

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Monday, April 27, 1998 1:30 p.m.
Date: 98/04/27
 [The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as our members gather to bring a new week to our Assembly, we are reminded of the blessings which You have bestowed on Alberta, and we thank You for this bounty.

May we conduct ourselves in our deliberations in ways that honour You, our province, and all of its people.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 15 members of the RCMP K division. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and they are as follows: Assistant Commissioner Don McDermid, Chief Superintendent Rod MacKay, Superintendent Peter Curley, Staff Sergeant Tim Vatamaniuck, Sergeant Wayne Carroll, Sergeant Pat Harrish, Sergeant Bob McDonald, Sergeant Dennis Schaefer, Corporal Bruce Barkley, Corporal John McIntosh, Constable Dale Baumgartner, Constable Audrey Hollander, Constable Greg Gerbrandt, Constable Chris Laubman, and Constable Jeff Presley. I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by 17 Calgaryans supporting the inclusion of MS drug therapies on the Alberta Health drug benefit list.

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. With your permission I'd like to present a petition signed by 125 Albertans asking that financial support for the postsecondary system be maintained so that high-quality postsecondary education is available to young people in this province.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MS BARRETT: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd request that the petition on day cares that I introduced last Thursday be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to support quality, affordable child care options for all Alberta families, regardless of income.

We also petition the Assembly to urge the government to reverse its decision eliminating Operating Allowances to child care centres and to instead bring forth a funding formula which will enhance quality child care and keep daycare fees affordable for low income and middle income families.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 44

Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 1998

Bill 46

Securities Amendment Act, 1998

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 44, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 1998, which is a series of amendments largely consequential to changes in the federal act, and Bill 46, the Securities Amendment Act, 1998, again a number of changes and amendments which are seen as industry- and user-friendly.

I want to thank participants from the opposition in both of the areas here in looking at this material. I'm quite excited about tabling these today.

[Leave granted; Bills 44 and 46 read a first time]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

Bill 43

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1998

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the Provincial Treasurer I, too, am very excited to be introducing a bill today. That is the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

[Leave granted; Bill 43 read a first time]

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

Bill 42

Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1998

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 42, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

This is an act that deals with mandatory registration of social workers, municipal licensing of regulated professions, and the Universities Act to permit the UCC to delegate authority for professional registration to specific professional organizations.

[Leave granted; Bill 42 read a first time]

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 42 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 45
Health Professions Act

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this afternoon to introduce Bill 45, being the Health Professions Act.

This bill is the culmination of about four years of public and stakeholder consultation and will, in fact, consolidate a number of health profession acts into one, will provide for a uniform way of regulating our health professions, and will also provide for broader and more specific public input into the administration of health professional organizations.

[Leave granted; Bill 45 read a first time]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 45 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table with the Assembly today answers to written questions 19 and 57 as well as Motion for a Return 60.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table copies of the annual report for the year ended December 31, '97, of the Automobile Insurance Board. In response to questions from the opposition, I am also, as usual, delighted to table responses to Written Question 9 and orders for returns 66, 69, and 70 and also responses to written questions 71, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, and 81.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to table further information in response to questions asked during Community Development's estimates on March 12 and 18, 1998. I have forwarded these responses to the members.

1:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is copies of correspondence from one of the schools in my constituency, La Perle, wherein they were informed by Travel Alberta that information with regards to Alberta would not be provided to students unless there was a cost.

The second is a letter to the hon. Minister of Economic Development asking her to confirm why Alberta is the only province not to provide students with information on their own province.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As a consequence of a meeting of the consumer advisory board at the VRRI, Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute, in Calgary, four tablings: the first one is a letter signed by every member of the consumer advisory board describing difficulties surviving on the

current AISH pension; next, a letter from Mr. M. J. Moynihan dated April 3, 1998; a further letter from the same individual highlighting concerns with the AISH pension; and then finally an analysis of rents that people have to pay on the AISH pension and why they can't afford to survive at that rate.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, followed by Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table with the Assembly copies of the annual report of the office of the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a letter from Annette Otto requesting help in placing her mother, Anna LaBonte, who's from Morinville and who would like to be in the Youville home in St. Albert. Because of health boundary restrictions, it's questionable whether she can get in there at all.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table 33 copies of a form that's been circulated widely throughout the province. These are Albertans who want an accountable Senate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Acting Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three different tablings today. The first is copies of a brochure from the Capital health authority detailing opportunities for early intervention and head start programs. These are wonderful brochures about wonderful programs; unfortunately, their budgets are being threatened.

Second is a package of postcards, some addressed to the federal government asking for a royal commission on the privatization of health care and some addressed to the provincial government urging the government to stop Bill 37.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, five copies of an Alberta freedom of information request asking for the recent draft report on gambling addiction which was completed by Wynne Resources Ltd. but not made available to the public.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 53 visitors from Albert Lacombe school. They are grade 6 students, and they are here today accompanied by their teachers, Paddi Brown, Eva Pennycook, and Theresa Belland and two parents, Mrs. Greico and Mrs. Nielsen. They are seated in the members' gallery and I believe also in the visitors' gallery, and I'd ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Nuno Cortez. Nuno is part of a program sponsored by Investment, Trade and Tourism of Portugal and the Portuguese Ministry of Economy. The program is in celebration of Expo '98, which is being held in Lisbon from May 22 through September 22 of this year. Ninety-eight young graduates from Portugal will live and work abroad for nine months, experiencing firsthand how various countries and industries operate. Each program participant must present a report on their findings of their experience. Nuno will be working with Alberta Economic Development and other relevant departments to review ways in which Alberta and Portugal can improve their relations in the areas of trade, investment, and tourism. Alberta Economic Development has provided Nuno with office space during his work experience period in Alberta. He is a graduate in economics and is 23 years of age. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Edmonton-McClung. I apologize hon. member.

MRS. O'NEILL: I also rise today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly two groups of people again who were here at noon hour for a cheque presentation from the Wild Rose Foundation. First of all, Mr. Gene Bince and Mr. George Cassidy, representing Our Lady of Fatima Association – I would ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly; they are, I believe, in the members' gallery – and also Mrs. Ireen Slater, who is the executive director of the SAIF association in St. Albert, Stop Abuse in Families. I would ask Ireen to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure today of introducing to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 44 visitors from Our Lady of the Prairies school. There are 38 students in grade 6 here today, and they are accompanied by teachers Jane Burghardt and Aurel Ulliac and by parents Nancy Gardner, Marie Lim, Lorraine Dallin, and Anita Jansen. I would ask that they rise in the gallery and receive the welcome of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly teacher Mrs. Julia Kendal, parent helper Masuma Rahman, and 19 students from J. Percy Page high school in Mill Woods. They're in the public gallery, and with your permission I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today

to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly two very good friends from Peace River: Bill Blake and Mary Leith. They're here for meetings this afternoon and are taking the opportunity to see question period in action. I'd like to ask them to rise in the members' gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a resident of Edmonton-Whitemud, Mr. Dan Backs. If Mr. Backs would please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly, I would be grateful.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

RCMP's 125th Anniversary

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, May 23, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in conjunction with many Canadians and Albertans will mark the 125th anniversary of this world-famous police service. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and its members have long been symbols of peace and good order in Alberta's communities and on Alberta's roads and highways.

The original police force, the North-West Mounted Police, came into being on May 23, 1873. A year later they began their trek across some of the least inhabited territory in Canada to establish order in the Canadian territories. In 1874 western Canada was the frontier of this nation. The North-West Mounted Police established posts and patrols, protected aboriginal peoples from unscrupulous whiskey traders, settled disputes, and firmly established a reputation for honesty, courage, and always getting their man.

1:50

As the Canadian Pacific Railway began bringing settlers from around the world, the Mounties were there to greet them, enforce the law to the benefit of all, and ensure that essential services were available to sustain the newcomers against the hardships of frontier existence. In 1904, the year before Alberta became a province, King Edward VII gave the force the right to use the title "royal." They became the Royal North-West Mounted Police. In 1920, when the force became the national police service, they were renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As Canada has grown in population and diversity, the RCMP has adapted to ensure continuing peace and security for the residents of this nation.

The RCMP and its members have a proud history in Alberta. They were our provincial police service from 1905 to 1917 and then again from 1932 to the present. In addition they now provide policing to 65 Alberta municipalities.

On behalf of this Assembly and the citizens of Alberta I want to formally recognize this important milestone of the RCMP's 125th anniversary. They are Alberta's police service, and more importantly they are the police service for many Albertans. Their commitment to safe communities and justice for all in Alberta is contained in the three words of their motto: maintain the right.

In memory of the members of the former North-West Mounted Police, the Royal North-West Mounted Police, and today's Royal Canadian Mounted Police it gives me great pleasure on behalf of all Albertans, Mr. Speaker, to recognize May 23, 1998, as the 125th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great honour that I join the Minister of Justice in congratulating Commissioner Murray and the RCMP on the 125th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I had the privilege of serving as a supernumerary constable with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. Through this opportunity I gained respect for the organization and became familiar with the services this internationally renowned law enforcement agency provides to Canadians.

The RCMP has shown leadership in the law enforcement arena by establishing the Public Complaints Commission to oversee the organization to ensure the accountability of the RCMP to the public. They led policing agencies by recognizing the need to recruit aboriginal police members to police the many native communities they're responsible for. They were also the first police service to introduce a comprehensive cross-cultural training program to complement Canada's immigration policy.

The RCMP have and do provide services in many areas not traditionally recognized by the public as policing functions: customs and excise, immigration, security on Parliament Hill, and most recently peacekeeping duties in war-torn countries and the restructuring of policing responsibilities and the training of police members in fledgling democracies.

The women and men who serve in the RCMP risk their lives so that Canadians can feel safe in their communities. I congratulate all members of the RCMP for their dedication and commitment to the communities and law enforcement.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Lotteries and Gaming Summit

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. The government's hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil summit on gambling is over. Albertans witnessed how their government can take 200 open-minded, well-intentioned citizens and force them through a process designed to mean whatever the government wants it to. A government that rules by summit, Mr. Speaker, should be careful who it is that they call hypocrites. Now this government has decided to suppress the latest gambling report from Albertans and from summit delegates, hoping that none of us would ever know the real devastation that these machines have created. My questions today are for the minister responsible for economic development and tourism. Why did the government give delegates at the gambling summit the mandate to make decisions about VLTs but deny them the most recent information which outlines VLT devastation? Were you trying to manipulate the outcome?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, this weekend people from across the province gathered in Medicine Hat to attend a gaming summit. The focus was to look at all aspects of gaming, and this was a

scheduled review from the original document, the Lotteries Review Committee report that came out three years ago. They had a very successful summit, and I appreciate very much the people that came from across the province to participate in the summit process.

We have not received the recommendations from that summit in a formal sense. However, we have heard a number of the recommendations that people came forward with, and quite frankly I'm quite anxious to get the report from Mr. Johnson when he completes his work. As hon. members know, the chairman, Mr. Johnson, has asked that he be allowed to receive reports up till the 15th of May. As I say, we have not received all the recommendations on that, but again I do appreciate the comments that have come forward from people who are stakeholders in gaming in Alberta and people from the public who spent the weekend working together.

Insofar as the process being skewed, I think I take great exception to that, quite frankly, when people gather from across this province and have the ability to put forward their views – that may not be your views but their views – and come together with a conclusion and a list of recommendations that they can then present to the government for our consideration.

Insofar as the position, I will ask the hon. Minister of Community Development to supplement my answer to the rest of your question.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite tabled a draft report on the prevalence study done by Wynne Resources earlier, and the key word is "draft." This is no secret. This report was begun some time ago. AADAC is working on an 18-month research project. This is part of that.

I can tell you that AADAC commissioned this part of this report. They expected to get the first draft of it in December. Frankly, it was late. It came in late February, as I understand it. Unfortunately, it had a number of data errors in it and had to be returned, and AADAC is concluding its work on it.

I'd like to table with the Legislature, just to clear the air on this, a memo from Brian Kearns, executive director of program services at AADAC, which is dated August 27, 1997, that was sent to a staff member in my department, and it gives an update. It says that on Monday, May 5, 1997, the SPC was briefed on this. The study was approved to proceed.

AADAC and AGLC discussed this, as noted in an attached critical path, which I'll table as well. Data collection was to start in September, draft report by December – as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, that was late; didn't happen – and a final report, release to be determined with the minister's office but the work expected to be completed by November 30, 1998. This is August of '97, before we knew there was going to be a summit or any of these other things.

The critical path that I am tabling – and this is important, because as the hon. Minister of Economic Development said, it was a good gaming summit. Because the information that came out was perhaps not what the opposition wanted to hear, this discussion on suppressing information is not appropriate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, hon. acting leader.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks. So it's work in progress.

MRS. McCLELLAN: You're out of line again.

MR. SAPERS: The Minister of Community Development says that I'm out of line again. Well, I think it's Albertans that want the information, Mr. Speaker, and we'll find out just who's out of line and who isn't.

Now, given that draft reports and even draft legislation get tabled from time to time in this Assembly, why wouldn't the government release the report, given that time line, given the advance work? Isn't it true that the only reason that report wasn't released, the reason why it's suppressed, is because the contents will lead to an unstoppable backlash?

2:00

MRS. McCLELLAN: I just spent some time – and perhaps this is one of the problems. We have some preset mind-sets. We have some predetermined questions, and despite the answers, we will proceed. Mr. Speaker, I pointed out that the draft report did come to us. I also pointed out that it was fraught with data errors. So unlike what the opposition is suggesting, that we put out information fraught with errors, which has happened from time to time as late as last Thursday, AADAC believes that the integrity of their information is paramount. There is no thought to suppressing this information. The last prevalence document was released when it was concluded, and this one will be too. The information that was taken to that conference was excerpted from a variety of areas. I can assure you the information that came from this government was as accurate as it possibly could be, and we will continue to present to the people of Alberta accurate information.

MR. SAPERS: Yeah, we're looking forward to some of that accurate information, Mr. Speaker.

Isn't it interesting how the report is discredited before they pay for it?

My question is to the minister responsible. Why does this minister continue to treat Albertans like children by hiding all the scary bits about VLTs? Doesn't the minister think that Albertans can make up their own minds about the report?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member obviously doesn't pay much attention in this House. I have filed in this session . . . [interjections] You know, Mr. Speaker, they ask the question, but they don't want to hear the answer. Now, I will provide the answer to the question if they will in fact for once listen to the information.

I come forward in this House each year, as previous ministers have, with the spending framework under gaming and lotteries. I bring that forward. In fact, the lottery fund is debated on a separate day all to itself, which provides the ability for hon. members to ask questions. This year I filed in this House, vis-à-vis the Premier's filing, a copy of all the information on dollars spent in every community in this province by constituency so they wouldn't have to look too far for the information. We have gone through a process in this House of providing data to any group that has asked for data. In preparing for this summit, we went . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, the chitter-chatter is carrying on.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, the Speaker does not want to appear to either agree or disagree with the hon. minister, but in fact the chattering is getting loud enough that I am unable to hear the final words of the Minister of Economic Development. Or have you completed?

Lotteries and Gaming Summit

(continued)

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I take exception to the fact that we have not provided information. In preparing for this summit, we asked: "What information could we possibly have that people would need? Let's give them everything we have from the Alberta gaming and liquor assessment – their data, their research, their background, how gaming is handled in the province, the regulations, the funding – all of the processes that we go through in gaming, so this summit would have as much data as we had available to give them." In fact we did exactly that. Quite frankly, I take great exception to this group over here snivelling and whining when they had two members down there to observe . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. We now have set a record, almost 11 minutes for that exchange. Hopefully we'll be a little more brief in the questions and the answers.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A report full of errors because the government doesn't agree with its content.

My questions today are directed to the minister of lotteries. Secret reports, buried reports – call them what you want – a summit that goes nowhere. I knew that this government was addicted to VLT revenues, but to go to the extent that they would actually delay a report till after the fall civic elections to keep their cash cow alive. To the minister: why does the minister need eight months before this report is released, whether it be a draft or whatever? Is it to revamp it – what's the expression? – doctor it?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about a report that's fraught with error, you ought to read this report that the hon. member handed me last Thursday night as I left this Legislature. I took this home this weekend and went through this report twice. You want to talk about fraught with error? This is nonsense, absolute nonsense.

Mr. Speaker, I take great exception. He talks about holding back information. First of all, he doesn't even realize that . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. acting leader, I don't think it was your question. I think it's the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford's. We are forgetting our manners.

Succinctly, please, hon. member.

MRS. BLACK: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would hope by now that the hon. member realizes that AADAC does not report through this ministry, number one. Please get that straight. Please get that straight. I am indeed responsible for the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. I am responsible for that, but AADAC does not report through this ministry. In your own report please make the corrections before you put it out to the public.

I will ask the Minister of Community Development to supplement my answer.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will listen one more time. The report that they are discussing was issued in late February to AADAC. It was returned because there were some data errors in it. Let me make that clear: just data errors; it was returned.

Mr. Speaker, the CEO of AADAC has not seen this report. The chairman of AADAC has not seen this report. If you read the time lines, the board and chairman are to deal with this in June. The minister has not seen this report, so I have no report to share. As I said, when we release this, we will release it on the grounds that it has the most accurate information possible for the people of this province. And we will release this report.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, again to the minister. Our reports are factual. We don't need seven, eight months to doctor them.

To the minister: will the minister confirm that the report in question, the buried report, documents an alarming increase in gambling addiction as a result of the 6,000 VLTs? Will you have the courage to admit that?

MRS. BLACK: I'll say this very slowly, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. member's benefit. I don't have the report. I have not seen the report. The report that is being prepared under this 18-month review will go through the AADAC process filed with the Minister of Community Development. Do you understand? AADAC does not report through this minister. I have not seen that information.

On the second part of the question, Mr. Speaker, he said that his report was factual. Well, I hate to break it to you, but again the community facility enhancement program comes under the administration of my area. Okay? Not under the Minister of Community Development. We can go through: detail, detail. Well, let's get the detail right once and for all, because this member is putting out information that is absolutely fraught with error. In fact, if you take the time to read this report, you can realize how bad the research really is.

Once again, I think the Minister of Community Development might want to supplement.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can do to offer to help the hon. member is to offer him the opportunity to read the memo, which as I said is dated August 27, 1997, regarding this report. I did also table a critical time path. This was prepared December 2, 1997, before the gambling summit was thought of, before a lot of this discussion was occurring. As I've already said, the report arrived late by a little over two months, so that has set the timetable back. But between October 1 to December 15 they were to do the data analysis and report writing. December 15, draft report to AADAC: didn't happen. So I'm hoping they can get up on the timetables and catch that time up. June 1998, the AADAC board review of this report: it will be the first time they've seen it. Then on October 1, 1998, it should come to my office.

2:10

Mr. Speaker, I can't comment on what is in this report, nor would I, as a draft. I don't think it's fair to the researchers, first of all, who have had an opportunity to complete that report now. And clearly, a draft is a draft. I haven't seen it. I can't doctor it. I don't know what's in it. Frankly, I don't think I'll spend the time reading the article that the hon. Opposition Leader tabled because, again, it's a draft. It's being corrected by the researcher, not by this government.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Final supplemental then. Hopefully, this doesn't plow over the ground of the last five questions.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for lotteries: if the biggest mistake I made was a technical one such as naming the wrong ministry, if that's the biggest mistake I made in life, I got 'er made.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member for Edmonton-Rutherford, the minister is not in a position to answer a question based on your report.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, now that the summit has failed to reach a conclusion in terms of the VLT issue, what are the government's plans to address the question of VLTs? What plans do you have now?

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Speaker, this was a gaming summit, so it dealt with all aspects of gaming in this province, whether that was casinos, bingos, raffles, horse racing, pull tickets, VLTs. All of those issues were dealt with in the gaming summit. So as long as you understand that, then we have a place to start.

The process we put in place was to have people from stakeholder groups plus Albertans come forward and talk about the future of gaming in the province. A number of recommendations are coming forward from the summit, from the people, not the politicians. We've seen some of the original summaries of those recommendations, but we're anxious to see the report from Mr. Johnson. He has asked that this information continue to flow in, some of it in written form, through to May 15. I think, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that it would be wrong for us to prejudge the report that Mr. Johnson is going to file with us so we can review the recommendations. I am, quite frankly, hopeful that some of the recommendations will have enough background so that I can see where all the groups were coming from and what their thoughts were. I'm very anxious to see this as this forms a major part of our commitment to the three-year review for gaming in Alberta.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the Minister of Community Development to supplement my answer. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The next main question. [interjection] Order. Hon. Government House Leader, order.

The third main question from the opposition. This one only took nearly 10 minutes; hopefully this next one will be faster.

The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been fascinating to hear about the government's newfound interest in veracity and accuracy.

Private Health Services

MR. DICKSON: The outpouring of concern and opposition that we've seen to Bill 37, the government's health privatization bill, clearly caught the government by surprise. It now appears likely that it will be left on the Order Paper when the Legislature breaks for the summer. My question this afternoon is to the Acting Premier. Just what has this government learned from the debate over Bill 37? What specific steps will the government now take

to ensure a broad public debate about the important issues at stake?

MR. DAY: Well, that's actually two questions, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to address them both. First of all, what have we learned? Well, we've learned that there's support for this bill, and we've also learned that there are people who are concerned about it. The other night there were about, I'd say, close to a hundred people in the galleries here that were interested in that particular bill. We know that there are two sides to the issue, as there is with most legislation.

As far as the second question, because there were two: what steps? Well, as with all legislation we continue to debate it here in the Assembly, we continue to listen to what people are saying, and we continue to be interested to see this whole matter move forward.

Those are the two questions that were asked.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, given what the Acting Premier has just told us, will the government commit to public hearings and a discussion guide with all-party input so that both sides of the question, as described by the Provincial Treasurer, can be fully aired before the bill comes back into the House?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's sometimes difficult to maintain a focus with all the chirping from the Spice Girls over there, and I'm just trying to remain on track here.

It's very clear that this is an open and public debate. We're hearing from people on both sides of the issue and will continue to do that. As a matter of fact for the few people that have called me on it, I've made available information related to the bill. All hardworking MLAs are doing that, and the discussion continues.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, my final question ought to be the simplest one to answer. Will the government commit this afternoon to increased funding for our public health care system to an adequate level to ensure that there will simply be no need for private hospitals?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, we continue to send the message out that annually we have increased the amount of funding to health care in this province, and we've done that very significantly, whether it's to the RHAs or to the doctors themselves on their fee package. We are absolutely committed to the highest level of service for Albertans. We believe that's being received. There are always improvements that need to be made in the system, and we'll continue to look at that. But let's make it clear that there have been and there will continue to be resources provided to health care for all Albertans that will continue to meet the needs.

Institutional Confinement and Sexual Sterilization Compensation

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, March 10, 1998, will probably go down as one of Alberta's darkest political days in history: the day the government introduced Bill 26. The government did the right thing by running away from the bill the next day. Over the course of the next week or so a lot of negotiations went on with the victims of unnecessary incarceration and wrongful sterilization, the result of which was to have been that those people, a block of 500 of them, were going to be offered an initial settlement by the government by the end of March. Today is April 27. I would like to find out from the Justice minister on behalf of that

block of 500, many of whom I have met with in the last two weeks: why has there been no offer of a settlement?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've instructed counsel to work as quickly as possible on this issue. In fact I'm expecting to have a proposal to review from counsel and from the department within probably the next 10 days. I will then have to take that through the usual course within government and hopefully have a proposal to them shortly.

This is a very complex issue, and we're trying to evaluate each of the claims individually and fairly. The member is right; we want to do the right thing. That's why it is unfortunately taking a little longer than we thought. However, there is still a commitment on behalf of this government to resolve this as quickly as possible.

2:20

MS BARRETT: Well, no question: justice delayed is justice denied. They're not getting younger, Mr. Speaker.

My supplementary question to the minister is this: in the proposal that he will give to that block of 500 victims, is he prepared to offer an initial amount subject to ratification by the group and then have the additional funding to be given out later if there is a contest? They're tired of waiting, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, these are complex negotiations. It would be entirely inappropriate for me to disclose the nature of the discussions that are being undertaken at this point in time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

MS BARRETT: No. It's okay.

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

Canadian Airlines International Ltd.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. As everyone knows, Canadian Airlines has a loan guarantee with the Alberta government. What is the background on this loan?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in 1992 the airline in question was experiencing no small amount of financial difficulty. They approached the government and asked for a loan guarantee. They actually also approached the federal government and the B.C. government. In 1992 we did agree to that loan guarantee. We wouldn't do that today because we're out of that business, but we did that in 1992. The deal was supposed to be that Canadian would in fact make payments of \$10 million every quarter.

In 1996 they came back, and they said that they were continuing to have difficulties financially and could there be an extension granted for those payments. All levels of government agreed to that, so the first payment was to begin in October of '98, and the succession of payments then was to be completed by January 1, 2000. That was what was agreed on in June of '96.

MR. HLADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the media reported that in 1997 the airline reported its first annual profit in 10 years. Given this, could the Provincial Treasurer please tell us what the status of the loan guarantee is?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker by the close of business day last Friday, the airlines were able to successfully complete a refinancing package through a \$175 million U.S. bond issue. What that means and the good news there for Albertans and for the government is that the Alberta government now has been paid out in full on the loan guarantee. There is no more liability, taxpayers are off the hook, and we made money on the deal.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental the Provincial Treasurer may have already answered, but will the province lose any money on this in any form?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, there is no loss of money on the deal. As a matter of fact, the province made money. Approximately \$478,000 was the fee that was charged to have the guarantee in place. So money was made on the deal.

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

Maintenance Enforcement

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most if not all of the MLAs in this Assembly have a caseload of maintenance enforcement files, so we're all well aware that this program is not working the way it should. The number of new files is steadily increasing, while the number of MEP staff has been steadily decreasing. A year ago a task force was struck to study the maintenance enforcement program. To the Minister of Justice: given that a common concern is the delay in processing maintenance cheques, can the minister explain why it takes the government three weeks to transfer money to a maintenance recipient while the bank usually takes two days, five days at the most?

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, quite simply what happens is that when the maintenance enforcement program receives a cheque, it will not disburse the moneys until that cheque has cleared, to ensure that there are sufficient funds to cover the cheque from the party who is obligated to pay the maintenance.

MS BLAKEMAN: That usually takes two days. Fine.

To the same minister: given that the review committee was scheduled to report at the end of 1997 and it is now the end of April 1998, where is that report?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons the report has not been forthcoming is that the committee actually asked for an extension of time to allow for further public input. There was an extensive questionnaire and survey sent out to both debtors and creditors in the program. We wanted to have those responses back prior to the final report coming out. But I understand that it will be available shortly. Of course I want to read that first, and I have given a commitment, I believe, before that once I've had a chance to review the report, it will be released.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government spent over \$50,000 on a report on the maintenance enforcement program by KPMG consultants in 1995, could the minister share with us how many more reviews are going to be necessary before we see improvements to this program?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker there was improvement as a result of the KPMG study. However, I would hope that the study which will be forthcoming will be extensive, will have a number of recommendations, and hopefully will be the final time that we take an in-depth look at this. We need to understand and appreciate that this is a very complex issue. What's tied into the issue of maintenance, of course, are a number of debtors who are noncustodial parents who also raise the issue of access. We're taking a look at that in conjunction with the maintenance side.

So this review is much more extensive than that conducted by KPMG. That was an internal audit. We've gone out to the general public to seek their input. We're looking at the access issue. We're trying to collate the responses. I understand and appreciate all the work that the committee has done to date. I know they are working hard to put the report together as quickly as possible.

MRS. SOETAERT: How about some action?

MR. HAVELOCK: They ask for action. Well, Mr. Speaker, there will be action, but first let's have the report. Give us a chance to review it, and then we'll implement the changes.

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

Film and Television Industry

MRS. BURGEMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday evening there was a presentation of the Alberta motion picture industry awards in the city of Edmonton, and some questions were directed to the Provincial Treasurer with respect to the status of the issues of the film industry. Given that this province has supported our economic interests with respect to energy and they've supported our economic interests with respect to our physicians, I'm very concerned that this province is neglecting to deal with our young people who are trained in this province in the film and television industry and must leave the province for work. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. What is the status of the request that was proposed to the standing policy committee last September by the film industry?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I should say, for those who were in attendance and for the thousands who watched live on television, the presentation ceremonies were an exciting time, and the standard of excellence of the craft in terms of the motion picture industry in Alberta is something to be noted.

The process that's in place now: there is a committee of individuals from across a number of sectors looking at issues related to corporate tax, to research and development incentives, to knowledge-based incentives. Is there a possibility of having some of these implemented? That particular committee will be coming out with a report, hopefully by the end of this month or maybe into the first week or two in May, which will be considered further by the Alberta Economic Development Authority, and we'd like to get some kind of a message out, especially to the film industry. If there is something that can be done, they need to know because there are investment positions. [interjections] Now it's the Spice Boys over there.

MRS. BURGNER: Again, to the Provincial Treasurer: will the Provincial Treasurer commit to giving due consideration to the educational and economic impacts of this knowledge-based economy and not limit the discussions and his review simply to cultural considerations?

MR. DAY: I think the point's valid. There's far more at stake here than simply cultural considerations. In fact, people who are involved in this industry are involved in business, and some of it is very big business, lots of dollars being generated, lots of jobs. In fact, it's true that if you look at the order and the list of presentations that were made on Saturday, you can see that there is a significant educational component to this industry. So all of those areas are being given consideration, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. BURGNER: My final question: in this decision-making process will the Provincial Treasurer commit that a full discussion will be held by caucus and no unilateral decision on this will be made without our discussion?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's been widespread discussion already across all sectors that are involved in terms of tax credits and film industry and knowledge-based industry. Certainly, every MLA in our caucus has input on this issue and will continue to do so. Whatever the decision is, it will not be unilateral in any way. It will be as a result of all of this input that we've received from across the province and which will be deliberated on by our caucus.

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

2:30

Family Court Proposal

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta we have over 20 statutes dealing with family law issues: divorce, custody, maintenance, alimony, division of property, and even domestic abuse. Many are dealt with in the Provincial Court and many in the Court of Queen's Bench. Under a unified family court all of these matters could be dealt with by one court. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. Why isn't Alberta one of the provinces that is currently participating with the federal government to develop a unified family court?

MR. HAVELOCK: Actually, Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. However, before we would go to the federal government, we would certainly want to review that issue with both the Provincial Court and the Court of Queen's Bench to determine what their preference would be. I have had very preliminary discussions with the deputy on this and many other issues relating to family and youth court. Actually, it may be a good issue, if the member would like to, to bring up during the Justice Summit. She is a member of the public consultation committee, and I think it would be a good topic to be reviewed at that time. Certainly there may well be some merit in pursuing it, and I would welcome her further comments in that regard.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the Minister of Justice has promised to improve families' access to justice, will you commit to taking part in the unified family court program in

the future so that Albertans can have all of their family matters resolved by just one application to the court? Don't leave it to the summit. You're responsible for it.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that as the Minister of Justice I ultimately am responsible. However, based on some of the discussion which has gone on in this House in the last while regarding consultation, I think it would be very important for this matter to be reviewed within the context of the Justice Summit. Certainly, if there is anything that we can participate in at this time and further the discussion, I'm not adverse to that either.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why won't this Minister of Justice just commit to a process that would put children and families first and reduce time to trial for family matters? That's what a unified family court would do.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have committed to a process. I've indicated already that this would be an issue which would be appropriate for the Justice Summit. If there is any other way which we can participate with the federal government in looking at this, certainly we'd be happy to be a participant. If the courts themselves wish to discuss the issue at any length, I'm certainly available to do that also. So we're not in any way holding this up. The idea has some merit. It needs to be looked at carefully. I think it would take quite some time to implement also, because we would want to ensure that all parties who have a stake and an interest, including the general public, would have an opportunity for input.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Maple Leaf Foods Inc.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and others are inquiring regarding the future of the Maple Leaf packing plant. They drive by and still see some steam escaping in some areas of the plant and transport trucks backed up to the loading docks, and all that seems to be missing are some farm trucks hauling hogs. My questions are all to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. Could the minister tell this Assembly what Maple Leaf is still doing there and when they will be vacating the site?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maple Leaf is still on the site. That is correct. They are there removing the equipment which they purchased from Burns in the lease transfer, which goes back quite some number of years and has been addressed in this House on several occasions. Their lease will terminate Thursday evening, I believe, at which point we would in all likelihood give them a day or two of grace to remove whatever they might have left. However, I might point out that a part of their obligation is that they are responsible for any possible environmental contamination that may have occurred on that site from 1994 until the current date, which means that we would be determining if there is any contamination that they are

responsible for, and then obviously they would have access to the site to clean up whatever they've left behind.

So in answer to your question, hon. member, Maple Leaf's lease on the buildings expires on Thursday. They should be gone by then. Their obligations may not be finished for about another year after. Hopefully, they're finished on Thursday.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister tell this Assembly what his department's plans are for the site and the buildings?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Yes, I'd be glad to. As most people are aware, that particular site is a fairly large one. It covers some 45 acres, half of which have been utilized by plant operations over the years and the other half of which has not been used, and most people are probably not aware that it in fact belonged to it. We have had preliminary discussions with the city on the site, and through the course of those discussions, we've also made a commitment to the city that we would remove whatever buildings they felt were not appropriate to be left behind.

Most members know the first buildings were put up in 1908, and I believe the last ones were about 1982. Some of the buildings, two specifically, may be of some value. So what we'll be doing with the city is they'll be determining which buildings will be left behind, and after that is done, we would endeavour to clean up the site and ensure that what the city receives is a site that is clean and to their liking.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister tell this Assembly if there is anything else that could hold up or change his department's plans for the site?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Well, currently there are a couple of discussions via the city on potential buyers, and until those are resolved, neither the city nor ourselves will know exactly what could be done from there. I would expect that once the issues are all cleared away, given the normal course of events, we would have to go to public tender and so on to get the work done. Other than that I don't believe that I can foresee any possibility of delay at this point other than the normal permitting and tendering process.

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

Employment Standards

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Labour's review of employment standards and regulations is very important for working Albertans. These regulations are a guide for over 70 percent of the province's workforce. Some of these regulations, or schemes of employment as they're called, are nothing more than subsidies to big business. My first question this afternoon is to the Minister of Labour. How many of these cumbersome Tory-blue questionnaires were returned to your department from across the province?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish House protocol would allow me to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, who serves as chairman of the regulatory review committee, a committee that we deem sufficiently important to be able to position more parliamentary, legislative resources onto with the participation of the Member for Calgary-Fort – he attends weekly meetings. In each weekly meeting they update the number of questionnaires that have come back. They update the number of responses, they update the number of responses by standard industry category, and they indicate to management just where we are in terms of the response. As a matter of fact, I can safely say that the review of employment standards regulation throughout the province of Alberta has been a lively one. It's been animated. We've had responses from community groups. We've had responses from church groups. I've been out to a couple of high schools. We've had good responses from those who collect the minimum wage.

MR. LUND: What did they say?

MR. SMITH: Well, that's a very good question, Member for Rocky Mountain House. I want to answer this question because it's very important. Mr. Speaker, in one school, 80 people sitting in the audience, I asked the audience, "How many of you work?" About half of them raised their hands. Of the 40 I said, "How many of you now make the minimum legislated wage in Alberta today?" Surprisingly enough, only two people raised their hands.

As the member talks about how many employment standards questionnaires were returned to this office, my understanding as of the last week – as he puts out, he calls it Tory blue. If the member had any experience in the printing industry, he would realize that is actually what they call IBM process blue. [interjections] So on this blue document . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

2:40

MR. SMITH: Thank you. Of the 7,400 packages that were sent out as well as packages sent out – the Member for West Yellowhead actually took copies out himself . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Big blue and Tory blue: there is a difference.

How much of an increase is the minister planning on making in the minimum wage in this province? How much are you going to increase the wage? Tell us that.

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to answer both of the questions that were brought up in that. One, the difference between Tory blue and big blue is simply spelling on the front end, I would guess. I guess the only person who is really blue here would be the former leader of the Liberal opposition, from when he had 32 seats going out and 18 coming back. That would make me blue.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I want to ensure that this minister does not do is to presuppose the opinion of Albertans, so we are not making comments on the change in the minimum wage. We are going forward, and we will go forward to a public presentation to the standing policy committee, just as we went forward to a standing policy committee public presentation that

talked about the issues at hand, about the people who are making minimum wage, of which there are about 2 percent in this workforce of 1.5 million people. Of that 2 percent, 1 percent make more than minimum wage through gratuities. So we know it's not a large number, but we know it's an important number to this government.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question this afternoon is also to the Minister of Labour. Are you going to eliminate the schemes of employment, these schemes that you regulate through your department which are nothing more than subsidies to big business, to your big-shot friends? Are you going to eliminate those?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let's have a question that doesn't have its own answer.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, could I just ask for a little point of clarification on his last question?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think it was clear enough.

MR. SMITH: Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, the member refers to subsidies. In fact, there has been a great deal of work done by the province of Alberta and the province of B.C. on being able to harmonize employment standards so that in the oil industry Albertans who have been involved in the industry, which I myself have been involved in for over 20 years, are able to work completely and able to work in a cross-border position. In fact, I see no evidence at all in the analysis, no evidence at all at this point that would indicate there is any subsidy being driven by regulations by this government.

Recognitions

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have a number of recognitions today. They will be in the following order: the hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and finally the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

We'll start with the hon. Member for St. Albert. Sorry, hon. member. Because there's such an exodus, we'll just take a 30-second, 10-second, whatever, break. Hon. members may excuse themselves, and then we'll start recognitions.

Telus Leaders of Tomorrow

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday evening the Volunteer Centre of Edmonton hosted a celebration of leadership to honour volunteers and volunteer organizations. Four young volunteers from the Edmonton area were presented with the Telus leaders of tomorrow award to recognize their volunteer service to their community. They are Ariana Daniel, a grade 12 student at Harry Ainlay high school who is an active member of her school's students union and the Girl Guides of Canada; 15 year old Katie Wier, who helps grade 1 students at Baturyn school with their reading practice, spends time with a schoolmate who has a disability, and is co-captain of the safety

patrol; Kim Nakatsui, a 14-year-old student at Vernon Barford school who helped organize a student youth conference and is a volunteer fund-raiser for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and Habitat for Humanity; and finally, Theresa Gallagher, a Grant MacEwan Community College student who volunteers extensively. I'd like to congratulate all of these four outstanding students.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Lois Hole

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to recognize Lois Hole and congratulate her on her appointment as chancellor of the University of Alberta. Lois is a very successful entrepreneur and businesswoman who is famous for her books and knowledge of gardening. She makes everyone she meets feel important, and her generosity is well known throughout St. Albert and Edmonton.

Lois Hole values public education and is a strong advocate for it, as witnessed by her years of service on two public school boards. She is full of wisdom and common sense, and her down-to-earth approach will ensure she doesn't get sidetracked by bureaucracy but will get to the root causes of problems.

The chancellor is the head of the university, but I know that she will be far more than a ceremonial figurehead. She is concerned that many young people cannot afford to attend university and has already announced that she wants to start a new campaign to get additional scholarships and bursaries for students.

I commend those who selected her for her ability to communicate and know she will form an excellent two-way link between the university and the community. On behalf of my fellow MLAs I wish her great success in her new role as chancellor of the University of Alberta.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Film and Television Industry

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta motion picture industry celebrated their industry awards on Saturday night in Edmonton. The Alberta advantage is poised to benefit from this industry and all they have to offer in the economic climate that they bring.

Mr. Speaker, regrettably, the lack of a level playing field in this country has created a situation which compromises our education programs that are aligned with this industry and unfortunately sends our young people and our talented technologists out of this province, not to return, not for a long, long time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm urging this government to recognize that the economic climate and the strength of the industry will benefit if we can make a commitment to support the industry on our terms, not with a tax credit that sets them up in a unique way but recognizing in the knowledge-based economy the skill level they bring, keeping our young people employed in the province, maximizing our postsecondary institutions. I urge each member of this Assembly to support this industry as they ask for this consideration.

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

Robert Hammel

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute Robert Hammel, a constituent of mine who was recently chosen for the 1998 cadet honour band for the prairie region. Robert has been a cadet for about six years and is now a senior member of the 504 Blatchford Field Royal Canadian air cadet squadron. He's an outstanding trombone player, and I can personally attest to his excellence in that regard, having heard him play. In fact, last summer Robert was among a handful of Canadian youth chosen for a cadet exchange program in Australia, where he proudly represented his city, province, country, and his squadron. In the words of his chief superior officer, Major Howard Mar, of prairie region cadet headquarters in Winnipeg, with whom I spoke today, "Robert Hammel is a very solid young citizen of whom we can all be proud." I know his parents, Robert and Maureen Hammel, and I know they share that feeling and that endorsement, as do I.

Congratulations, Robert, and thank you for continuing the fine tradition of partnership between civilian programs and the Department of National Defence in these self-development programs for the youth of Canada. Cadet programs promote good citizenship, leadership, physical fitness, and stimulate interest in the sea, land, and air elements of the Canadian armed forces. Robert is one fine example thereof.

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

2:50 Telus Leaders of Tomorrow

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday evening the Volunteer Centre of Calgary hosted the 1998 leadership awards. These awards are held annually during National Volunteer Week. Four young volunteers from Calgary received the Telus leaders of tomorrow award in recognition of their outstanding community contributions. Sarah Rau, a grade 6 student at St. James school, leads her classmates in fund-raising to support the Alberta Children's hospital and the Calgary women's emergency centre. Jane Roy-Croft of Branton junior high school is a member of the child-friendly Calgary Youth Volunteer Corps, working with persons with disability. Ernest Manning high school student Shannon Moore has spearheaded many community projects, such as the mayor's peace heroes program. Erin Ludwig is a Mount Royal College student who volunteers with the Alberta Children's hospital, Canadian Red Cross Society, and the Children's Cottage Society. This year 30 Alberta communities participated in the leaders of tomorrow program, which is supported by the Wild Rose Foundation and Volunteer Alberta to recognize their young volunteers, Alberta's future leaders.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Drug Abuse Resistance Education

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday, April 23, I was privileged to be invited to the DARE graduation at St. Gabriel elementary school located in Edmonton-Gold Bar. DARE stands for drug abuse resistance education. It is a comprehensive prevention and education program designed to equip elementary school students with skills to recognize and resist social pressures to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

This unique program was developed in 1983 and is ably taught by Sergeant Darren Hodson of the Edmonton city police force. The DARE program has several noteworthy features. It targets elementary schoolchildren. It offers a highly structured core curriculum emphasizing a "no use" message to students. It uses uniformed law enforcement officers to conduct the class, and they serve as fine role models. DARE also represents a long-term solution to a problem which is developed over several years. It is a widely developed program internationally. This program fosters self-esteem among students and helps to build increased interpersonal and communication skills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Shannon Moore

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to recognize Shannon Moore, a grade 12 honours student at Ernest Manning high school in the constituency of Calgary-West. Shannon is a winner of the leaders of tomorrow award, senior high category, presented April 23 at the leadership awards celebration in Calgary.

Shannon is committed to the Manning leadership class, is assistant editor of the yearbook, works on the graduation committee, is a student representative on the student council, serves on the Manning partnership steering committee, and plays on the school's field hockey team. Shannon spearheaded the mayor's peace heroes program and worked on the stop the violence effort at school. She embraced the clothing bank project and developed successful working relationships with the Salvation Army and the Mustard Seed ministry. She initiated and led the secret Santa program, community cleanup, AIDS quilts, day of caring, operation Christmas child, and celebrity fund-raising fashion show. The driving force behind many successful projects, Shannon Moore walks the talk, is a tremendous benefit to her community, and a very worthy leader of tomorrow. Congratulations, Shannon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We appear to have one point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Point of Order Answers to Oral Questions

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under *Beauchesne* 409(6), which states that "a question must be within the administrative competence of the Government." This is with regard to the answer our Minister of Economic Development was giving in an exchange with my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. She tried to duck responsibility for answering these questions by stating that those . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I wonder if we could turn it up. I didn't hear, right from the beginning, the point of order. You quoted *Beauchesne*. I didn't hear what that was and some of the following. If we could turn that microphone on and up, then the chair might be able to follow this debate.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order was with regard to *Beauchesne* 409(6), page 121. It states there: A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government. The Minister to whom the question is directed is responsible to the House for his or her present Ministry. This is with regard to the Minister of Economic Development in

an exchange with my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. She tried there, Mr. Speaker, to duck her responsibilities with regard to answering the questions. We understand that she is responsible for VLTs in this province, and that was the content of the question. The report that was being asked to be presented and discussed has to do with VLTs in its content, and this is a report that was not only released to a weekend summit, but it's being delayed in its release until after municipal elections happen this fall, which we consider to be a problem. So the minister then slammed my colleague by saying that his question was misplaced in being directed to her, when clearly she's aware that his concerns are VLT focused. I would suggest that unless she has misplaced or changed her areas of administrative competence, her comments were in error earlier this afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened intently to the minister's responses to the questions, and I don't believe she stated at any time that, for example, VLTs were not her responsibility. All she was doing at that time was pointing to a report which I believe had been given to her by a member of the opposition, and she stated that in there was a factual misstatement which I believe indicated that CFEP was the responsibility of the Minister of Community Development, and that of course was an error. So I believe that's what she was referring to. I don't believe that at any time she indicated she was not responsible for gambling or gaming in this province. She indicated she was responsible with respect to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, I believe. They make decisions associated in that area.

I think what we have here is a bit of a point of clarification as opposed to a point of order. I don't recall at any time the minister trying to disavow responsibility for her portfolio in her answer.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, first of all, hon. member, the chair had some discomfort with the process of answering the question. But I think your quotation, *Beauchesne* 409(6), deals with the question, not the answer. It deals with the propriety of the question, and you're trying to move it to the propriety of the answer.

Surely the hon. minister isn't responsible for the report that she expressed an opinion upon. I think it draws, to me anyway, attention to something that's happened a number of times today and on other days. A number of gratuitous comments often lead to more debate than anything else, and the chair would take the view that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has really taken a moment to draw that attention to the government and to clarify, as the hon. Government House Leader has suggested. Hopefully it was not to extend debate.

The chair wanted to make a little bit of a comment however. We cannot always make comments about who's present and who's not, but should hon. members read *Hansard*, they might note that the first two questions took 11 and 10 minutes and the last question seven minutes. The other questions went along quite well. We had one even taking only two minutes and a number taking three and four minutes. So we did improve but let our guard down at the end.

Orders of the Day.

MR. MITCHELL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could I?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think it's a little late.

MR. MITCHELL: A point of order on *Beauchesne* 492. I think it isn't coincidental that . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, I called for Orders of the Day, and perhaps if you want to draw something to my attention, you can do so afterwards.

MR. MITCHELL: I'd like to do it now. Could I do it now? It would just take a minute. I just think there is . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair made several gratuitous comments, and perhaps that has done what he was trying to direct others not to do and has spurred another question. But I don't think there really is a point of order on the point of order and a comment by the speaker. I don't think there's a real point of order. We've called Orders of the Day, and we'll proceed.

head: **Orders of the Day**
head: **Government Bills and Orders**
head: **Second Reading**

3:00

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having entered into intensive and now completed negotiations with both opposition parties on this issue, I would request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 73(1) to permit second reading consideration of Bill 43, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.
 You have your agreement, hon. House leader.

Bill 43
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1998

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of Bill 43, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

MR. DICKSON: I just wanted to simply say that the opposition appreciates the co-operation of Mr. Pagano, particularly, in the Department of Justice, who I think has done once again a terrific job in terms of addressing a number of concerns and questions. I think that sort of effort ought to be acknowledged, and it ought to be acknowledged on the record. I wanted to thank him and his colleagues in the Department of Justice.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a second time]

Bill 38
Public Health Amendment Act, 1998

[Adjourned debate April 23: Mr. Hancock]

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 38, the Public Health Amendment Act, 1998. We have a couple of concerns about this, and I'm hoping they will be addressed. I read with interest the Minister of Health's comments on the last date this was debated, and he certainly didn't eliminate my concerns in this regard. In fact, I don't think he actually addressed many of the concerns that have been shared so far in this Legislature with him, and I do believe that almost everyone from our side of the House has spoken on this. He just talks about administrative efficiencies that have been addressed in this bill and those then improving the overall public health surveillance system.

I would say that there are some flaws in what he's proposed here, Mr. Speaker, and there are some significant flaws. I know that once this gets to committee, we will have a number of amendments to address those flaws, but knowing the way this House operates, I also know the amendments have little chance of being passed if they come from our side of the House. So I'm hoping that between now and the time this bill gets into committee, the Minister of Health will have a chance to review with some significant detail the concerns that have been brought forward by the members on this side of the House with regard to this, isolate two or three or four of the concerns we've had and address them with amendments of his own, which can be then brought into this Legislature, talked about, debated with a certainty of them being passed, and passed. We know as we get through them that there are going to be some problems with some major areas, some areas that will be very significant in terms of putting this bill in place and making it operational for the people of the province in a way that will better affect them.

I'll talk first about the Public Health Advisory and Appeal Board changes that are happening here. Section 5 really is where my concerns are. Here the bill deletes many of the duties, so the new public health appeal board will only have the duty of hearing appeals pursuant to section 4 of the act. Well, it's a little bit of a problem for us to address this change in this regard. What's really needed here in the province dealing with the health system, I believe, is a single body that can investigate problems in the health system in a more global context, Mr. Speaker. What we have right now is the Provincial Health Council, which does some of this but doesn't have any legislative power, any teeth to it so that changes can be made or enacted in a manner in which we can all address them.

We know there are lots of problems in health. It's one of the biggest problems I have in my own constituency. In fact, we just went through a session with one of my local constituents when we were on spring break here that added significant cost to the health care system. I would like to outline that as a kind of problem, as an example. If we had a universal reporting system for all flaws or problems in the process, if we could report them into that process, then surely what would happen is we would start to accumulate the kinds of numbers where we could get some kind of proactive action out of that. When you would see significant increases in cost, increases in patient frustration, illnesses, protracted stays in the hospital, or improper care after people are

let out of the hospital, if we saw a pattern developing there, Mr. Speaker, then even this government would do something about that, I'm sure. They would take some kinds of proactive measures to clean up the system in those areas, do more than just address pressure points that come to their attention, and really address the framework of the delivery of the system in a manner that would provide improved service and efficiency to the system.

This example is a very current one, and this is something that's happening all the time in the hospital. Certainly I'm at the Grey Nuns quite often visiting people who have exactly these kinds of circumstances. Here's a man who has some health concerns. He has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and he's diabetic. He's managing those things very well with his diet and a very superb exercise regime. He is not overweight. He's taking really good care of himself. He's in his mid-50s, which is an age when problems of this nature often start to develop. He's exercising two or three days in a row in his normal pattern, Mr. Speaker, and he starts to get a tightness in his chest. No pains; just a slight shortage of breath.

So he goes to the doctor, which is what he is supposed to do. His GP says to him that because he thinks he's under stress, he's got to try and get him in to see a heart specialist and go through the normal process, but it's going to be three months before he can get in to see the specialist. What he suggests that this man do is go to the emergency department of the hospital. So off he goes to emergency, and they do the stress tests on him. They find out that there is some kind of a problem there, so they admit him.

This is a small businessman. He's the sole operator of his business. He has one assistant working for him. The day he goes into the hospital, everything stops in terms of money generating in his business. He goes in on a Tuesday morning, and they keep him in there. They decide that he needs an angiogram. He's at the Grey Nuns hospital. The only places that angiograms are done in this city are at the Royal Alex or the U, so he has to go on the list. So he goes on the list. Well, he's not in a serious threat, so he's low on the list in both hospitals, Mr. Speaker. He goes all Tuesday without being sent over to one of these other hospitals.

Let me tell you the process for sending him over to the hospital. Now he's taking up a high-risk bed in the heart section of the hospital. When he goes over for the tests to the other hospital, he's got to go in an ambulance and he has to go with an attendant. Now, I don't know how much it costs to send somebody by ambulance, but it's a lot more than what it would cost the taxpayer if he could go in his own vehicle. So it costs plenty: plenty for the transportation, plenty for the IV hookup, and plenty for the attendant that's got to go with him. [interjection] This is relating to why we need an expanded role, Mr. Minister. If you can't follow my train of thought, I'll remind you.

This deals with why we need an expanded role where we have one body where all health complaints can come to, so at the end of the day what we get out of there are improvements to the system that will save this government money in an efficient fashion. What we're going to be losing, just to remind you, are duties of the board. In section 3(1) the board "shall advise the Minister on matters pertaining to the public health." That's what we'll be losing if we don't have this. So this example is very important from a cost-saving perspective, Mr. Speaker, which is the only rationale I feel I've seen over the past five years that this government makes their decisions on.

So now this fellow has waited all of Tuesday in the hospital. Wednesday comes around. They don't want to feed him anything

in the morning because they're sure that he's going to get shipped off to one of the hospitals to have this test. Well, no; Wednesday he doesn't. Thursday comes around; the same thing doesn't happen. Now we're into Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday where he's been off work. He's the only employer. The next day, Friday, is Good Friday, and all of the hospitals were running in a slowed down, holiday manner, so they were only doing emergency angiograms. Now the doctors tell him that it's probably going to be Monday before he gets in to have this procedure done. I'm there in the hospital when the doctors come in and talk to him, and he says: "I'm losing all of this business. It's a holiday weekend to spend with my family. Maybe I should go home." The doctors say: no, you should not go home because if you come off the list, you're not going to get the process done, and you are under some risk.

3:10

Now, what's the hospital cost per day for one of those beds in the cardiac unit? It's high, Mr. Speaker. It's one of the highest cost beds in the whole hospital. Now he's taking up that bed Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Monday afternoon he goes by ambulance, has the procedure done, and then comes back to the Grey Nuns by ambulance, again at a high cost. So now we have all of these days, nearly a week, where he has held up a bed when someone else who needed a bed couldn't get one and all the costs associated with doing that. What they find out is that he has two blocked arteries at 90 percent and many of them at 50 percent. Now he needs another procedure. So guess what? He goes on another waiting list. Who could believe this; right? So now he's been away from work for over a week, a small businessperson and the only breadwinner in the family, and he's off work for another two days before he can finally get in.

I phoned who we're supposed to phone for these kinds of problems. I phoned Capital health care and said to them: get this guy the tests, save some money in the system, and get him out of the hospital and back to work, where he'll be a producing member of society. They said: well, there are waiting lists; there are only so many doctors; there are only so many operating rooms. They said in essence, Mr. Speaker, that there was nothing we could do about this.

At the end of the time he was in the hospital for nine days for what really are two day-surgery procedures, when in the times before these hospital cutbacks came in, he would have been in two times for half a day each time, had the procedure done, and been back out. At that point in time they did the procedure when it was necessary. They had the adequate staff to do that.

Mr. Speaker, if we had a provincial board that we could put these kinds of complaints to and then that board could cost those complaints, we would see some major inefficiencies in this system. These guys don't like us to talk about this, but tomorrow it could be them who go on this long waiting list.

Now, his family was very upset during this process. They couldn't understand why he couldn't get the procedure that he needed when in fact it's only one hour to fix the problem that he had. That's all it would have taken, and instead we had nine days of hospital costs.

This is why I think in section 5 we need to see an amendment. We need to see an amendment that deals with two things. One would put in some kind of a collective umbrella board where all complaints and concerns can come to. So then what happens once you have all those complaints and concerns coming into one area? This board then needs the power to do the investigating of those

concerns. If they need follow-up information, they need to have the ability to do that, to see if there's a series of issues in the same area. Are there any patterns developing? What is it that needs to be processed and developed in this area that would improve the system, that would save us money in the long run and would provide more effective service to the people of this province within their health care mandate? That's what's needed in there.

Also what we need is an additional issue to be addressed, Mr. Speaker, and that's a time line for when issues come in for appeal. There needs to be some time there, maybe a month or six weeks or two months, where they can take a look at this and adjust it accordingly and discuss it so that hasty decisions aren't made, and they can see if there are any sorts of consistent patterns running throughout the concerns in the appeals that can be addressed in that regard.

So if the minister could specifically address section 5 in that regard and if we could hear from him if he is anticipating any kinds of amendments coming in, I think that would be a really good idea.

My second major concern with this bill has to do with section 8, where we're now allowing the chief medical officer to have expanded powers. Any time you give this government expanded powers, Mr. Speaker, I've got some concerns. I think we've seen some patterns that would establish why this is necessary.

We see a series of apparently unrelated items occurring this session in legislation, Mr. Speaker, that give powers to a person or a body that increase the control the government has over our lives. The one that quickly comes to mind for me in this one is that we're now combining power going to the medical officer, where in another bill that we just saw before us here in this House, we're giving power to the Minister of Health with regard to being able to dictate whether or not docs can opt out of the Alberta health care system. So we see what looks like a power grab there and now what looks like a power grab here with the chief medical officer, and the perception is that rather than having less government, which is what this government campaigns on all the time, we are into a system of where we're getting increasingly more government and where more decisions are controlled and directed by ministers or by appointees under their control. So that concerns me.

I have not seen in any of the comments that the minister has made with regard to this bill where we're going to see any sorts of reporting responsibilities or controls built into the chief medical officer's mandate, any checks and balances on the kinds of encroachments to privacy that we may see. I don't see any of that happening here. All I see is he's going to be getting more power. So for sure I think the minister needs to address that and tell us why it is they need that.

I know he just glossed over the comments here where he said that there'll be some efficiencies "administratively and logistically." Well, that doesn't answer it for me, Mr. Speaker. If we're taking away privacy from individuals and we're putting more power and control into any officer's hands, then I want to know that there are very tight responsibilities for that person in terms of reporting and in terms of checks and balances on the system to ensure that privacy is maintained at all times.

This is a huge issue out in the community. I think if people in the province knew that privacy may be a considerable concern with this section in the act, they would have a lot to say about that. I think this is enough of an issue to postpone this bill until the fall session, Mr. Speaker, when we have a chance to get out

and talk to people in the province and see how they specifically feel about a chief medical officer now having more control over information in their lives. I don't think they're going to be too happy about it. I would think that if we did a proper review, where they have the information, we would have coming back to the government, if not pulling this particular section, certainly some amendments that brought in some regulations dealing with roles and responsibilities. I know that at least if we don't see that happening with this bill now, when we come back in the spring next year we're going to be seeing regulation amendments in this regard, because the powers, as they're outlined here, seem to be far, far too wide without any checks and balances in them. So I'm wondering if he could tell us why he thought he would be doing that in the first instance and what he's going to do to put in some controls.

Once again here's a situation where we're seeing two new positions being appointed by the minister: the chief medical officer of health and the deputy chief medical officer of health. Once again here's a government that has campaigned for the last two elections on being cost efficient and cutting down and everybody has to tighten their belts and take their 5 percent and do more with less. We hear the comments ad nauseam every time someone speaks on an issue of cutbacks. On the other hand, every time we turn around, they seem to be appointing new positions here and there.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know why this is. Why do we need two new positions here when we're facing cutbacks everywhere else, when the government continually will not take responsibility for even giving back the 5 percent to those people whom they grabbed it away from back in '93? If the minister could address that, that would certainly help with my concerns about this bill. He had an opportunity. He was speaking about it, but he didn't address any of those concerns. So if he could do that, I would appreciate it.

I have a concern here in section 10. This section talks about how any medical officer of health who "reasonably believes that a person has engaged in or is engaging in" an activity that is or may be a health risk can require that the person must provide him with any information respecting the activity that the MOH asks for in his notice. Once again, why is this? Does this mean that the medical officer of health can require persons who have communicable diseases to report all the issues with regard to that in terms of partners? Do they have to report places that they've been? What about other kinds of communicable diseases like tuberculosis? Once again we've got privacy implications in and around this, Mr. Speaker, and I haven't seen them adequately addressed by the Minister of Health in this regard. So if he could do that for me, I would appreciate that. That would be certainly something that we need to take a look at.

3:20

Section 13 I also have some concerns with. I have no problem with section 11 and no problem, I don't think, with section 12, except there are some privacy implications once again here. This whole privacy issue is an issue that is a theme throughout this bill. I haven't seen the concerns addressed there, and I'm wondering why that is. What is he going to be doing about that?

Section 13 talks about requiring a laboratory to notify the medical officer of health if they've found a communicable disease. Under this bill they now have to provide a specimen to the Provincial Laboratory of Public Health. Mr. Speaker, what's the reason for this? Why do we want these contaminated samples traveling across the province? Surely there must be some method

they're thinking about putting in place here that will not have contaminated samples at risk back and forth in the province. I wouldn't want to be driving one of those trucks.

I'm out of time. I guess I'll have to come back in committee. Thank you.

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

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief in my observations about this bill at this stage. [some applause] Aw, thanks for the government applause, but you know my speeches always conform to my height, unless it's on Bill 37. You know that.

Mr. Speaker, on principle I think this is a good bill. It gives a person or persons some authority that may be required under extreme or extraordinary conditions. I note that some people have actually talked about part of the real content of this bill, which is related to the deliberate infecting of persons with communicable diseases, particularly HIV. I mean, you don't need to turn on too many newscasts to hear some of the bizarre, bizarre incidents that have happened in this country, the one to the south in particular, where controls would have been necessary, and it is for that reason that I do support this bill in principle.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

I, too, share the concern about protection of privacy though. I realize that the position being created here and the deputy position means that they have some accountability directly to the minister, which I believe is appropriate. However, I too would like to see some kind of mechanism invoked that would prevent such a person from getting trigger-happy in that job. [interjection] All right. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has already got his amendments ready to fly. Oh, in that case I suppose we should adjourn debate and go into committee; should we?

MS CARLSON: No, no, no. Carry on.

MS BARRETT: Not for too long. I think this bill would be really quite good with a couple of very minor amendments, which I think can allay people's concerns. I am curious as well, though, why the Public Health Advisory and Appeal Board would now just be the appeal board. I'm not sure that's healthy. On the other hand, I'm not sure, if that agency has been giving the minister any advice, that it's been very appropriate, particularly in terms of legalizing HRG, the legalize HRG bill, also known as Bill 37.

MR. DICKSON: Now, that's a really scary one.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, that's really scary. So who came up with that? My guess is the Fraser Institute. What do you think, Calgary-Buffalo?

MR. DICKSON: Yeah, you bet.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, he agrees. Good.

So that's the bill that's in front of this Assembly that's truly scary, Madam Speaker. This bill I think is generally developed to protect the public at large, and certainly that could be necessary under extreme or extraordinary conditions. It's for that reason

that in principle I support it and hope that a couple of minor amendments can be adopted.

Thank you.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's with great interest that I have looked through Bill 38, the Public Health Amendment Act, and also have glanced through the actual act itself, the Public Health Act, because I thought it was interesting to be able to compare the two to see what the differences were. What I thought was interesting was that there's no definition of public health in the Public Health Act. There are lots of definitions about particular bits and pieces – epidemic, infection, infectious agent, institution, community health nurse, communicable disease – but there really isn't a definition for public health. So when we look at amending an act that in fact doesn't have a definition of public health, it makes it questionable as to what is the purpose for the amendment and what is the end result of an amendment that occurs.

What we see here I believe are two things that will happen as a result of the Public Health Amendment Act. One is a cost-cutting measure, not necessarily one that will provide for better overview and better review of issues of public health. The other is a centralization of control within the Ministry of Health itself, because when you look at this particular bill, what ends up happening is that the minister is able to appoint a chief medical officer. That's a new individual that will oversee the Public Health Act, and I think you might almost want to call that chief medical officer, when you look at the controls that are put forward, the medical czar of the province.

What that medical czar actually will be doing is doing the bidding of the minister. The independence of the medical czar is gone. Because when you look at section 3, which was the section that had a board that advised the minister on matters pertaining to public health and also on request by the minister was able to do certain things – and that board was able to obtain payment of sums to obtain supplies and services in order to exercise any powers. That's all been deleted. What we have left is the chief medical officer who on behalf of the minister – so read: on direction of the minister – will monitor the health of Albertans. So we've gone from a board of, I believe, seven to 11 individuals to a board of no more than five members. We've gone from a board to one individual who will on the direction of the minister monitor the health of Albertans.

So what happens to the public health concept in the province of Alberta as a result of this particular bill? I believe what happens is that public health becomes defined by the minister and becomes defined in accordance with the finances of this province as opposed to what is best for Albertans and Albertans' health. What ends up happening when you look at some of the cost cutting that's occurred in the health care sector is that there are certain things that probably will not be investigated because the board no longer investigates. It becomes an appeal board that has lost its advisory function and its function to investigate.

In other words, when Albertans want to find out what the impact is of mothers who are let out of hospitals too early with their newborn babies, what the impact is of hospitals and hospital beds not being available across regions across Alberta, what the impact is of hospitals being shut down, what the impact is of seniors who are let out of hospital too soon and then come back

to hospital requiring emergency care, what the impact is of patients who are let out of hospital too soon, what the impact is of individuals having to wait for heart surgery too long so they become an emergency, what the impact is of the uncleanliness in the hospitals, in fact there's no one that can investigate that in this province, because this bill has taken away the ability for an independent board to in fact do that and to in fact have an appeal process as a result.

3:30

Now, is this because of the underlying philosophy of this government to privatize health care? Is it because of the underlying philosophy of this government to want to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum, keeping us as the lowest province with regard to per capita spending on health care? Is it because of this government's desire, as they have in education – and we see it in health care, and we see it in other parts of government services – to centralize and maintain control of the so-called decentralized functions throughout the province?

I don't have the answer to that, quite frankly. The only one who can answer that is the Minister of Health. I would hope that as we continue through the process of discussing the principles and reasons for this particular bill, we will in fact have some of those answers. That might make it easier to understand the reason for the Public Health Amendment Act. I know the minister has indicated that it's for administrative purposes, that again it's one of these innocuous bills that in fact has very little impact. But having watched this government work for the last five years, I tend to have a bit of trepidation when I hear about bills that are being put forward for administrative purposes only, when I don't understand the rationale for a particular bill, when a bill that's put forward in fact does not explain in its essence – there's no preamble; there's nothing here – what is meant by public health within this province.

Does public health, for instance, include smoking, the impact of smoking and secondhand smoke? Does it include drinking and the impact of drinking? Does it include the impact of gambling and the results of that on individuals, social and psychological and physical? Does it include speeding and stop lights, as the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has ventured to include, or bike helmets for that matter? If in fact we had this bill in place 10 or 15 years ago, would we have legislation in this province that deals with seat belts? Because what ends up happening is that if we cannot have an individual, separate advisory board that can advise the minister on issues of public health in the broad spectrum of the definition – and that's what I'm looking at, the broad spectrum of the definition, because there is no definition in the act that I can see – then what would the implications be?

We see and hear that the role with regard to investigation of health care complaints has been minimized, and in fact when you look at the ability of this board to have dollars provided for investigations, that is no longer there. It's only there in terms of hearing appeals. But what would be interesting to know is: is that contingent still upon the minister providing for those dollars? So if the minister has decided that this is not an issue that requires the services of persons having technical, professional, and other knowledge to assist in the hearing of appeals, can in fact the minister say that he will not provide the dollars? What kind of budget is provided for this diminished board, diminished board in terms of its abilities?

The main questions that arise out of this particular bill are: who will investigate health care complaints, who has the ability to investigate those health care complaints, who has the power to

change what is seen as a result of an investigation, and where is there the ability to appeal? When you look at the act itself, when the chief medical officer, the czar in other words, decides that he is going to assume the powers and duties of a medical officer of health or executive officer and replace that person, there doesn't seem to be any appeal process. Now, again that's no surprise given the fact that this government doesn't believe in democracy and having the ability to follow through on issues and actually questioning, which is a prime role of a democracy. But, in fact, when you see that the chief medical officer has this unilateral ability with no appeal whatsoever, again it begs the question: why is this occurring and on whose orders would it occur?

MR. DICKSON: More sloppy draftsmanship.

MS LEIBOVICI: Well, more sloppy draftsmanship; that's true.

When we look at the bits and pieces that are happening right now across the province within health care, what I believe needs to happen – and I believe my caucus colleagues have also expanded on this particular theme – is that we need to at least have the Ombudsman have the ability to investigate complaints and concerns.

Even in my own riding individuals have come to me over a number of years and indicated that they have questions with regard to the care they have received, with regard to the care loved ones have received. I can think of one particular case, at least one, where there was a distraught individual in my office whose husband had passed away, and she didn't know where to turn for answers. In fact, when I asked the Ombudsman if he was able to investigate, his reply to me was: no, he was not able to investigate. That is a huge, huge gap within our health care system right now.

Now, why would the government not want to have someone investigate the concerns of Albertans? Again, unless someone else has an idea, the only thing I can think of is that they're afraid of the truth. They're afraid that the shortfalls within the health care system will become apparent and will become public, that the shortfalls in terms of their legislative agenda will also become apparent, and that in fact the Premier and his Minister of Health have gone so far that it's now impossible, without major revamping, to change the direction of health care in Alberta.

Now, that is a depressing picture, but it is a reality that I hear over and over from constituents and from Albertans across the province. When we have an opportunity to speak out and to speak to bills with regard to health care, I think it incumbent on us as an opposition to ensure that everyone is aware of what the implications are of particular bills that come forward in this Legislative Assembly, especially given the concerns that Albertans have on health care in particular.

So if I can summarize what my concerns are with regard to this particular bill. What I see is a bill that in fact addresses some way of saving dollars in the administrative functions of the Public Health Advisory and Appeal Board, as it was formerly called but now will be renamed the public health appeal board if this bill is passed. What I see is a centralization of control by the minister as delegated to a chief medical officer of health. What I see is a lack of independence on behalf of the new chief medical officer. What I see is again a wish by this government to ensure that examples of their cost-cutting measures do not come to public light.

What I believe we would like to see in this particular piece of legislation is an expanded role, if it need be, for the Public Health

Advisory and Appeal Board but preferably for the Ombudsman to be able to investigate health care complaints, an expanded role of that Ombudsman to be able to look at all the concerns directly, not through the regional health authorities as it now stands but directly to investigate health care concerns.

3:40

What I believe we need to have within this act is the ability, again, for the appeal board, for the advisory board to be able to advise the minister on matters pertaining to public health, not just be one that acts on behalf of the minister but someone who can be independent and advise the minister, that there are dollars that are allocated to this board so they can have their function be carried out in an efficient and effective manner, that the powers, as it were, are not resting solely within the chief medical officer but rest again within a board and a larger board than five members only.

I believe that the public health of Albertans needs to be represented by a cross section across the province and that five members may not be sufficient in order to ensure that public health is looked at adequately across the province, that the mandate be enlarged in order to make it clear that public health is not just communicable diseases, that public health is not just infection, that public health in order to be true preventative public health needs to look at some of the other issues I elaborated upon earlier in my debate, that public health needs to look at those issues that are of concern to most of us in this Legislative Assembly. I've seen that through the private members' bills that have been put forward in the past by members of the government benches. In fact, if this bill is passed, my concern is that there will be no body of government that will be able to investigate, advise, and look at the broader spectrum of public health that needs to be addressed in ensuring that health care moves more towards a preventative model than an after-the-fact model of health care.

Those are my concerns, those are my suggestions, and I look forward to the rest of the debate on this particular issue. Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health has moved second reading of Bill 38, Public Health Amendment Act, 1998. Does the Assembly agree to the motion for second reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:44 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Gordon	McClellan
Black	Hancock	McFarland
Broda	Herard	Melchin

Calahasen	Hierath	Renner
Cardinal	Hlady	Shariff
Clegg	Johnson	Smith
Coutts	Kryczka	Stelmach
Day	Laing	Stevens
Doerksen	Langevin	Strang
Ducharme	Lougheed	Tarchuk
Dunford	Magnus	Thurber
Forsyth	Mar	Woloshyn
Friedel	Marz	Yankowsky
Fritz		
Against the motion:		
Blakeman	Leibovici	Paul
Carlson	Massey	Sapers
Dickson	Mitchell	Sloan
Gibbons	Olsen	Zwozdesky
Totals	For - 40	Against - 12

[Motion carried; Bill 38 read a second time]

Bill 40
Senatorial Selection Amendment Act, 1998

[Adjourned debate April 22: Mr. Day]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 40 is probably the bill that takes the cake in this House. This bill is something that does not even merit full discussion during this session. This bill addresses the need to have a Senator-in-waiting. Can you imagine? I mean, who in the world wouldn't want to have a job, have no place to go, get paid, sashay in, sashay out, and have absolutely no responsibility? [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. That is unseemly noise when we're discussing something as important as the Senate.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't imagine the rude noises coming from the other side.

Mr. Speaker, when I read that this bill was going to be introduced during this session, I had to phone a lot of my friends and constituents and say: can you believe we're discussing something that is so ridiculous as electing people to a vacancy that doesn't exist? You know, it's like the lady-in-waiting. What does a Senator-in-waiting do? What do they wear? Where do they go? What are their responsibilities? Believe it or not, these people are going to get paid.

MR. DAY: A point of order.

MS PAUL: The taxpayers of Alberta are going to pay . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

Hon. Provincial Treasurer, your citation?

Point of Order
Imputing Motives

MR. DAY: Under 23(i), in terms of allegations. Is the member

aware that in fact there is not a reference in the bill to what the person will be paid? That is not part of the element under discussion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order.

MS PAUL: Yes. He makes a very good point, and that's part of the problem with the bill.

MR. SHARIFF: On the point of order. Mr. Speaker, this bill is setting the stage for an election to occur, and I'm giving my good time to listen to the debate. To be discussing a subject or an issue that's not part of the bill is wasting everybody's time, and I hope this doesn't continue here.

Thank you.

4:00

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, parliamentary tradition holds that at the second reading stage one can enter into a broader scope. You can ask the kinds of questions that may arise from what is in the bill or what is not in the bill or what ought to be in the bill. There is a little more leeway, unlike third reading, where it's strictly related to the bill, or committee stage, where you're focusing on one particular section. So although we can hear the admonitions of various members, the hon. member is within the wide scope or limits of second reading.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, continue.

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the hon. member on the other side does take part in this debate. He doesn't stand up unless he's criticizing, so it would be rather unusual that he address some merits of a bill.

Debate Continued

MS PAUL: I know, Mr. Speaker, that talking about the Senate is serious business. If you're talking about the Senate, that's one thing. If you're talking about a vacancy that is not there, if you're talking about appointing somebody to a vacancy that has not occurred, I'm sorry, but this is way beyond any realm of possibility, any thought process on the merits of the bill. I mean, it just does not make any sense.

The current Senators are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister, and this actually only occurs when there is a vacancy. Seats become available when a Senator dies or retires at the age of 75. The appointments are almost always done in conjunction with the input of the Governor General and the Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, when you appoint somebody to a position that does not exist, I don't think it deserves a whole lot of discussion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Then sit down.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

MS PAUL: No, I won't sit down, hon. member.

There are a number of problems with this legislation. First of all, it leaves too much decision-making to the discretion of cabinet through regulations. I mean, I don't understand the so-called, quote, unquote, job description of somebody who's waiting for a position, who's nominated, being paid by Alberta taxpayers. There is indication that expenses will be absorbed, and obviously somebody is not going to be sitting in Ottawa waiting to have a place in the Senate and not being paid.

The term also of a Senate nominee should be defined in this legislation, and it is not. We have absolutely no idea what the term might be. You appoint somebody-in-waiting who's perhaps in their 30s or 40s; they may not retire till they're 75. I mean, wow, what a cushy job. I think everybody in this Assembly wouldn't mind a job like that. I don't believe that a Senate nominee should be paid, and this part of the legislation should be eliminated totally.

The performance and accountability framework also needs to be spelled out in the legislation. When you look through the bill, it's something that leaves us all with more questions than we're getting answers to.

Madam Speaker, I am not in favour of a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, should not even have come through the front door. It's like having a job but not having a job. You're getting paid while you're waiting for the vacancy in the company. It absolutely does not make any sense. The concept seems sound, but it really doesn't have much value unless there's a commitment to Senate reform at the federal level. I mean, when you talk about Senators, you have to recognize, as I said before, that the appointment is with the Governor General and the Prime Minister. When you're appointed . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You mean anointed.

MS PAUL: No, not anointed. When you're appointed a Senator, there are qualifiers of course. It is not partisan at all. We all recognize that.

Madam Speaker, it is astounding that anybody would legitimize this bill. It has absolutely no merit, no credence, no meat and potatoes. You're getting paid for something that is not conspiring. You're getting paid for sitting up in the bleachers and doing absolutely nothing. Even though it has not been stipulated in the bill exactly what the remuneration will be, I can't imagine anybody taking on a job, going to Ottawa, and not getting paid.

So I think that the question is: why are we discussing Bill 40 at this time? There are no vacancies. There is no vacancy in the near future. There are numerous bills that the Liberal Party has brought forward that need to be discussed. There are other bills that the government has brought forward that have merit, that have a lot of issues that need to be addressed for all taxpayers in this province. We do not need to have a nominee for a Senate position that doesn't exist being paid for by the taxpayers. It makes absolutely no sense.

Madam Speaker, with those comments I will conclude my discussion at this time. Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to make a few comments as well in relation to the elected Senate. The Alberta Liberals, the Official Opposition, have long been in favour of the triple E Senate and the reform that needs to come with that. In fact, I believe it was March 10, 1987, that we introduced a motion calling for a triple E Senate and overall reform. At that time 90 percent of Albertans supported an elected Senate. Let's say from the outset that the Official Opposition is on record as supporting the triple E Senate.

My concerns have been raised through the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs in many ways, but I just want to reflect a little bit on why the Senate was adopted at Confederation.

There are three reasons. Firstly, it was to follow the tradition of the British House of Lords. In the mid-1800s democracy as we know it was a fairly new concept, and some people were concerned about turning decision-making over to a group of popularly elected representatives. The second reason was that the smaller provinces agreed to join Confederation only if they were over-represented by the Senate, and let's note also that from the beginning the Senate was intended to be a regional representative body. Thirdly, the Senate was to improve legislation from a technical point of view by carefully reviewing bills passed in the House of Commons. This function at this stage currently occupies the majority of the time of our Senators that are there now.

Given that the Senate does have a purpose and does serve a function – to ensure that legislation is passed – we know also that the debates in the Senate cannot hold up any money bills at all. But they can certainly discuss other legislation, and I think that there have been examples over the past few years where the Senate was very effective in halting bills or having reviews done. I believe one of those bills was the gun control legislation, where they asked a lot more questions, and as a result there was much more public input.

4:10

I'm concerned, though, that we now have before us the Senatorial Selection Amendment Act. We all agree that the triple E Senate, standing for equal, effective, and elected representatives, is a good notion, but this particular amendment will make it possible for the government to hold elections for a Senate nominee even when, as others have said and I repeat, no vacancy exists. I have a little difficulty with that because we have a number of these amendments, and I'm surprised that in bringing this amendment forward, the Provincial Treasurer would agree to this particular amendment, given that this government purports to be fiscally responsible. In their bill they talk about the Lieutenant Governor in Council making regulations, and this bill does talk about the regulations respecting remuneration and expenses to be paid to a Senate nominee. But the problem with that is that it goes through a regulations review only by the government side, you see.

That brings me to the other issue, the Law and Regulations Committee. When we start pursuing this avenue of democracy, if you would call it that, government by regulation, I get very concerned. I would like to see this government take seriously the Law and Regulations Committee and actually have that committee work and look at the bills and the regulations that exist in many bills. This is one that is very important, and I think it should not be determined by the government of the day. It should be determined by an all-party committee, if it was going to exist. However, that doesn't mean that I support the notion of having a government-in-waiting. It's very good to see the Treasurer putting stickies on his forehead. That's great. [interjection] I can't read that; sorry.

So the cost of this proposition for the Senator-in-waiting program will be high. The money that's going to be spent – there will be money attached to this, and it will be determined through government regulation – on having somebody sit around and wait to fill a position will be enormous. I think of some programs right now, such as the early intervention program, where that money could go. Hot-lunch programs, youth justice committees, women's shelters: there are innumerable programs that this money could be spent on. So I have some real problems with the accountability aspect and thinking that this is a fiscally responsible bill.

The taxpayers carry the burden of Senators-in-waiting. If there's no vacant position, they sit around. We don't know how long they're going to sit around because that's not identified. We do know that they could sit around until they're appointed, but I think it's six years now before we get another appointment out of this province. By that time the Senator-in-waiting could have resigned, so then we have to go through another process to get another Senator-in-waiting. Or the term could expire. There appears to be a term limit that may be on here. So you could have a Senator-in-waiting who's never actually going to reach the Senate.

Let's not forget that at this stage the Prime Minister of the day along with the Governor General is responsible for appointing, and they're the ones that make the decision on who's going to get appointed to the Senate. So we may have somebody sitting here waiting to be appointed, but the decision of the day from the government of the day may be to ignore the selection in the province and move on to somebody else.

The notion of the provincial cabinet determining the duties through regulations and certainly the functions of the Senator-in-waiting does not take the politics out of the whole issue around the senatorial appointments. In order to do that at the provincial level, the all-party committee on Law and Regulations should sit, and that committee should help to determine what the function is going to be. I would wonder what the salary of the Senator-in-waiting would be if we had an ND Senator-in-waiting as opposed to a PC or Reform Senator-in-waiting or a Liberal Senator-in-waiting as opposed to a PC or Reform. I wonder what the duties and responsibilities would be, because let's not forget that these are going to be political regardless of what happens. It then leaves the government of the day still involved in the politics unless they appoint an all-party committee to determine what the role will be.

The other thing that I find very interesting is that the provincial government has taken onto itself an initiative to meet with Preston Manning, the Leader of the Official Opposition at the federal level. In his case for Senate reform – and I've only thumbed through this report – I still see no mention of a Senator-in-waiting program, that the particular Reform opposition supports the Senator-in-waiting program. So I'm just wondering. Maybe the Premier has some new information to offer us through his meetings with Preston Manning, and if he does, I would really like to know. I think it would be important for us to know whether that particular group – it seems that this government caucus is taking their direction from the Conservatives, so I would like to know whether or not they support that. At this point I don't think they do.

I also want to note a couple of Senators that are sitting right now. I'd just like to quote Senator Dan Hays from the report called the Senator Dan Hays Western Report, spring 1998. Senator Hays makes some comments on the whole issue of Senate reform. He says:

I am a strong believer in an elected Senate using the proportional representation model as I have stated many times. However, electing Senators for an indefinite term without accompanying institutional changes dealing with the distribution of Senate seats and ensuring appropriate Senate powers is not a good idea. We should not have elections just for the sake of having an election.

I think that that's something we need to think about. Are we going to, you know, have an election just to elect somebody with nobody there to take the position? I think those are some interesting words from Senator Hays.

The other issue of equal representation across this country is a

bigger issue. Maybe the proportional representation model isn't such a bad notion. We need to look at that, and we need to also make sure that we're going to get agreement, because in order to have true Senate reform, it just doesn't mean that we in this Legislature pass the Senatorial Selection Amendment Act. It means that there has to be agreement for constitutional change across this country, and that means that every province has to be aligned and has to be in agreement, which would then lead me to believe that the money we might be paying to a Senator-in-waiting may be even better spent trying to get all other provinces outside and pushing the federal government to have some substantive reform. So the resources that we're spending on a Senator-in-waiting program could be well used elsewhere.

The federal government needs to deal with reform. Like I said, it can't be just us. That means that our minister of federal and intergovernmental affairs should be pushing the issue with the Prime Minister and others. You know, I think that that's what has to happen, not these silly amendments here.

I'd like to turn to Senator Taylor, a highly respected Alberta Senator, whose wisdom should be heeded by all members of this Legislature. He's a very hardworking and fair Senator, and he thinks that the role of the Senate is a legitimate one. He talks about the Senate debates and debating the bills that come through the House of Commons. He stated that Senate

committees are usually more effective as Bills are studied after the House has clearly signalled their intention. This allows intervening groups and citizens to better focus their fire.

So anything that they're looking at they can focus through the Senate and ask questions of Senators in the Senate committees that are held around this country.

4:20

So, as I say, we'd like to see a regional balance, because that really was the intent of the Senate. Let's not forget that it is absolutely essential to reflect on the role, the history, and that not every Senator is like Andrew Thompson. Not every Senator has been that absent. We have to respect the people that are in those positions, and we have to respect the fact that there is a job to be done in the upper Chamber. It is a place to be respected. It is a place to have proportional representation, regional representation, but it's not going to be achieved through this bill.

The last comment that I would like to make. I find it quite interesting that this government would like to see this bill aligned with the municipal elections. Well, we know that the Edmonton city council has unanimously stated that they do not want senatorial elections at the same time as municipal elections, and I have to agree with them. That is their election. That is their time to reflect on what their agenda is for their cities and municipalities. It is not a time to go the way of California and have a million initiatives in a civic election.

So with that, I take my seat and leave it to somebody else to speak.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Before the chair recognizes the next speaker, I just would like to say that during this last debate it was fairly noisy in here. I have to say that it was coming from both sides of the House, so I can't point a finger at any one side. But I would remind everyone that we are in second reading. This is not Committee of the Whole. I would ask for some decorum. I realize it's 17-plus degrees outside, but I would ask that if that's how you feel, leave the Assembly and go outside and then come

back so that we can carry on with the debate and so that those that want to listen to the debate can hear it. Thank you.

I'm going to recognize the leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Debate Continued

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This has got to be the silliest bit of legislation I've ever seen. I mean, it's just flaky. You know, this government has been driven by an unprecedented zeal between 1993 and 1997 to race to the bottom in terms of supporting public programs that the public wants supported, like health care and education, because they said that they had to wrestle down the deficit and the debt. Now they want to waste Alberta taxpayers' dollars not only by conducting this silly election or set of elections, but they actually want to pay a shadow Senator to sit in the galleries, to be laughed at by the entire reporters . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not in the bill.

MS BARRETT: Well, that's the implication.

Madam Speaker, it's clear that that's what they want to do. Do you think somebody is going to run for and maybe win this nominee position, not an actual position but a nominee position, and go voluntarily to Ottawa to hang around the Senate gallery for free? If they're saying that they think somebody's going to do it for free, then obviously only rich people need apply. Correct? I mean, it's got to be one way or the other.

Madam Speaker, these guys don't want to admit it, but the implication of this legislation is that they would use valued tax dollars to send somebody, all expenses paid, to Ottawa to hang around the galleries, to be the laughing stock of the nation. To do what? With no official duties, none whatsoever, do they think the reporters would be running to this person or those persons every day when the Senate sits to get his or her opinion on what the Senate did today? You know, the Senate doesn't actually make earth-shattering decisions. The last time it did, the Mulroney government paid the biggest price of all. It went from I don't know how many seats to two over the stacking of the Senate with the Queen's aid to get the GST through. Well, this person would be laughed at just as badly at taxpayers' expense. I cannot imagine how this bill could be defensible.

You know, Madam Speaker, I did two degrees – my undergraduate degree, four years, and my graduate degree, two years – in political science and economics. I'll tell you what. I would love the opportunity to be invited to a political science class to talk about Bill 40. Believe me, it would quickly turn into the Pam Barrett comedy hour, because that's all you can say about this legislation. No amendment can save this hopeless legislation. I would implore the government members who salivate at the thought of passing this legislation to get in writing former Premier Lougheed's position. Get it in writing. I challenge you. You know what? Former Premier Lougheed had some sense of dignity. He would never engage in these kinds of shenanigans, particularly at public expense.

I don't know about the government, but I would hope they would have a collective ego and would want to protect it against the massive embarrassment that it would face if this legislation were to pass. Honestly, I have been an active political observer since the 1960s, more accelerated since 1975, since the federal Liberal government brought in the very first monetarist budget in the entire developed world. Shame on them and John Turner.

Shame indeed. That is when I got really cranked up, Madam Speaker. That's when I started watching question period federally and provincially. That's when I started reading *Hansard*; yeah, 1975. John Turner is responsible for the Pam Barrett of today. Let's put it that way; okay?

Anyway, this legislation . . . [interjection] Yes. Yes, I did. But remember: I'm a student of political science, and I was not talking about going to Ottawa on my own dollar and sitting there without being able to go out to the dry cleaners, where I worked while I put myself through university. I wouldn't be able to go and work at the dry cleaners or do as I did later, teach at Grant MacEwan. I wouldn't be able to do that because I'd be stuck in the galleries. I'd obviously be a rich person, because the government wasn't paying, which proves again the irony. Of course the government intends to pay such a person, a nominee.

This is the most ridiculous legislation I have ever seen. I challenge the government to get former Premier Lougheed's endorsement of this goofy, goofy bill in writing. In a word, Madam Speaker, this bill is flaky.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. DAY: We're withering after that last speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. member, through me, please. Thank you.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Yes. Perhaps I'll save the editorial comments that I was preparing there and move right on to speak to second reading of Bill 40, that being the Senatorial Selection Amendment Act, 1998. I might add, Madam Speaker, that as I read this through three or four times, I had some mixed feelings about what was really intended when it was crafted.

I know the sponsor of the bill, the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, to be a very intelligent and well-spoken and well-mannered individual. [interjections] In fact, while some of his colleagues may be disagreeing with my statements about him in that regard, I stand by my comments. I know this man somewhat, and I know him also as a well-educated, well-spoken lawyer who obviously knows a lot about legislation and how it applies and how it's to be interpreted and so on. So when I received this bill, I looked at it and said: probably here comes an intelligent document that will help reform the issue of senatorial selections.

4:30

Then I got into reading it. I realized that while there are some potentially good ideas here, I don't think that the bill captures the essence of what was intended with the triple E Senate, with the exception of the one point about being elected. However, that one point I stand very strongly on; I believe in an elected Senate. But I think there's a process that has to be followed, such as was followed earlier on with respect to the Hon. Stan Waters, who was elected and then eventually appointed, I believe, by the former Prime Minister, the Hon. Brian Mulroney. In this particular case I have so many questions that I don't know if I can get this all into 20 minutes, but I'm going to try to get it into even less time than that, if I can, because a lot of what I would say has already been covered by previous speakers.

Madam Speaker, I've had the pleasure of visiting the Red

Chamber in Ottawa, where the Senate sits, and I'm sure a number of other members have been there as well. I went through with my family in fact last August. We made a special trip to Ottawa just to see what the entire process was all about. Having been there a number of times before, I delighted in showing my young children and my wife what the Red Chamber was all about. That Chamber does have a very important role. I think we would agree on that. Whether it's being exercised to the maximum degree and whether or not it's being exercised the way that we here in Alberta would like it to be is a matter of opinion at best. In a general sense that idea of a Senate having the capability of sober second thought, as I've so often heard it referred to, is an important function, and I don't think we should ever treat lightly the appointment to that Senate or the election to that Senate.

Through a bill like this, while I support the gist of the elected part of it all, I just can't support the way that the descriptions or the lack of descriptions are enunciated in the bill. Now, I'm talking to a government that is extremely cost conscious. I know that. I'm talking to a government that has brought in significant programs of cost-effectiveness and streamlining and avoidance of duplication of effort and so on and so on, cutting out the fat and cutting through the red tape. Some of that I certainly agree with and can support, but here we are enunciating some points about an electoral Senate process that talks directly to the opposite end of what the government hitherto has stood for, and that is the issue of public expenditures for public good with public accountability attached to it. In this bill I see the lack of clarity being a major fault, an absolutely major fault. In fact, Madam Speaker, I think that if you wanted to heap even more cynicism on our Senators and the entire Senate process, then you have the instrument through Bill 40 that would help you accomplish that.

This bill has some major flaws, particularly with respect to the lack of definitive description on what it is that they intend to have happen here with these Senate nominees. I look, for example, at section 5 on page 2, where it says:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) fixing the term of a Senate nominee.

Now, let me just talk about that. In other words, there is nothing specified in the bill, Madam Speaker, that would give me any level of comfort in knowing how long a nominee would have to stand on the sidelines and wait for consideration to be appointed to the Senate. As we all know, at the moment the process of ascension to the Senate is by appointment, not by election. I say that unfortunately because I do favour the election process. However, I don't favour the standby notion as it's described here, because the term of the Senate appointee is not fixed.

Now, that has tremendous ramifications when you look at the next subsection: "(c) respecting the remuneration and expenses." I'm concerned here that you could physically have a standby Senator being nominated and waiting on the sidelines for as many as five to six years, until this bill expires, which is in – what is it? – the year 2004 or something like that. Yes, December 31, 2004, is in fact the expiry date. So now we have a person standing on the sidelines waiting for that possible appointment or election to occur and in the meantime drawing a salary, which will be at some expense, I'm sure, to Alberta taxpayers, drawing personal expenses by way of travel to and from Ottawa, should that become necessary. Presumably, if they are standby nominees, they would require some additional firsthand knowledge of what goes on in the Senate, so they'd have to travel there. Then you have the expenses of accommodation and the expenses of meals and so on and so on. I'll tell you that for my money, as the financial watchdog on behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition,

that just doesn't bode well. I can't support something as vague as that.

So I thought: well, I'll just read on to see if there's something that'll give me a level of comfort to perhaps vote for this bill. I get to the bottom line and I see under section 5, subsection (d) of (2.1), where it says: "respecting the performance and accountability of a Senate nominee"; i.e., the job description part. You know what, Madam Speaker? There is no job description in here. Now, when was the last time you ever applied for a job or could endorse paying someone to perform a job that has no description to it? There's absolutely no detail, no information in here with respect to anything that would be required of the Senate nominees, other than to stand on the sidelines waiting patiently for an if-cum-maybe situation to develop. That's not good accountability, that's not good governance, and that's not good bill writing in my view.

On the other hand, if it's the government's intention to simply focus attention on some of the shortcomings of the Senate process, including the appointment versus election model, including the accountability, the attendance, and other things that have been in the news media recently, then I think they've done a good job at focusing some attention on that. But this isn't how I would prefer to see that done, because it takes up very valuable time in this House to discuss these bills, and it takes enormous time away from other work that we could be doing not only in this House but also on behalf of our constituents in the constituencies that we represent.

Now, having said that, I'm very, very aware of some of the shortcomings of the current appointment style or the appointment process. I understand about political patronage. I understand about underrepresentation and so on. But there are also some benefits we have to understand. We can argue that those benefits perhaps would never outweigh the style of selection that is afforded by an election process for senatorial advancement. I would argue in fact that elections, as I've said now for the third time, are the way to go. If you take a look at the appointment process, there is something to be said for some of the current benefits that are enjoyed by the government of the day in that respect, and I think all governments from the two major parties that have been traditionally elected in this country would agree with that. However, I note that even the Prime Minister of Canada, the Hon. Jean Chrétien, on a few occasions prior to 1993 and in fact since, I think, has said – at least he's been quoted as saying in the press – that he, too, favours an election of Senate members as opposed to the appointment process. So I figure that we're on the right track with that aspect of it, but this bill doesn't quite capture the essence of how it could and should be done.

As I say, I can't believe that a bill would come forward asking me as a representative of the good people that live in this province in Edmonton-Mill Creek to support a bill that essentially requires the expenditure of what could amount to significant dollars without an adequate description. In short, Madam Speaker, I'm being asked through this bill to support a piece of legislation that is only half baked, because there are not sufficient explanations of what the job really would entail nor for how long that job would be entailed nor what the money that goes along with it would have to be. The costs and the descriptions are just simply absent, and therefore I cannot support it for those reasons.

4:40

The final part about the Lieutenant Governor in Council's regulations as enunciated under section 5, in 29(2.1), deals with the duties and functions of a Senate nominee, which is sort of the compliance part of the performance and accountability portion of

the Senate nominee's description. Here again, it doesn't appear that there's any contemplation whatsoever that would deal specifically with what I could expect from this person by way of duties and functions. Ordinarily, Madam Speaker, when we talk about elections, we're talking about people who are put into a position of trust, who are put there by the people to accomplish a specific task, and those tasks are abundantly clear to you and to me and to all members of any elected official body.

Now, here we're talking about electing people to some kind of a body without any sense of what their duties or functions might be. Now, if the hon. sponsor has some descriptions that are being drafted in the regulations – and I'm sure he probably does – then simply bring those forward, hon. member. I'll have a look at those. Maybe you'll change my mind. Until I see what the regulations are that accompany this, I just think that it's too long a reach to expect me and anyone else with good conscience in this House to vote in favour of something that carries so much vagueness in it as to not be able to answer some of the very primary questions that have been raised by me and by other members.

As I say, Madam Speaker, when we talk about elected officials, we're talking about people who have put their life on the line, their career on the line in order to represent a cause, in order to represent a specific set of duties and functions and responsibilities. I take that very seriously, at times perhaps a little too seriously. Although I'm not having fun yet, I'm sort of building up to that. At one stage in my career I hope to eventually be enjoying this job a little bit more than is currently the case, because at the moment I'm simply finding that it's just a huge amount of work. I don't mind that work at the constituency level, but when we come here to the Legislature, it's work of a different kind. The work here is one of scrutiny, one of careful thought, one of the greatest type of evaluations that we could do on behalf of the taxpayers and on behalf of the people who have elected us to this position. They expect us to fulfill that diligently, and that's what I'm trying to do by getting the government to try to explain to me what it is that is contemplated here through section 5, in particular.

When we get into committee on this Bill, it'll be interesting, because I'm sure we'll have at least 29 amendments or so. I can't remember the total, but I'm told that there will likely be a number of amendments, unless the government is prepared to start answering some of those questions. At that stage we'll have a closer look at what is really intended.

Madam Speaker, let me close just by reiterating that I am all in favour of the so-called triple E Senate concept insofar as it has to be equal, elected, and effective. However, I don't find this particular bill to be the way to begin that process. Unfortunately, I think it takes away and distracts from the very, very serious nature of the triple E Senate that was advanced by a Premier of this province several years ago, one that eventually did culminate in the first ever elected Senator being sent to Ottawa. I look back on that period in our history as a very important one, one that I would like to see upheld through a process also, however, that I can support. Unfortunately, this process is not yet there.

So I would look forward to the hon. sponsor's comments or answers to some of those questions and, in particular, to the possibility of seeing what the regulations look like. In fact, I'd be happy to look at those regulations outside the normal course of this House, in a private session if he would wish, but I would like to see what is contemplated by those regulations. I truly would. Maybe you'll change my mind on it once I see what is drafted

there. I think that's something that the hon. sponsor, as I say, a man for whom I have great respect, would bring forward and show us, and then in good conscience we could make a much more intelligent and a much more informed decision. Without that, hon. member, I'm afraid I simply cannot support your bill at this stage. I look forward to some of those answers forthcoming shortly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, as I sit here listening to the debate on this particular bill, I keep thinking that this is going to be a trial balloon that's going to explode in the government's face. I wonder: why should we stop that balloon from getting bigger and bigger until it gets to the point where it just explodes?

It will be wonderful to go door-knocking in the year 2001 and be able to say to the citizens of Alberta: "Nope, there's no elected regional health authorities. You've got piecemeal decisions being made across the province on VLTs. Nope, when you look at important issues like Bill 19, that was dragged on and waited and waited, no priority on violence in families. But you know what was one of the most pressing issues in the Legislative Assembly? To look at electing pseudo-Senators that are going to be paid out of your taxpayers' dollars, that are going to be paid for with your hard-earned, sweat-soaked loony," if I can use that expression from the Provincial Treasurer.

What have you got to show for it? One, two, three, four people who sit in the balcony in Ottawa, whose expenses can – for those members who say they will not be paid: read the bill. The regulations are there that deal with remuneration and with expenses. If there was no intent to pay those particular pseudo-Senators, it would not be in Bill 40. For those who haven't seen it, it's on page 3: "Section 29 is amended by adding the following after subsection (2)." [interjections] I'll read it for you, and I'll read it slowly:

- (2.1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . .
(c) respecting the remuneration and expenses to be paid.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has the floor. Can we please hear her out? Thank you.

MS LEIBOVICI: Given that I'm sure you didn't hear that over the din from the other side, I just want to make sure that you do hear this. From page 2 of Bill 40: "Section 29 is amended by adding the following after subsection (2)." So if you want to look it up, you'll see it's there.

- (2.1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . .
(c) respecting the remuneration and expenses to be paid to a Senate nominee.

Now, that's clear. That's black and white. I know you can read that; otherwise you wouldn't be in the Legislative Assembly. We can read it. We know what the intent is. If there was no intent to pay for the expenses, do you think it would be here? I don't think so. So let's just go through some of this wonderful bill. As I said, the more I sit here and listen to it, the more fun I know we will have when we talk about this at the doors in the year 2001. It'll almost guarantee our election as government in this province.

What we're seeing here is another piecemeal approach to legislation. I'd like to know what guarantees you have from the Prime Minister. I'd like to know if the minister of federal and intergovernmental affairs has phoned up the Prime Minister and said: "This is the bill we're looking at. This is what the implications of the bill will be. Will you take those pseudo-Senators and appoint them after they're elected?" Has the minister, your minister, phoned the Prime Minister and asked him? That should be his job in terms of this particular bill. Otherwise, what you've got is piecemeal legislation.

4:50

What I'd also like to know – if there is the wish for true legislative reform in the Senate, you will have our help with that. We were the party that put forward the idea of the triple E Senate before the Conservatives did in this province. We have also in this Legislative Assembly put forward issues and ideas for reform of the provincial Legislative Assembly. We've put forward a bill that talked about recall. We've put forward a bill that talked about reduction of MLAs. We've put forward a motion – I did personally – that said: let's examine how we can make the legislative process and the electoral process better and more accountable to the electorate. So if there is a real desire for electoral reform at either the federal or the provincial level, somehow it's not coming across. That's why I wonder what this trial balloon is about, because it doesn't make sense, given this government's track record on reform in either of the venues, federal or provincial. But what's really delicious, if I can use that word about this bill . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Delicious?

MS LEIBOVICI: It is delicious. It is just wonderful. As I said, I can hardly wait to go out to my constituents and say to them: this is what this government has done.

Let's just look at sections 3(1) and 3(2). I'm not a lawyer, but I can pick this up, and the lawyers in the Legislative Assembly should have fun figuring out this one:

- (2) A person remains as a Senate nominee until
 - (a) the person is appointed to the Senate of Canada,
 - (b) the person resigns as a Senate nominee by submitting a resignation in writing to the Minister . . .
 - (c) the person's term as a Senate nominee expires, whichever occurs first.

Well, let me pose this question to the Legislative Assembly: what happens if the person dies? What happens if they die? For the lawyers: when you look at the Interpretation Act – and this is page 12, again if you want to look it up, and I know I've got the Minister of Justice's attention right now – (p) of section 25(1) says that

"person" includes a corporation and the heirs, executors, administrators or other legal representatives of a person.

In other words, your Senate nominee lives forever through the corporation, through the executors, through the administrators. You know, the more I think of it, the more I think we should just pass this bill and then call an election. Because you know what? We've got it won on this side of the House. So that's one of the problems.

Now, we're going to be electing a Senate nominee. How many?

AN HON. MEMBER: How many do you want?

MS LEIBOVICI: Well, it's not a question of how many I want. It's a question of how many you want. This is your bill.

Where in here does it say how many Senators? Again, remember you're paying for this. You're paying for their salaries. You're paying for their expenses. Is it one? Is it two? Is it 10? How many do you want? Those Senators are going to be there until the year 2005; well, December 31, 2004. Again, there's no definition of term in this particular bill. So is the term to December 31, 2004? Is the term one year? Is the term two years? Is the term three years for these pseudo-Senators? It's not here.

So if I put all of the comments aside, I'd like to know how in good conscience you can vote for a bill that allows a dead person to stay on as a nominee, that allows for any number of Senators to be voted for, that allows for payment to occur to these Senators, that allows for no way to recall the Senators? I'd like to ask each and every one of you: is there any guarantee that that elected Senator will not turn out to be like Senator Thompson? Is there any guarantee? I'd look forward to your answers in the debate. If perchance a pseudo-Senator might get nominated and sit there and decide to spend his or her time in Mexico, there's no way to recall that individual, from this bill. Absolutely none. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I didn't know that we had come to where we're now going to have group debate. This is second reading. This is not Committee of the Whole. I will recognize any government member the next speaker. Edmonton-Meadowlark, please, through the chair. This is not group debate, nor is it group therapy.

Continue, Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Well, Madam Speaker, it's therapeutic for me, especially when I look forward to bringing this to the doors. It almost leaves me speechless. What can I say? Almost but not quite.

Debate Continued

MS LEIBOVICI: So what we've got is a bill that aims to provide for a democratic way of ensuring that Senators become elected. I don't have an issue with that. What I have an issue with is the fact that this is a piecemeal process. What I have an issue with is the amount of holes that are in this bill that, in essence, could provide the Alberta taxpayer with representation that does not serve their best interests by having pseudo-Senators sitting in Ottawa, and there is no method of ensuring that those pseudo-Senators are accountable to us as the taxpayers.

Is there anything in this particular piece of legislation that says that there will be an election in three years' time, in four years' time? There's absolutely nothing in here. There's no recall. Each one of us is accountable, as this government so likes to tell us, to our constituencies once every three and a half, four years. There's absolutely nothing in this particular bill that suggests that those Senate nominees are accountable to the province of Alberta, and there's no way of ensuring that accountability again in another election because it's not here. It's not even in the regulation-making ability. What it talks about is the term of a Senate nominee. Well, we're going to have to have that really quick if we want the Senate elections to occur in October.

Duties and functions of a Senate nominee: I can't imagine what they would be. They have no legislative authority. They have no legislative budget. They have no research budget. They have no

office. There is nowhere that their constituents, Albertans, can get hold of them, unless of course the government is going to be providing them with a budget. I have heard some of the ministers on the front bench saying: oh, no, we're not going to do that. Well then, how are these people going to be accountable to their electorate, which are the people of Alberta?

How do they get chosen? What will the ballot look like? Are we going to have a multiple list of five or 10 and the first five with the most votes get elected? Do we have five different ballots with three names on each, and then one on one ballot is the winner, and one on the second ballot is a winner? If you want five individuals, then how does that happen? What happens if there are only two people that decide they're going to run for Senate election? My guess is that that's going to be very costly. If you're going to run an election provincewide sponsored by either a political party or as an independent, which is what is allowed for in the Election Act – and I'm sure each one of you has looked at it so that you know that that's what the conditions are. If that is, then, what's going to happen, what in fact is the method of voting? How is that going to occur? What happens if only two people decide but there are three vacancies? I guess they're acclaimed. Then do we have another Senate election because we need three filled?

Those are all questions that I believe are valid questions, Madam Speaker. Those are all questions that need to be addressed. We can't go blindly off and say: oh, we'll have a Senate election for pseudo-Senators because it sounds like a good idea. This is not what we as legislators are about. What we need to do is ensure that we are providing good government, that we are providing the ability for people to have their wishes represented and respected. By passing a shoddy piece of legislation like this – it is a joke.

Now, I know that the minister of federal and intergovernmental affairs, unless he wants to ensure a clear Liberal sweep in the next election here in Edmonton, could not have been responsible for this piece of legislation. I'm sure that after hearing what some of the problems are with this particular bill, he will be going back to the caucus and he will be going to back to his department and saying: "You know what? This doesn't work. This doesn't work. We're going to leave it. We'll leave it until the fall, and then maybe cooler heads will prevail." Maybe there won't be as much of a need to come up with an issue that deflects from some of the real issues that are in this province, some of the issues that deal with the RHAs, with the red alerts, with the use of the notwithstanding clause, VLTs. You know, the list goes on and on.

5:00

This is not something that people are concerned about. This does not have at this point a direct effect on their lives. This is something that we can put aside, and in conjunction with the federal government and the other provincial governments across this country, the minister, who I know is able to because he's a leader – he was a leader when it came to the unity issue in dealing with his federal and provincial counterparts as was the Premier, and we have to give him a hand on that. They can use that as a springboard to say that Senate elections and Senate reform is a real issue here in Alberta, and it's one that needs to be dealt with in a planned, in a concerted fashion that will not entail cost to the taxpayers with no representation. That's taxation without representation, a fundamental principle in our democracy, and that's exactly what happens if you elect these pseudo-Senators. You have gone down that road of taxation without representation,

and that is something that Albertans will not stand for.

So, Mr. Minister, I urge you to pull this off the Order Paper for tonight and for tomorrow and just sit on it – Madam Speaker, I am talking through the chair to the minister – to ensure that this bill retains its rightful spot, and that is to sit there until some of those issues have been dealt with, the issues with regards to the shoddiness in terms of the drafting of the act and the issues in dealing with ensuring that it is not a piecemeal approach, and that in fact what ends up happening is a concerted effort of Canadians across Canada that deals with how we effectively reform the Senate.

Thank you very much.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I must say that I share the respectful comments made by my colleagues previously with respect to this bill. It's absolutely amazing to me that this government – if the weather, if nothing else, could lure us from this Assembly, they have us at plus 17 degrees in this House debating Bill 40, which is unquestionably in my tenure as an MLA in this province and even in my professional tenure the worst excuse for a piece of legislation that I have ever, ever seen, very disappointing – very disappointing – particularly from a government that espouses that we should not have elections for integral governance structures like regional health authorities. Leave it aside that they are running institutions in a system that's worth \$4 billion a year: "We don't need to elect those individuals. It's quite fine for the government to appoint them." They have continued to do so despite a political promise during the last provincial election that they would elect them.

Be that as it may, now we have a bill before us that we should elect Senators that do not have seats. So I put my mind, Mr. Speaker, to exactly what these elected Senators-in-waiting would do. As has been indicated, they have no legislated authority. They have no budget. They have no job description. So what exactly would they do? Well, perhaps they might take Senate school. That would be another activity that this government would have to design. The hon. Minister of Education could design a program, a curriculum, textbooks. They could design a whole process and teach Senators how to be Senators-in-waiting. I mean, it's a wanna-be sort of process, but I'm sure there are people out there that this government could find who would be interested in doing that.

What else could a Senator-in-waiting do? Perhaps they might like to take a holiday at the taxpayers' expense. Why not? I mean, they'd be on a salary. They could just choose a destination.

MR. DICKSON: Do a little research in Cuba.

MRS. SLOAN: Do a little research in Cuba. Exactly.

Perhaps a Senator-in-waiting might want to learn to knit. There are many, many children in this province that don't have adequate clothing. They don't have winter clothing; they don't have mittens to wear. It would be a useful purpose for these people at their \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year income to set about making clothes and providing food for the homeless and the needy in this province. Now, that would perhaps require . . . [interjection] Well, I'm getting to that.

Perhaps another area that the Senators-in-waiting might want to

expand their usefulness in is performing some type of community service. They might wish, perhaps, to volunteer at the food banks in this province. The need for that type of service – regrettably the harsh, cruel, rigid reforms of this government have put thousands and thousands of people in food bank lineups, so perhaps we could have the Senators-in-waiting manning the food banks, going out, getting food, providing it. Why not? They're being paid by the taxpayers, and they should earn their keep. Rightly so.

There may also be some partisan community service where this government might choose to want to put them to work. Perhaps they might need to volunteer for a political party that has been involved in creating this position for them. Perhaps they might need to serve or be a part of a pool for government committee panels or authority appointments.

MR. DICKSON: How about the standing policy committees?

MRS. SLOAN: Standing policy committees. Exactly. I mean, put them to a useful purpose. Granted, it's partisan. Granted, it's just to reinforce government's ill-conceived policy. If they're on a slate, if they're a Senator-in-waiting, why not?

The other question this bill poses that I have put my mind to, Mr. Speaker, is: where would these Senators-in-waiting work; where would their offices be? Well, the bill doesn't speak to that. They're just going to be floating around in some type of political la-la land, I suppose. Seriously, where would they work, and where would their offices be? Well, I suppose there are two immediate things that come to mind. There are a few, a declining number, of PC Party offices in the province. I suppose they could find a vacant space there and work. There might perhaps be some vacant space in a local Reform Party office that they could take up. Maybe this government, given its infatuation with building, might want to build a Senate tower, and we could have our Senators-in-waiting housed in a Senate tower, totally isolated from reality, and they could just go to Senate school, read their books, and knit in their spare time.

Seriously, there are thousands of vacant offices that have been left by public servants because their jobs have been deleted by this government, at least 600 in the Ministry of Health. There would be lots of space for these Senators-in-waiting to set up shop. Is that a prudent use of taxpayers' dollars? I think not.

AN HON. MEMBER: Neither is this.

5:10

MRS. SLOAN: Well, listen, you're the one that put the bill before the House, so don't criticize me for debating it.

The third important and relevant question to this pathetic bill is: what will Alberta Senators-in-waiting wear? Will their attire be the golf shirt, golf shorts, straw hat sort of attire? As they're waiting for this someday appointment, they can make prudent use of their time and golf. Or perhaps it might be the traditional western Senate attire, where they have the cowboy hat, boots, spurs. They can go around to all of the relevant western events and look . . . [interjection] That's true. If they dress like that, we would be confusing them with cabinet ministers, and I'm afraid that would not . . .

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Minister of Labour and others engaged in lively conversations, we'll put your name down on the

list if you wish to enter into the debate. We'd also like to remind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview that when you start engaging others in the debate, then it only encourages them to do it at an inappropriate time. I would like to encourage them to put their name on the list or stand up when there's an opportunity and speak their piece, but right now the chair has recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually am flattered that my comments have inspired some desire in the hon. members across the way to debate this bill.

Debate Continued

MRS. SLOAN: All right. So where was I? I was talking about Senator-in-waiting attire and how we'd have to make sure that whatever they wore, we could differentiate them from the cabinet ministers of this province. So I'll have to think about that. Definitely I know one thing that they could take in Senate school. They could go to Harry Rosen, and they could be adequately instructed on the types of co-ordinated shirts and ties and such.

Now, the fourth question, Mr. Speaker . . . [interjections] I'm just dying to see the speaking list, and I know the hon. members want to debate this bill, so I will make my comments brief.

Where could the dollars used to elect Senators-in-waiting be more effectively used by this government? Well, perhaps we could adequately fund public health care in this province. Perhaps we could adequately fund public education. Perhaps we could fund social services in this province above the meagre pittance it is currently funded at. Perhaps we might want to be progressive and broad in our thinking and fund public day care. Perhaps we might want to use taxpayers' money, frivolously used to elect Senators-in-waiting, to provide for more public housing and address the growing need of the homeless in this province. Perhaps we might want to use this money to address the growing need for public seniors' programs and housing, which this government has to date done minimal to address.

With due respect to the Legislature, to the process of debating bills, and with the sincere expression of my desire and the Liberal caucus' desire to see true Senate reform in this country, this government would be much better served, Mr. Speaker, if they facilitated a process that would talk about reform of the Senate at a national level instead of trying to construct a process in the province to elect individuals. I have in good humour and with more than a small degree of jest demonstrated that they will be nothing more than Senators-in-waiting and that their election will be a very, very poor use of taxpayers' dollars.

As I indicated, I think the Premier, his cabinet, his caucus would be much better served to be spending the time and resources of the people of this province to achieve a national consensus on Senate reform. If they cannot put their minds to that, then I would respectfully submit that the money they would be using to elect Senators-in-waiting to do absolutely nothing would be better spent on adequately funding public health care, public education, public social services, housing, and seniors' programs in this province.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my comments on this bill.

Thank you.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to speak to Bill 40, the Senatorial Selection Amendment Act, 1998. I find this a waste of our time at this time of year when everyone seems to want to vacate the dome. Are we not wasting our time when health, education, and social services are a top priority? In the case that I keep talking about, I do hope that this government will start planning and producing a vision of this province's infrastructure with a plan with the municipal governments in Alberta. Is this bill not just a diversion to get away from other important items that are much more of a concern to Albertans? If you survey Albertans with a comparison with more than just this topic, not in isolation, you will probably hear a much different answer than just having an elected Senator.

Has anybody seen the cartoon that's been in the paper in the last while where there's a makeshift chair nailed to the back of the Senator's chair? Well, doesn't this cartoon say it all? This is just a true joke. Everyone that I've discussed this with believes that the election of a Senator – and do we forget that there has been support from both sides in the past? I personally don't believe in a political appointment, but what is to be gained by having a bill or even discussing it at this time? The last time we held such a Senator's vote, there was actually a position available.

I would like to say at this particular time that I'm in favour of an elected Senator, but I also want you to remember the triple E Senate concept, one of the E's being "elected." A reformed Senate, if designed properly, would give Alberta a greater voice in Canada. We believe that Albertans should have the right to elect a Senator, and it makes sense to hold elections concurrent with a municipal election but only when there's a seat available. I say that this is a smoke screen or a diversionary tactic to get beyond a provincewide vote on VLTs, health issues like Bill 21, Bill 37, Bill 38, or even the electrical bill, Bill 27.

Does everybody remember my question in the House on March 5, 1998? Mr. Speaker, page 708. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Almost: beware of waking them up. When you ask a rhetorical question in this late hour of the day, you'll get answers, far too many. Hopefully, we can all remember our parliamentary manners and let the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning conclude his debate as he will.

MR. GIBBONS: For a member on this side that doesn't speak very much, I did get a bit of a reaction.

Debate Continued

MR. GIBBONS: On page 708, if you want to go through to it, I asked a question, Mr. Speaker: "At the drop of a hat the government is ready to hold a vote." When I said this, there was a whole audience up there of Reform MPs. I did ask them afterwards if they took light of my question and so on, and my MP was quite behind what I said. At the same time,

At the drop of a hat the government is ready to hold a vote on the Senate seat, but the problems that directly impact families and communities are ignored. The Election Act clearly says that we can have a [municipal] provincewide plebiscite on VLTs anytime.

The minister at that time said, "I would have to research that information." She didn't have it at that particular time.

My next question was:

Why [do we] not have a VLT vote this year when it's clearly needed and wait to have a Senate vote when the seat actually becomes available?

Well, we had a long answer from the minister:

In this House the Premier has discussed and announced the summit on VLTs, on the whole of gambling. There has been discussion in the past from [our] ministers. There has been discussion from the municipalities that they have provided me, documented evidence that they prefer to have [a vote] taken at a local, municipal level. I think that is the way the whole thrust of the Municipal Government Act directs. I don't think municipalities want our direction on when they should hold a vote on [the issues] in this province. I think they [actually] would like to think that they had some kind of opportunity to be a part of the process and consultation.

5:20

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 459, relevance. Painfully, we all remember in this House where we were when the hon. member asked this question. We were present, and the question was duly read into the record. I would ask the relevance of rereading a question from *Hansard* that was already noted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on the point of order.

MR. GIBBONS: On the point of order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point of order comes to my next question, when the Speaker of the House shot me down on my next question. The relevance behind that was the fact that there should be some correlation between the VLT vote and the Senators' vote.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair is rather uneasy with the response to the assertion of relevance. The question was whether your questions that you were referring to some days and weeks ago were relevant to this particular debate. When you begin to reflect upon how the Speaker ruled in some fashion, then that becomes a little more awkward for the Speaker to rule on it in that it sounds like you're raising this as a means by which you can address an issue with the chair's ruling. I'm sure that's not your point, but if it is, then we have a problem. The chair has some problems with the relevance of the comments. So hopefully we can get back to the bill.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Debate Continued

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, hon. member. I suppose the members opposite will just keep ramrodding this bill through, which they have on lots of other bad bills. If the government doesn't take any suggestions by the members opposite, like myself, I would really suggest that this time you should. This is just another case of someone dreaming up another bill at the time of year that we keep thinking there are too many bills in each one of the sessions.

Mr. Speaker, in closing my remarks, this bill is not worth the attention we're paying it today.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unbelievable that we have to get up and speak to this kind of bill in the House. With all due respect, there is no doubt that this is absolutely the dumbest bill that I have ever seen hit the floor of this Legislature in the five years I've been here.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, given the hour, I would like to adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has moved that we adjourn debate on Bill 40. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

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

MS CARLSON: My colleague and I were having a discussion about how dumb this bill is, and he thought that maybe the previous bill that we had in here . . . What was that, 213? The property rights bill.

MR. DICKSON: Thirteen.

MS CARLSON: Bill 13.

MR. DICKSON: That's a government bill.

MS CARLSON: Yes, the government bill that gave rights to property and not to people in this province fit that criterion quite well. But I would have to argue that this one is worse.

MR. DICKSON: And there was 26.

MS CARLSON: Well, 26 was really bad, because it had 34 amendments in it. I mean it was completely flawed.

MR. DICKSON: That was 25. Twenty-six was a notwithstanding one.

MS CARLSON: Oh, yeah, 26 was the notwithstanding.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that Bill 40 is one in a very long series of incredibly poorly crafted, poorly presented bills that we have seen this spring session.

Mr. Speaker, in the five years that I've been here, most of these members have been here too. You would think they would have learned something in that time, that they would have learned how to properly craft a bill. But, no, couldn't be. These guys couldn't. They just come in here with absolute arrogance and try to ramrod all of these kinds of pieces of legislation through the Legislature that are very flawed and in fact do not in any shape or imagination represent the needs or wants of people in this province. Who would want a bill like this to come through that would cost people extra money for people to sit around and do absolutely nothing? It's beyond belief.

We have people in the galleries here today. I am sure they do not realize that when this bill gets passed – and it will get passed because they have the majority here – what will happen is if this

is actually proclaimed, this is going to cost each and every taxpayer in this province a lot of money. You're going to pay it through your taxes to have a bunch of Senators-in-waiting sitting like a bunch of blobs doing absolutely nothing, waiting for somebody to either die or retire. Now, what could be more foolish than that? Nothing. We've had lots of people in this Legislature give good ideas about what these people could be doing to fill up their time. Mr. Speaker, it's an absolute joke.

I am sure that the minister who introduced this, the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, has some serious, pressing issues that he could have dealt with. Bill 40 means 40 in order. He had a long time to think about it and to prepare something and to bring something to this floor.

MR. DICKSON: He will forever be embarrassed by this.

MS CARLSON: I believe that's true. He's going to be forever embarrassed for having brought this forward. It's like my colleague said: when I take this to the doors in the summer, I tell you, it's votes in my pocket, I have to say. They're going to look at this and say: "These are the same guys who cut 5 percent out of our wages? These are the same guys who say they can't properly fund health care or education?"

MR. DAY: There are girls over here too. Don't just blame the guys.

MS CARLSON: When I say guys, it's generic. It includes all of you.

What they're going to say, Mr. Speaker, is: "These are the same people who cannot properly fund people on social assistance who need enough money just to buy groceries? These people are going to elect, not a proper sense, but elect in-waiting Senators to sit around and do just nothing?" I tell you, I don't want to be that kind of a vulture who has the kind of job who sits and waits for someone to die. It's absolutely incredible that we could see this here.

What's going to happen when this passes here? This is what I bet's going to happen. The minister, his department, his staff have spent a lot of time drafting this bill. They've done this much research on it, but this much time in terms of doing the research, and then it gets brought into here, and we debate it. We debate the foolishness of it until hopefully they can see the light in some regard. Then we're going to bring in amendments, probably a lot more than you had on your bill. We're going to probably need more than 34 amendments to try and correct this bill in any regard. So there's more time, more energy, all for a bill that isn't worth the paper it's written on. All this time and all this energy is going to be spent here debating a bill that will probably never be proclaimed.

I would like the minister to stand and tell the Assembly if, when this passes third reading, which it will – because we can stand here and say everything we want to say and bring in all the amendments, and they're going to vote every single amendment down, and then at the end of the day, this is going to pass third reading. But the question is: is it ever going to be proclaimed? Are they ever going to take such a foolish piece of legislation . . .

MR. DICKSON: No, of course not.

MS CARLSON: No, of course not, my colleague says, and I think that's true. Such a foolish piece of legislation that has just

had a lot of money spent on it. It's a trial balloon coming out. It's just a for-show bill saying that these people believe in a triple E Senate, which is not at all what this bill does, and it's just going to sit there. It's never going to be proclaimed. It's never going to become the law of this province. That will be the only good thing that ever happens to this bill, Mr. Speaker. It's the only piece of good news in this whole situation.

When we talk about a triple E Senate, which you guys have

said that you believe in fundamentally too, this bill misses one of the basic components of a triple E Senate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: According to Standing Order 4(1), we're adjourned until 8 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]