

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title: Monday, December 8, 1997 1:30 p.m.**  
 Date: 97/12/08  
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: I would ask hon. members to remain standing after the prayer.

Father, on this day of a new beginning we ask for Your guidance in the responsibility we have undertaken and Your help in fulfilling our duties.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly may we faithfully serve all Albertans and, in serving them, serve You.

Amen.

**Mr. Thomas Neil Musgrove**  
**July 19, 1927, to June 28, 1997**

THE SPEAKER: As is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to former members of this Assembly who have passed on since the House last met.

On this day we remember Thomas Neil Musgrove, who passed away on June 28, 1997. Mr. Musgrove was first elected to the Alberta Legislature in the general election of 1982. He served as the MLA for the constituency of Bow Valley until his retirement in 1993. We are honoured by the presence of Tom's family in the Speaker's gallery today. Mrs. Musgrove, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to you and your family for sharing the burdens of public office. Let us bow our heads and observe a moment of silence in his memory.

Rest eternal, grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Amen.

Please be seated.

The hon. Government House Leader has caught the Speaker's eye.

### Amendments to Standing Orders

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Orders temporarily, as outlined in the document distributed to members' desks earlier today, which facilitates the agreement reached by House leaders on October 20, 1997, and reads as follows:

I Be it resolved that the following temporary amendments be made to the Standing Orders for the sitting of the Assembly commencing December 8, 1997, the exclusive focus of which is to consider Government Motion 23.

A Standing Order 4(1) is suspended and the following substituted.

If at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday the business of the Assembly is not concluded, the Speaker leaves the chair until 7 p.m. unless on a motion of the Government House Leader made before 5:30 p.m., which may be made orally and without notice, the Assembly is adjourned until the next sitting day.

B Standing Order 7(1) is suspended so that the daily Routine in the Assembly shall be as follows: Introduction of Visitors; Presenting Petitions; Reading and Receiving Petitions; Tabling Returns and Reports; Introduction of Guests; Oral Question Period, not exceeding 50 minutes; and Members' Statements, Tuesday and Thursday.

C Standing Orders 8(1), (2), and (3) are suspended so that on each sitting day after the daily Routine the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be Government Motions.

D Standing Order 29 is suspended and the following substituted.

(1) Notwithstanding Standing Order 23(a) the order of debate on Government Motion 23 shall be

(a) Opening of debate

(i) the Premier,

(ii) the Leader of the Official Opposition, and

(iii) the leader of the third party;

(b) All other members except those listed in clause (a);

(c) Closing of debate

(i) the leader of the third party,

(ii) the Leader of the Official Opposition, and

(iii) the Premier.

(2) (a) The Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the leader of the third party shall each be limited to 20 minutes for opening debate and 20 minutes for closing debate on Government Motion 23.

(b) Except as provided in clause (a), no member shall speak for longer than 10 minutes in debate on Government Motion 23.

II Be it further resolved that following the vote on Government Motion 23 the Assembly shall immediately stand adjourned until a time and date as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour of granting unanimous consent to the request as sought by the Government House Leader, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The request is carried.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would present three petitions today: one, requesting the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to limit the financial support of private schools at current levels per pupil funding, signed by 146 Albertans from the northern part to the southern part of the province; the second, signed by 152 Albertans, asking Alberta "to end any and all payments of public money to private schools from revenues collected by or for the Province of Alberta"; and a third one, with a slightly different wording, asking the Legislative Assembly of Alberta "to freeze per pupil grants of public money to private schools at \$1,815" per student.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I wish to present two petitions today on behalf of the constituents of Highwood. The first petition requests funding of early childhood services and kindergarten and requests that ECS be included within the School Act, signed by 16 constituents of Highwood. The second petition, with 1,319 signatures, regards the modernization of Okotoks junior high school.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave today to table a petition signed by 164 constituents of Lac La Biche-St. Paul. The petition is in regards to the funding of early childhood services and kindergarten.

Thank you.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two petitions. One calls for an end "to any and all payments of public money to private schools from revenues collected by or for the Province of Alberta," and a second one calls for a freeze in the "per pupil grants of public money to private schools at \$1,815" per student. These petitions include well over 600 names and are signed by people from across the province: Okotoks, Airdrie, Edmonton, Picture Butte, Calgary, Coalhurst, and so on.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Lethbridge-West I wish to present to the Legislative Assembly a petition signed by 187 constituents from southern Alberta regarding public funding of private schools. The petitioners are urging the government of Alberta not to increase funding to private schools "from revenues collected by or for the Province of Alberta."

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several petitions today, probably because it's been so long since we've been back here. I do want to table them. They are concerning payments of public money to private schools. There are 168 names on this list from people, many in the Rocky Mountain House area and from across Alberta: Wetaskiwin, Camrose, Edmonton, Spruce Grove.

AN HON. MEMBER: Beiseker.

MRS. SOETAERT: I don't know about Beiseker.

The other one is a petition worded a little differently that is calling for quality public education properly financially provided for, signed by 10 people. This last one . . . [interjections] Well, I feel everybody who signs a petition has a right to have it tabled.

The last one here is signed by 206 people, mainly from my riding and the Member for Stony Plain's riding, asking that public moneys to private schools remain at the present funding.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition from 18 Albertans requesting a ban on all VLT gambling.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table two petitions today. The first is signed by 87 people from Calgary and southern Alberta who are asking that the government

"freeze per pupil grants of public money to the private schools." The second petition is signed by 164 people from throughout the province, and it is asking that there be a freeze on the public funding that is given to private schools.

Thank you.

1:40

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also am pleased to rise and table two petitions. The first is signed by 182 Albertans calling for the Legislature to end public funding to private schools, and the second, signed by 103 Albertans from across the province, is calling on the Legislature to freeze public funding of private schools.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to present to the Assembly two petitions. The first, signed by 115 Albertans, urges "the Government of Alberta to freeze per pupil grants of public money to private schools at \$1,815" per student. The second petition, signed by 155 Albertans, urges "the Government of Alberta to end any and all payments of public money to private schools from revenues collected by or for the Province of Alberta."

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, sir. I have two petitions to present this afternoon. The first one is signed by 164 Albertans from Calgary, Manning, Edmonton, and points in between, and it urges the provincial government to end public funding of private schools. The second petition, signed by 147 Albertans primarily in Calgary and points in southern Alberta, urges the Legislative Assembly "to freeze per pupil grants of public money to private schools at \$1,815" per student.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as the representative of Edmonton-Mill Creek to offer two petitions to the Assembly today, signed by individuals in the constituency and beyond and reflective of all of Alberta. The first one is 103 signatures urging the government "to freeze per pupil grants of public money to private schools at \$1,815 per funded student." The second petition is signed by 168 individuals who wish to urge "the Government of Alberta to end any and all payments of public money to private schools from revenues collected by or for the Province of Alberta."

Thank you.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present also two petitions, the first of which is by the undersigned Albertans, some 87 of them hailing from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, and Calgary. They petition the government of Alberta to freeze the present grant system to private schools at \$1,815. The second petition, sir, is by Albertans to this Legislative Assembly "to end any and all payments of public money to private schools from revenues collected . . . for the Province of Alberta."

MS OLSEN: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I am presenting two petitions, the first one asking the government of Alberta "to end any and all payments of public money to private schools from revenues collected by or for the province of Alberta," signed by 159 Albertans. The second one is a petition to freeze public funding of private schools at \$1,815 per student, and it's signed by 104 Albertans.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present two sets of petitions. The first one is a petition to freeze public funding of private schools. That's signed by 219 people from throughout the province. The second one is a petition to end public funding of private schools, and this is signed by 336 people from around the province, many of them from the Peace River area.

MR. MacDONALD: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to present two petitions. The first one: 143 Albertans are urging the government "to end any and all payments of public money to private schools." The second petition, signed by 116 Albertans, is urging the government "to freeze per pupil grants of public money to private schools."

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce two petitions to the Legislative Assembly. The first urges "the Government of Alberta to freeze per pupil grants of public money to private schools." Eighty-five Albertans have signed that one. The second petition is signed by 194 Albertans, and it urges "the Government of Alberta to end any and all payments of public money to private schools."

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present two petitions. One is 109 signatures to freeze public funding to private schools. The second one is a 166-signature petition to end public funding of private schools.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I rise today to present two petitions, one signed by 87 Albertans to freeze public funding for private schools and the second signed by 179 Albertans to end public funding of private schools.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MRS. PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present two petitions this afternoon. There are 103 signatures on one petition to freeze public funding for private schools at \$1,815. Also, my second petition is 151 signatures to end public funding to all private schools.

Thank you.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the

petition I presented to the Assembly on the last day that we sat, which would be June 16, 1997, be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request that the petitions that were presented to this Assembly on June 16, 1997, be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to introduce legislation that would raise the amount of the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) to a level offsetting inflation and the Goods and Services Tax, thereby restoring the economic value of the AISH subsidy to its recipients.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise to table four copies of the summary response document, the responses received by our department on the recent consultation, Dialogue on Unity. Each member of the House has received a copy, and I'd like to provide four copies for the House.

Mr. Speaker, during our consultation process, Dialogue on Unity, in excess of 50,000 Albertans responded thoughtfully and articulately to the Calgary framework and the questions posed to them. Most of those responses have been distributed to individual MLAs where we could identify a constituency because the constituency was noted or an address provided, but I'd like to table today the 18,869 responses from Albertans where the responses did not identify their MLA or their address. Because of the volume of those, the documents themselves have been provided already to the Clerk's office.

THE SPEAKER: I might point out, hon. members, that on both sides of me there are pages with trolleys covering the 18,000 submissions so that all members will know that they have been filed here in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through forums and meetings, through public consultations and summits, Albertans have been expressing their concerns about education. I am today tabling a discussion paper prepared by the Calgary board of education and a declaration for more education funding that's been modeled on the Calgary declaration on Canadian unity that we're here to discuss at this special sitting of the Legislature. Because these two education papers raise many of the same issues and concerns that we've heard from Albertans, I think it is appropriate to respond with an open letter to the organizations and people who drafted these two documents, and I'm also tabling that letter.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac la Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like, as chairman of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, to table four copies of the report of the Chief Electoral Officer. This report is covering the general enumeration which was held November 1996 and the general election held on Tuesday, March 11, 1997. This report was made public on August 7, 1997.

1:50

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I table a letter dated November 26 which I sent to the Premier asking for his support and agreement that after we've had the full national unity debate defined by the rules laid down in the House today by the Government House Leader, we stay in the House and have a special, specific debate on education, which is in many respects in crisis in this province.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a petition which isn't in legal form, but the petition is from Fort McMurray and directs the Member for Fort McMurray to oppose any increased funding to private schools.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table three reports. One is Alberta Justice's 1996-97 annual report, tabled pursuant to section 52 of the Legislative Assembly Act. The second report is the 1997 annual report of the Alberta Law Foundation. That is being tabled pursuant to section 120(2) of the Legal Profession Act. Finally, the 1996 annual report of the Law Society of Alberta, is tabled pursuant to section 5(4) of the Legal Profession Act.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table four copies of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning report titled Energizing the Classroom. This report statistically proves that the provision of food in school programs increases learning, increases student focus, increases student behaviour, and decreases health visits.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have a considerable number of documents to table: firstly, a summary of the public question period on education held in Calgary on Monday, September 8, 1997, and the Minister of Education's response dated October 7; a fax from a Ms Crichton at A.E. Cross junior high school dated December 2, 1997; thirdly, a copy of the submission from SunAlta School Council to the Growth Summit; fourthly, a letter from the principal, the school council chair, and the ATA rep from Connaught school in Calgary-Buffalo, all attached to the Calgary education declaration; copies of 36 letters from SunAlta school parents, including one with the postscript, "I would urge you not to wait until the February/March 1998 sitting to address these issues"; copies of letters from concerned parents in Calgary-North West, Red Deer, Calgary-West, Airdrie, Whitecourt, Rockyview school district; 41 letters from concerned parents in Earl Grey School Council located in Calgary-Elbow constituency; a wonderfully eloquent letter from Mrs. Christie in Calgary-Currie; and a letter from Kurt Moench, president of the ATA local, Calgary public district dated November 17, 1997, to address and hopefully lay to rest a number of myths perpetuated by the Minister of Education.

Thanks very much.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a plethora of letters to present because I think it's been so long since we've been back in here.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, hon. member. Let's get on with the business of doing what we're supposed to be doing here.

MRS. SOETAERT: Okay. Well, I think this is important business.

THE SPEAKER: Now, just be quiet and forget about the editorializing. Get to work.

MRS. SOETAERT: Okay. Thank you. I will and I am. Glad to be back in here working.

This is a copy of several letters sent to the Premier, myself, and the Member for Stony Plain regarding the lack of funding that has occurred and the result at Meridian Heights school that they will lose a teacher and a classroom. I'm tabling those copies from some very concerned students. This is a response to Bill 209 way back in the spring, because we haven't had a chance, and concerns about that Bill. They are very opposed to that. Then I have about 300 letters here and four copies of them begging, pleading, and urging this government to properly fund public education.

That concludes my tabling for now, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two letters to table today, one from my constituent and one from Lacombe who oppose any increase in private school funding.

I also have 69 wonderful examples of how the public school system can work effectively. These essays are from Holy Trinity high school in Mill Woods, and they're all on the unity issue: very well done.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four copies of a letter written by Judith Evans, the co-chair of the Capilano School Council, Capilano elementary school, the little school with the big heart. These letters express concern regarding the inadequacy of current levels of funding for public education.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table in the Assembly copies of essays written by grade 8 students at St. Thomas More high school. I should say that I was accompanied at the school by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and the grades 8 and 9 students presented us with several essays on the theme of thoughts on Canada. This represents excellent thinking on the behalf of these future leaders. It's my pleasure to put them on permanent record with the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, pursuant to section 36(1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I'm pleased to table with the Assembly a report from the Chief Electoral Officer. Appendix A of this report is a list of registered

candidates in the 1997 general election who failed to file financial statements on or before July 11, 1997. The report was distributed to all members on August 7, 1997.

I also table with the Assembly a report from the Ethics Commissioner. This report is an investigation into allegations involving Brian Evans, QC, former Minister of Justice and Attorney General. This report was distributed to all members on November 18, 1997.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce some family friends. I would like to introduce Frank, Rosa, Andrea, and Franka Lucente. This is a family that for years has operated a restaurant in Calgary and now in Cochrane. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly four individuals who ought to be commended for their dedication and commitment to education in this province. I'm pleased to introduce to you Liz LoVecchio, trustee for the Calgary board of education; Joan Barlow, a representative of a Calgary education stakeholder organization known as SPEAK; Joanne Cuthbertson, president of SPEAK; and Kurt Moench, the president of the Calgary local of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I ask that members join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour and pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a familiar face to many of us, Mr. Vincent Tong, who is seated in your gallery today. Vincent served as a page in this Assembly from September of 1994 to January of 1996, when he then took on the responsibilities of Speaker's page. Mr. Tong held the position of Speaker's page until the fall of this year, when he left the page program to work part-time in the Legislative Assembly Office, financial management and administrative services branch, while he is completing his studies at the University of Alberta. Vincent Tong is a fine example of the outstanding young Albertans who assist us with our work in this House. I now ask Vincent Tong to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly eight visitors from the Edmonton Academy. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Armstrong. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like

to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 16 students from the Edwin Parr community composite school in Athabasca. They are accompanied by their teachers John Traynor and Diana Jackson. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

2:00

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some people who are here today. Number one, they're glad that we're back in session so they could come, and number two, they're very interested in the unity debate that's going to happen. I'd like them to please rise as I introduce them. Ron Williams is from Heisler, Germaine and Mitch Lehodey from Spruce Grove, Chuck and Gwen Jerrett from Spruce Grove, and my assistant Marilyn Van Hove from Sturgeon county.

Thank you.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two very special people in my life who have traveled from Mississauga, Ontario. They are my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Elinor and Jack Burgner, and they are accompanied by their second oldest son, Peter. I would ask them to please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent of mine who has already made considerable contributions to public life in this province, and, yes, she's here to see what it is she has been missing. I would ask that Nancy MacBeth please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a constituent of Calgary-McCall and also a member of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Pat Sokolosky. I request her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**  
**Education Policy**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the government has spent a million dollars on polls like this one to find out that 97 percent of Albertans don't like the government's education policy. This is supported by the 15,000 teachers who marched on the Legislature several weeks ago, by the 2,000 parents who demonstrated in Calgary supporting the public education system, and by the fact that Alberta now ranks 60th out of 63 jurisdictions in North America in spending on our children's education. We now trail places like Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi. To the Premier: why won't the Premier take some of the current \$2.4 billion surplus and put it into our children's education? Children's education can't wait for another fiscal cycle.

MR. KLEIN: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition leads one to believe that we aren't spending anything on education. As a matter of fact, we're spending a lot on education, about \$3 billion annually.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the hon. Minister of Education to speak to some of the figures that have been thrown out. You can compare apples and oranges and pears and bananas and so on, and the Liberals are so very, very good at doing this.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that through polling, through the Growth Summit that was held recently and co-chaired by a former member of the Liberal caucus, this thing called people development came out as a number one priority of Albertans. Now, this doesn't mean just education in the traditional sense, K through 12. We talked about diaper through K, K through 12, we talked about postsecondary education, and we talked about the need for lifelong learning, skills upgrading, and job retraining. I can tell you and I can tell the public through this Legislative Assembly that, indeed, as we go through the throne speech, as we go through the budget process, the priority of this government will be people development. Loosely translated: education as it involves all components of education.

THE SPEAKER: I think that in terms of the completeness of the response given by the Premier, we might just go to the second question of the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Maybe the Premier should put his money where his priorities are, Mr. Speaker.

Why do the children of this province have to wait until the next budget cycle when the government found Al-Pac \$130 million outside the budget cycle about two weeks ago?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again I'm going to have the hon. minister supplement, but since the hon. Leader of the Opposition brought up Al-Pac, this is a case of the government getting \$250 million, which is the principle amount outstanding, to invest to ensure that we will in fact get all our interest payments. If that money is properly reinvested through the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, we stand to make about \$280 million on this, not lose \$130 million.

To supplement relative to the hon. member's question on education, I'll have the hon. minister reply.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that through the process of going through the Growth Summit and the education summits, Albertans are saying: reinvest in education. We intend on doing that.

I want to point out that the figures the Leader of the Opposition was referring to about where Alberta stands in terms of the numbers of dollars we put into our education system – I strongly believe and this government believes that we ought not to be judging the quality of our education system based on inputs. We must also look at outputs. We should not judge the quality of our education system based on the number of dollars we spend. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we should look at results of international and national examinations that demonstrate that Alberta's students are doing very well.

The other key point, Mr. Speaker, is that we must emphasize that it is not how much you spend, it is where you spend it. Albertans are saying: do not spend money recklessly; we want you to target the dollars in the classrooms, where it counts. If you look at the list that was referred to by the opposition leader,

what you'll find is that one of the highest education spenders in this country is the Northwest Territories. They have very little money comparatively speaking that is dedicated towards instruction. In this province \$3 out of every \$4 is devoted to instruction. That is the highest in the nation, and that is demonstrating that our priorities are targeting classrooms.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, no matter how he shaves the figures, Alberta has the 60th lowest spending on children's education in all of North America. He might know it if he wasn't in Japan for three weeks having a good time.

At the very least why doesn't the Premier simply implement a new and creative matching program and put the same amount of money, \$130 million, into education right now that he just found for Al-Pac two weeks ago?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we didn't find any money for Al-Pac. As a matter of fact, this was a proposal from Al-Pac to the government. The government accepted receiving not \$250 million but \$260 million cash in hand. I understand that that's gone back to the Al-Pac board, and they're having second thoughts on that situation. So we're talking about a bit of a ghost here right now because we don't know whether the deal is going to go through at all.

Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. minister pointed out quite clearly that relative to classroom instruction – and that's what's important, not to bureaucracies, not to administrators, but to classroom instruction – this province and this government has a very good record indeed.

THE SPEAKER: The second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:10

### Special-needs Education

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the classroom. From two blue-ribbon panels, from a series of mini education summits, from the provincial education summit itself, we've heard the same message: school boards don't have the money that they need to assess, plan, and provide programs for special-needs children. My question is to the Minister of Education. What do you say to parents who find their special-needs youngsters are being warehoused while they await the next government budget?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I've traveled to schools and school boards throughout the province. I've been to over 500 schools in the province of Alberta. If there is one issue that I do hear that is of universal concern, it is in the area of special needs. The two blue-ribbon panel reports that were referred to by the hon. opposition critic I think could contain some good recommendations. In the Alberta School Boards Association blue-ribbon report there are eight recommendations that I recall, four of which we have implemented, one of which we are considering and working on right now. With respect to the other report that he was referring to, which I think was an Alberta Teachers' Association document, there were six recommendations in that one, and we are implementing three and working on a fourth recommendation.

We have reinvested money in the special education area in the past fiscal year. We do recognize that it is one of the pressure points. It is an area of concern not only to parents but also to students and to teachers of course. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a

critical area, and it is important to advise members of the House and members of the public that by putting money back into special education programs, it does benefit all kids in the classroom, not just the one with the special needs.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister. What is the government doing to ensure that special-needs children return to the schools this January to the assessments and to the programs that they deserve?

MR. MAR: In going through the budget process, it is important to determine, first of all, how much we have available for reinvestment and also to go through the budgeting process to ensure that our priorities are all satisfied. There are of course many pressure points other than special-needs students in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and as a consequence we do have to weigh all of the pressures that appear in the education area. Special needs is certainly one concern. It is one of many and must be considered in the context of all the issues that people bring forward.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. My question again is: what is going to happen to these children this January?

MR. MAR: It would appear that the hon. member is suggesting that nothing has been done, but the fact of the matter is that money has been reinvested in this area. There are serious concerns out there, and some of them are legitimate, and we have to deal with them. There's no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker. But we have acted upon recommendations that have been contained in reports. We are continuing to act upon them.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is an issue that does not involve more money. Sometimes the delivery of service can be done in a better way that does not require more funds. So for the hon. member to suggest that nothing has been done for these children would not be correct. It would not be an accurate reflection of government's action in this area.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Child Poverty

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton city council's submission to the Growth Summit cited that 25,000 preschool and school-age children in Edmonton live in poverty and are hungry because their parents are poor. Meanwhile, the Edmonton Social Planning Council cites that Edmonton has the highest rate of family and child poverty in the country. The government's response to date has been to duck, deflect, and deny that such facts exist while hypothetically espousing that people and people development are priorities. To the Minister of Education: how many schoolchildren do you think, Mr. Minister, are disadvantaged because they live in absolute poverty?

MR. MAR: I've had an opportunity to quickly review the document that was tabled by the hon. member earlier on. It is my belief, Mr. Speaker, that there is nothing more fundamental to the ability of a child to learn than to operate on a full stomach. There are children, it is true, that come to school not being as well fed as they ought to be. It is something that we do have to work on in collaboration with other government agencies and departments. The co-ordination of children's services has got to be a critical key to this. It ought not to come simply as a

responsibility upon educators to ensure that these children are fed, although I do say and I do admit that having a full stomach is a critical prerequisite to being able to learn.

For too long there has been a downloading of community and social responsibilities upon schools. Mr. Speaker, in many instances communities have accepted responsibility for designing programs that deal with the needs of these children. It is clear to me that co-ordination of children's services throughout government departments must occur.

MRS. SLOAN: Less than half of the funding for school lunch programs in this city is provided by the provincial government. Why can't you go to the cabinet table and ask for money, such as the Treasurer does for Al-Pac, to provide school lunch so that 27,000 children in this city can have hot lunches? That would fund it for eight years if you just got what the Treasurer got for Al-Pac. Eight years of hot lunch: go get it.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I don't wish in any way to minimize the nature of this situation. I would, however, ask for the opportunity for the minister of social services to supplement my answer. This is a concern not just in the city of Edmonton but in other parts of the province as well, but in my view there are good programs that are being put together by communities in recognizing that this is an issue.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to be able to address this extremely important issue. First of all I will say that the government of Alberta and myself in particular in no way accept child poverty. It is something that is extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do first of all is run over what the Edmonton Social Planning Council stated. They used the comment called the low-income cutoff. [interjections]

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, you know, it's been a few months since we've actually been in this Assembly. There was one night in September when I woke up in a cold sweat, and I really was having a nightmare, and you were in it. And here I am on this day in December of 1997. [interjections] Hon. member, please.

I went out to some event just recently. It was kind of a volunteer appreciation night, and they had bingo. Fortuitously I won a game of bingo, and they presented me with a school bell that goes ding-a-ling. Perhaps tomorrow I'll bring it into the Assembly, and when the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert does move herself in the manner in which she has today, I will ring the ding-a-ling so as to remind all members of what actually is happening.

Please, Mr. Minister, continue, and please, Madam.

### Child Poverty (continued)

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll continue before I was so rudely cut off by the hon. member.

Mr. Speaker, the low-income cutoff was a figure that was started in 1961 by Stats Canada. The low-income cutoff at the moment in Canada is slightly over \$32,000, and Stats Canada continually says and I quote: this is not a measure of poverty; this

is a statistical number. The Edmonton Social Planning Council arbitrarily took one half of the LICO. So, Mr. Speaker, one half of something that is nothing is still nothing.

What they came out and said was that \$15,700 is what they addressed for a family of four as half income. In Alberta at this moment a family of four on welfare receives \$15,792 plus medical benefits plus optical benefits plus dental benefits. Today in Alberta the average wage, at \$607 per week, is 10 percent higher than it was a year ago. In Edmonton the unemployment rate is 6.3 percent, which is 2 percent lower than a year ago. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, they obviously don't want to hear the good news about what's happening in Alberta, the prosperity capital of Canada. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Wow. We are getting close to the festive season, aren't we.

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, this is your third question, but the Speaker has really forgotten the intent of the first two, so perhaps you can spend just a little longer with the preamble so we can get back to the original intent of the question. And would you kindly put your arms on your two colleagues, one to the right and one to the left, and ask them to just be quiet? Would you raise the question so all members will hear the question, and then if all members would listen to the response, we'll move on to the next question.

2:20

### Child Poverty (continued)

MRS. SLOAN: The issue, Mr. Speaker, is about this government not ducking, deflecting, denying, or attacking others who are attempting to find and quantify a definition of poverty. I am asking the question of the Minister of Education: what actions are you taking to address the issues of poverty and to ensure that schoolchildren living in poverty have one nutritional meal per day? What are you doing?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I've gone to schools and seen the lunch programs that are provided by those schools. They are often with community support; they are sometimes with government support. They do address the issue of ensuring that children who are in need do have a nutritious meal, a hot meal once a day. In addition to asking the minister of social services to supplement, I might at this point ask the minister without portfolio responsible for children's services to respond.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much. My colleague has indicated that we can't resolve the problem of poor kids doing badly in school unless we address the question of kids at the very beginning, and that's what the children's services authorities are going to be doing. They will be determining who lives in poverty, what kind of services need to be done, and, yes, they will be taking on responsibility and authority for their own children and be able to be involved in determining the solutions. I think that's a very important part when we're talking about people taking on responsibility and authority for their lives.

### Health Resource Group Inc.

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

four copies of letters and Department of Health documents related to the attempted accreditation of Health Resource Group, also known as HRG. These documents, many received through a freedom of information request, show that the Minister of Health was actively involved in trying to persuade the College of Physicians and Surgeons to accredit HRG for inpatient services. The documents also contradict the minister's assurances that he would monitor HRG's activities, showing instead that the minister has no power to shut these guys down once they're open as a hospital even if they undermine medicare. My question to the minister is this: why did the Minister of Health continue to push for Canada's first for-profit hospital when he knew he could not, and I quote, disestablish, close quote, the facility even if it was subsequently shown that the facility was harming our public medicare system?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government's continued priority is, of course, the best possible public health care system for this province. With respect to HRG this initiative has been monitored very carefully to make sure that anything that it might be doing in the area of providing uninsured services does not overlap and does not violate in any way the Canada Health Act. The Department of Health and myself have watched very carefully to make sure that this is not the case. We continue, as I've said, to put our emphasis on monitoring the situation so that the Canada Health Act's five principles are maintained, and we also focus our attention on a good public health care system.

MS BARRETT: Clearly the government salivates at the thought of for-profit hospitals, Mr. Speaker. As proof of this, let me suggest to you that the documents I filed today refer to a directive from the department, and I would like to know why this directive is in there. It says amongst other things to the regional health authorities that they must "maintain a role for the private sector." That's a direct quote. I'd like to know why that directive is in there, even if it makes no economic sense, even if it means undermining public health care.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I don't quite understand the phraseologies she's used. I know what I did communicate to the regional health authorities, and that was very clearly that no contractual relationship or other type of legal arrangement should be made with a private facility unless it was approved by the Minister of Health.

MS BARRETT: That's not what the memo says.

Mr. Speaker, the College of Physicians and Surgeons last Friday ended up recommending that a steering committee be established to review accessibility to, public funding of, and quality of services of health care in Alberta. I would like to ask the minister if he will now agree to appointing a five-member steering committee consisting of two members at large plus a representative from the Friends of Medicare, a representative from the Consumers' Association of Canada, Alberta division, and chaired by the president of the United Nurses of Alberta to conduct this very needed study.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the general idea that I think is behind the hon. leader's question – and that is that we should be developing a health care system in this province and maintaining a top quality health care system in this province from which we can show measures of performance and that the system



overall is accountable – I think that I would certainly agree with her. We've taken major initiatives. Just have a look at our business plan, hon. member, and you will notice that two or three of the major initiatives that we have under way currently on which, by the way, there is broad consultation, for instance, such as the accountability . . .

MS BARRETT: A five-member steering committee.

MR. JONSON: Well, I'm talking about thousands of Albertans.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, we are very serious about having a health system which is accountable, which performs well, and that is what we're working on.

### Education Funding

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, over the past month I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of school councils in Calgary-Glenmore, and during those meetings there has been an urgency expressed for reinvestment in education. They have asked that the Minister of Education be asked certain questions. Firstly, I would like to ask why there isn't additional education funding available right now.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, as has been noted by our Provincial Treasurer and the Premier and others before, any extra money that we had this year by legislation went to pay down our debt, and we don't actually have any extra cash to reinvest until the end of this year, when we will actually realize our next surplus.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, then, why don't we announce reinvestment initiatives now like we did last year with respect to health?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it is true that we don't need to have actual cash now to make an announcement now, but we do need to know how much will be available there, and we are still in the budget process. In the education area perhaps more than in any other area of government the process is a little bit slower than usual because we've had so much public input to consider. This fall we had unprecedented public consultation with Albertans on education issues through the education summits, zone summits, through the Growth Summit, and now it is taking time to assess all of that input. We are assessing how much money will be available, and we are assessing how much money we do need. So we will not be in a position to make announcements about reinvestment until such time as those issues have been satisfied.

**2:30**

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, lastly, what process is used to determine the appropriate level of education funding?

MR. MAR: Well, there is no substitute for the gathering of input from parents, teachers, schools, and school boards as to what their needs are. Through, as I indicated earlier, the Growth Summit, the education summits, there has been a great deal of consultation. I have also made myself available to many groups, meetings, school visits, task force reviews, public consultations, and again as a government as a whole through the Alberta Growth Summit. So, Mr. Speaker, with all of this input we are reassessing our needs under our three-year plan for education to see if we need to change some of our priorities and also to see if there are better strategies that we can employ to meet student needs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### School Fund-raising

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Equity of education for all of Alberta's children was the central premise of the government's shift to provincial funding of education. Accompanying this, they put in place site-based management and school councils to help operate the local schools. What we've seen now is that an environment of local fund-raising has developed where the school councils are looking for funding for educational materials and programs. My question is to the Minister of Education. How will you maintain this promised equity of education for all students when various school councils choose to raise funds to different levels and for different purposes?

MR. MAR: It is true that school councils have been used for fund-raising. For the first time ever we've had the ability to determine what the level of those school-generated funds is. It is roughly \$90 million collectively throughout the province. That amounts to about \$180 per student. Mr. Speaker, I would point out that that is not strictly fund-raising. That is all school-generated funds, which would include as examples things like fees for yearbooks, pictures, cafeteria receipts, school uniforms, and things of that nature. So it is true that there are different levels of fund-raising abilities depending on the nature of the school and where it's located, but I've observed that school boards generally speaking have been pretty good about recognizing the differences in abilities of various schools to raise money and have dealt with those types of equity issues at a local level.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up from what the minister just provided us in the answer to that first question, I'd like to ask him if he condones the idea, then, that school divisions differentiate between their per pupil allocation to different schools based on the school's ability to raise funds. Does this not create inequity?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly those schools that are able to raise money because a particular community is of a certain background – I don't think we should be preventing such school councils from raising money for various programs, but I do think it is appropriate that school boards do recognize that where there are inequities because a particular school does not have such resources, they should be able to address that issue.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. I would just like to ask his opinion on it. Is it right to have school fund-raising activities solicit donations and dollars for essential materials such as beakers, graduated cylinders, petri dishes, iodine solutions, and copper sulphate so their school can offer a science class, as one of the schools in Alberta is now doing?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, there are occasions when individuals do raise particular concerns about fund-raising for materials such as textbooks or beakers, as in the example of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. Those do give me concern from time to time because in my strong view there is appropriate funding for those types of resources within the instruction block.

Because of site-based management, sometimes there are decisions that are made at a site-based level where, for example,

a nice-to-have type of thing is purchased through the school budget compelling the school council to raise moneys for need-to-haves. So, for example, Mr. Speaker, in a particular school there may be a desire to purchase an overhead projector or audiovisual materials, a television set, a VCR. Those things, in my view, would be nice-to-haves, but because those things are purchased in a site-based budget, it may result in the need-to-haves that would have to be picked up by the school council.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, school councils ought not to be raising money for those types of things. If they have concerns about that, they should deal with their school trustees.

### **Speaker's Ruling Seeking Opinions**

THE SPEAKER: To all hon. members, to the Member for Lethbridge-East and the Minister of Education, question period is not the place for opinions. One was solicited and one was given, but both could have been ruled out.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

### **Farm Vehicle Safety**

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks I have received numerous phone calls from the farming community within my constituency. They have heard that Alberta Transportation and Utilities is proposing regulation changes to farm vehicles with a gross vehicle weight exceeding 24,300 kilograms. My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Are these vehicles to be reclassified as commercial vehicles, making them subject to the National Safety Code and therefore creating an additional expense to agricultural operations?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you to the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. If I may for a moment just give a background of the discussion paper that was sent to the agricultural organizations, every maximum five years the regulatory review committee reviews all the regulations that we have on our books in the province. Part of the regulatory review that was being done this year involved the highway traffic safety Act. What was asked in the discussion paper that now has been sent to approximately 100 agricultural and rural organizations is: how should vehicles of a size in excess of 24,000 kilograms be handled regarding safety issues? Should it be done in the same manner as commercial carriers? There was never any thought given to anything more or anything less.

Indeed, farmers now are having to travel farther with the advent of more regionalized gathering centres. That is probably going to happen even more in the future. Consequently the large farm vehicles are going to be spending more time on the road on an ongoing basis, and we want to make sure that our roads are totally safe. Having said that, the question that was asked of the farm organizations is: what is the best way of handling these large farm vehicles to see that they are safe? Should they be inspected to the same standards as commercial carriers, or should there be something different? We solicited the views, nothing more, nothing less.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can you assure the farming community that the noncommercial farm vehicle used to transport the farmer's own goods to market will not require expensive commercial plates?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have no difficulty in assuring the hon. member. Our intention with the paper – and I repeat – was to simply review the safety standards that are placed on these vehicles. The issue of commercial plates was not one of the questions that was asked, nor was the issue of farm fuel. The simple issue and the simple question that was asked is: to what safety standards should the large truck vehicles that travel our highways be compared to? Should they indeed have a safety inspection every year?

We have to realize that farm trucks in many cases are resurrected at harvest time, travel no more than 100 miles in total, most of it on the farm. So indeed the safety issue really has to be dealt with by the individual owner.

Having said that, all farm vehicles are still subject to the same highway inspection as any other vehicle. If you are stopped on the highway and your vehicle does not measure up to the safety standards, you will be ticketed and you will have to bring your truck up to standards. No different than what was, no different than what will be.

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: how best can Alberta farmers find out more about this safety issue and share their thoughts on this matter with the minister?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Both in agreement with the regulatory review committee, because originally the regulatory review committee had asked that all input be brought forward by the end of November. The date has been extended to February 2 so that indeed everyone has an opportunity to make comments as to what level of safety standards should be considered for the trucks as far as highway traffic is concerned. I'd invite people to contact Peter Dawes at 415-0687 or Jim Bedingfield at 427-8901 or the office or the constituency office.

**2:40**

THE SPEAKER: It's okay, Mr. Minister. This is not a telephone directory place here.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### **Education Funding (continued)**

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I need some clarification on a response we heard earlier, and I want to ask the Minister of Education to help me understand this. One year ago the Department of Health, the biggest single department in this government, was able to announce in November additional moneys specifically going to be allocated to regional health authorities, restrictions in terms of what those funds could be used for. Now we have an emergency in terms of public education at least as important as anything that existed a year ago, and the minister tells us he doesn't know, that he can't tell yet. I want to ask the minister: what does his office require, what does his department require to be able to do exactly what his colleague the Minister of Health did a year ago, which is address a pressing, urgent problem?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in response to the question from the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, we do have a process in place that has generated a great deal of input throughout the province. I think this has been unprecedented. Ordinarily we might be able to do what we did with Health last year, but because of the enormous amount of input, there is a great deal that must be considered.

Mr. Speaker, it should not come as a surprise to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo that there are some issues that have arisen in the city of Calgary and in other parts of the province, issues relating to special needs, issues relating to pressures on capital, issues related to English as a Second Language for Canadian-born students. These are all things that have arisen through the consultation processes. We are responding appropriately. We are making sure that the money that we spend is targeted. If people expect the dollars in the Department of Education to go up across the board, I wish to dampen their expectations. Albertans are clearly saying: don't write a blank cheque for any department, even one as important as the Department of Education; rather, make sure that money is targeted into specific areas so that we can assure ourselves that the money that we spend is money well spent and not wasted.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we've got this kind of process in place, why is the minister teasing Albertans by speculating \$100 million more, \$500 million more? Why didn't he say that in the first place? Why did he build up expectations that there'd be some emergency relief?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, there are many areas that we do have to consider. The Premier has spoken about a reinvestment of at least \$100 million in education. Others have said that it should be more; others still have said that it should be less. But we do have to ensure that the amount of money that we spend is targeted where it makes the most sense, and that takes skill. It takes time. It takes consideration. It takes the input of many people, and we are not prepared to come up with a plan that is merely half baked. We want to ensure that the plan makes a good deal of sense and that it does target the greatest needs.

MR. DICKSON: My final question to the Minister of Education would be this: what responsibility does this minister take for the problem that Calgary families are experiencing today and for the last number of months, since the start of this school year, where there simply isn't the support for students after hours? We've got problems with recreational programs for kids and a huge additional responsibility for Calgary parents and families. What responsibility does this minister take for that, Mr. Speaker?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, not a day goes by that I don't think about children of my colleagues on both sides of the floor who come from Calgary who deal with the work-to-rule situation in Calgary. I would point out that boards are equitably funded throughout the province of Alberta and that of the 61 school boards there's one that has work to rule currently under way, and that is with the Calgary board of education. I encourage members of the board and the Alberta Teachers' Association to continue to work together. I'm encouraged by some of the messages that I've heard said by both sides. I believe that through the collective bargaining process a resolution will be arrived at. I don't believe that members of the ATA wish to hurt children. I do not believe that members of the Calgary board of education want to hurt children.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt in my mind that a strike does not serve the best interests of students, and as long as both sides in this collective bargaining process continue to have children as their first consideration – and they have indicated comments to that effect – then I'm encouraged that they may come to a resolution on their issue.

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

### Minimum Wage

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Growth Summit has recommended an increase in Alberta's legislated minimum wage. My question is to the Minister of Labour. Can the minister tell the Assembly if he intends to follow the recommendation of the Growth Summit and increase the minimum wage in Alberta?

MR. SMITH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the Growth Summit has brought out one of 243, I believe, recommendations. I once had a teacher who had a profound impact on my life. He said: there are two kinds of people; there are those on the building crew and those on the wrecking crew. So we know what side that side of the House comes from.

But the building crew was the Growth Summit. For the first time in the history of Alberta leaders of this province had the foresight to bring together business leaders, social economy leaders, and other leaders to talk about issues that are important to them. One of these issues was the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, we will be taking into account very seriously the input from the Growth Summit and what the people said there at that very important meeting.

MR. AMERY: Mr. Speaker, since the media has been talking and writing about the possibility of not having a minimum wage, can the minister tell Albertans if he has any plan to get rid of the minimum wage in Alberta?

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. In fact, any kind of thought or debate that occurred in Alberta was simply the musings of a fictional section in a local newspaper in Edmonton, and it's probably built subscription rates, but the government has no plans to eliminate the minimum wage. The government has an important responsibility to listen, to listen to all Albertans. In fact, through an order in council last week and through the sunset of all Alberta regulations – those that are discovered not to be necessary, those that are discovered to be essential, relevant, appropriate – that's part of what's taking place today in this debate.

When we brought this publicly to the standing policy committee about a month ago, it was an important question that we wanted answers to, and that's why we've established a process where we expect input from presidents of high school councils, student unions, university student unions, those who receive the minimum wage, the very few in this province that receive the minimum wage, and also those that pay the minimum wage. In order to ensure that that debate is represented in the political spectrum, I'm pleased to announce to you today that the review committee will be headed up ably and capably by the Member for Calgary-Fort, Mr. Wayne Cao. I look forward to the members' response and supervision of that debate.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me just finish a very brief answer by saying that the government has no plans to get rid of the minimum wage.

MR. AMERY: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: can the minister assure Albertans that the public review of the minimum wage regulations will be fair and will allow all interested Albertans to express their ideas on this very important issue?

2:50

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, again fairness is the key note to this review. That's why when the very review was started, it was initiated in a public forum, in a standing policy committee, an important policy measure that has been brought forward by this government over the last four years, where items can be discussed in a public format, policy can be debated, and now we're going on to the next process, again to keep it public, transparent, and ensure that this government is accountable to not only those who pay the minimum wage but to those who receive the minimum wage.

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

#### Availability of Minister of Education

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To protect public education, the Calgary public teachers have, since August, been engaged in a work-to-rule campaign. On October 4 thousands of teachers, parents, and concerned citizens rallied at the Legislature to defend education. The Deputy Minister of Education had been fired, and where was the Education minister? He was touring Japan, Hong Kong, and China. To the Minister of Education: would the Minister of Education please explain why a trade mission to Asia takes priority over the needs of over half a million Alberta children, their parents, and teachers?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, there is an important responsibility that runs with being a minister of the Crown, and that is to represent the Crown in the right of the province of Alberta at certain occasions. In both Japan and Hong Kong there were Canadian education fairs that thousands – thousands – of potential students attended in an effort to gain more information about the education system in the province of Alberta. They were, of course, also meetings that were set up long in advance of any such rally at the provincial Legislature Grounds for the purposes of trading information about the best practices in education.

There's a great deal that the Japanese and Hong Kong education systems can learn from the province of Alberta and vice versa. All of those things are important. That is not to diminish the importance of public education right here in the province of Alberta. Far from it. There are important responsibilities that we have both at home and abroad that should be fulfilled.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister please inform Alberta taxpayers, many of whom are parents and educators, exactly how much his Asian trip cost the taxpayers of this province?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, that information will be the subject matter of a tabling which will take place at some later juncture.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you.

I'll ask then: could the minister explain why he failed to show at a Calgary-Nose Creek education forum, in his own constituency, in March at St. Bede school?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, that was just prior to the election, and of course all members of the Assembly were busy on the campaign trail. It was a function that did not fit within my schedule. There are many people who have had the opportunity to speak with me personally about education. I've gone to

hundreds of schools. I've met with thousands of students. At the end of the day there are important functions that have been in a constituency, and we do try to accommodate every single one that we can. The one at St. Bede was one that I could not attend.

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

THE SPEAKER: The time for question period has evaporated. There are two government members and six opposition members still on the list wanting to raise questions today. Just a friendly reminder that question period is not the place for the seeking of opinions or for musings or the confirmation of media reports or speeches or one's individual schedule.

#### head: Motions under Standing Order 40

##### Maple Leaf Foods Inc.

THE SPEAKER: At this point in time I have received notice from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona about wanting to raise a point under Standing Order 40. Standing Order 40 refers to urgency, urgency in terms of your argument as to why the Assembly should deal with this motion at this time. So I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its disappointment with the lack of leadership provided by the Premier and the Minister of Labour which contributed to the tragic loss of over 1,000 jobs at the Maple Leaf hog processing plant in Edmonton and urge the government to immediately make public the lease agreement between the government of Alberta and Maple Leaf Foods Inc.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 40 I rise to ask for unanimous consent of the Legislative Assembly to debate this matter of urgent and pressing necessity. This is a matter of urgent and pressing necessity because over 1,000 Edmontonians have lost their jobs due to the recent Maple Leaf plant closure.

Speaking to the matter of urgency, the president of the UFCW local wrote the Premier on September 16 asking for his help to resolve the impasse at Maple Leaf Foods – it was responded to by the Premier's office by acknowledging the letter – and forwarding the letter to the Minister of Labour. The Minister of Labour didn't respond until October 22, five weeks later. The Minister of Labour's response basically said: there is nothing we can do. I am forced to ask myself the question: would the Premier and the Minister of Labour have taken such a hands-off approach if these 1,000-plus jobs had been located in Calgary?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please. Urgency is the only parameter under Standing Order 40. Focus your remarks on urgency, not on the subject matter of the motion.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is a matter of urgent and pressing necessity because, as we speak, Maple Leaf is removing equipment from the Edmonton plant. The land and buildings are owned by the province of Alberta. Albertans have already lost hundreds of millions of dollars due to a bailout by this same plant's former owner. They have a right to know what the lease agreement between the province and Maple Leaf contains regarding the ownership of the plant equipment and other assets.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I urge the Assembly to bring this motion up for debate on an urgent basis because we will not have an opportunity to further debate this until the end of January next year. By then Maple Leaf will have canceled its lease, and Albertans will be left holding the bag once again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I hear a question, the very hon. Member for Edmonton- Gold Bar.

Might we have unanimous consent to proceed with the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona? [interjections] I haven't called the vote yet. Those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

There has been a request made by one hon. member to briefly revert to the Introduction of Guests. Would the Assembly agree to that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes from your vantage point to my chair your view, your sightline, is obscured by the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

I thank you for this. It is a pleasure for me to introduce two parties to the House this afternoon. First, it is a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Judith Evans, co-chair, Capilano School Council, and Heather Green, parent representative, Capilano School Council. They are in the members' gallery, and with your permission I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second party I would like to introduce is Mr. Dan MacLennan, who was elected this fall, while this House was recessed, as president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Through you I would ask Mr. MacLennan to rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Another hon. member has also requested leave to introduce a guest. Would that be appropriate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

3:00

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me this afternoon to introduce some students and their teacher Cindy Winters who have joined us from Holy Trinity high school. Two classes of grade 10 students spent a great deal of time and effort

discussing the framework on national unity and submitting detailed essays to me. I would like to thank them for their participation in this debate and through you welcome them to the Assembly. You can stand.

**Speaker's Ruling**  
**Procedure for National Unity Debate**

THE SPEAKER: Prior to calling Orders of the Day, I'd like to make a few comments. The first deals with members speaking in an alternative language to English during the course of debate on Government Motion 23 over the next few days. There's certainly no problem with anyone doing so and in fact speaks to the very interesting diversity of nations represented in Alberta's population. I would, however, request as a courtesy that all members be provided with a copy of the member's remarks in English prior to their being spoken during the debate in order for everyone to be able to follow what is being said, and as a courtesy the member may wish to repeat their remarks in English. For your information it is a practice for *Hansard* to print remarks in its verbatim transcripts in both official languages of Canada. All other languages spoken in the Assembly will have the English translation only appearing in print. I would also like to remind members that they are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the translation of their remarks delivered in the Assembly as well as being responsible for responding to these with the media and the public.

The second point I'd like to raise relates to tablings. Although I have always strongly encouraged members to table reports and documents during the appropriate item of business during the daily routine – that is, under Tabling Returns and Reports – I understand that a number of members are wishing to table copies of the responses they have received from constituents relative to the consultation that took place on the Dialogue on Unity when they make their remarks on Government Motion 23. For this occasion and on this occasion only – that is, the debate on Government Motion 23 – I am not going to discourage members from tabling these responses at the appropriate time. I wish to emphasize, however, that this is for this very special time in our history that such occurrences will be sanctioned.

While on the subject of tablings our Standing Order 37(3) states that

documents presented voluntarily to the Assembly for placement in the records of the Assembly and the Legislature Library may be tabled in quadruplicate by a member.

As these number in the thousands, for this one time only the chair is prepared to accept the tabling of one copy, which will be retained in the Assembly's historical records. The library, which normally receives two copies of all tablings, and the opposition, which is normally given a copy for their records, will be given a copy of the top page with a notation that the original tablings can be accessed and viewed with the Clerk's office.

The last point I wish to make relates to one member who is purportedly going to entertain us with a song. I would ask that member to please supply all members with a copy of the words to this song at the appropriate time.

head: **Orders of the Day**  
head: **Government Motions**  
**National Unity**

23. Moved by Mr. Klein:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be

guided by the input received from Albertans during the public consultation process, Dialogue on Unity, and on behalf of the people of Alberta concur with the principles embodied in the elements of the Calgary framework, recognizing that the Calgary framework is not an amendment to the Constitution acts of 1867 to 1982 and that the specific wording of any amendment to those acts must be approved by Albertans in a referendum in accordance with the Constitutional Referendum Act.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all hon. members may I first thank you for your assistance in making the special arrangements for this unique session of the Legislature.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the opposition leaders and their House leaders for their tremendous co-operation and support throughout this process. I believe the bipartisan nature of this process was an important signal of the importance we attach to the issue at hand.

Third, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank each and every member of this Assembly for working these past few weeks to execute our fundamental responsibility as legislators, and that is consulting with our constituents. In one fashion or another each member of this Assembly has debated or discussed with their constituents the elements of the so-called Calgary declaration.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Albertans, Albertans by the tens of thousands who took the time to write or phone or fax or appear at a public meeting to talk about a very important thing, and that very important thing is what it means to be Canadian. In that regard I would like to table for the benefit of all members of the Assembly the results of a public opinion survey commissioned by the government which shows clearly that most Albertans support the principles of the Calgary framework, and I wish to table four copies of that survey.

Mr. Speaker, nine Premiers and two territorial leaders, representing regions of Canada from sea to sea to sea and representing different political parties, agreed upon those principles three months ago in Calgary. I would like to read into the record those principles.

1. All Canadians are equal and have rights protected by law.
2. All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status.
3. Canada is graced by a diversity, tolerance, compassion and an equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world.
4. Canada's gift of diversity includes Aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the English and French languages and a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world.
5. In Canada's federal system, where respect for diversity and equality underlies unity, the unique character of Quebec society, including its French speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the well being of Canada. Consequently, the legislature and Government of Quebec have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada.
6. If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces.
7. Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial, and territorial governments work in partnership while respecting each other's jurisdictions. Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation. Canadians want their governments to work together particularly in the delivery of their social programs. Provinces and territories renew their commitment to work in partnership with the Government of

Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians.

Those are the elements of the Calgary declaration.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people who think that the process started in Calgary. Really, that was the culmination of a process that started somewhat earlier. As a matter of fact, the process started a month or so earlier. The process started at the annual Premiers' Conference in August at St. Andrews-by-the-Sea in New Brunswick, and it was at that conference that a number of Premiers, myself included, felt that the time had come to engage Canadians in a discussion about our common values, of what it means to be a Canadian, because we do know that the real big debate is coming – the national debate is coming – and it perhaps could come in a constitutional sense.

3:10

And why is it coming? It's coming because the government of the province of Quebec has made it very, very clear that there will indeed be a third referendum, a referendum that will have implications for all of us, but this time we must be ready. The Premiers believed that we had to consult Canadians early in a grassroots fashion, in a bottom-to-top fashion, to receive their general direction on what it means to be a Canadian in anticipation of the great debate we know is coming. So the Premiers in St. Andrews agreed that we should meet again, that we should see if we could develop some principles that define us as Canadians and take those principles out to the public. Hence, a further meeting of the Premiers in Calgary.

The culmination of all that is what this legislative session is all about, and let me be very clear about this, Mr. Speaker. We were determined that the process be one that included all Albertans, that it be open, that it be bottom to top, that it be transparent, and that it culminate in a special debate in this most special of all Alberta buildings. In keeping with the bipartisan co-operation I referred to a moment ago, this debate will conclude with a free vote.

It must be noted that the principles of the Calgary declaration are not, as pointed out in the motion, a proposed constitutional amendment. Albertans know very well that they can vote on any future constitutional amendments through a referendum here in Alberta. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, that indeed is the law.

In a sense these principles speak to a broader meaning than the dry legal language of constitutional reform. We are simply asking Albertans as Canadians – and other provinces are being asked by their legislators – do you believe in the equality of citizens, the equality of powers, and the equality of provinces? Do you agree that much of our strength is found in our diversity, our tolerance, our compassion and equality of opportunity and that those are important values that must be continually promoted? Do you believe in those principles? Do you concur with the principle that the people of Quebec do in fact have a legitimate desire to protect the unique character of Quebec society within Canada? Do you agree that governments, particularly the federal government, must do a better job of working co-operatively and with flexibility to build a better Canada? In short, Mr. Speaker, do Albertans, through the voices of their 83 elected representatives gathered here, agree that these broad principles of the Calgary declaration describe us as Canadians and should guide us in future constitutional discussions? If so, Albertans will have told us what is important to them when the time comes to discuss constitutional reform. When that time will come we don't know and we cannot know at this particular time, but we can be prepared.

Equally as important, as I said in a speech in Montreal last

month, these principles, if adopted, might send an important message to the people of Quebec, who have been told for too long by their political leaders that they are not equal partners in Confederation. They are equal partners in Confederation and play a very, very special role in this beautiful country of ours, the people who have been told for too long that they are not wanted or respected in Canada. We need to take that message out, person to person, Albertan to Quebecker, Albertan to New Brunswicker, Albertan to Manitoban, Albertan to Saskatchewanian, that we are together as a family, that this is a great Canadian family, and that indeed Quebec is very, very much a part of that family. These principles, Mr. Speaker, if adopted, are a small step, a small human step, a tentative step but a step nonetheless down a road we know we must travel.

I indicated, to open this debate, that my remarks would be brief, Mr. Speaker, because for the next two or three days . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Three.

MR. KLEIN: Three for sure.

. . . the people of Alberta will speak. For the next three days I fully expect to hear many different views and many different positions. I expect and I hope this debate will allow members to express both their hopes and their fears for the future of this country. I expect and I hope this debate will shine a light on the diversity of Alberta itself, the diversity that has sent Anglophones and Francophones, aboriginals, and members of other ethnic and cultural societies to this very Chamber. We see it here today.

Mr. Speaker, I expect and I hope that this debate will inform, engage, and inspire Albertans to begin to think more about our country as time and circumstance move us toward another momentous chapter in our history. So at the conclusion of the debate it will be both my challenge and my honour to try and summarize our deliberations. My comments at that time will be based on the comments of all members.

Mr. Speaker, our form of parliamentary democracy requires on most occasions the rule of party discipline, but on other occasions that discipline should and must be relaxed. This is such an occasion. So I urge all members to speak from the heart, to speak your mind about your Canada, your Alberta, and our collective future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL:

For 10 years I have stood opposed to the Honourable gentleman opposite in the most hostile manner it is possible to conceive of public men arrayed against each other in the political arena. If a crisis has even arisen in the political affairs of any country which would justify such a coalition as has taken place, such a crisis has arrived in the history of Canada. Party alliances are one thing and the interests of my country are another.

Those are the words of a member of the Clear Grit Party, George Brown, in the Assembly on June 22, 1864, on entering into a coalition with John A. Macdonald with the goal of making Confederation a reality. Without being pretentious, Brown's words echo very much how I feel about joining the Premier, the leader of the New Democrats, each Member of this Legislative Assembly, and the political leaders across Canada. I concur with Mr. Brown: party alliances are one thing, and the interests of my country are another.

The Premier by his actions and by his conversations with me has demonstrated very clearly that he, too, concurs with those sentiments. I would certainly like to thank him, and along with

him I would like to thank the minister of FIGA, my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, every member of our caucus, every Member of this Legislative Assembly, and our respective staffs for the work that they have done in furthering this process and bringing it to the point where we find it today.

Our quest to renew the Confederation that Brown and Macdonald and many others sought and achieved has begun where they in fact began, and that is with trying to determine what exactly Canadians value. Our debate today has a parallel with theirs in that we are focusing on a framework of seven elements developed in Calgary and in that they focused on a framework of 72 resolutions from Quebec. Our success today will be measured in large part by how we situate Quebec at the end of this, just as Brown's and Macdonald's success was measured in large part by how they situated Lower Canada.

3:20

This debate is not being done in isolation. The Premiers specified very clearly that across this country there should be a grassroots consultative process upon which we could base the debate. Well, we've done that. Everyone in this Legislature has been part of it. We've had workshops and town hall meetings, and we've received questionnaires and telephone input and letters. We've spoken to people in kitchens and living rooms and in shopping centres and workplaces all across this province, and I believe we know what Albertans are thinking.

Let's remember that this debate didn't start just six weeks ago. It's been going on for a long time. In fact, I think the recent trend in this debate, you could say, started with Meech Lake and culminated in the Charlottetown accord. One thing is fundamentally different about the consultative process that we've undertaken and about this debate over those two other experiences, and that is that our consultation and our debate have come after, not before, a Quebec referendum which, but for 50,000 votes, almost saw the end of our country. If ever there was something that has focused our attention, it is that we almost lost this country, and nobody can any longer flirt with the idea that Quebec would never leave. They almost did. This consultative process and this debate, therefore, have a very special focus.

I accept each of the seven elements of that Calgary framework. I accept that all Canadians are equal, that they all must have rights protected by the law, and that all provinces must have equality of status. I accept that the largest part of Canada's grace lies in its diversity, its tolerance, its compassion, and its attention to equality of opportunity. I accept that our diversity includes aboriginal peoples and cultures, the English and the French languages, and our multicultural citizenry. I accept that the unique character of Quebec society is fundamental to the well-being of Canada and that the Legislature and the government of Quebec have a responsibility, a role to ensure that that society's unique characteristics are defended, protected, and promoted within Canada. I accept that powers conferred on any one province must be available to all other provinces, and there is no doubt in my mind that we all accept that federal and provincial governments must work co-operatively.

You might ask why I accept these things. I accept them because in each case they are either intrinsically true or they represent an ideal to which I believe most Canadians do aspire and want to aspire. But I also support them and accept them because they make practical sense in this debate and this effort to keep Quebec in Canada, to keep this country unified throughout the 10 provinces.

Concurrence with this framework across this country gives

federalists in Quebec some ammunition for their debate in Quebec about staying within Canada. If they can be successful in that argument, then we have an excellent chance of electing a federalist government in Quebec in the next provincial election, and when that happens, then we can make some real progress on addressing the range of issues that can strengthen and unify Canada for decades and decades to come. By accepting this, by concurring with this, we will show Quebecers and all Canadians that there is a set of values that we can mutually agree upon and that we mutually live by. In particular, we can show Quebecers, demonstrate to Quebecers that we understand the pressures that they find within their province.

I'm also accepting this framework because I've had an overwhelming response in my constituency that says yes in answer to the first question in the questionnaire, which was: "Overall, do you support the framework?" Overwhelmingly my constituents have said yes.

One constituent, Brian Summers – he's allowed me to use his name – wrote in answer to that question: "Absolutely! This is the best short statement of 'who we are' that I have ever seen." He went on to write, "Let us recognize and applaud and celebrate [in fact] the uniqueness of Quebec." I'll admit that not everyone in responding to this questionnaire, in supporting the framework was as definitive as Mr. Summers.

Another Edmonton-McClung family wrote that they supported the framework, "but only because we would like Quebec to stay." I was impressed by this in particular because I think it reflects a heartfelt desire to make reasonable compromises to keep Canada together. It underlines what every one of us knows to be true, and that is that strong relationships are never built on irrevocable, inflexible positions.

There were others, Mr. Speaker, of course who simply disagreed with the framework or disagreed with parts of the framework. Jurisdictional issues, multiculturalism as opposed to assimilation, the unique character of Quebec, conferring special powers or the potential to do that were all reasons that were cited for not supporting this framework. Some wanted the framework to deal with more; some thought it dealt with too much. Others, a few others at least, I think had the sense that they would support only a complete capitulation to their specific positions.

I listened to these submissions. I heard these people. I accept their concerns. But I say to people with these concerns that this framework does not confer special powers on any province. I say to those people with these concerns that nothing in this motion becomes constitutional unless there is a referendum that passes and approves it by Albertans. To those people who think it hasn't done enough, I say that this framework does not preclude dealing with the range of other issues that we have to deal with to strengthen this country. It simply says: let's take manageable steps in a thoughtful and paced way.

On balance I am compelled to support the framework because I believe that my constituents are supporting that framework. They are not alone in this. The questionnaire responses of 50,000 or 55,000 people indicated that 76 percent of the respondents were supporting the agreement and that 67 percent of those respondents were supporting or silent on the issue of unique character. In addition, several weeks prior to that there was a poll which supported these findings. It said that 69 percent of Albertans support the framework and that 65 percent are okay with the unique society character resolution in the framework.

At a personal level I am profoundly relieved to see these kinds of results and this kind of support. I simply do not want to lose

this country. I don't ever want to see this country in jeopardy again. I don't ever want to see this country in harm's way. I believe, as deeply as I can believe anything, that we have to go some distance to protect and preserve and strengthen this country.

3:30

I embrace Quebec as I do the other nine provinces in this country. I believe that Quebec makes Canada special. It's one of the things that makes us special. It distinguishes us from the United States, it opens up all kinds of international economic opportunities because of its Francophone connections, and it focuses us on culture more broadly, cultures that enrich and enliven our lives every day. I do not accept the too quickly made argument that somehow if Quebec goes, everything will be fine in this country. Canada, I think, will be in serious jeopardy of falling apart entirely. I can't see a federation staying together when a single province, in this case Ontario, would have overwhelming prominence. I simply don't see how that imbalance can last. I do see that as soon as the idea of Canada, that precious idea of Canada, is in some way chipped away or the bubble is burst, the glue that holds this country together will come unstuck in light of the north/south pressures. I like the United States; I like Americans. I simply don't want to be one, and I don't want my children to become American.

I don't accept the too quickly stated argument that if Quebec goes and the country changes and allegiances change in this country, somehow Alberta's economy will be unscathed and that our standard of living and our quality of life will remain unchanged. I simply do not believe that. Of economies across this country Alberta may have an economy that will survive best, but it will take a body blow. One of the reasons that Canada has the economic success that it has around the world isn't simply because it's a powerful economic factor in the world. It is because it has huge and powerful respect from countries and people around the world because of what we are as Canadians. We don't sit on the Group of Seven, with the respect that we have there, because we have a huge economy. We sit on the Group of Seven with those very powerful western economic leaders because they respect us for what we are.

Imagine or think about how much time and effort people in this province – members of government, members of the Legislature, people everywhere across this province – spend focused on developing, building our economy and our wealth, on building education and health care and those things that make this province what it should be. And think about all of a sudden each of us being distracted by an effort to preserve what's left of the original Canada or to begin creating an entirely new country. You distract people's energy from what we're doing today, and you'll find that our economy and our way of life will suffer grievously.

There is no other place on this Earth as remarkable as Canada. To me Canada is so good that it almost seems as if there is a special reason for our existence. Perhaps it is to be a beacon to people around the world on how people from diverse backgrounds can live and work together and enrich each other's lives. Perhaps it is to be a bastion of decency and civility for a troubled world to emulate. Perhaps it is simply for Canadians to lead the world in peacekeeping and to figure out a way to do away with land mines. For sure – for sure – it is for us to be here to teach the rest of the world how to play hockey.

The point I'm making is that Canada isn't just for us, as remarkable as it is to each of us. It is a responsibility, much more broadly, to the entire world. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I ponder and I'm sure you and, I'll bet, every member of this



House ponders the imponderable question: why is it that people in the world have not seemed to be able to find a way to get along, to live in peace? If you could imagine a country in the world where that might be possible, this is how you'd describe it. It would be a country with unprecedented wealth. It would be a country that pursued equality of opportunity. It would be a country that has never experienced a war within its boundaries or massive social upheaval. It would be a country with an abundance of food, with health and cleanliness, with unparalleled beauty and an unprecedented environment. It would be a country with safety and security. You know what you'd call that country? You'd call it Canada. The disappointment is that in spite of all that we have been given, we've demonstrated over the last number of years, 10 years perhaps, that we can't in fact get along very well. If we vote for this Calgary framework in this Legislative Assembly, I think we'll be demonstrating that in fact we can.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly. The first thing you'll be pleased to note is that my intention is to have my speech today conform to my height, as they usually do, as opposed to preambles in question period.

Gee, Mr. Speaker, you put me in a tough boat. Here I am, you know, dealing with the Premier of the province, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and we're all agreeing. There must be something the matter with this picture.

I'd like to start by congratulating the Premier on initiating the process by first of all offering to host the other Premiers and territorial leaders at the Calgary conference, the result of which is in front of us today in the form of a framework and a resolution endorsing the framework. I'd also like to make note that I think the process that was used here in Alberta is probably the most appropriate that I can think of when you consider the processes that were involved with both the Meech Lake accord and the Charlottetown accord. The Leader of the Official Opposition and I went through both of those together, and at the time of the Charlottetown accord the Premier was then the environment minister, so he certainly has some experience with this.

What I'm getting at is that I believe that taking the approach of "if you're interested, write to us, phone us, fax us, or E-mail us" was probably the best measure of where Albertans stand on the issue of Canadian unity. I think we got an accurate reflection of what's on Albertans' minds. While I'm grateful to the minister of federal and intergovernmental affairs for sending me a copy of the survey that the Premier tabled just a few minutes ago, I must say it came as no surprise to me that Albertans are more concerned with Alberta issues such as health care and education. But the interesting thing that the survey and, I think, the passive nonresponse of a lot of Albertans did show is: it's okay; the unity framework is okay.

As I told a reporter a couple of days ago, people come up to me all the time, wherever I am, and they tap me on the shoulder: "Hey, Pam, I want to talk to you about this," or "Boy, you know about that that's going on?" and "What's the government doing?" and "Why isn't the House sitting this fall?" They've got a range of issues that they want to talk to me about. Not one person has walked up and tapped me on the shoulder and said: "Pam, we've got to talk about the unity issue. There's stuff in there that I'm really crazy about and stuff in there that I hate." It didn't happen, which is a pretty good indication that most Albertans are happy in a passive sense with this unity framework. Good. And

good for the reasons that were recited by both the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition. People in this province have a fundamental understanding of what it is to have Canada, the nation of Canada, and they like what they see.

I did hold a town hall meeting a few weeks ago. Twenty-seven people came to the meeting, and I promised them that I would reflect today what they had to say. What they said is: "Go ahead; endorse the framework, endorse the resolution that comes to the Legislature, because, generally speaking, it is good. We must send the message to Quebec that we appreciate its uniqueness in terms of dominant language, history, and civil law, and we like the fact that we are one country, including the diversity that this country enjoys. But don't forget that another reason we need to stay together is this. If the country were to break up under the threat of the multilateral agreement on investments, we could all become little banana republics." I'm using the phrase; I didn't make it up. This came right from one of the constituents who attended. I think that constituent is right.

The other thing that came up at the meeting and is also reflected in some of the written responses that I have received is that we are different from the United States. We have pride in supporting the institutions that provide for the common good. We don't have a history of turnpikes, in other words toll roads. We have a history where we collectively sponsor streets, schools, sewers, and hospitals, and we're proud of that. I think that does need to be reflected today.

3:40

One other very important thing that did come up is that even though this is very clearly not any change to the Constitution, it may be a step in that direction, that we must be open as a society to the inclusion of Canada's First Nations at that level, that anything else would be irresponsible and, quite frankly, snobbish.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I think I have reflected my constituents' concerns and their priorities, and I've certainly reflected my own. I like being Canadian. Canada without Quebec is not Canada. It is a very different creature, just as would be Canada without Newfoundland, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, you name it. We are a collective. We are a model society for the rest of the world. Surely in this Assembly we can uphold the desire to retain that status, to retain the concept of society that is so unique to our country.

I ask all members, if their conscience will allow, to support this framework and the resolution that supports this framework in the name of our home, Canada.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great honour that I rise today following three leaders of provincial parties who agree on this issue. It's probably a singular honour that not a lot of people have had the opportunity or will have the opportunity to enjoy in the history of the Legislative Assembly. It is also with some humility that I rise to speak to the issue of Canadian unity. This is an issue that has been looked at not only within the province but within the other provinces, including Quebec, as we speak today. There are numerous reporters that have phoned and are waiting to hear what the results are of our debate in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday.

To just give you a little bit of background as to on what basis I am going to be addressing this issue this afternoon, I wear the hat as the critic for federal and intergovernmental affairs. I also

wear the hat of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and speak on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton-Meadowlark. I also carry with me the life experience of having been born in Montreal and having lived in Montreal for 28 years and having lived in the province of Alberta for 17. For those that are quick with math, you now know my age. Wearing those three different hats, I had much to look at in the initial process as we looked at how this process would evolve. I've had much to consider as the input came from the constituents in Edmonton-Meadowlark, and I've learned a lot as I've traveled across the province with the Calgary declaration.

Now, when we first started this process, a lot of you may remember that people said that this was just a PR exercise, that it was grandstanding, that in fact this would lead nowhere. When I look at what some constituents have written, they have said: "I am diametrically opposed to the concept of this Declaration. I view it . . . as one of 'grandstanding.'" But when we look at the fact that we've received over 50,000 responses, that in each one of your folders those responses have many thoughtful ideas as to what it means to be a Canadian and what the issues are that are of concern to those individuals, you begin to understand that this is more than a PR exercise, that that's not what this is about.

What this is about is initiating a first step towards talking about what it means to be Canadian and how we keep Canada together as a whole. Even when you look at those individuals who say, "We're not sure whether this exercise will work; we're not sure whether this exercise will have any meaning," those individuals invariably say: I am proud to be a Canadian, and Canada is the best place in the world to live.

There were some others when we started this exercise who said that this would be an exercise in futility, that Quebecers wouldn't care, that it wouldn't make a difference what we in the rest of Canada said. When we look at the polls that are coming in and we look at the information that we're getting out of Quebec, we're finding that that's not the case. It is having an impact in Quebec, and I believe that the reason it's having that impact is in fact because we're not dealing at a political level. Even though we are now in the Legislative Assembly discussing this issue, this issue has come, the responses have come from the people of Alberta, and that's exactly where those responses need to go. We need to bypass the political level in these discussions, and we need to ensure that that is directly provided to the people in Quebec.

We've heard also that people don't care. Well, when I look at what some of my constituents have said, and when I look at the depth of feeling that has been written in some of my questionnaires that I've received, I know without a shadow of a doubt that people do care. I'm just going to take the opportunity to read a few because I think it puts into perspective what Albertans in my constituency – Meadowlarkians, if we want to call them that – have as feelings for Canada.

A Canadian has access to excellent and equal universal medical care and treatment. The best education is available to its citizens. A Canadian is an important individual to the country.

It is time to put aside differences and political opinions, and look at what is best for everybody. Quebec cannot separate! That is the bottom line. We need Quebec in Canada to maintain this as the greatest country in the world.

This is from a student in grade 9: "What I think Canada will be like in the future. I hope Quebec will not separate because without Quebec Canada won't be Canada."

Some other thoughts.

Though we live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, rights, freedoms, opportunities and social justice must

continue to be improved, expanded and protected, not for the elite few, but for the common good of all citizens.

To live in the most open and free nation in the world tempered by a social, health and economic safety net for all people and to provide education at the highest level for all citizens.

One country, one flag, one anthem, one railway, one CBC, one dollar, and 28,000,000 different voices with the right to say what they think.

Now, is this coming from people who don't care about our country? Is this coming from people who have no wish to keep our country together? I say: no, it's not. I say that this is coming from people who have the desire and have the wish to keep Canada together and are willing to sit down and think about it. What's important is that in this exercise we're not doing this when there's a referendum crisis in Quebec; we're doing this at a period in time when we can step back and look at this in a rational manner and come up with the best solution possible to keep, again, Canada together.

Now, what else did I learn through the consultation process? I learned that there's a depth of feeling for keeping our country together and that there is also little tolerance for those who want to separate from this country. People were adamant. They wanted to keep Canada together, and they didn't want to have more talk about separation. I learned that Albertans have a respect for others in this country and a wish for us to be Canadians first and did not like the term "hyphenated Canadian." I learned that there were some Albertans that were worried that unique status might lead to the breakup of the country, that in fact that might not be what keeps the country together, that if we felt one piece of Canada was unique, then another piece might be unique, and suddenly we have a fracture happening. That was a concern that some individuals had. There were some people who questioned the fact that Quebec already has its own legal system, has its own laws, is able to determine language rights, and in fact, "Do they need more assurance?"

### 3:50

But what was interesting was that woven throughout those concerns, throughout those questions was the recognition that we need to keep talking with each other, that dialogue was what was going to keep our country together. There was a further recognition that in fact one of the ways of keeping the country together was not to diminish the powers of the federal government, especially with regards to health care, education, social programs, and environment. There was a list that people had with regards to that to ensure that there would be no diminishing of the federal government's powers. They also recognized that governments needed to work efficiently and effectively and that we should not forget a third level of government which at times is forgotten – and that's the municipalities – and that in fact they should also be partners at the table in talking about the federation.

There were other concerns that were brought up, concerns with regards to aboriginal peoples, that not enough was talked about, and suggestions that various areas needed to be looked at as well with regards to Senate reform and other issues such as taxation, minimum wage.

If I can just close with a couple of observations. One is that we have a choice this afternoon. We can perpetuate the two solitudes idea of Canada, or we can look at the fact that Canada needs to be recognized much like a Siamese twin: if we split, the chances of surviving are next to nil.

If I may just very quickly say a quick message that I'd like to

provide to Quebec. Le message qu'on donne aujourd'hui au Québec est très simple: les albertains voudraient être un pays uni. La raison est très simple aussi: c'est que le Canada est la meilleure place au monde.

Thank you very much.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "My Canada is . . .": I would like to table close to 400 responses from the constituents of Lacombe-Stettler.

This afternoon I'd like to begin my speech by quoting James Conant: democracy is a small, hard core of common agreement surrounded by a rich variety of individual differences. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Premier, the other eight Premiers, and the two territorial leaders for their vision, their commonsense approach, their strong commitment to Canada, their desire to seek our views on national unity, and their unanimous resolve that Canada must enter the next millennium intact, united, and strong. By utilizing their individual leadership skills, they co-operatively focused their attention and energies on compromise. They spent considerable time and effort putting together the Calgary framework, a true declaration of intent, a framework of nonconstitutional elements put forward in support of an improved Canada, a nation hopefully better equipped to meet the needs and challenges of the next century.

Given the importance of this issue and the short time frame involved, I applaud our Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the leader of the New Democratic Party for working together on this productive process in a true, nonpartisan manner. As my style is similar, seeking public input through consultation, I congratulate them for using this grassroots approach: bottom up, not top down. Together as Canadians, as Albertans our shared views can and will make a difference.

Over the weekend I read through some 400 or so returned responses. I found the read fascinating. At first glance it appeared as though many answers were all over the map, very diverse and often unrelated. However, upon further investigation with some analytical analysis I did indeed find common ground: areas of shared views, consensus, beliefs, and understanding. The underlying factor: a reinforced commitment to Alberta, to Canada, a Canada that I am pleased to say most said should include Quebec.

Question 1. Similar to the view held by most Albertans, the majority of my respondents categorically agreed most often with a simple, singularly worded yes. They can and do support in principle the overall framework.

Questions 2, 3, and 4 provided for some interesting reading. The elements receiving the greatest response were those related to fairness: equality for all Canadians, the need for equality for all 10 provinces.

The single most written about and controversial clause, the recognition within the framework of Quebec's uniqueness, was: how would this transcend to other provinces?

Most commented favourably on was element 6, the acknowledgement within the declaration that any powers given one must be bestowed on all.

In answering many of these questions, many constituents raised concerns regarding institutional changes, the need for immediate Senate reform being first and foremost. Also, individual rights issues were identified: private property rights, gun laws, human rights legislation, and the necessity to revamp the present criminal justice system, to name a few.

Some indicated difficulty in answering question 5 in isolation.

Many focused on the whole, often encompassing within their remarks consideration for all elements combined. Some noted that elements 2, 5, and 6, when considered together, created a balance, a balance that melds, yet one that recognizes and respects differences. One writer from Lacombe stated it best when she said that these elements will allow us all to coexist as equals.

The acid test, the tie that binds, the very important link between all elements became obvious as I read with interest what it meant to some of my constituents to be Canadian. Please allow me to share some of their written thoughts: free to make choices; proud to be part of a country where so many cultures can come together peacefully; the freedom of religion and expression; the enjoyment of multiculturalism; the opportunity to advance; it means to be free; let's not blow it; it means that I can work with all races, respect people's traditions, and learn from them; to live freely in a country, enjoying the uniqueness of everyone, which most certainly includes Quebec.

I believe in consideration of the foregoing, the following can be said. If formal recognition of Quebec's right to protect culture, language, and legal traditions is given, fundamental of course to the overriding principle of equality and equity achieved, if indeed powers conferred on one province are made available to other provinces, then progress will have been made. A new beginning going into a new millennium.

As Canada's first ministers continue to work through this progress, I would be remiss, however, if I didn't raise another vital point. Through this very framework, by virtue of element 7, the provinces along with the territories have reviewed their commitment to work co-operatively in partnership with the government of Canada. Albertans, many my constituents, want to see this commitment renewed and fully reciprocated by the federal government. Areas such as health care, social programs, and more recently energy programs need to be fully examined. Ongoing dialogue is essential.

Please allow me to end with another quote, a timely quote attributed to Edwin Markham.

He drew a circle that shut me out –  
[Nonconformist], rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in.

Thank you.

4:00

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address the Assembly on the issue of national unity and to share with you my views and the views of some of my constituents of West Yellowhead on this prominent issue. Canada means different things to different people, but most of all, Canadians agree that Canada is indeed the best country in the world in which to live. It is Canada's greatness that makes the pursuit of national unity so vital.

At the meeting of the Premiers and territorial leaders in Calgary in September of this year, a framework for discussion on national unity was developed. Point 3 of the framework indicated very clearly and accurately that "Canada is graced by a diversity, tolerance, compassion and an equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world." There are some of these things that make Canada the envy of the rest of the world.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, just as any country or any human has problems, we Canadians also have problems, but there are millions of people worldwide who dream of coming to Canada. This is because our achievements and successes are far greater

than our problems, real or perceived. The diversity and tolerance that characterize Canadians stem from our history. A legacy of coexistence and mutual respect between English and French Canadians is at the heart of the Canadian identity. It is this special relationship, or partnership, that often serves as a model for other countries facing similar situations. If we fail to preserve the Canadian federation, we will be sending a dire message, Mr. Speaker, a message to the world that a country as healthy and prosperous as ours cannot unite populations of different languages and backgrounds. We must not give up on Canada's ideal because it is a universal ideal.

In times of increasing globalization our bilingual character combined with the multicultural population provides us with a unique advantage. French is the official language of no fewer than 33 countries and English, of 56. Thus, with a bilingual and multicultural population Canada has a decided advantage in the global community as well as the global marketplace. We cannot afford to jeopardize the future of this great country. We must do what is necessary to preserve our federation, and it is time to be proactive rather than reactive in reaching a solution that will benefit all Canadians.

This, Mr. Speaker, is what the Calgary declaration seeks to accomplish. The framework for discussion on national unity is a step forward in the pursuit of national unity. The Calgary declaration invites all Albertans and indeed all Canadians to offer their opinions and ideas on this serious issue. I am proud to say that the responses from my constituents have been tremendous. For the most part responses have been encouraging and supportive. Many of those who support the framework share the view that all provinces and Canadians must remain equal and united. There are clear establishments in points 1 and 2 of the framework, and point 6, also well supported, ensures that all 10 provinces remain equal constitutionally.

I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that some of my constituents disagreed with portions of the framework, but almost everyone who disagreed did not based on point 5, which gives recognition to the unique character of Quebec society within Canada. This is the most critical and hence the most controversial point of the framework. I think it's important to reiterate, though, that there is absolutely no mention of and no intention to confer any special powers upon the province of Quebec or any other province for that matter. Point 5 is simply a form of recognition, probably one which is overdue. It is the rest of Canada recognizing that Quebec society, based on its language, culture, and civil law tradition, is in a situation that differs from those Canadians in other parts of Canada, but that is all. No new powers, no special rights or privileges, simply a knowledge by the rest of Canada that Quebec is a unique member of Canada, which it certainly is.

Let us recall that 49 percent of Quebecers who voted in the most recent referendum voted to separate from Canada. Certainly this was a narrow margin of victory for Canada. However, a considerable portion of the 49 percent would almost certainly admit that they voted yes simply because the rest of Canada had failed to offer a regional recognition of Quebec's unique character. For the most part, these are Quebecers who have no desire for special powers. They wish to be treated equally as Canadians. By offering such recognition, Mr. Speaker, we are taking a remarkably easy step but a giant step nonetheless towards national unity.

This is exactly what the Calgary declaration seeks to accomplish. It seems a clear message that we as Canadians accept and understand Quebec's unique position. In so doing, it

allows an important process to begin, a process of developing an understanding among all Canadians as to what our country is and what our country ought to be for generations to come.

Arthur Lower, a Canadian historian, once remarked that "in every generation, Canadians have had to rework the miracle of their political existence." This is a profound and accurate statement. Some Canadians see that this is a burden or an inconvenience. Instead, the reworking of the miracle of our political experience ought to be seen in a positive light, because it shows that we as Canadians still care about the future of our country. It serves to remind us of the things that make Canada great. If the day comes when it is generally accepted that Canada has no more problems to solve, this would be the beginning of the end. This is no different than accepting defeat, because it would mean that we have given up on improving our country, our constitution, and ourselves.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the beauty of democracy. It allows us to rework, to change, to alter. It provides us with an opportunity to adapt to circumstances and face new challenges. Our Canadian democracy ensures that all of these changes reflect the wishes and desires of the people. The national unity consultation process of the past two months is a perfect example of Canada exercising the right to be heard and demonstrating that democratic power helped shape the future of Canada.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that I'm proud to be a Canadian. It is our ability as Canadians to compromise equally in diversity that has contributed to Canada's reputation in the world. This is precisely the reason why we should recognize the place of the only majority francophone province within Canada.

I would like to thank all the many Albertans who used the consultation process to express their views on the framework of Canadian unity. The responses were enormous and encouraging. It is clear that Albertans are committed to achieving national unity by the understanding and appreciation of a great Canada. I'd like to thank the constituents of West Yellowhead as well as the students of West Yellowhead for the 431 responses which I received. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table them.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to table the Canadian unity questionnaire responses from the Wetaskiwin-Camrose constituency. There were a total of 524 responses.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks by commending the nine Premiers and two territorial leaders for their leadership in initiating this Canadian unity consultation process. Canadian unity is not an easy issue. It never has been. While there are numerous views from my constituents on how the difficult problems of Canadian unity should be approached, there is general appreciation for the grassroots consultation process. On their behalf I say thank you to all of our provincial and territorial leaders and to all political party leaders that support this initiative.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that many of my constituents accepted the invitation to be involved in the consultation process. In addition to the 524 questionnaire responses tabled today, four organized forums were held in my constituency involving close to 300 citizens. In particular, I want to commend the Wetaskiwin and Camrose composite high schools and Augustana University College for their interest and partnership in hosting these meetings

for the public and for their students. I also want to recognize the many seniors' groups who reported to me findings of their coffee party discussions on this topic. Further, I want to thank the press, especially the local newspapers in Camrose and Wetaskiwin, for their timely reports on our unity activities. Community awareness of the consultation process was relatively high in my constituency. Finally, I want to thank the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs for participating in one of my forums in Camrose.

From the many responses from my constituents I would like to be able to describe the thinking of the collective mind, or shall we say the average or the majority. With so many divergent opinions that is not an easy task. In reviewing the summary of results from the 50,000 Alberta-wide survey responses, I can only conclude that the Wetaskiwin-Camrose constituency is very typical of the Alberta response. We, too, overall support the Calgary framework by approximately 76 percent of our respondents, even though there are concerns yet to be resolved, especially in relation to framework 5, the issue relating to the unique character of Quebec.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

While the document, *Dialogue on Unity*, looks at Canada as a whole, nevertheless Quebec is what is really on the minds of a large number of my constituents. Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us speaks to the *Dialogue on Unity* process as a guide to this Legislative Assembly. This process has been one of consultation and input with our constituents, and now it has reached our Legislative Assembly.

Let me tell you more about this process in my constituency. In responding to the seven-point framework, the Wetaskiwin city council identified four principles underlying the Calgary declaration. Number one, the principle of equality of status and opportunity of individuals and provinces. Number two, the principle of respect for diversity of peoples, languages, customs, laws, et cetera. Number three, the principle of teamwork, cooperation and partnership. And finally, the principle of working together for the common good. These four underlying principles support the declaration as a basis for continuing discussion and progress.

As we think of the framework as the basis for a work in progress, key terms like equality and diversity and the difficulty of reconciling them as being complementary rather than opposites begin to take on a new meaning. Equality, as some have told me, is something to be reached for, not grasped. As a senior citizen from Camrose said to me: the ideal of equality as always shines afar, but the will to win it keeps us whole and keeps us on track. One high school student said to me: it makes sense if we think of equality as a goal yet to be achieved but not in terms of a fact today. My constituents tell me: we are a country in progress; we are in the process of making ourselves and defining ourselves as we go.

A conclusion at one of our forums was that as a nation we have come a long way in 130 years. Let us continue to make ourselves. Let us continue to mature through dialogue and communication and a vibrant education system. One of my constituents said that we have to help Canadians experience the magic of this country. The sheer physical size and diverse populations have an impact on our sense of national unity. Governments and schools and airlines should create partnerships to provide more people with the opportunity to get to know one another. Closer to home, a native leader at one of our forums rose to extend an invitation to all participants to visit his people.

Exchanges lead to understanding. We need understanding in our country.

My constituents see our diversity – diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, language, and traditions – as a distinguishing mark of what makes us uniquely Canadian. Most believe our multiculturalism makes us strong and respected by the rest of the world. In spite of the strength in our diversity, many of my constituents warn that our nationalism runs thin. A high school student writes: we need to fly the Canadian flag, sing the national anthem more, and instill a greater sense of patriotism amongst Canadians. Diversity, with all of its desirable qualities, must not stand in the way of all peoples and all provinces and territories being Canadian first and foremost. That is a strong, recurrent theme from my constituents. Diversity can only be accommodated within a strong sense of patriotism and oneness of Canada. One of my constituents wrote: ours is the responsibility to teach others how to live with diversity as a treasure, not a problem.

To all legislators and parliamentarians, my constituents warmly endorse the commitment of provincial and territorial governments to work in partnership with the federal government. The message was strong that reassessment of local, provincial, or federal powers must lead to a more united and stronger Canada. While there is general acceptance that stronger powers for one province must also be available to all provinces, there is also a realization that the whole must be stronger than the sum of its parts. Canada is more than the sum of its provinces. There must be a strong federalism to bind us together as Canadians.

As true Canadians my constituents tell of those qualities that they hold most dear. The common threads embrace many of the same words in the Calgary unity framework: equality, diversity, tolerance, compassion, and understanding. If I may again share common comments taken from the questionnaire, written in response to "My Canada is . . .": "My Canada is a country where hard work pays off," someone said, "where people are taken care of in times of need, a country of tolerance, compassion, kindness, and understanding but also a country with discipline and high moral standards, a country of diverse traditions, a country looked up to by nations around the world, a free and united nation."

In conclusion, my constituents endorse that Canada includes all that it is today. It includes its aboriginal peoples, and it includes a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world. It includes a strong Alberta. It includes a strong Quebec and all the other provinces and territories strong and united. There is an expectation that their leaders have a responsibility to work together to keep Canada whole.

We support the *Dialogue on Unity* process and concur with the principles embodied in the elements as a basis and as a starting point for future discussions and developments on Canadian unity. I support the resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

4:20

MRS. FORSYTH: I'd like to table 446 results of the survey from Calgary-Fish Creek constituents for the House record.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm pleased to join the debate on unity. I'd like to start with the three definitions that are found in the dictionary. Unity: oneness, being one, interconnected parts constituting a whole; two, being united, solidarity, harmony; living together in unity. The second word I'd like to describe is "unique": being the only one of its kind; having no like, equal,

or parallel. The last word that I think is important to define is "equal": the same in quality, quantity, size, degree, level, evenly balanced, having the same rights or status; human beings are essentially equal.

Like many English Canadians, I have been ignorant of what was happening in Quebec politics because I find the issues complicated, confusing, and with a long history. On October 30, 1995, as I sat watching the results of the referendum with my colleague from Calgary-McCall, I saw how we nearly lost Canada as we know it. We were 52,000 votes away from economic and political crisis. After the referendum I suddenly realized that I'd better wake up and smell the coffee.

Canada should not be taken for granted. To me, it's the best place in the world to live, Mr. Speaker. I have a son who is currently in the armed forces and is posted in Gaagetown, New Brunswick, and I believe that if there ever was a war – God forbid – he would be fighting for all of Canada.

What has been interesting in this whole process is how little English Canada has to do with any of this. This is about Quebecers fighting Quebecers in a Canadian arena. It's a family feud, and the rest of the country might as well not be there. We just sit back and watch them go at it. The vast majority of Canadians believe in the rule of law, individual rights, and protection from discrimination. Despite how close the referendum's outcome was, many Quebecers felt that Canada is the best place in the world to live. Why have separatists always refused to accept the fact that we live in a unique country and that independence can only set us back dramatically? They have ignored the economic evidence stacked against them. They have ignored conducting a much needed study on the economic future of separating. Why? Because once the study has been completed, it will only spell one word, and that word is "disaster."

It should be acknowledged that the separatist elite have always failed to act honestly and responsibly toward the people of Quebec. I want to remind the House about Mr. Parizeau's behaviour the night of the referendum. He blamed the separatists' defeat on the ethnic vote. We as Canadians must put an end to this type of behaviour. I think the other thing we should keep in mind is that this is not what Canadians want; it's what the separatists want.

Canadians are now insisting that their provincial leaders send a message to Quebec. In September of this year the Premiers of nine Canadian provinces and leaders of both territories made a commitment to consult the people on national unity and what it means to be Canadian. In Alberta our Premier, in consultation with both opposition leaders, agreed on a bottom-to-top consultation process that would ensure that Albertans would have the opportunity to express their views. The constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek responded with how they see Canada and what was important to them. It was an opportunity for the constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek to speak up for what they wanted. We are now players in the game and have a voice in the decision-making process. We as participants can now be the masters of our fate. The message is simple and is very clear: united rather than divided.

The constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek as citizens of this country decided to take the time to fill out the questionnaire and enter the political debate. Point 5 of the framework for discussion on national unity talks about

Canada's federal system, where respect for diversity and equality underlies unity, the unique character of Quebec society, including its French speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the well-being of Canada.

There is no doubt that Quebec has developed as a distinct society in Canada. Legally and under the Constitution, Quebec is equal to other provinces, just as other provinces are equal to Quebec. The constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek by and large acknowledge that Quebec is unique in terms of its culture, history, language, and its civil law. What they are unwilling to accept is the interpretation of the word "unique" if it gives Quebecers financial, social, and political advantage over any other province.

Mr. Speaker, the responses from my constituents were filled with passion, love, hate, intolerance, but mostly a love for our country. They talked about Canada including Quebec as an equal, not special, partner. In any province individuals should have the right to promote their culture – that is not supported by law – to enjoy the same freedoms and rights as everyone else in Canada, regardless of where they live, to choose to move from province to province, and to be able to speak, read, and write in the official languages. Quebec no longer needs to separate from Canada, as we Canadians understand their passion for their language and their culture. The separatists must face the fact that Quebecers rejected the kind of sovereignty that will take them away from Canada. Whether we live in Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, or anywhere else in Canada, we must respect and be tolerant of each other's differences. Canada is the envy of the world. Let's face it: we built it; we named it; we have a national anthem. This country belongs to us as Canadians, and it has captured our hearts. To even lose one province is and would be a tragedy.

My constituents feel that if Quebec decides to separate, they need the approval of all of Canada, not just one province, as one constituent said so eloquently. I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I thank God for being born here, the best country in the world, the beauty of Canada, the sense of belonging wherever you are in Canada it evokes warm fuzzies in my tummy.

Others weren't so kind, and I've had a difficult time trying to decide what I can or can't say. One constituent went as far as drawing a map of our country excluding the province of Quebec. Many of my constituents expressed their appreciation of our Premier taking the initiative. They thanked him for engaging the people of Alberta in the consultation process. Many just said, "Thank you, Ralph."

Attitudes can change with the help of people by sending a clear, concise message to the people of Quebec. As we enter the 21st century, we'd like nothing more than to be able to leave our old quarrels behind so that we can live in peace and take time to discover and enjoy Canada, this great nation of ours, to enjoy all people of all origins. Let's not forget that each province in this wonderful country of ours can claim a distinct history, geography, a distinct population. The people of Quebec are protected. Their rights and freedoms are entrenched in two charters, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I leave with again a quote from one of my constituents.

This unity issue brought forward by all Premiers, I believe, was in good intent for the benefit of all Canadians, including Quebec. To my Quebec . . . friends, please think before you leap. My Canada is . . . one that includes all Canadians. The primary right to individuality, the right to culture, race, beliefs and ideas. The right to live in the same country yet to exist as and by individual ideas.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I consider it a real privilege to be able to participate in this debate tonight for a number of reasons. I suppose one thing that would be top on my mind would be that two years ago I had the opportunity to be in Montreal for the unity rally, and in the course of the rally I had the opportunity to travel sort of not in the middle of the crowd but around the periphery. I had a chance to talk to a young dentist, and we chatted a little bit. He was astonished that there were people from all over Canada who had come to Montreal on the eve of that very important referendum. About three weeks later, back at my home in Calgary, I received a letter from this young dentist, and in the course of I think four typewritten pages this fellow poured out the angst, the anxiety, the concern he had. He had three young children. He was, I think, a fourth generation Quebecker, and he was absolutely torn up over the future that his children would have if he continued to stay in Quebec and what would happen to that province and to residents in Quebec.

I hope that this debate here in this provincial Legislature will be able to provide some solace and some comfort and perhaps some assistance to people like that young fellow I had a chance to chat with in Quebec two years ago.

In Calgary-Buffalo we received a very large number of responses; in fact, in excess of 700. I haven't had time to count the responses that I received this afternoon and only had a chance to leaf through a number of them, but well over 700 responses. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I just feel that it's such a unique privilege and opportunity to be able to read opinions from so many residents in my constituency who with candour and eloquence and enormous conviction talk about what's important to them about this country and also what kinds of concerns they have for themselves and their children.

#### 4:30

In terms of reporting on the feedback I received, of the total number of responses only 14 did not address the Calgary declaration in any way. Fully 83 percent supported the Calgary declaration; 14 percent rejected it. In terms of those constituents who had concerns with elements of the Calgary declaration, not surprisingly the largest number would be with element 5. Also, a smaller number had concerns with number 6, number 7, and then an even smaller number of constituents registered concerns with respect to element 1. To me it was particularly interesting to note the very significant number of respondents who identified aboriginal issues as something that ought to be assigned a whole lot more weight and importance than we've seen in Canada and indeed in Alberta to date.

I received a very clear message from my constituents, and I think that my responsibility as their elected representative is to support and vote in favour of the Calgary declaration. Having said that, I also want to acknowledge that I do believe in Edmund Burke's theory of representation. I have to say that I'm uncomfortable in many respects with the vagueness of the Calgary declaration. I'm uncomfortable with some elements which are in more detail and other elements which are so general as to be virtually glib. I have a concern, Mr. Speaker, that this Calgary declaration will be used by some as a launching pad for a widespread devolution of powers to the provinces, and that's something I want to expressly dissociate myself from with as much vigour as I can muster in my 10 minutes. It is absolutely important and essential, from my perspective, that we continue to have a strong federal government. One need look no further than what's happened with the erosion of our public health care system

to recognize that were it not for that single bulwark of the federal government and a single federal statute, we might be vastly farther down the road to commercialized, for-profit health care.

Mr. Speaker, I was thinking as I read through these 700-odd submissions, thoughtful submissions from constituents, that even the most cynical observer would be moved by the genuine, heartfelt responses. One of the most powerful responses was one from a woman who's 101 years old, and her valuable and insightful advice is longer than I would have time to share with all members this afternoon, but I think it's instructive for all of us. Someone who has seen 101 years of Canadian experience has, I think, much useful advice to share with us, and she's very supportive of the Calgary declaration, the thrust of it and the elements of it. Two of my constituents, a husband and wife, suggested: we are

confident the results of the survey will provide a clear vision that it is crucial Canada remains united, and there is no options for separation.

I expect many of us in this Chamber and certainly many of my constituents share that sentiment.

There were a number of very concrete suggestions that constituents made in terms of how we can foster a stronger and more united nation. There were the suggestions about sending students, after they graduate from high school, on an educational trip to Ottawa or to other capitals. There were concrete suggestions in terms of how we could make coast-to-coast travel more accessible, more affordable. One woman, a Mrs. Beauchamp, wrote a wonderful 4-page letter entitled, What it Means to be Canadian. One of my favourite elements in her letter I would just quote as follows.

Being Canadian also includes the need to accept and respect the fact that we are a diverse people – sometimes defined by ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and racial qualities. Once we sample and share in the lifestyles of these other groups, we begin to understand their needs and aspirations and feel an empathy with them.

One of my constituents lived his first 27 years in Châteauguay; this is a suburb of the city of Montreal. This individual wrote a thoughtful four-page analysis as an Albertan looking at Quebec and as a Quebecker looking west. I might say that a very large number of people who have moved to Calgary-Buffalo in the last four or five years in fact have come either from the city of Montreal or other parts of Quebec. Their perspective is fascinating, not that it's monolithic. There's a range of views expressed, but I think there's a kind of immediacy in terms of their experience that gives this whole debate a particular kind of reference maybe stronger than some others may feel.

One anonymous constituent wanted to see a renewed social contract between all of Canada and its constituents, with a stronger set of supports for universal health care and the social safety net.

The responses that I received were fascinating because for many people this was an excellent opportunity to give direction and instruction to their elected representative and through their elected representative to the government of the province of Alberta.

One woman noted that we have a crisis in health and education and no sessions, no fall session. This was an interesting theme that was reflected in many of the letters I received, Mr. Speaker. People who were anxious – in fact, I can quote another one from a resident on 26th Avenue in my constituency

How extraordinary in these times of relevant, sensitive issues, to reduce the sittings of the Legislature! The "constituency" needs more voice there for discussion, debate, decisive measures to be effective. Please! Sit more!

Mr. Speaker, there were a variety of thoughtful suggestions in

terms of what we as a province may do better. I think that many of my constituents looked at the first element, "All Canadians are equal and have rights protected by law," and identified ways that we could do far better in that respect.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in the debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I consider this an astute honour, to have the opportunity of standing in such a prestigious place as the Legislature to represent the constituents of Grande Prairie-Smoky. Son of an immigrant family who moved to Alberta in the late '20s under very difficult and very trying circumstances, I consider it the ultimate honour and privilege. I'm sure there may be others in this Legislature who've had the same or are having the same opportunity. Really, it's probably only in a country like Canada that we would have that opportunity, to represent as astute a group as what we have in the Grande Prairie-Smoky constituency.

My parents came to what were very difficult and very trying circumstances. The Depression was just at its start. They came with the clothes on their backs and had to build from there. It's a result of people like my parents, people very much like the immigrant parents of some of the others that have come to Canada and to Alberta, that we've built this great country. I think we have to really, really recognize the outstanding contributions that our forefathers have made in building the mix from all parts of the world into what is considered now the very best country in the world to live in. That is probably the ultimate, ultimate measure of success that we have to recognize as far as this country is concerned.

When my parents came here, they had a tough start. It wasn't easy. They chose to farm, which is what my father was familiar with when he left Poland. Obviously the land, though it was cheap, had to be developed. The environmental conditions were not good. The great Depression, of course, is one that we still remember. They had to manage through without any government support. At that time there was no government support for the trying circumstances that people may have had. So through their ingenuity they were able to continue to grow and continue to build and help in the development of what I consider this outstanding country.

4:40

Where are we at today? As I've mentioned before, a country that has been recognized as the best place in the world to live in three of the last four years by as astute a group as the United Nations. Certainly that in itself is something that is outstanding.

In the process of deliberations, in the process of discussions with constituents I was pleasantly surprised by the response that came forward, because indeed there was an overwhelming response for what I consider an issue critical in nature and of great importance. I haven't counted, but I understand that there is something in the area of between 500 and 600 responses. We had the opportunity of meeting twice with constituents directly to discuss this issue, and we had the opportunity of meeting the school children, in many cases the grade 6s.

To the hon. minister at that time of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, I want to thank you for your presence in speaking to the majority of our high school students in the constituency: at St. Joe's, at Grande Prairie Composite, and at Sexsmith secondary. Indeed, the minister was grilled for hours as

to the potential of this unity discussion and where it will take us and where it will lead us. It was his direction that prompted many of these responses. Certainly the questions were very legitimate, very logical questions, some questions that we ask ourselves. We were fortunate to have had the hon. minister present to help answer some of those questions, some of those concerns, because indeed we have issues to deal with, and we have to recognize the fact that these issues must be addressed and must be dealt with.

With the grade 6s I was very impressed with the schools and the staff and the teachers. Kerri Kane at St. Mary's, Marlys Moller at Swanavon school, Bonnie Countryman at Valleyview, Harry Gray, the principals, again, at the various high schools who had their students prepared for the opportunity of discussion. The questions that these grade 6s asked and the enthusiasm that was generated from these young people certainly made us all feel good about the future of Canada, of where we're going as a country, because indeed our youth is our strength, and certainly we have some very, very fine youth coming forward in the next generation that will be following.

Again, what were some of the things we heard? I think they were the common concerns of the little folk in this country, the concerns so many of us ask ourselves. That is, we like the country the way it is, but there are some changes that have to be made. What are you going to do about it? Who is going to look after that? Who is going to take charge to see that those changes happen? In fairness, again the same questions were asked at the public meetings. The same questions were asked at the high schools. The same questions were asked in the elementary schools. The same questions were often asked in the documents that people had taken time to send to us in response to our questions. Their primary concern seemed to centre around the whole notion that we have of federalism as it exists today. Their concern seemed to be, "Let's have another look at it because times are changing, times are moving, and there are some things that we have to address." I think that has to be part of our challenge as well: to work towards a better federalism, to find a way of meeting the needs of the day in a more effective manner for the constituents in this country; not just Alberta, not just Quebec, but all of the provinces of this country.

I've had the very, very wonderful opportunity of traveling all the provinces of Canada, and certainly I've always felt at home in every one of the provinces that I've been to. I can't say that I've felt that way in other parts of the world. There have been times where I was quite anxious and quite glad to get home. That has never happened when I've traveled Canada, and therefore in itself that's a true recognition of one of the strengths that we have in this country.

What did the people tell us? They said they wanted Canada to be fair and equal. They wanted Canada to be safe. They wanted Canada to understand the needs of the people. I think that's a fair request. Those are the key concerns that, when we go through these points, are addressed time and time again.

We indeed have a challenge. History, as I said, wouldn't be very kind to us if we sat idly by and let this country tear apart, and rightfully so. I think it's very critical that each and every one of us take this opportunity. It is a tremendous opportunity to reunite a country that has some differences but a country that is still the strongest and the best in the world. We're going to have to address those issues. We're going to have to sit down. We're going to have to come around the table, and certainly running away from the issue will never solve the problem. So that's the challenge that we will be facing, and I hope that we're able to do



that in a timely manner, because the people basically are expecting that. Of the people that responded, 81 percent basically supported the Calgary declaration, and I think that in itself is significant when you're looking at the volume that has come forward from our constituency.

The unity issue, of course, is one that is on the minds of all. It has been pointed out by other speakers. Certainly our Premier and the Leader of the Opposition clearly indicated that we as Albertans have a lot at stake here to keep Canada as one and as a united Canada. It may be more than just economics, which people automatically reflect on. Our whole social nature is built around – the fabric of our country is built from sea to sea. There are differences that make us unique: indeed, the fact that we've built a country, a consummate of so many other countries that have come together and are able to coexist in such a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take the opportunity of just sharing some of the views of one of the constituents, Andrew McFarland:

What it Means to me to be a Canadian. It means that I have a safe place to live in and that I have great friends. It means that I can get a good education. It means that I don't have to worry about being robbed. It means that I can get a good job, someplace to live, and indeed a safe place where there are no wars.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the responses of the constituents of Grande Prairie-Smoky. I'm very honoured and very pleased to indicate that I will be supporting the Calgary declaration.

Thank you.

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

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Premier and his colleagues for having the insight and the wisdom to write the Calgary declaration. In response over 400 of my constituents in Calgary-Cross have provided very useful and interesting commentaries through artwork, essays, letters, telephone calls, and personal meetings. They have generously provided their thoughts, feelings, and comments about my Canada, what it means to be Canadian. To all of them I extend my warmest thanks.

To make full use of my budgeted time of 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move directly to the submissions and comments of the children, the youth, the adults, and the seniors living in my riding. I'm filing 64 written submissions, with artwork from the grade five class at Guy Weadick school. Their educators Mrs. Irwin, Mrs. Kettles, and Mrs. Young encouraged the students to use their imaginations when expressing their views. I was deeply moved with their responses. Their writings are a celebration of our beautiful country and are truly a joy to read. Intertwined throughout the grade 5 submissions are words of peace and harmony, freedom, beauty, Canada geese, fresh air, our Maple Leaf, our national anthem, differences, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, friendships, and trust and respect for one another.

4:50

Grade 5 Joey Abboud summed it up when he wrote:

What it Means to be Canadian. To me being Canadian means being proud of your country even if it makes a big mistake. It means paying respect to our flag and singing our national anthem. I love being Canadian because its freedom of speech allows us to say what has to be said. It's an honour to be a Canadian, with no wars, productive learning, and best of all, anyone, of all religions, are welcome to come from all places. Being Canadian means

every morning getting up to go to school and achieving your goals, because no one can stand in your way. Sure, there's a few bugs to still work out, but that all will come in time.

How to make a perfect country: boil one cup of joy and honesty; mix four cups of peace and freedom; add a dash of love and pride; put four tablespoons of all religions, different languages, and native cultures in; bake daily; serve in 10 provinces and two territories with an honourable Prime Minister. And that's how you make a perfect country, just like my Canada.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

Mr. Martens, who is an educator at Rundle College, submitted twelve essays on the Dialogue on Unity from his grade 10 class, which I now file with the Legislature. These students thoughtfully debated the questions put forward in the discussion paper. They strongly supported the overall framework, but many were concerned about the fifth element. Mr. Martens called me to say that he had not coached his students to reject number 5 but was pleased to see the students' depth of knowledge on the unity issue. I found the essays were passionate, articulate, and written from the heart. The grade 10s wrote of freedom, diversity, respect, language, tolerance, equality, uniqueness, special recognition, protection, status, and opportunity. To paraphrase grade 10 Bruce Gatzsch, I quote.

Not all changes to the Constitution will satisfy all Canadian people. That is understandable, but one element that concerns me is the fifth point. I argue against this component because I find it contradicts what you've been trying to do in this framework. The first few components explain about equality for all Canadians and the provinces they live in, but if you give Quebec special status on language, culture, and its traditional civil law, you must give the rest of the provinces the same rights. This component might give Quebec the message that they are a higher form of people who require exclusive rights. This could tear Canada apart, with devastating effects.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Calgary-McCall and I held a joint town hall meeting, which was well attended by adults. I am submitting their comments now to the Legislature. People wrote and spoke of the values they believe are important to Canadians. These included family, freedom, safety, tolerance, equality, stable governments, justice, and peace. Their wise observations and caring concern were truly impressive. Overall, they strongly supported the framework. The groups that commented on the principles unanimously agreed with points 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7. A few of the concerns with points 3 and 5 included: diversity can create problems; being Canadian should be our focus; the word "unique" is misleading and should be defined; Quebec is equal to the other nine provinces and the two Territories; and also, there should be an acknowledgement for aboriginal people.

Mr. Speaker, I am also filing a letter from a hardworking community volunteer, Mrs. Janet Anderson, who cares deeply about her family, her community, Alberta, and Canada. Mrs. Anderson wrote:

The Dialogue on Unity was not about building rules but rather about building relationships within Canada. It acknowledged provincial and individual differences and recognized the diversity of our people as a key to our success and strength. As Canadians we must take an active role in creating that relationship. Canada is not my Canada or your Canada; it is our Canada. Unity isn't created by borders but by attitudes that will keep Canada together for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I am also filing a letter from Mr. David Picken, who is a senior that I greatly admire and respect. This wise friend told me: You know, Yvonne, Canada is a very young country; compared to the rest of a very troubled world, Canada has vast freedom and peace. Mr. Picken writes:

Nationalism is difficult to pin down because it is an essential attitude that defies definition. When Paul Henderson scored that famous goal, Canadians felt a surge of nationalism, as they did when Donovan Bailey and the four-by-100 relay team won their gold medals in Atlanta. We all know the feeling, but how do we generate and maintain it all across Canada?

He then goes on to make some suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also filing 199 written responses as well as an analytical document which highlights the statistical data and comments from these submissions. Seventy-seven percent strongly supported the framework, while another 8 percent considered it a great start.

People wrote: my Canada includes Quebec; I do not believe any one group should receive special favours; no matter what takes place, I'm still concerned that Ottawa still won't pay enough attention to the west; in Quebec the northern Cree and Inuit are also distinct, or unique; our future as a country is too precious to risk; we lose our Canada if we lose Quebec.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking for one other article I had wished to file. I can't find it, so I'll go on.

On behalf of the residents living in Calgary-Cross I strongly support the resolution that is before this Assembly. It allows for consideration of the input received from my constituents, which I have filed with the Assembly today. I am uncertain what the next step will be in the national Dialogue on Unity. It is my hope that our Premier will ask members of the Legislature to join Albertans in taking our message from this historical unity session on my Canada, what it means to be Canadian, to our fellow Canadians living in Quebec. It is also my hope that our message will be received as a gesture of friendship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS CARLSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Edmonton-Ellerslie the people who responded to the framework discussions on national unity took this issue very seriously and often were very eloquent in their comments. In total we had 158 people respond directly to the minister's office. Four responses on the questionnaire came to my office; I received another one today. In addition to that, we had about 60 people attend a town hall meeting in Mill Woods that was a joint town hall by the three MLAs who represent the 75,000 constituents there. In the town hall people came and gave us their comments one by one, but a number of them sat down and had roundtable discussions. In great detail and at great length they discussed each point in the framework and overall whether or not they would support it and gave us some very valuable comments that were then forwarded to the minister's office.

In addition to that, I visited a grade 8 class at Holy Family school, where about 30 students participated in the discussion. We had to extend that discussion for an extra hour because we couldn't get through the framework in the time allotted.

In addition to that, I spent an hour with three classes of grade 10 students at Percy Page high school, where we went through the framework item by item and got their feedback and input into it. Once again, the discussion there was very united and I think very honest in terms of what they had to say.

In addition, we had grade 10 students who are at Holy Trinity

high school – 17 of them are here today joining us – who did a very massive effort in terms of responding to the issues on unity in terms of an essay. In the essay they told us overall whether they supported the framework. They listed those points that they particularly liked. They listed those points that they had problems with. They brought forward recommendations of other issues that they felt should be or could be addressed within the framework. In addition to that, many of the students wrote a poem, drew a picture, or wrote a paragraph about what it meant to them specifically to be Canadian. I would like to thank their teachers Ms Winters and Mr. Kirylyk for taking the time and effort in their classroom to truly share with their students what it means to be Canadian and how much a part of this decision-making power they have in terms of where we go as a nation.

**5:00**

So, when you total all of that information up, 81 percent of the adults who responded supported the framework; 86 percent of the students who responded supported the framework. I think that's excellent. That's better than the provincial average. Well done. Thirteen percent of the adults did not support the framework; 9 percent of the students did not. Six percent of the adults were noncommittal or partly supported the framework, and 4 percent of the students fell into the same kind of category.

I'd like to share with the Assembly a few of the comments that capture the themes from the people who did support the framework. These particular quotes are taken right out of the students' papers. One of the students said:

Though Albertans may feel that they are dominated by central Canada and that Quebec receives special treatment, they must see that they have a distinct identity of their own that they must preserve. This can help them to be strong and unique in this country full of diversity. Alberta should support the framework so it can feel it is equal to central Canada.

Another student stated:

The framework provides equality of rights for all Canadians. It recognizes diversity, tolerance, and equality of opportunity, and provides for a co-operative system of government.

Another student:

The framework on national unity reaffirms a country that is widely respected for what we stand for and the values that we have. It states what we can be and want to be.

Those three themes capture the essence of what people said in their responses as adults and as students. I think it's very well spoken for these young students to have made that kind of participation.

They did have some concerns, however, and I would like to address those, because I think these concerns lead to areas that need to be more fully developed when the Premiers get together and here, the government in this province, in terms of dealing with some of the issues that people feel strongly about. There were two of the points in the framework that particularly concerned the people who responded to me. One was 2, when we talk about the equality of status for all of the provinces. Nineteen percent of the students who responded had a concern about this and 7 percent of the adults. This one quote is the essence of what the theme was underlying those concerns. They said that they do not believe that equality of status for all provinces is true in this particular instance. For example, this person stated:

There is alienation in the west because they are not being heard, and most Canadians feel that Quebec is given too much.

Now this wasn't a view shared by most of the people who responded, but it was a view shared by many of those who had concerns about point 2 in the framework. I think it is incumbent

upon the provincial government and the federal government to address this particular issue at some point in the future and ensure that this theme is addressed. Particularly, those people who did not support the framework in the responses I got felt that the west was alienated to some degree, and clearly it's enough of an issue that we need to work on it to show in fact that that doesn't happen in the majority of cases, that we are treated fairly and that we do have a full seat at the table. It may be just a matter of sharing that information that would help these people feel better about being a western Canadian in this proud country of Canada.

They had concerns about point 5, too. Of the people who supported the framework, 50 percent of the students were concerned about this point and 12 percent of the adults. And here were some of the comments:

Granted that Quebec does have a distinct society, giving it special privileges is contradictory to what the government is trying to achieve with all of the other points. This is of concern to me because it shows a lack of decisiveness and consistency in our system of government.

Another comment:

They are right that Quebec has a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society and their French-speaking majority, but Quebec is not the only province that is unique in many different ways. Not only Quebec, but every province should preserve their unique character and let it grow.

So once again these two comments captured the flavour of the concerns about point 5, both by those who supported the framework and by those who did not support the framework. In fact, some of those who did not support the framework said that the only reason they didn't was because of point 5. So, once again, I think it's an issue that needs to be addressed.

It's a bit disconcerting to see that 50 percent of the students who responded had problems with this particular point, and it makes me wonder why that is. Some of the reasons may be that historically the students are not taught to the same degree how important Quebec has been as a founding part of this country and taken through the whole process of what happened when we had Lower Canada and Upper Canada and moved into Confederation and the kinds of discussions that happened at that time. I'm wondering once again if the province doesn't have a role to educate people in regard to this. I think it would be good for all people to understand the history and the uniqueness.

Some of the people had concerns here that multicultural communities are not given the same kind of importance or treatment that Quebec is. Once again, I think that goes back to not understanding Quebec's role as a founding member of the country. So there's some education that needs to happen in that regard, I believe, and I would hope that the government would undertake to do that. Certainly with the kind of budget surpluses we have and the Education minister trying to make a commitment today about making sure that all needs are serviced, this would be one area that they could certainly take a look at, I think.

Of the people who did not support the framework, one person in particular had some very interesting comments that I think are very important to be shared with the Assembly. This person said that he could not support the framework at this point in time because he felt it was premature. He felt that before Alberta could be treated as an equal province we, then, had to have a provincial government that treated all of the people in the province as equals. These are his comments. I have to share these with you. This is what he said:

The provincial government has a role and responsibility to ensure that every person in this province who wants a job in fact has a job, to ensure that every person in this province has parents that

know they're going to be well taken care of in the health system when problems occur with them, that they know that their children are going to be educated to the highest possible levels of standards and that those children are going to find jobs here so they can watch their grandchildren grow.

In that context he felt that those needs had to be addressed first before he could support the framework.

Thank you for the time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak to this very important issue, whether the dominion of Canada is to remain a united country. My task today, as I see it, is to reflect what the constituents of Highwood have shared with me by referencing their responses. First, I'd like to make some comments on the framework itself and then cover the seven questions asked on the last page of this Dialogue on Unity and finally a few personal comments.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Highwood sent in nearly 700 responses, many of which had two names attached to it, and a number had more than two people's names attached to it. So without exaggeration I could say that nearly a thousand Highwood constituents took the time to express their views in the form asked.

There is overwhelming support for element 1 and equally strong support for element 2.

Element 3 received general support. However, a few people felt that perhaps as Canadians we're a bit too tolerant and tolerated some variances in the country that they didn't approve of.

Element 4 received considerable support on the aboriginal part of the issue. However, some concerns were expressed on both the French language and the multicultural references.

Element 5 received the most wide-ranging comments, from absolute support to absolute rejection, and a considerable range of interpretation and indeed qualification in between on that one.

Element 6: "If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces." Some people were concerned that this in itself was somehow attached to the constitutional issue. This element received rather widespread support, but again many people expressed what I guess I can characterize generously as a fatigue on the whole issue of constitutional change.

Finally, element 7 received support of the majority of responders from Highwood.

### 5:10

The seven questions asked of Albertans. First of all: do you support the framework? By far the large majority of Highwood residents supported the framework and listed elements 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 as being particularly worthy. What elements of the framework did you particularly like? Again, 1, 2, and 3 had wide support; 6 and 7 good support; 4 some support; and 5 received the least support and the most caveats or qualifications on the particular question. Question 3: "Are there any elements in the framework that concern you," and why? A significant number of respondents, well over 50 percent, had some level of concern with element 5, ranging from concern about what rights "unique" might convey to Quebec, and for that matter they expressed some concern that all provinces are equal and all provinces in their own special ways have unique qualities.

Question 4: "Are there any other elements that you feel should

be addressed?" This question had a lot of interesting answers, and in the report on this process that was given out to members earlier this afternoon – many of those issues were identified there, but triple E Senate, property rights, taxes, criminal justice system being frequently mentioned in this area, health care, education, national debt, de-funding abortion, return of capital punishment, control of immigration, and a whole host of other items that two or more people spoke about.

Question 5: "Do you think the interests of Albertans are reflected in this framework?" That evoked responses ranging from, "This is just designed to appease Quebec," to "This is designed to reflect Canada's interests, not Alberta's." Others applauded the pro-Canadian viewpoint of the framework, and a number of people again emphasized that all provinces were equal.

Number 6: "What does it mean to you to be a Canadian?" Well, this question undoubtedly was a treasure trove for many responders, ranging from the best country in the world, freedom, freedom to move, freedom to seek work, rule of the law. A number of new Canadians – and this is one of the things that I found particularly interesting in reading the responses – expressed great pride in their adopted country and several expressed concern that Canadian-born citizens sometimes don't appreciate what a country we have to live in.

The final question was other comments. A small minority did express that they thought it was a waste of taxpayers' money or at least a waste of their time. Many people expressed their distaste for the term "hyphenated Canadians," went on to talk about the dangers of being considered French Canadian, Norwegian Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and the like. They wanted just Canadians. One person really put this into perspective. The individual claimed to be an eighth generation Canadian with at least a dozen or more possible national origins in his ancestry, so he thought the whole exercise was unproductive and referred to those census forms that required you to have national origin. That was found by a number of people to be objectionable; they wanted to be just Canadians.

Some people wanted the cost of separation to be spelled out before another referendum was held. Some described possible separation as really like divorce or the loss of an important member of a family. Some people expressed their objection to the sign laws in Quebec. A number of people wanted or asked for

Quebec to opt in or opt out, to end the decades-long controversy of Canadian union. One person compared it to a divorce and said that it was better to end with a catastrophe than to have a catastrophe without end.

A number of people talked about what separation would mean. One person said that it would mean the Maritimes would be cut off, and yet another constituent said that in fact it wouldn't cut off the Maritimes and cited the case of the Americans who've been traveling to their state, Alaska, through Alberta, British Columbia, and Yukon and have been doing that for five or six decades so didn't really worry about separation in that context. Many of my constituents expressed their weariness over the separation issue. A number reminded us that as members we were elected to make decisions, and they encouraged us to make a decision. That's why, I guess, we're all here today.

A few personal comments I'd like to add. First and foremost, I thoroughly enjoyed reading all the responses. At first I didn't think I was going to read them all; I might read one in 10 or one in five. I just was so intrigued with them, and like any teacher who has been faced with reading a lot of essays that are repetitive, after a while you're really encouraged to keep on reading them for all of the different comments that you get. That certainly caught my attention for at least 12 hours. It did support my belief that Canadians do care about Canada, as I'm sure all hon. members do and have expressed so far today.

I thank all of those constituents for taking the time to respond. Today I've enjoyed listening to the comments of all the hon. members, and I want to particularly commend the three leaders of the parties for agreeing to this process on Dialogue on Unity.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a Canadian and will support Motion 23 before the House. I'd like to table the 600 and some odd petitions and take this opportunity to ask leave to adjourn debate at this time.

THE SPEAKER: On the motion to adjourn debate, are all members agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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