member a question.

MRS. SOETAERT: No. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The hon. member has declined.  
Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

#### Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm given such precious moments to speak about the budget, but I will gladly speak to the member afterwards about his question, and we can debate the issues of the day outside of the House.

DR. TAYLOR: That's threatening him.

MRS. SOETAERT: That wasn't threatening. I don't think Calgary-Montrose would be too afraid, though there are people who think he should be.

I want to say that I am worried about the social infrastructure of this province. I don't believe it's been addressed in this government's budget. It seems like the bottom line is only dollars, and I think the human deficit has not been accounted for in this budget.

Another area that I am concerned about, too, is advanced ed and the shortage that we are going to have of trained people in the trades. If that is a part of the budget cuts and the rising tuition costs and the inaccessibility to some advanced education programs, we're going to pay that price, too, in a few years. I have to be concerned about that.

I want to say that sometimes this government talks about being open and accountable, yet when we ask about tabling agreements being made on loan guarantees, we get short, curt answers that say yes, no, and no real consideration of how we want to see this government redeem some of the losses they have incurred. We know that the loans were given out by this government, and now we want to know how you're recouping those losses at the least possible expense to us. I think people in Alberta deserve to know the details of how those losses are going to be recouped.

Now, this government has projected, I think, crude oil at \$19 or \$18.50 a barrel, so we'll see how that comes out in the real world. I guess my concluding remarks – and I know people will regret that – are that this government has been painfully off its projections. So they can crow from the highest post: we have a surplus. Meanwhile, we have a terrible human deficit, and the point is that we don't have to have that human deficit. We don't have to in this province, where so many wonderful things can happen and where there are so many advantages that people have over other provinces.

We're a very wealthy province in the overall picture. Yet as they underestimate and we end up with a wonderful surplus at the end of the year, how many people have waited in pain for a hip replacement? I was speaking to a surgeon, and he said: I spend too much of my time speaking to patients and trying to explain to them why I can't get them a bed for a hip replacement or knee surgery. They sit in pain, not being able to contribute to society the way they would like to because they're waiting for surgery. That's wrong, and I hope every government member has some qualms about that, because as we sit here in this enclosed cocoon, you can be quite arrogant about the real needs out there, and you shouldn't be. There are people hurting daily, and because this budget won't allow more beds – more acute care beds, more surgery beds, more long-term care beds – these people are waiting in pain. That's called the human deficit. So when you crow about your surplus, know that I will be saying: I'm so glad we have spare money, but look at the people who've been hurt in the process. Just look at them.

One more thing under education that I didn't have a chance to mention when I was speaking about it is that people think that kindergarten funding is back up to a full half-time, but it's truly not. So when you go back to your constituencies and people say, "Well, you know, you're not . . ." [Mrs. Soetaert's speaking time expired] Mr. Chairman, I regret that I'll have to be seated.

Thank you.

4:30

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. This Bill that we're talking about right now is a Bill that's worth speaking to. It's a Bill that's about a huge figure. We must speak to this because this government is on its path to get rid of the debt brought on by governments of the past. The difference between this government and our party is that we have fiscal responsibility but a social conscience to go with it.

MR. DAY: But we have a majority.

MR. GIBBONS: This time.

To destroy the government departments one by one can be thought of as being a very smart business venture, but this government should, not just through the election period but now and for the next four to five years, as the Premier says they're going to be sitting, listen to its citizens and prepare for what the future is going to be, not destroy it.

Three major themes emerge through the rationale of this legislation. The government has rendered meaningless the presentation of expenses, operational capital, nonbudgetary disbursements of lottery funds under the Appropriation Act, 1997, since they now have the ability to transfer money between programs within the ministries at will. The Legislature can only approve these transfers of funds between and within ministries after the fact of supplementary expenses. This is not the fiscal accountability that Albertans are demanding from the government.

Performance measures and benchmarks identified in the three-year business plans for the individual departments should be included as line items in the Appropriation Act itself, similar to what happened in a state that they keep referring to, and that is Texas. This would ensure that the costs of output delivered by the government are more closely related to outcome measures and the output benchmarks. Including the goals, objectives, strategies, the output and the outcome measures, and the benchmarks within the Appropriation Act means that there is an enforceable contract in place between the government and Albertans that would allow for greater accountability for meeting performance goals and objectives. While we appreciate the commitment from the Provincial Treasurer to provide more of a vote-by-vote breakdown within the Appropriation Act, there must be more of an attempt to link the output to the results achieved.

The third theme in Budget '97 is that it is a stand pat, stay the course budget from a government that has forgotten that the people are what matters, not simply the financial bottom line. This government is a government that has substituted a structural fiscal deficit with a structural human deficit by failing to measure the impact of expenditure reductions in Alberta health care, education, and social services on Albertans.

Lack of disclosure within the supply votes. We support the move to separate operating expenditure and capital investment. In previous years the full expensing of capital expenditures within the GRF made it difficult to measure the true costs of providing programs and services. The Auditor General and the Alberta Financial Review Commission recommended separation of operating and capital expenditures as a means to strengthen material accountability and evaluation of effectiveness of the program. However, the government has used the recommendations as a means to reduce the level of this disclosure on a program-by-program basis within the Appropriation Act.

Accountability and performance. On May 15, 1997, we heard the Treasurer suggest "that Alberta is breaking new ground in Canada when it comes to performance measures" and accountabil-

ity. We are making strides, but the Treasurer must know that performance measurement is an evolving process. He can take a lesson from the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Britain, that have all evolved performance measures long before Alberta. The Treasurer tabled copies of *Measuring Performance: A Reference Guide* and the Government Accountability Act last week. We can assure him that the caucus members and the research staff were interested in the documents when they came out.

These constructive recommendations for improving the Government Accountability Act include quite a few items: change the financial statement to include such items as statement of cash flow, statement of commitments, asset and liability statement sheets, ministry transfers, statements of commitment of the Crown as of the day on which the financial statement is consolidated, fiscal plans are finalized; statement of special fiscal risk of the Crown as of the day on which the forecast financial statement is consolidated, fiscal plans are finalized; being at fiscal risk in relation to government decisions or other circumstances that may have a material effect on the fiscal and economic outlook and qualifiable fiscal implications of this government's decisions and other circumstances.

At this time I will sit down, Mr. Chairman, and let others speak.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd like an opportunity to speak once more to the estimates, particularly to focus on the estimates of the \$1,635,637,000 that the Department of Education is going to spend in the estimates that are before us, and to raise a couple of issues. It's an issue that I've asked about before and that I hope I'm still going to receive some information on, and that's the per student instructional grant. That grant in this budget has been increased from \$3,686 per student to \$3,716. I really would like to know on what basis that increase was made and what the figures are or what kind of computations and factors went into determining the base level in the first place that would form the calculations for these current figures.

There's been a number of people from across the province questioning the amount of money that's available for classrooms, and parents from Calgary and some other jurisdictions had sent copies of letters they had forwarded to the minister and to the Premier of the province. Those letters were tabled today in this House, really claiming that the basic grants for education were inadequate. Those parents represented a wide variety of interests and socioeconomic areas in Calgary, so I don't think they can be dismissed, especially if you put with their questioning of the inadequacy of the basic grants the recent survey by the home and school associations across the province, where the inadequacy of basic funding was again an issue.

[Mrs. Gordon in the Chair]

If you look at the material that was tabled earlier in this session from Calgary, where 60 school councils were asked to identify major issues they saw as important in education, they too identified basic funding as an issue and indicated that many of them were in the business of raising funds for what they considered basic program elements. There is just a growing chorus across the province who are asking about the adequacy of the basic funding, and I think that in response to those people there should be some rationalization, some justification for the levels that are now being used, in particular the increase for this year.

4:40

The budget is a little misleading in terms of indicating that there's been a 6.1 percent increase in Education spending, or \$169 million. It's true that there's been that kind of money added to the budget, but in terms of what people seem to be identifying as their priorities for budget spending, they don't seem to quite match. A hundred million dollars of the \$169 million was for increasing enrollment, so there really wasn't much choice on the government's part to supply that kind of money. To claim it as part of the increase I think is a little misleading.

There was \$40 million for technology, and this, I have to admit, is congruent with what people are saying. There's more money needed or at least there's a feeling on the part of people that there is more money needed for technology, and that usually translates into money for computers and money for hardwiring and making sure that schools can be connected to each other and to the Internet.

There was another \$8 million placed in the budget for sparsity and distance factors and, again, not really much choice. Those schools operating in remote parts of the province, those schools boards faced with the problem of providing education at distances remote from youngsters' homes just had to have the resources to make that possible. There was another \$17 million reallocated for children with severe learning disabilities, and those funds will be welcome. But to really claim that there's been a 6.1 percent increase in the areas that many people deem important I don't think is quite fair.

If we could put \$165 million back into the system, I think that there are a number of areas that should be in this budget and aren't. I think the money to restore 475 hours of kindergarten is an essential and should have been part and parcel of this budget. Certainly I hope that if it isn't, it will soon be at least. It's the kind of investment in young people and young Albertans that I think is most necessary. Estimates have put that at about \$15 million to restore the full funding for kindergarten.

One of the areas where I think it's imperative we have some more money spent is to bring class sizes into the ranges that people feel are teachable and reverse the trend to increase them. I mentioned last week in the Legislature some work that had been done in trying to determine the effect of class size on student achievement. The information coming out of a rather major study in Texas was that in grades 1 to 7, as soon as you start adding students over the number of 18, you'll see a direct drop-off in students' achievement scores. That was a study that was based on 2.4 million children and 900 different school districts, so I don't think it's easily dismissed. It seems to be the first study that indicated a threshold at which other things start to happen. We get caught up with teacher/pupil ratios and what should be included, and I think instead we should be looking at individual classrooms and looking at what should be the ideal and exactly what it would cost us to fund education at 18 students for grades 1 to 6 as the class size.

Interestingly enough – I think I mentioned it last week – the same doesn't seem to hold true for programs post seventh grade; that is, they couldn't find a direct correlation between student achievement and a decrease or an increase in class size over the 18 students. So I think we need more teachers. We need more teachers put in place and to make sure that those class sizes approach more often the 18.

Another area that hasn't been addressed in the budget and that sometime in the near future is going to have to be addressed is the material fees that are being charged to students who are supposedly attending a tax-supported public education system. We can't

continue to let those fees grow. We can't continue to let them exist as they are in some school districts.

I had in September a constituent phone and indicate that it was costing her \$600 for each of the students in her family. She had three of them that she was enrolling in one of this city's school districts. That's just unacceptable for a school system that is supposed to serve at minimal or no cost the students of this province. I think that reducing material fees, making sure that we are not putting barriers in place that deter students from attending schools openly, freely, that students are not feeling their parents are being financially penalized or not feeling somehow or other that they're less than other students in the class when their parents don't happen to have the particular resources that are being demanded of them by schools and by the school program – at some point, either in the basic instructional grant per student or in some sort of special grant I think we're going to have to move and try to reduce material fees that are charged to students.

The support for special needs has been earmarked by . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. Hon. members, could we try to keep the noise level down. If those that want private conversations could take them outside the Assembly. Thank you.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Money for special-needs students, particularly mildly disabled students, again has been identified across the province by parents and teachers alike. The move to mainstream youngsters I think was applauded by many, and when that move was made, there was also a move by many boards to put in place the resources to make that possible. There has been a lot of talk around this particular item, but I think it would be in everyone's interests if members of this Legislature would take the time to visit a classroom where there are special-needs youngsters and get some appreciation of the kind of burden that those students sometimes place on classroom teachers and on other youngsters in attendance in that classroom.

The number of children in a classroom often is not nearly as important as the mix of those children. I can recall being in a second grade classroom where there was a severely behaviorally disordered youngster, whose outbursts when he lost control made sure that any instruction that followed in the next half hour or so was usually lost because youngsters were so upset with the kind of behaviour that that youngster exhibited. So I think it would really be in the interests of all children and education for members of the Assembly to make sure that they spend some time in a classroom or two where special children and their needs are being met, where teachers and school personnel are trying to meet the needs of those children.

4:50

The technology investment of \$40 million in matching grants has already caused a number of questions to be asked. What does it do in have-not communities? Is it really just more money for those communities that already have access to a lot of extra resources, given the differential ability of have and have-not communities to raise funds? The \$40 million in technology is interesting. It goes nowhere near the figure that the now Minister of Energy indicated in the Legislature last term, when that minister indicated it would take between half and three-quarters of a billion dollars to adequately hook up and equip our schools across the province to computers and computer systems.

So again, the \$40 million sort of raises the question: what is the long-range plan for technology? How much money does the

government expect to put into technology over the next 10, 15 years, and what are those sums? How are they going to be raised? How much are local communities going to be expected to contribute? I would hope that in that regard there might be some evaluation of the matching grant and its impact on computers in classrooms across the province as this matching grant is instituted, to tell us if this is really the way we get the kinds of technology we want youngsters to have at their disposal. Is this really the way we should go about getting it into classrooms?

There are other things on a wish list one might hope would be in the Education budget. It would have been nice to see some money for research in K to 12 education earmarked for dealing with problems such as small schools. Increasingly there are small schools in this province that are under the threat of closure. When you look at schools as being the heart of many communities, at efforts and ways of running those schools so they are still viable, still able to provide quality programs for youngsters, it seems to me that it's a research effort that's long overdue.

There is work around, some of it dated now. A number of years ago Paul Gump and his associates at the University of Kansas put out a book called *Big School, Small School*. They put together a rather impressive list of the benefits of small schools, the pressure in small schools for students to be more versatile, the pressure in small schools for students to take part in a wide variety of activities, and, just the contrary, on how large schools work against involvement of students, allow students to become more anonymous. So there is a background of work done in the area. It would have been nice in the budget if we could have seen that kind of work formally looked at and some research effort made into our particular circumstances in this province.

It would have been good to see because of the sort of blind faith we have in technology right now, particularly in computers. It would have been useful, I think, to have had some money allocated to the evaluation and the use of that technology. Is it going to really fulfill the promise that most seem to hold for it, or will we be four or five years down the road wondering how wisely the money we spent on that technology really was spent. Are there things that we should be doing: looking at limited-capacity computers, getting those kinds of computers into classrooms that have limited but targeted use by students at particular grade levels? Is that another way we might go in technology. We talked in the public works estimates about the advantages of setting standards for equipment and using those standards across the province so that equipment was interchangeable and the skills that youngsters used on that equipment were usable in a variety of settings across the province. Again, it would have been interesting to have that included as part of a small research budget in these estimates.

The estimates have allocated some funds for capital spending, and I don't think you have to be a great planner to realize that's it's not going to be many years down the road before capital funding and the rebuilding of the infrastructure program is going to become an acute problem. It would be useful if there were plans being put in place now, some long-range plans, to cope with those changes, with everything from the claim that we're not going to need school buildings because students will be able to stay at home and use technology to access instruction to counter-claims that we're going to need even more schools and school facilities because what will become more and more important is human interaction in education and the need for more support and more resource people to work with children.

With that, I'd like to conclude my comments on the estimates, particularly the Education estimates. Thanks, Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I speak to Bill 14. Bill 14 contains, of course, the overall numbers on budget estimates.

While going through the departmental estimates at the committee level, I observed that every department seems to be in competition with every other department with respect to reducing the number of people working for it. Every department also seems to be looking for ways of privatizing as many as possible of the services that it had been responsible for delivering to Albertans.

It has been apparent that the estimates for all departments seem to follow a general pattern. There is an organic sort of model within which these estimates are designed, arrived at, and finalized. The main objectives of the estimates seem to be either privatization of delivery of services, outright privatization – that abandonment of government's responsibility to certain areas of service – or privatization of costs to users. Privatization, as we know, takes a variety of forms, and this government has obviously very eagerly sought to use any and all of those forms wherever possible to follow the objective of privatizing much of what government has been doing in the past.

Another objective that these estimates seem to have followed is wage cutting, a general dampening of wage increases. It seems it's the objective of this government to not only stabilize wages to the level of inflation or whatever but in fact to drive them lower than they have been in recent years. The consequence of these two policies of privatization and wage cutting has of course been massive job cutting. Rather than taking pride in creating jobs, this government has been gloating about the number of jobs that it has been able to cut. These cuts in jobs, the reduction in provision of services, both in terms of what's provided and the quality of the services provided, have gone on now for many years.

5:00

My colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has already talked about education, so I will not comment on that area. In my interventions in the debate on estimates I made those points. Overall, the government's actions and its budget represented in Bill 14 in essence demonstrate that the government's agenda is just as much about privatization as it is about cost cutting.

Let there be no mistake: Albertans are paying a price in terms of lower levels of service and lower quality of services that they receive, particularly in those departments which have experienced the deepest cuts. Let me provide a few examples. The Department of Labour has operating expenditures of close to \$33 million in 1997-98 compared to expenditures of close to \$50.5 million in '92-93, a reduction of 35 percent over the last five years. The Department of Labour is projected to have 399 employees on an FTE basis in '97-98 compared with 706 employees in '92-93, a reduction of 44 percent in departmental employees in just five years. What price are Albertans paying for the sharp reduction in employees in the Department of Labour? Well, one price is that there are too few employees to enforce this government's already weak employment standards. Ask the employees of Bubbles Car Wash in this city whether the reduction of personnel in the Department of Labour hasn't caused them to pay the price of the nonenforcement of employment standards on hours of work.

Take the case of the department of transportation. This department has operating expenditures of \$542,611,000 for '97-98

compared to \$696,271,000 in '93-94, a reduction of 22 percent over four years. The department of transportation is projected to have 780 employees on an FTE basis in 1997-98 compared with 3,589 employees in '93-94, a reduction of 78 percent in the departmental workforce in just four years. What an example of job creation: reductions in expenditures of 22 percent in four years but reductions in personnel of 78 percent. The reason is that much of the work previously done by departmental employees is of course now done by private contractors. Ask Albertans who have to travel Highway 2 between Bowden and Crossfield if they were satisfied with the job private contractors did with snow clearing. The high piles of snow in the centre median caused whiteout conditions every time the wind blew, creating dangerous conditions for the hundreds of thousands of Albertans driving that stretch of the highway.

There are numerous other examples of the government's agenda, which is about the ideology of privatization as much as it is about cost-cutting. The decision several years ago to privatize most services at provincial campsites, parks, and recreation areas is now coming back to haunt Albertans. Private operators are beginning to discover that providing these services is not the cash cow they once thought it was. As a result, dozens of roadside campsites and campgrounds may not open this summer, including four in the county of Strathcona alone and many more throughout the province.

Now the Conservative government wants to extend this failed strategy to more ecologically sensitive areas including natural heritage sites. No wonder they are calling this strategy – and this is in quotes – Completing the Puzzle. Since the privatization strategy has been a puzzle so far – and it is indeed a puzzle – why is the province determined to extend it to heritage sites and more ecologically sensitive areas? The ideology of privatization dictates that decisions regarding the future of Alberta's protected areas will in future be based on the need for profit by private operators and not on the need to protect the special spaces for current and future generations.

There are numerous other examples of putting private profit ahead of public service. Several years ago the province privatized registry services covering such things as corporate records, land titles, and vehicle registrations. I understand that the Department of Health is planning to privatize vital statistics, which includes such things as births, deaths, and marriages, perhaps accounting for the decrease of 17.3 percent in the number of civil servants employed by the Department of Health between this year and last year.

Instead of public services paid for by the taxpayer being provided by professionally trained civil servants accountable directly to a democratically elected government, increasing numbers of public services are being provided by private operators with little or no accountability back to the public, who are paying for these services through their taxes and now, in addition, through user fees. This is what columnist Mark Lisac has referred to as the red market, the creation of a class of so-called entrepreneurs and businesses all of whom depend upon this government, other governments like this, and taxpayers for their funding. Many of these businesses that are fueled with taxpayers' money turn around and make good substantial political contributions to the party in power, another profitable arrangement for the party that's been in power now for more than 25 years.

This government plans to extend this ideology of privatization further. The single largest privatization currently under way is in



the Department of Family and Social Services and in all children's services, including child protection services and handicapped children's services. The Conservative government has thus far spent \$23 million trying to convince Albertans that these vitally important services should be regionalized and then ultimately privatized. Despite all the government propaganda, the muzzling and threats made against child protection workers, and the slanted consultation process which only welcomes participation from those agreeing with the government's agenda, those who are most closely involved with Alberta's children aren't buying it. The Alberta Foster Parent Association doesn't agree with the government's plans on child services, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities doesn't agree with the government's plans, but the government's blind devotion to the ideology of privatization means that none of this matters.

My final example is the Conservative government's determination to let a private for-profit hospital be set up in the city of Calgary. After cutting hundreds of millions of dollars in health funding, causing the closure of three public hospitals in the city of Calgary alone, a private for-profit hospital is being allowed to reopen in one of the closed hospitals. The Conservative government is clearly trying to have it both ways on the issue of private hospitals. If the cuts in public funding for health care have not been too deep, as the government claims, then why do we need additional beds provided by a private hospital?

I could go on, Madam Chairman, talking about the real intent and the potential impact of what's contained in Bill 14, but that I think has been done enough. To conclude, I want to just draw attention to the following. The contents of this Bill, Bill 14, embody in them the Klein government's acknowledgement that the policies and actions of the Alberta Tory Party and this government during the long years it has been in power – and that's now 25 years – have been misguided and wrong. The Klein government has decided to turn its back on not only the thousands upon thousands of public service workers recruited by the successive governments of this party up until recently but also on the direct provision of all kinds of services that Alberta citizens are duly entitled to.

#### 5:10

It is these policies and this Bill and this budget; it is not merely about cost cutting, Madam Chairman. The agenda of this government seems to be about cost transfers and privatization. It is about radically cutting back, rolling back the scope of what is to be deemed as the public's affair and public interest. Privatization is about privatizing public interest. In short, it is not about just downsizing democratically constituted and democratically elected government, but it is primarily about reducing and limiting citizens' power to democratically influence policies and processes that widely affect their welfare. It is about downsizing democratic control. For these reasons, Bill 14 will probably not get my support.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I would like to speak briefly on Bill 14 this afternoon. I have listened with interest to all members on both sides of the House, but I have a few things to say about the human deficit with this Bill. I believe that once the smoke clears, this government will be known for creating a structural human deficit. We know in this province that

we're becoming a province of haves and have-nots. There is a large gap in income distribution. This government does not seem to acknowledge that. In the future – and I'm not talking three, four years; I'm talking maybe 10, 15, 20, 30 years – there will be a huge human deficit in this province. The government has created a human deficit by cutting funding to health care, as my colleague said earlier, to education, and to social services without any assessment of the impact of these reductions on the quality and accessibility of our programs and services in these core areas. Hopefully, the Growth Summit in the fall will address some of the shortcomings of this budget.

Alberta, we all know – and I think it should be repeated – spends the least amount of its wealth on health care, education, and social services of any province in Canada. We spend \$3,200 per person, or 10.5 percent of our gross domestic product. Even with this \$534 million in reinvestments over the next three years contained within this budget, Alberta will still be spending the least amount of its wealth on social infrastructure of any province in Canada. Alberta spends the least amount of wealth among the provinces on health care: \$1,363 per person, or 4.4 percent of our gross domestic product. Even with the reinvestment of \$274 million over three years, Alberta will still be spending the least amount of its resources on health care, \$1,462 per person. Alberta is seventh among the provinces in the amount of resources it spends on education: \$1,360 per person, or 4.3 percent of gross domestic product. Even with the \$244 million in reinvestment in this budget, Alberta will still be in the middle of the pack among provinces on spending in education.

With these few words on health care, education, and social services, Madam Chairman, I would like to sit down.

[The clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the Bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

MR. RENNER: Madam Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain Bill. The committee reports Bill 14.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

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

