

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 24, 1998** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 98/11/24

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. I'd invite members to remain standing after prayers so that we may pay tribute to a former colleague who has passed away recently.

This prayer is an excerpt from the one said in the British Columbia Legislature.

Let us pray.

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

Amen.

Robert A. Simpson
April 5, 1910, to September 24, 1998

THE SPEAKER: This morning my office was advised of the passing of Mr. Robert A. Simpson. Mr. Simpson was a former Member of the Legislative Assembly and represented the constituency of Calgary-North for the Social Credit Party. Mr. Simpson was first elected in the general election held on June 17, 1963, and served until 1971. During his years of service Mr. Simpson served on the following select standing committees: Municipal Law and Law Amendments; Public Accounts; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; and Public Affairs.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of his family who shared the burdens of public office. Our prayers are with them.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Robert Simpson as you may have known him.

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

Amen.

You may be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for children's services.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mrs. Pinky Phosa with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for the government of Mpumalanga in the Republic of South Africa. Accompanying Mrs. Phosa are Ms Mahlangu with the Office of the Status of Women, Mr. Ghardee with the Youth Commission, and Mr. Rootman, special adviser to the Premier of Mpumalanga. I had the privilege of hosting them this noon to welcome them to Alberta, and I know that they've been working very hard to see what happens in this province.

I should also point out that Mrs. Phosa also happens to be the spouse of the Hon. Mathew Phosa, Premier of the province of Mpumalanga, who has visited Alberta on two previous occasions and signed the initial Alberta/Mpumalanga memorandum of understanding with our own Premier Ralph Klein in October of 1996 to officially twin our two provinces and strengthen already existing informal ties.

Mrs. Phosa and colleagues are currently visiting Alberta to

examine our province's policies and programs concerning disadvantaged peoples, community-based support organizations, children's programs, teenage prostitution, and youth development, to name a few. I know that they have had a very busy schedule and continue to do so. I would hope they'd take the opportunity to enjoy some of the home-grown western hospitality and the great snow and have a very productive and memorable stay in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the members of this Assembly.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of distinguished individuals who have worked very hard to share their vision with the rest of the world. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are members of the executive committee of the International Human Rights Conference.

The Universal Rights and Human Values Conference was established to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. It will be held in Edmonton beginning November 26 through November 28. More than 700 delegates and guests representing 34 countries will attend. The conference is bringing leaders together to raise awareness of the declaration, help people understand the intent of the document, and advance acceptance of the declaration globally.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members as I introduce them to stand and remain standing until I have introduced the group: first, Mr. Gurcharan Bhatia, the chairman, Mr. Jack O'Neill, co-chair, the Hon. Jean Forest, Mr. Patrick Bendin, Mr. Bob Fagan, Professor Gerald Gall, Mrs. Nancy Hannemann, Mr. Robinson Koilpillai, and Cathy Anne Pachnowski. Unfortunately Mr. Jim Edwards, who is the 10th member of this committee, is unable to be with us today. We're also privileged to have Randy Palivoda, who dedicated a great deal of his time to this conference. I invite all members of this Assembly to give this distinguished group a very warm welcome.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions from a number of Albertans across Alberta stating that Albertans deserve an accountable Senate.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have firstly a petition signed by 179 Albertans requesting that the government of Alberta not pass Bill 37, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

I have a further petition signed by another 49 Albertans to the same effect in slightly different wording.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MR. DICKSON: I'd ask that the petitions that had been presented the other day now be read and received, please.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to pass Bill 37, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to recognize the disadvantaged position of renters in the current Calgary apartment market, and take steps to ensure that safe, affordable accommodation is available to every Albertan.

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to pass Bill 37, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

head: Notices of Motions

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Written Question 97.

I'm also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Motion for a Return 98.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, section 8(1) of the Government Accountability Act requires a tabling relative to the consolidated fiscal plan when there are estimates to be presented within the fiscal year. Because I am presenting you with messages from His Honour later on this afternoon regarding supplementary estimates, I am pleased now to table this government's second quarter budget report, as the amendment requires, to the consolidated fiscal plan. I am happy to say that in terms of what stands out in this report is the fact that the projected surplus for this year is indeed, as projected, slightly ahead of where we were to be as far as our February '98 budget. There are a number of factors reflecting the fact that revenues are up considerably over what was projected and expenses are also up, reflecting significant growth in the province. I'm happy to table that.

I'm also tabling with the Assembly today copies of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund second quarter investment report for 1998-99.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to table five copies of the Department of Economic Development's Highlights of the Alberta Economy document.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is copies of correspondence to the hon. minister of agriculture and the hon. Premier calling on them to withdraw Bill 37.

The second tabling is copies of correspondence received from foster parents in Edmonton, Alberta, and the United States opposing the introduction of a licencing fee because of provincial underfunding of municipalities on foster parent families.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the appropriate number of copies to table of 500 postcards from people across this province who are opposed to Bill 219. I hope the minister takes a chance to read them.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is from Janet Cook. She is the provincial Catholic Women's League president, which represents about 10,000 women, and this is a letter to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs requesting a meeting to discuss the elimination of child poverty in Alberta and the building of affordable quality houses.

Also a copy of a letter from Ronald Harvey elementary school council speaking to the government, requesting that basic education is supported by tax dollars rather than money acquired through fund-raising.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table five copies of a letter from the Department of Labour agreeing to participate in a monitoring program in concert with the forest products division of the Alberta Research Council and manufacturers of untreated pine shakes.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table today in the Assembly answers to written questions 30, 31, 32, and 37.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MRS. MacBETH: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to check my papers.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, we're always honoured to have visitors and guests to our Assembly. Would you let the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods proceed, please.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group from Christian Home School Fellowship. There are 24 students. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Sue Lucius, and parents Mrs. Beth Hiebert, Mrs. Ruth Taitinger, Mrs. Valerie Hanneman, Mrs. Val Lozier, Mrs. Benita Straugan, Mrs. Susan Eisenbarth, and Mrs. Tina Kawalilak. They are in the members' gallery, and with your permission I'd would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies to you and to the members of the House, and my apologies to the 57 students from the Lymburn elementary school, who I am delighted to welcome to the Legislative Assembly. There are 15 in the members' gallery, and there are 42 students in the public gallery. They are accompanied by teachers John Ray and Susan Peacock and by parents David Galbraith, Debbie Dobson, Colleen Broodhagen, Kelly Bullock, Sheryl Martin, and Isobel Wells. I would ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 47 visitors from my constituency from the Georges H. Primeau school. There are 36 bright and energetic students. They're seated in both the members' and public galleries. Accompanying them are teachers Mrs. Cathy Prockiwi, Mrs. Janice Beler, and Ms Chantelle Gale. Also with them are parents Mrs. Karen Cust, Mrs. Deb Charrois, Mrs. Dolores Girard, Mrs. France Shaffer, Mrs. Doris Bulger, Mrs. Leeanne Lane, Mrs. Linda Arychuk, and Mrs. Susan Lee. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. MAGNUS: They're not here yet, Mr. Speaker. They're not due until 2.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and welcome Mr. Derek Bullen and introduce him to you and through you to Members of this Assembly. Mr. Bullen is the Alberta chair of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, and he has been busy promoting support among employers of the important role that the 30,000 reservists play in the Canadian Armed Forces. I ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Joëlle Tremblay, an exchange student from Quebec. She's accompanied by Geoff Frisby and his daughter Brenna Frisby. They're in the public gallery. If they would rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you Dr. Ron Howard, who is the unit leader of new crops development at the Brooks Research Centre. I would ask Ron to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for science, research, and information technology.

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine, a good supporter of mine, a leading agricultural businessman in the province of Alberta. All of you have probably used his products. He owns Spitz sunflower seeds, and if you don't know Spitz sunflower seeds, you should. I am pleased to have Tom here. He's here today to present a rather large cheque for agricultural research to the minister of agriculture at 3 o'clock this afternoon in my office. Tom Droog, would you please rise and receive the welcome of this House.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly this afternoon Miss Pauline McCormick, who is a resident of St. Albert and a worker with a keen interest in health care in the province. I'd ask her to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly three board members of the Alberta Injured Workers Society. They are Mrs. Joyce Waselenchuk, Ms Darlene Zloklikovits, and Mr. Rick Bremont. They're seated in the members' gallery, and with your permission I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a very special young woman. Quinn Grundy is in grade 8 at Vernon Barford junior high school and in the academic challenge program. She is interested in politics, particularly women in politics, and she joins us today as part of her school project on the job of MLAs. She is seated in the public gallery. I would ask her to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly an Alberta senior who is very proud to call Alberta home. She is Mrs. Lenora Turtle, who is seated in the members' gallery. She is a lifelong Albertan who lived much of her life in Turner Valley and Calgary before moving to Edmonton. She is accompanied today by her daughter, Mrs. Rhonda Sarnoski, also of Edmonton. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

International Human Rights Conference

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for human rights I am pleased to inform this Assembly of two important events in human rights: the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights and the International Human Rights Conference taking place in Edmonton later this week.

Following the atrocities of the Second World War, a group of individuals shared a common goal of preventing such atrocities from ever happening again. Their vision was a world of peace, harmony, and respect for fellow human beings. To make that vision a reality, this group conceived 30 principles, or articles, that embody basic human rights -- civil, political, economic, social, and cultural -- to which all people are entitled. One of those individuals was John Peters Humphrey, a Canadian and a professor of law at McGill University. Humphrey was one of the primary authors of these 30 articles that the world now recognizes as the universal declaration of human rights. In 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the universal declaration of human rights, which remains the cornerstone document on human rights 50 years later.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, another group of individuals sharing a different vision is gathering international human rights leaders to review the document and human rights achievements since its adoption and to discuss solutions to human rights issues that exist today. This exchange will take place at an International Human Rights Conference held in Edmonton November 26 through 28. Mr. Speaker, I introduced the chair and co-chair and members of that organizing committee earlier in the Legislature.

The theme of the conference is Universal Rights and Human

Values: A Blueprint for Peace, Justice, and Freedom. It has attracted esteemed speakers such as Her Excellency Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Ireland, and the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus, chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa and Nobel laureate. There are also several other guests such as the Right Hon. Antonio Lamer, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Albertans are indeed fortunate to have an opportunity to attend such a conference that has gained the international attention of world-renowned authorities on human rights.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues and the citizens of Alberta to join communities all over the world in recognizing and celebrating human rights through this conference and through International Human Rights Day, which is December 10. We as Albertans, Canadians, and world citizens share a responsibility to continue in our efforts towards a society without violence and without discrimination and a society that values the equality and dignity of all human beings.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberal caucus salutes the efforts of those Albertans who have worked very hard to plan and now to host the International Human Rights Conference. The Alberta Liberal caucus also welcomes to the Edmonton conference special guests including the UN High Commissioner and Nobel laureate recipient Desmond Tutu and many, many other distinguished individuals who have been engaged in the promotion of human rights.

A commentator said one time, Mr. Speaker, that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the forces of moderation, tolerance and understanding that the text represents will probably in future history-writing be seen as one of the greatest steps forward in the process of global civilization.

The declaration itself has served as a model for domestic legislation. It's served as a standard against which observers can assess progress and government action or inaction in the nations of the world, including Canada. What impact has it had nationally? We have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982, the Canadian Human Rights Act, 1977, and Canada joined 170 other nations to ratify the convention on the rights of the child in December of 1991.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta human rights record has been very disappointing. This is a province without, at the provincial level, employment equity legislation, although this is common with large employers in our major communities. We have evidence of poisoned work environments in our own civil service where sexual harassment is tolerated. We have rejected key recommendations in this province of the government's own panel that wrote the Equal in Dignity report. We've got, in addition to that, the one province in Canada which has refused to implement the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, and yesterday some government members refused to permit a brief debate dealing with tolerance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Oral Question Period

Health Care System

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I've just been handed a news release by Alberta Health communications saying that Bill 37 has now been deferred and pulled by government. I think the

government has done the right thing in pulling the bill and has listened to Albertans, and it's to those Albertans that the credit should go for having written letters, having phoned their MLAs, and having continued with diligence to ensure that this government is stopped in its tracks in trying to promote private health care. The news release also refers to the establishment of a blue-ribbon panel, which isn't in fact what's needed. My questions, then, are to the Premier. When will he commit to holding a broad, all-party, public consultation? You know, the kind that has Albertans coming out in town halls right across the province in their communities so that they can talk about the future of public health care in this province.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that a blue-ribbon panel is the way to go, especially if the people chosen are independent, unbiased. You know, bias goes to the heart of the question, and certainly if we have Liberals on the panel, it is going to be very, very biased. The reason we want to get an independent assessment is because of the tremendous misinformation, the false information that has been put out there by the Liberal Party.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the last blue-ribbon panel that this government called was on the matter of conflicts of interests, and of course they didn't accept their recommendations either. So what assurance do this House and the people of Alberta have that this government is not going to continue to promote private, for-profit health care?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the opposition Liberals have about 25 amendments they wish to put. I would respectfully suggest that they submit those amendments to the blue-ribbon panel.

Relative to the bill itself and the principles of the bill, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that Bill 37 is intended to provide additional protection -- additional protection -- for Alberta's publicly funded health care system.

2:00

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note -- I quote from the hon. leader of the Liberal Party: the Liberal leader, while opposed to Bill 37, says it's okay for private health facilities to operate as long as it's outside the public health system. Well, that's exactly what Bill 37 is all about, so I take it that she agrees with Bill 37.

Relative to a traveling Liberal road show -- and that's what it would be; that's what it would be -- we had one of those all-party committees, and the Liberal Justice critic managed to attend I think it was about 50 percent of the time. Perhaps only when it was politically convenient.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, our amendments to Bill 37 would ensure that there would never be approved in this province a private, for-profit hospital. When's this Premier going to commit to that?

MR. KLEIN: Well, we're not talking about private, for-profit hospitals. First of all, I would ask the hon. member to define a hospital. I tried to define a hospital yesterday. A hospital is a place where you go when you're sick, when you're banged up, you know, when you have a cause and a purpose to be there. That is a hospital.

Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member talking about nursing homes? They're not hospitals? What are they? They're not care facilities? What are they? I mean, what is she talking about? I would ask the hon. member to give her definition of a hospital. What is a hospital? I'll give you my definition of a hospital. That's

where when you get sick, you get banged up, you go and you get cared for under the publicly funded health care system.

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

Education Policy

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Chaotic, confusing," "an extreme state of fragmentation and . . . confusion," "nearing a crisis state": not my words, Mr. Speaker, but the words of Alberta school superintendents describing the results of this government's education policies. My questions are to the Premier. What more evidence does this government need to show how they've dropped the ball in public education in our province?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can understand why school superintendents would be upset, because there are about 100 less of them now in this province. We had a multitude of school boards. About 40 of them didn't even have schools, but they had superintendents and administrators, so naturally they would be upset.

Relative to the impact on education, I will have the hon. Minister of Education respond.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, we've been asked to comment on this survey work done by Dr. Townsend from the University of Lethbridge. Dr. Townsend wrote to me earlier this year asking for money to fund this research. We indicated that we did not fund private research, and when we asked him for a copy of the report, he did not provide it to us. So it makes it more difficult for us to comment on the specifics of the contents of the report.

As the Premier has indicated, it is not surprising perhaps that principals and teachers and superintendents would express concerns about changes and reform to the education system, because there is greater responsibility on trustees and on superintendents and on principals. They're working harder than ever before, and I think that's a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to reform, it's precipitated a number of good results; for example, our equitable funding of education. That did not happen before. There were differences of funding throughout this province of up to \$20,000 per student per year. That was not a tenable situation. So by reason of our reform we now can say that we have fair and equitable funding of each and every student regardless of whether they're in Red Earth Creek or Pincher Creek. We've reduced the administration cost. We've capped administrative spending. We've reduced the number of school boards from 181 to 60. We can say now that we place a greater emphasis than ever before on making sure that dollars are spent in classrooms, where they have the greatest impact.

Mr. Speaker, there is a greater role and responsibility for parents to take in schools and for the education of their children. Our results report shows that 88 percent of parents in the province of Alberta are satisfied with the quality of education their children are receiving. So we must focus on the concerns, and we must agree that there are concerns that superintendents will express. But on the other hand we must also focus on the results, not just on the inputs but the results. Our kids, by every measure, are doing better than ever before.

MRS. MacBETH: Getting back to the question: given that teachers, school superintendents, and last night at the standing policy committee the Alberta School Boards Association are all saying that this government's support for public schools is inadequate, are they all wrong?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister pointed out, the funding mechanism for schools is much more equitable and much more adequate than it was before. Perhaps the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition liked it the good old way, where those communities with a tremendous commercial tax base could spend about \$12,000 per student and the poorer communities, places like Peerless Lake and so on, were limited to about \$3,800 per student. She probably liked it the good old way. Well, in this province this government likes equality and quality, equal education for all students.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that this government increased funding for 20,000 students in private schools by 20 percent, when is this government going to take action in support of the 520,000 students in our public schools?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I am so happy that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition asked the question, because the hon. Minister of Education is going to give her a very long and articulate answer.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to start . . .

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. minister, let's focus on an "articulate answer."

MR. MAR: That was my intention, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Good.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate, first of all, something that has been said before, I believe, in this House: I think we have to suspend our disbelief, whether it's a school board saying everything that the Education minister is suggesting is wrong because it's going to affect the local board's autonomy or Labour saying everything that government is doing is wrong or the government dismissing media criticism because they don't know -- we cannot find comfort in these ideologies anymore; rather, we must keep going and ask: what is right; what can we do; what baggage can we throw off that we've carried along for many years going through the 1990s and into the 21st century? Those aren't my words; those are the Leader of the Opposition's.

You know, I note also that she said in this House with respect to funding, her words: I don't think education is solely dependent on the number of dollars spent.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of reinvestment in education it's very clear from the Growth Summit that Albertans are interested in reinvesting in education. That's what we're doing. The dollars we're reinvesting from 1997 through to the year 2000 amount to a 13 percent increase. That is a significant reinvestment and far exceeds the rate of growth of the number of students and the rate of inflation.

2:10

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that we are increasing areas like special needs, a 30 percent per capita increase. We are increasing our basic instructional grant rate. We're increasing our amount that we spend on areas like literacy, which has received great response throughout the province. We are also increasing areas such as capital, which is one of the significant areas that the Alberta School Boards Association referred to in its presentation last night. Frankly, there isn't enough money in the world for these guys to spend, but we are targeting our money appropriately in the areas that make the most difference.

THE SPEAKER: The third Official Opposition main question.

West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims that politics played no part in his government's \$418 million made-in-Alberta solution in the refinancing of West Edmonton Mall. My questions today are to the Premier. If politics weren't involved in the decision, then why was the then executive director of the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta a participant in the refinancing discussions?

MR. KLEIN: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. This goes back to what year, and who was the executive director then? [interjections] Pardon me? Well, name the individual.

MRS. MacBETH: I just did.

MR. KLEIN: No, you didn't. Not for the record. Would the hon. member name the individual? [interjections] Right, and then I can check into it.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, my next question is: why did the Premier appoint the Member for Barrhead-Westlock, who was then the Deputy Premier, to be the Minister of Economic Development and who essentially became the minister responsible for West Edmonton Mall?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the then Deputy Premier and Minister of Economic Development was not the minister for West Edmonton Mall. It was part of his file, it was part of his portfolio, and indeed it was part of the portfolio of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I mean, very much a part of her portfolio. She wrote me a letter encouraging me to do whatever I possibly could to save the mall. So obviously the Liberals, all of whom at that time were from the city of Edmonton, with the exception of one, had a very significant interest at that particular time in making sure that this tremendous tourist attraction in western Canada was preserved and maintained.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I'll table the Premier's response back to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, which he seems to forget in his answers.

If the Deputy Premier was only doing his job, then why was he removed from cabinet just days before the ATB refinancing of the mall was approved?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, will all due respect, that is none of her business.

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

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saddened and disappointed that because of the actions of some government members yesterday this Assembly missed an important opportunity to send a message affirming our democratic freedoms, including freedom of the press, the right of journalists and reporters to work in security and safety, and our right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisal. This Friday the Premier is meeting with the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus, and is also addressing the International Human Rights Conference in Edmonton. My question is to the Premier. On the eve of the start of this most important International Human Rights Conference will the Premier show some leadership, stare down the right-

wing extremists in his caucus, and commit to bringing forward tomorrow a motion to ratify the United Nations convention on the rights of the child? If not, why not?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a very interesting preamble that led to a totally unrelated question. Nonetheless, when that issue was discussed by the government, I believe in 1991 -- the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* alluded to it; that's the UN convention on the rights of the child. The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition would know about this because she was part of the government decision at the time not to sign onto the convention. It's not that we're opposed to the convention. The Liberals have said it would be a great symbolic move. We want it to be something more than that.

I can tell you that all of our legislation as it relates to children and the protection of children conforms to the UN convention on the rights of the child. We were concerned at that particular time about two specific articles: article 15 as it pertains to parental control over who children can associate with -- they didn't want their children associating with criminals and people who would influence them to do bad things -- and article 13, I believe, spoke to the issue of free and unlimited access to any type of media, which could mean pornography, you know. Would you allow that, hon. member? A 14- or a 12-year-old child? All we wanted to do at that particular time was ask the federal government to put a notation that the province of Alberta was opposed to those two articles. The federal government refused to do so, and therefore the province refused to sign the declaration.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, that was 1991; this is 1998.

How can the Premier and his government, in failing to ratify the UN children's convention, ignore the advice of dozens of Alberta communities? I have a list of 19 here including Edmonton and such Tory strongholds as Picture Butte, Caroline, and Eckville, all of whom are urging this government to ratify the convention.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think that I answered the question. We are not opposed to the convention. If the federal government would agree to put a notation registering the objections of this province . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not the federal government's declaration.

MR. KLEIN: We are concerned as a government and you should be concerned about allowing children free access to the most vile of material available. If you aren't, then your social values are a lot different than mine, believe me. If they will put that notation on, we would be willing to proceed with signing the declaration.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the real reason that the Premier doesn't want to ratify the UN convention on children's rights because it would be more difficult for the Minister of Justice, the notwithstanding man, to criminally charge children under 12 years of age, as he proposes to do, as stated in an October 30 news release of the Department of Justice?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the question is absolutely totally hypothetical. Nonetheless, since the hon. member alluded to some of the legal intricacies involved with this convention, I'll have the hon. Minister of Justice respond.

2:20

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Premier. As every member of the House knows, Canada did ratify the convention and is

bound by the terms of the convention. There is, however, no significant impact in international eyes of Alberta's position regarding this matter. Quite frankly, the federal government does not have the authority to bind Alberta with respect to the ratification of this convention because the particular area in question falls within provincial jurisdiction. There is no legal obligation, Mr. Speaker, on the part of Alberta to implement through legislation the terms of the convention. Nevertheless, we feel there is no need to do so because all of our legislation in this province complies with the terms of the convention.

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

Health Care System

(continued)

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, there's been considerable discussion lately regarding Bill 37 and its impact on our publicly funded health system here in Alberta. Individuals in my constituency are concerned with the possible long-term effects of Bill 37. Some are concerned with the contents of the actual bill, while others are confused by what they call some misinformation regarding the bill. Our government, on the one hand, is emphasizing that this bill is necessary to protect our publicly funded health care system, while opponents are saying Bill 37 spells the end for public health in our province. My questions are to the hon. Minister of Health. Can he tell my constituents and others specifically what he's doing to alleviate these concerns and what he's doing to help unravel this confusion, and in the end how we are going to help protect the public health system?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly will certainly recall that during the spring session -- and actually I think it would go back to the fall session prior to that -- the opposition was raising the issue of private health care and possible developments in that area. They were wanting to make sure that the legislation prevented any inappropriate aspect of private health care in this province, and we certainly agreed with that, because as I've said repeatedly in this House, we are certainly committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act and a strong, good public health care system in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we did act, and we did bring in Bill 37. That bill is designed to protect our public health care system, to follow the provisions of the Canada Health Act. It's very interesting that over the debate, if you look back at the debate during the spring and now the debate this fall in committee, there's very little reference in the debate to what is actually wrong with the clauses of the bill. We see very few references to that. The references, the speeches, are all on, "Well, this threatens public health care in the province." Which it does not. It is designed to do just the opposite.

However, Mr. Speaker, if the issue is that the clauses of Bill 37 do not do what we purport that they do and we say that they do, then that should be examined. We are quite open to that, I as minister and we as government, to have that examined by an arm's-length, neutral panel of people who will look at that bill and make sure that it has the clauses, that it has the content which achieves the objectives that we say it does. And we certainly will not get that kind of rational debate from those across the way.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Given that the minister has just announced this blue-ribbon panel on health, what assurances can the

minister give Albertans that really do ensure that the blue-ribbon panel on health will involve the most appropriate participants and provide the most meaningful health care consultation possible?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will certainly select people who are knowledgeable in the area of health care governance. They will be people with stature in our general community in this province and stature with the medical system in this province. We will certainly want them to be thorough in their work in terms of analyzing the proposed legislation to make sure it is going to achieve the objectives the government has before it.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health how this blue-ribbon panel will ensure that the voices of ordinary Albertans will be heard in concert with the voices of medical, legal, and other experts and tell us, for example, if there's any downside to Bill 37 not being introduced at this time?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that certainly there is a downside to the delay of what I think is very necessary and appropriate legislation. We identified, actually months and months ago, certainly going back over a year, that our existing legislation was not constructed in anticipation of certain developments that could occur regarding private health care in this province. We need to make those changes so that we have the legislative basis for controlling and preventing any erosion of the public health care system in this province.

The members across the way I'm sure would remember that we did act a year ago last June with respect to private eye clinics, which was an area of irritation and concern in the health care system. Mr. Speaker, we were able, fortunately, to be able to address that issue through setting a policy, but that policy would be much, much stronger and much better if it were enshrined in legislation, which is part of the amendments that we put forward for Bill 37.

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

Child and Family Services

MRS. SLOAN: "As a professional social worker, I would violate my code of ethics if I participated in the initiative, which I believe is ultimately detrimental to children, families, and society." This quotation is one of 387 reflecting widespread concerns of frontline staff in the children's services initiative. These concerns are being made public today and tabled in this Assembly. To the Minister of Family and Social Services: how does the minister justify advancing the redesign of children's services at an accelerated pace when he does not have the support of frontline staff?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Probably about a year ago there was significant concern about the children and family services authority initiative. This concern came from social workers, the frontline workers. I met with a lot of them. My senior staff in my department met with a lot of them, and indeed we have come to the conclusion that the best possible way to get the children and family services initiative rolling, to get it going is to accelerate that pace.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we had a report commissioned last year around this time which stated that we had two or three options. One of the options was to accelerate the pace to get it going. What you have to remember is that this has been an initiative that has been out there for three years. It's been in the planning process for three years, and quite frankly it

became time to get this initiative going, to get it forward, and to get the authorities up and running. This is a very important initiative that is backed by the communities, backed by the people of Alberta, and I think it's very positive.

I would ask the hon. minister responsible for the children and family service initiative to add to my answer.

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my hon. colleague for allowing me to respond to that. First of all, it is very important to remember that this whole initiative took approximately four years, and in the last two years 13,000 people have been asking me, as the minister responsible, to see when it is that we are going to allow this to happen. It's come to pass, and we really appreciate the input the staff have given us in terms of what they see as some issues that we have to overcome.

It's not a perfect system yet, Mr. Speaker, but what the people of Alberta, the 13,000 people, have told us: you have to get this where the community can make the decisions. We're doing that, and I think it's a very wonderful initiative, and I thank all those support workers that have been involved.

MRS. SLOAN: I would ask the minister to explain how three reports over the span of one year could draw the same conclusions, that staff do not believe this redesign will work in the interests of children.

2:30

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, the staff I have talked to are fully committed to it. I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that the children and family services authority has been up and running in Calgary since February. It is going extremely smoothly. Ask the Calgary MLAs here. Are there any problems with the child and family services authority? They've done a fabulous job. They're working well. The social workers in Calgary are working well. It's time to get this to the rest of the province, and we are doing that as quickly as possible.

MRS. SLOAN: What kind of example does this minister set for regional authorities, just as he mentioned, by ignoring the widespread concerns of frontline staff?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, I think what the hon. member tends to forget is that there are 5,400 frontline staff in my department. I am not ignoring them. The staff are behind us in this initiative. I will certainly take a look at what the hon. member has tabled today, but the staff that I talk to, the staff that I hear from, the staff in Calgary that are already working under the auspices of the child and family services authority are very much behind this. I find it absolutely absurd that the Liberal opposition does not want to do what the communities and the people of Alberta want to do.

Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

THE SPEAKER: To all hon. members, in this case in particular to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, earlier in the routine today we had an item, Tabling Returns and Reports. The chair recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, and as I recall, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview tabled two reports. The appropriate time for tablings is under that point in the routine, not during question period. The hon. member is not the only one who has strayed from that particular understanding.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Foster Parent Program

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Family and Social Services. Mr. Minister, today a group of concerned Edmonton area foster parents gathered at city hall to protest a proposed bylaw to charge foster parents a licensing fee and have their homes identified by signs on their window. The next thing that will happen is to license the foster children like we do our pets. These loving, caring foster parents are deeply concerned, as they should be, and, quite frankly, they are disgusted. Can the minister please advise what the impact of the proposal is on the ministry's foster care program and foster parents in the Edmonton area?

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for that question. First of all, I certainly will give the city of Edmonton council the benefit of the doubt, and I hope that they are not looking at licensing foster children as they do their pets.

Mr. Speaker, this Monday morning when I awoke and read the newspaper, I was quite shocked and astounded to see that city council was looking at this bylaw. Approximately eight to 10 weeks ago I had a conversation with the mayor of Edmonton, Mayor Bill Smith, because I had heard a rumor about this potential bylaw coming forward. I talked to him, and he said: "Oh, no, Lyle. Don't worry about it. It's not coming forward. Nothing to worry about." So I put it on the back burner. As I already said, I was quite shocked when I saw it this morning.

What will happen to foster parents under this proposed bylaw is that they will have a \$500 initial licensing fee followed by a \$350 annual fee. Mr. Speaker, I find this quite horrendous. What we're trying to do with foster parents -- I may add that potentially there is a shortage of them -- is get more foster parents, get more foster families to look after these kids that have come from backgrounds that are anything but desirable. This bylaw puts an impediment on our department's looking at getting more foster parents, and I think that's extremely bad.

I think the other thing and probably the most incredible part of this bylaw is putting a sign in your window or putting a sign on your front lawn that says, "I have foster kids." What we're trying to do is integrate these foster children back into mainstream society because they have come from very unfortunate circumstances. I think this bylaw is absolutely regressive, and I just can't understand why Edmonton city council would even be looking at something like this.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the minister doing to limit this bylaw and the obstacles it brings for foster parents and children?

DR. OBERG: Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday morning I wrote a letter to Mayor Bill Smith and to all city councillors expressing my dismay. I think probably the best thing that I can do respecting the autonomy of the municipal government in Edmonton is to send a message straight to Bill: "Bill, if it was your administration that brought this bill forward, fire them. If it was your council that brought this forward, have the councillors stand before this bylaw and take ownership of this bylaw."

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you.

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

Lakeland Park and Recreation Area

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, the Lakeland provincial park and recreation area was set up in 1992 to protect the natural environ-

ment, but the Minister of Environmental Protection doesn't seem to agree with this. In June of this year he approved a utility corridor through this recreation area. What attempts did the Minister of Environmental Protection make to use existing pipeline corridors that avoid Lakeland park and recreation area?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, there is a corridor that runs through the air weapons range, and that is the corridor we would prefer. In fact, if there is an application to put a pipeline from Fort McMurray down to Hardisty, we're hoping it will in fact end up going through the air weapons range.

The process is that the Alberta utilities board will ask during the hearing if there are alternatives to the proposed route. If in fact they can go through the air weapons range, if the base commander at that time approves it, then that's where it will go. But we were faced with a situation where we couldn't be assured that it could go through the air weapons range. The alternatives that were looked at would be to go clear around on the west side of the provincial park or set aside an area that is right on the very east edge of the recreation area between the air weapons range and the recreation area, and when it hits down around Spencer Lake, it will come on the west side of the lake. This will do the minimum amount of environmental damage.

As a matter of fact, if you look at the route around the west side of the park and look at the extra mileage involved, if that doesn't do more environmental damage than the potential of going in the route that we are suggesting or preferably over into the air weapons range, then I'm sure that the hon. member has not really researched the whole area.

MS CARLSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, is it the intention that this utility corridor, several hundred metres wide, will include high-voltage transmission lines and a road, and that's why they wouldn't let it through the weapons area?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, at this point there are no -- and I must emphasize no -- applications for any utility line or pipeline, and we don't know what might be coming in the future. We do know, though, that there's going to be a very large development in the Fort McMurray area and there will be the necessity to have a pipeline run from the Fort McMurray area down to Hardisty. We know that is going to happen in the next few years.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, supplemental information.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Energy has approached the Minister of Environmental Protection to ensure that this corridor is put in place. There are over 300 billion barrels of oil locked in the oil sands. That equates to present-day development of it at about 900 years. Future generations of Alberta are going to thank us for setting aside this pathway through this recreation area. It's not a provincial park; it's a recreation area. When I was minister of parks and recreation I developed the Lakeland plan, and in that plan it had always intended multi-use. It is only recently that certain people thought they could backtrack on the plan and close it down for any future development. Future generations need to know that when we need a transmission line. up there, when we need a road, when we need pipelines to bring that product down, they have access to do that for sustainable development of the north. Anybody who denies that today is only doing it to be politically correct.

2:40

MS CARLSON: For this theoretical corridor that the minister has

already approved, when it contravenes the 1985 management plan that forbids major transportation or utility corridors through any park, including this one, when the Minister of Energy has a memo stating that he believes this minister to have concerns about this corridor, why is the Minister of Environmental Protection once again completely abandoning environmental protection in this province?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course one of the things is a little bit twisted in her preamble. She talked about the park. This is not going through the park, and if it ever does go, it's through the recreation portion of the Lakeland special place. As far as talking about protecting, since we implemented the special places program, we have set aside some 45 parcels of land under the special places program. That's in a very short period of time since we put it into place. So I really don't know what this member is talking about when she mentions that we're not protecting the environment.

If you want to look at things like the regulations on emissions, the province of Alberta has the most stringent regulations in North America. As a matter of fact, we did a comparison, and only on two or three parameters was there any place that was any tougher. That was the state of California, and they were only minimally above our standards. So, Mr. Speaker, we are looking after the environment.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. Minister of Environmental Protection. I was attempting to listen very attentively to your answer. There seemed to be an echo. There seemed to be two or three of you speaking at the same time on the government side, and there seemed to be a whole series over there. I sincerely hope *Hansard* will have picked up the appropriate answer.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

Cancer Research

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is the home of many talented medical researchers who are involved in exciting medical breakthroughs. Evidence of this was revealed a few weeks ago when Dr. Patrick Lee and his group of researchers at the University of Calgary discovered what may in fact be a potential cure for cancer. Can the Minister of Health provide Albertans with an update on this exciting discovery, please?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the member certainly raises an important question in one of the many areas of strength of our health care system in this province. It's my understanding that Dr. Patrick Lee and his research team at the University of Calgary -- I hope I've got that right -- have been successful in developing a number of viruses which arrest the progress of I think up to about 20 different types of cancer, including breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, some of the most deadly forms of that terrible disease. The initial experiments have been dealing with mice, and now he is applying through the very, very important stage of getting approval to do human-based research.

MRS. LAING: Thank you. My supplemental is to the same minister. Would you please explain what the role of Health Canada is in approving this potential new cure?

MR. JONSON: In our overall national health care system the federal government does have responsibility for approvals with respect to that very important step, from initial applications of a research project to actual human subjects. The federal government is currently in receipt of the application, as I understand it. It will likely take 12 to 18 months before approval is given. While that might seem to be a long time, I think it's extremely important with research projects as with any other new development or treatment in the health care system that it be as safe as possible, albeit an experimental process. So, Mr. Speaker, at the federal level through the agency -- I think it's known as the institute of biologics and pharmaceutical something or other -- they will be doing that thorough analysis, and we certainly hope for a positive outcome.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand there are people phoning this doctor from all over the world because of their concern and wishing to have access. Could you tell us, please, Mr. Minister, what our government is doing to ensure this approval process is not unduly delayed?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to emphasize again that at this particular stage of this project the decision has appropriately been referred to the federal authorities, to the agency which deals with these research project approvals and their application to individual people. But in the more general sense, the province has a major commitment of course to health overall, well in excess of \$4 billion, and within that we have a significant amount of money in Alberta Health but also through other departments that goes into research in this province.

One of the early decisions of this government back in the late 1970s, as I recall, was to establish the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. That particular entity, Mr. Speaker, has been the envy of I think all of Canada and certainly North America, perhaps the world. It has continued to generate a sound viable funding base to keep research going in this province. So an excellent question.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now we'll begin with the three members' statements, and we'll go in this order: first of all, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler. In 30 seconds from now we'll call on the first hon. member.

Speaker's Ruling Tablings

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before I call on the first hon. member for Members' Statements, just a brief note to the hon. minister responsible for science, research, and information technology. In the introduction that you gave today -- we do have a provision for tablings in the Assembly, and oftentimes there are unique items that are tabled in the Assembly. I would just like the hon. member to know that if the hon. member would want to table in the Assembly a reflective package of, say, five kilograms for each member of the Assembly of Spitz, I would allow that to take place.

head: Members' Statements

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, on December 11, 1991, Canada ratified the UN convention on the rights of the child. This convention has been ratified by all Canadian provinces except

Alberta. It is important to note that Canada did not ratify the convention unconditionally. Two reservations in one statement of understanding were placed on its ratification. Canada indicated that it was not bound by certain obligations in the convention. One reservation concerns the detention of young offenders, while another concerns the adoption of children.

The convention sets out special protection for children based on the universal declaration of human rights and the declaration on the rights of the child. The UN community of nations recognized the need for this convention because children as a group require special care and attention and are more vulnerable than other human beings. The convention aims to protect the social, economic, and cultural as well as civil and political rights of children around the world. It gives children the right to survive, to be protected, and to develop, the right to have a name and nationality, and the right to live with their parents wherever possible. The convention appears to emphasize the importance of parents in the upbringing of children.

Lastly, the convention espouses the ideal that children should grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding with the protection and assistance necessary for full development of their personalities so that they may become responsible individuals within their society.

Mr. Speaker, with the world's attention focused here in our province as we celebrate the conference on human rights, it is time for us to revisit the decision to hold out on ratifying the UN convention on the rights of the child. The time is right, though late. Let us rise to the occasion. Let our children be part of the free world.

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

2:50 Maintenance Enforcement

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce the Legislative Assembly to three of my constituents who are involved with the maintenance enforcement program. For confidentiality purposes I'll call them Ms A, B, and C.

Ms A has been separated from her husband for 15 years and has had custody of the children. The original enforcement order was for \$500 per month, reduced to \$400 and again to \$300. To date the debtor has willfully defaulted on his payments, and Ms A has been supporting herself and her children on a disability pension. Currently the arrears total approximately \$35,000, even though past arrears have already been forgiven. The debtor has managed to shelter his assets through the company of his common-law wife.

Ms B has been divorced for 10 years, and the arrears have grown to a phenomenal \$80,000. The debtor resides in B.C. and has been able to shelter his assets and income. A current court order calls for a repayment plan of \$200 per month to cover the arrears in addition to maintenance payments. At this rate it will take 40 years to cover back payments, presuming of course that he starts to pay. She has custody of three children.

In the case of Ms C the arrears are currently \$18,000, and only recently has the maintenance enforcement department begun to push for action.

The maintenance enforcement review undertaken by the government is a long overdue initiative. In the future the recommendations may address some of the concerns that have been expressed by my constituents; however, as of today my constituents have experienced no relief from the constant anguish of not knowing how to make ends meet. For whatever reasons the maintenance enforcement program has been slow to take action to

collect the moneys owing and slower to enforce section 21.

At some point the needs of the children must become paramount and no more chances given to the delinquent payer. I urge that the recommendations of the maintenance enforcement review that did not require legislation be fast-tracked to benefit these families now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Osteoporosis

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 200,000 men and women in Alberta are afflicted with osteoporosis. The silent thief, as it is called, is a debilitating disease where the skeleton does not contain enough calcium and often leads to broken bones, deformity, and reduced quality of life. As a result of this disease, there are over 7,000 fractures every year in Alberta; that is 21 fractures per day, one fracture every 69 minutes. Currently, broken bones resulting from this disease cost the Canadian health system \$1.3 billion per year and represent a projected expenditure of some \$32.5 billion over the next 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, osteoporosis is of particular concern to me as I have had several loved ones that have died as a result of complications from this disease, and I have recently learned that I am prone to developing it myself. At present there is no cure for osteoporosis. It is best managed through prevention and early treatment, and certainly public awareness, public understanding is key. It is important that Albertans are educated on the risk factors. In particular, women need to be aware that it affects more women than men, partly due to the loss of estrogen that occurs after menopause.

The good news is that there are steps that can be taken to ensure that Albertans with this disease maintain their independence and quality of life while decreasing associated health costs. There are many lifestyle changes that can be made and new medications available to treat and prevent. For example, the Health Canada approval of a new drug called Evista was announced today, which will provide a new option for postmenopausal women to protect themselves from osteoporosis.

Mr. Speaker, without prevention and early detection measures many Albertans will continue to unknowingly live with the silent thief at work while the costs associated with this disease will continue to balloon. The health costs can be contained if we act now, if we take steps to educate all Albertans.

THE SPEAKER: Before calling Orders of the Day, I'd like to call on the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill for an introduction.

head: Introduction of Guests (reversion)

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to be able to introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly a group of 27 very dedicated and bright individuals from Calgary, from in fact one of the finest examples of private schooling in this province, the Webber Academy. The students are, as I said, indeed bright and dedicated. I will add quiet and polite. They've been sitting in our gallery for some period of time, and I don't think one of them has made a move since they got here.

The founder of the school is with us today, a friend and colleague from past days. A great many members would know him. Dr. Webber is leading the group. There are, as well, five or six parent/teacher helpers with him today to help with these students, although as I said before, Mr. Speaker, they don't

require much supervision. I would ask that the students and Dr. Webber and the parent helpers stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

Thank you.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Second Reading

Bill 216

Citizen's Initiative Act

[Adjourned debate November 18: Mr. Severtson]

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me real pleasure today to stand and speak on Bill 216. I guess we have to start and look at what we all believe in when we talk about democracy. It's a matter of the legislation and it's a matter of the rules that govern society being a true reflection of the wishes and the direction of that society within the constraints of certain rights that are laid down in the Constitution.

What we've got is a democratic process that has evolved over a number of years that reflects the election of individuals to be our representatives as we undertake to develop the rules and laws for our society. We've got to have within that a way of communicating to those representatives certain initiatives, certain ideas that we want to make sure they address in a certain way.

A lot of times the, should I call it, hype that gets associated with elections takes individuals away from the issue of the form or the real direction that a particular program, a particular initiative might take. So Bill 216 as it is presented to us today provides us with an option to look at the ideas of: how do we get information from citizens into the legislative process? The idea that this Bill 216 suggests the format for a mandate to be brought to the legislation, which then has to be acted on, is a far superior process, as far as I'm concerned, to the process that just says: if it's passed, it's law.

What we have to do is look at how those laws that are brought about by referendum mix with all of the other laws that are on the books and look at how we relate them to our constitutional rights. In many cases, especially when we try and make the citizen's initiative short enough that people can understand it in the context of a polling booth and a vote, it doesn't have that opportunity to reflect on all of those issues. So from that perspective I'd like to commend the author of the bill because it does provide for that kind of a safety check, and I guess in the end, if the Legislature decides not to act and to support the idea being brought forth under that citizen's initiative, what you've got is an option for the voters at the next election to put in place representatives who would actually carry out their wishes. So from that perspective what I see is a very good bill.

3:00

I guess if there's a concern, it has to do with the requirement that the petition be less than 25 words. How do you get out an idea that's complex enough to become a law in 25 words so that it can be understood and fully appreciated by all of the citizens who are going to be voting on this piece of legislation? So it brings about some options for supporting documents -- I guess that is a way to put it -- secondary activities that would bring about support or lobbying on behalf of the different initiatives. From the way we have to look at it in the context of getting the

process put in place, we see that the time line that comes through is fairly effective. It sets out quite a detailed process for the proponent of the initiative to follow, and it has a check in place to make sure that it is reasonably broad based in terms of the support that comes about for it.

I guess when we look at it in the context of the likelihood of it passing, because of the conditions that are there for the activity to pass when you have to get the relative proportion of all of the constituencies giving it support at a 60 percent level, what you end up with is essentially a situation that really creates a broad-based support for an initiative. If we look at some of the initiatives that went on in the U.S. in the last election as examples of "Can plebiscite initiatives be broad-based enough?" a lot of the ones that were voted on in the U.S. this time, that were passed, would not have passed under the conditions of the broad base on a constituency level and the level of popular support that are required by this bill. I guess that's what we need to be debating and probably can take that up when the bill gets to Committee of the Whole, because we've got to start looking at: what do we need in the context of both a regional balance and an absolute level of support?

You know, democracy is based on the majority vote bringing about initiatives, bringing about election of representatives, bringing about plebiscites or actions at a local level, so we have to look at it from the perspective of why this one is so much more restrictive, especially given that it only brings forth to the Legislature a suggestion of an action or a mandate to act in the sense that they would then bring forth legislation. So it would, I guess, in a way constrain the initiative very significantly in the sense that it might be harder for people to get support for an initiative, and they also then would not be as prone to start these initiatives. If we're going to get citizens involved in bringing forward ideas, we've got to have them in a position where they seem to have and expect a level of success. If we want to look at that in the perspective, "Is it likely that these will be successful?" then we have to give the individuals a feeling of confidence, a feeling that, yes, their initiative will be likely successful, will bring forth a piece of legislation into the Legislature.

One of the things that we've got to try and make sure of, as we get this idea supported across the province, is that it's not a way to bring about change in the Constitution; it's a way to bring about change in the laws of the province. I say that, Mr. Speaker, because a number of the people who have been contacting my office on either side of this issue in terms of how they would like to see me vote on this bill are talking about it in the context of: well, if we have this in place, then we can do certain things that are within the power of a popular vote.

Yet a lot of what they want to do brings about issues of debate about the relative ability under human rights or under the Constitution: "Can we change the power of taxation that's authorized within the context of the Constitution for different levels of government? Can we change the way individuals are treated under the human rights act through this kind of legislation?" I think it needs to be brought forward that this is an initiative that can only address those facets of law that are subject to the actions of this body, this Legislature, that we serve our constituents in. So that's one of the things that we have to look at in the context of dealing with how to get the public informed about the potential for this type of initiative. They have great expectations for it, and it's almost like it's overextended in its appeal in the sense that they want to see this applied to a lot of initiatives that are probably outside the boundary of what we can do.

I'll kind of conclude on a couple of comments on some of the specific sections that we might want to look at when it gets to

committee in terms of changing it. I've dealt a little bit with the one on the absolute level. Given that this is not a lawmaking process, that it's a law introduction process, I think it's a little too severe in the level of public support that we need to do. We might want to look at and I would encourage the sponsors of the bill to look at making those thresholds a little lower so that we do have a feeling of confidence for the Albertans that want to undertake this kind of action, this kind of an initiative.

The timing of it also seems to be a little bit restrictive in the sense that we've got a large province we have to cover. We've got to cover two-thirds of the constituencies under the rules of this process. We're going to end up having to have a large body in place that is ready to support this before the whole thing is put into action. It's almost like we're going to have only organized, provincewide associations that can undertake the action that's required here. It can't be something that starts in a community and grows and spreads across the province while this process is maturing. The maturity of the effort would have to be in place before that.

So those are some of the comments that I'd like to raise about Bill 216. I think it's quite a successful idea. It's one that I would hope a sufficient number of people in the Legislature will support because it's the kind of initiative that I think would make the voters of the province, the people of the province, feel that essentially, yes, we want their input and, yes, we'll take their suggestions. But there also has to be the legislative prerogative to make sure that it balances with all the other aspects that go on in the context of how we deal with policy and how we deal with the issues of taxation and government financing within the context of the bill.

So on that basis, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that people would undertake this bill and look on it favourably and support it when the time comes.

Thank you.

3:10

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 216, the Citizen's Initiative Act. I am wanting to take that the hon. member across the way is proposing this bill in a sincere position to try and establish democratic mechanisms for citizens to be involved in democracy in this province. I think as citizens involved externally in the democratic process or, as is the case now, directly involved as elected members of this Legislature we have all had experiences and insights into the level of citizen involvement in democracy in this province and country. Any mechanisms, in my opinion, that facilitate constructive involvement I think are supported. However, I am not in a position this afternoon to speak to Bill 216 and say that I will support it at this stage. I would like to continue to speak quite generally and then will speak specifically to some of the sort of technical omissions in the bill itself.

I have been quite surprised as an MLA that there is not a succinct job description for Members of the Legislative Assembly, and over the course of the 18 months that I've been in office, it's become clear to me that the responsibilities certainly that I am expected to assume for all members of my constituency cover the areas of communication, advocacy, management, and acting as a legislator. I have endeavoured to co-ordinate the affairs of my office and the work of my constituency around those four responsibilities, to publish an annual report which provides all constituents with an update of those activities and also a report of how I have spent the \$57,000 I've received from the Provincial Treasurer to operate my constituency.

Speaker's Ruling Clarification

THE SPEAKER: Please. The Speaker would not ordinarily interrupt, but the Provincial Treasurer does not allocate dollars to any hon. members. The Members' Services Committee allocates dollars to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you for that correction, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

MRS. SLOAN: I was astounded, though, that that is not common practice by MLAs. In fact, I am not aware of any other member of this Legislature that publishes how they spend the money allotted by the Legislative Assembly on an annual basis. I raise that example because I think it's an example where if we assumed our role and responsibilities in an accountable fashion, if we reported to our constituents on an annual basis, and if we offered services of advocacy to constituents regardless of what their political beliefs or philosophies may be, we may not in fact need initiatives like the act that is before us today.

I am also told, Mr. Speaker -- and I did a formal review in my last annual report -- that there are many members of this Assembly that do not offer advocacy services. When constituents call their office, they are told that they do not provide that support. I have had a number of those constituents call my office for support directly in the social services area both with respect to accessing information and assistance with respect to social services, child welfare, Workers' Compensation Board, and other appeals. So if we in fact had a job description for MLAs and if in fact that description was accessible to constituents in such a way that they could hold their elected member accountable to that, I think we'd have a much better process, a much more accountable process for ensuring that citizens' issues were acted upon in a responsible fashion by the Legislative Assembly.

The alternative that's proposed this afternoon is highly technical. The process is quite complex, to put it mildly. I am not in a position, I guess, to say whether or not this type of thing would actually ever be able to fly in this province, but I think that specifically there are some aspects of the bill itself that cause me concern.

The first is under part 1, the areas that are exempt from a petition being able to be activated. I would respectfully suggest that that should be broadened. I think one of the things that has been raised previously but has not really been responded to by the hon. members across the way is that this section is not broad enough. It basically says at present:

A proposal for an initiative petition shall be rejected if the initiative petition

- (a) requires an expenditure of public funds,
- (b) requires the imposition of a tax or impost, or
- (c) is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I think we would suggest -- and it may be something which the hon. members across the way want to put into perhaps an amendment -- I think we should also include that the initiative not require the Legislature to invoke the notwithstanding clause. We have had in this Legislature in this very last year circumstances that prompted a government to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and invoke the notwithstanding clause on a group of citizens who had already been subjected, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, to enough abuse and enough injury at the hands of government.

I would also suggest that the initiative be restricted to provincial jurisdiction and therefore could not violate the Canada Act of

1867. The initiative should also not set forth the issue of independence of Alberta from Canada. We're all very much alive in the western part of our country to a segment of society that believes our province would be better off separated. Mr. Speaker, I do not share that view.

We should also suggest that the initiative not violate the IRPA. Further, I think it would be a rational suggestion that we remove 2(2)(a) and (b) to permit an initiative to spend public funds or impose a tax. Being a Member of the Legislative Assembly aside, Mr. Speaker, I've had the experience of being a parent in the last 10 years and working an increasing number of fund-raising activities, from bingos to selling chocolates to selling gift-wrap paper, basically to subsidize the level of public education that is accessible to my children in the public system and also to facilitate them participating in sports and other recreation activities both in the context of school and in minor hockey. I'm beginning to believe that the level of fund-raising in this province is really a substitute for a sales tax or a provincial tax. Basically we have opted for another source of revenue, from VLTs, from lotteries and gaming, and are expecting parents and citizens in an increasing way to subsidize our primary public programs because this government doesn't have the political guts to say that there needs to be a consideration of the level of funding for those programs.

I guess I come back to questioning why, when we don't have a job description for MLAs, when there is not a core list of services those MLAs are expected to offer their constituents, when to my knowledge there isn't even a published process of how government members determine what bills they will or won't enact in the Legislative Assembly. I cannot support a convoluted process. Despite the good intentions of the member across the way, I think that in the absence of those other things, this bill is really tokenism, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to point out another technical aspect of the bill that I think should receive some further scrutiny. In order to pass an initiative, the bill is saying that it must receive 60 percent of support across the province and 60 percent of electors voting in two-thirds of the constituency. Basically that means the threshold for passing an initiative is much higher than for a political party in the past and the present systems. It suggests that the Legislative Assembly, where the majority party typically receives less than 50 percent of the vote, is in a better position to judge legislation than the 60 or 59.9 percent of the electorate. I would criticize the bill on this ground, Mr. Speaker, from the basis that it is in fact antidemocratic.

There are references, I think, in the comments of the hon. member across the way where he talked about other jurisdictions. I believe all of them that have enacted this type of legislation were in the United States. I looked at some of the legislation that has come forward under citizens' initiatives, and I don't think it's the type of thing that we would want to be promoting.

MR. DAY: Point of order.

3:20

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, the hon. Provincial Treasurer on a point of order.

The citation, please.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DAY: Reflecting *Beauchesne* and the ability for a member to pose a question to another member, would the member entertain a brief question?

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, in the words of the hon. Minister of Justice, I would be prepared to after I've concluded my remarks. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, unfortunately there's no provision for that because once the hon. member has concluded her remarks, the chair will recognize someone else. So I take it that the answer is that you just want to continue.

MRS. SLOAN: I would like to continue, sir. Thank you.

Debate Continued

MRS. SLOAN: One of the initiatives in the States that actually saw the light of day under such a process was an initiative to deny driver's licences to illegal aliens. Now, is that not hilarious? There was another one that came forward, an initiative that was titled Stop Killing Our Dogs. Several other ones, I think. Maybe this government would like to debate the legalization of marijuana, the use and manufacture and possession of that substance.

MR. DICKSON: We see equally foolish government bills coming forward.

MRS. SLOAN: As my hon. colleague from Calgary-Buffalo says, we see equally foolish government motions coming forward.

However, I don't know if the hon. member across the way has some examples of issues that he would like to raise in the context of this debate to indicate, you know, what types of issues this government believes this process would facilitate.

I should also preface my remarks, Mr. Speaker. I think there has been a significant publishing of evidence now that there are medical purposes for marijuana, and that is something which perhaps the hon. government members would like to pursue at some point and bring forward for debate.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on the bill at this stage. I look forward to the debate and hope that the sponsoring member is alive to some of the areas and issues I've raised and that he will provide some further information or rationale at some point in the future debate of this bill.

Thank you.

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

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into the debate on Bill 216, the Citizen's Initiative Act, which has been sponsored by my colleague for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The bill we are debating today centres on something very important to all Albertans, and it's called democracy. Bill 216 touches on the basis of our democracy and the sources from which political power is derived. While the power to make decisions affecting the lives of all Albertans is here in the Assembly, the Assembly gets its power solely at the will of the people. Political power ultimately rests in the hands of Albertans. They elected all 83 of us in the Assembly, and they are ultimately our bosses. Everything we do here has to be done for the sake of our constituents, so when we talk about democracy and reforming our political process to make it more like the ideal of democracy and more responsive to the people, we need to keep that in mind.

Bill 216 proposes a significant change in our political process. It would allow any voter to propose an initiative to present to Albertans for their signature. If a petition was successful at that stage in garnering the nearly 100,000 signatures that would be

needed, there would be an election on the issue. This represents a fairly significant departure from our current system of having voter input primarily at election time or on the rare occasion during a plebiscite.

Over the last few years the government has taken many steps to establish greater openness and accountability to Albertans. Certainly the publication of government annual reports, budgets, and business plans all indicate a commitment involving the average Albertan in government initiatives. On the informal side, we presently have a method of public input in decisions through roundtables and task forces, which opponents of the bill are apt to point out when suggesting that we do not need legislation such as Bill 216. But providing a voice during a public consultation process is not comparable to initiating legislation, nor is public consultation something which a government is compelled to do. These methods of public consultation have worked and continue to work well for both the government and those Albertans who wish to have a stronger voice within government, but I believe that we should always be open to new suggestions, particularly if they reinforce the principles of our democratic system and allow average voters an additional input into the legislation process.

In that regard I would like now to turn to the consideration of the reasons for supporting this bill. The most typical opportunity for citizen involvement in the democratic process is at election time. Every four or five years people put an X beside someone's name in support of his or her beliefs and the belief that he or she will be the best representative for them in the respective constituencies at the Legislature. I believe that citizens need to get more involved in the political process. Although the electorate is largely comprised of informed and intelligent individuals, many do not participate as much as the importance of political decisions would warrant. But should we blame the electorate for this? By no means, Mr. Speaker. Bill 216 is another means of encouraging active involvement from all Albertans. Many people believe that the democratic system would only be enhanced and improved through the implementation of a citizen's initiative process.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 216 will work to correct many of the concerns I've just raised. It allows for issues of importance to be brought forward by the people of Alberta. In addition, it will tend to get more citizens involved, educated, and hopefully excited about the democratic process, which in turn will only be beneficial to all of us. Bringing more and more people into the process means a richer, more thoughtful debate on issues. This will in turn assist the Assembly and the government in developing better solutions. These benefits have certainly been a result of the public consultation around the province which has been held on various government legislation and initiatives.

In fact, much legislation from this government has been primarily based on the input from Albertans. I believe that Bill 216 continues in this tradition and gives the electorate the right to bring an important issue independent of the government. People won't have to wait for the government to propose something; the people can initiate it on their own. Such a process brings a richness and additional dynamics to the democratic process and system that will make all Albertans better off.

Mr. Speaker, another reason I support this bill is that besides encouraging greater citizen involvement and input, it also enhances people's sense of political efficiency and the ability of average people to really affect what government does.

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has expired.

head: Motions Other than Government Motions
3:30 **Student/teacher Ratios**

514. Dr. Nicol moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to cap elementary class size, kindergarten to grade 7, at 18 students and to limit the instructional load of secondary English, mathematics, and science teachers to 80 students.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a growing body of academic evidence that shows that if we are going to make sure that our children get the greatest opportunity possible out of their education system, class size has to be a major part of the criteria we use to deal with the education structure that we develop in order to convey to our children the necessary knowledge.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There's a lot of work now in place that shows that children come into the school system with a sense of one-on-one contact, and as they get to a classroom situation, they need to have that individual contact, that individual association with a teacher to kind of bridge that transition. That gives them the sense that there's a continuity in their learning style and process so that as they move through the learning process, the size doesn't become as critical. It's really important, because if students can get a good start in their education system, then they perform better as they move through subsequent grades. We have to look at it from that perspective in terms of: how can we provide our students with the option to move into the learning process and get the most out of it so that they can be productive citizens?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just talk again in general about the two different categories that I put in there. The first one is the elementary class size, where it's so important that these students be given that initial individual contact but also be given the opportunity to learn in a style that they're accustomed to in a family unit. But as we get to the secondary schools, what it amounts to is that it's the relationship between the skill and knowledge areas, where the learning process is built from very close structure. English is a good one. We have to learn our English in a process that has a lot of feedback in it. Do we use the correct tenses? Do we use the correct words? When we have classes in literature or parts of our English class that deal with literature, how do we interpret those written articles? It's the appreciation of how thoughts are put on paper to convey ideas. This is the kind of thing that needs a lot of feedback in an education system.

You know, I can speak from some experience, Mr. Speaker. When I teach my courses, even at a university level, in the issues of policy or of general approach, these are just lectures. These are the ideas. These are how they relate to each other, and people pick up on them. But when I go out and try to teach my introductory economics courses, these are the concepts that people need to be able to say: "Well, does it work here? Does it work there?" There's an awful lot more of that one-on-one contact that's required, so that's why I'm suggesting that in English, math, and science, teachers be limited to a maximum contact of 80 students in the context of their curriculum for those subjects, because the feedback that's required in that context takes up all of the time. It puts too much stress on the teacher, and then it shortchanges the student in the classroom if the teacher has to deal with more than 80 students.

So what you have to look at is: how can we achieve that? It would be nice if we weren't in a position to have to constrain school boards by putting in limits. We have to be able to provide them with the flexibility to mold their education system in the way that gives them the most opportunity to provide for their children in a way that the parents accept it and in a way that the society accepts it.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the reflections that's coming up quite often in the debate that we get now between the private schools and the public school system. A number of the private schools now are out recruiting their students on the basis of: we have small class sizes. Yet we're providing a context where the public school system cannot use that same argument in the context of: look; we have a comparable system of education. Now, fiscal responsibility requires that there be those kinds of trade-offs, but we've got to provide the public system with the same flexibility. I think the issue here comes down to where some of the school boards now have class size and contact limits built into their contract negotiations. Others don't, so they have more flexibility. They have the degree of flexibility that is available, and it shows up in how both the teachers respond and how the students are responding.

Mr. Speaker, as I started off, there's a lot of academic literature that shows the importance of the idea that class sizes are critical in the education process. I think one of the kind of benchmark or pivotal studies was done in Tennessee, where they had a project that looked at 7,000 students over a number of years. They followed them through the education system, and they showed that in the lower learning classes, the lower learning ages, there was a substantial improvement in learning at the low age limit as well as in consecutive years if smaller class sizes were there as compared to schools that had larger class sizes. This is the thing that showed up as they kept their study going, and they reported that for children who moved from one school to the other, even if they moved into a school that had larger class sizes, if they came out of a school that had the smaller class sizes during their younger learning years, they still continued to perform better even though they were now in a large class size environment.

So this kind of re-emphasizes and really focuses on the issue that we have to have that promotional education style at the low grades. This is the kind of thing that they went on, and there are all kinds of other studies that are there as well. We have to look at it in the context of how these fit together. I think our objective in all of our education system is to make sure that our students get the greatest opportunity to learn, that they get the greatest opportunity to be supported in that learning process, and if that means we've got to give them the contact with a teacher on a one-on-one basis, if that means we've got to give them the option as they get into the technical learning areas of secondary school, that we've got to give them the feedback options to get critique on their work, to get comment on their thought processes and direction for their thought processes in the science, math, and English classes, then we've got to look at the way that they deal with this.

Mr. Speaker, I have not used up my full time, but I think that there are a lot of people that want to speak on this issue. Given that we only have a limited time to speak to the whole motion, I'll take my seat, and I would encourage everybody else to speak briefly so that all of us can get a chance to speak.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak in opposition to Motion 514, sponsored by the Member for Lethbridge-East. The purpose of this motion is to

universally limit class sizes in both elementary and secondary schools. In kindergarten to grade 7 the member opposite has proposed that we restrict the number of students in a class to 18 or less. This motion also suggests that in high school the teacher workload be the focus with a limit of 80 students for science, mathematics, or English.

One question I would have at this point, Mr. Speaker, is: why are junior high classes not being addressed as well? Why not social studies? Why not consider their marking load in addition to English, and why limit it to these three subjects? I believe that the consequences of supporting Motion 514 would be neither effective nor efficient for the people of this province and their children.

3:40

The number of students in the classroom is not the only issue that determines good teaching and good learning. Other more important factors are the abilities of the teacher, the teacher having the training and the experience required, the opportunity for the teacher to be rewarded for superior effort -- call it merit pay, if you wish -- and also, Mr. Speaker, the behaviour of the students. The issue of class size has been ongoing for many years both in academic research and within this Assembly. Perusing the various previous debates on this issue in *Hansard*, it certainly has been raised with some frequency but with no conclusive arguments.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that research published on the issue of reducing class size is not conclusive by any means, and even those studies that do support the reduction of class sizes put forward more of an argument for selective and appropriate reductions in class size rather than the universal across-the-board reductions proposed by this motion.

To begin with, I would like to state that I understand why many people would be supportive of this motion if they had not done any extensive research on the issue. Small class sizes seem to be the most natural, logical way to go if we are looking to improve our children's education system. As parents we may feel that our children will receive more individual attention and that this increased attention will benefit them both intellectually and developmentally.

Teachers are also in favour of smaller class sizes, Mr. Speaker. They know that with fewer kids they will be able to devote more time to individual students. There will be fewer exams to grade, evaluations to conduct. But I feel quite strongly that in constructing such an argument, that small classes are the only way to provide better instructions for our kids, we are setting ourselves up for a false dichotomy. There are many other relevant factors and alternatives that must be considered. For example, the presence of a teacher's aide, one-on-one tutoring, peer tutoring, integration of technology, the ability, commitment, education, professionalism, and appropriate placement also of the classroom teacher can all affect student achievement. These are all factors that this government considers on an ongoing basis as it works to maintain Alberta's excellent reputation for quality in education.

There is an assumption behind the argument behind this motion which I would also like to discuss. This assumption perhaps is that our children are not being well served by our current education system and that there's a need of some sort for the kind of measures that Motion 514 suggests. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's students are receiving an excellent education and are performing very well on achievement tests. We saw that in 1997 Alberta's grade 4 students outranked all other English-speaking participants in the third international mathematics and science study. Out of 26 countries and provinces Alberta students achieved third in science and seventh in mathematics. In science

achievement only Korea and Japan outranked us, and in mathematics we placed in the top third of participating countries. In both areas Alberta achieved the highest scores in Canada.

In the same study of math and science achievement grade 12 students from Alberta again ranked highly. Alberta students achieved the third highest score in science and the fifth highest score in math literacy as compared to the other 24 countries and provinces taking part in the study. In fact, in advanced math Alberta tied for the second highest score with students in Switzerland; they came second only to France.

Overall, Alberta's results in the third international mathematics and science study are significantly higher than the international average on six of the seven tests, putting Alberta among the best of the G-8 countries. In Alberta's own achievement test conducted in the last school year Alberta students did very well. In most subjects in grades 3, 6, and 9, students performed as well or better than expected. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, our education system is serving our students well, allowing them to achieve high results not only here at home but as compared with students across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to consider the example in Calgary where a mechanism has been tried to limit class size. The mechanism I'm referring to is the inclusion of the STR or PTR in the collective bargaining contracts. You have a situation where one board has an STR of approximately 19 and the other board of approximately 22. One would expect that one board would have smaller class sizes because they hire more teachers for a given number of children. Given 100,000 children in the system, if you divide by 19, you get approximately 5,263 teachers. If you divide 100,000 children by an STR of 22, you get 4,545 teachers. The difference between the two, 718 teachers, is a lot of teachers, and I would suspect it represents approximately \$35 million in budget dollars.

This example is roughly the current situation in Calgary. One would reasonably assume that the system with 718 more teachers would have smaller classes, but as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, the class sizes are approximately the same. This example is an illustration of measures that were supposed to translate into smaller class sizes but have not. The only way that class sizes can get larger is if certified teachers are not teaching.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are three central questions when examining this issue. One, do smaller classes make a great enough difference to students to justify the cost? Secondly, how does this improvement, if any, compare to the improvement shown by other approaches such as teacher aides or technology? Third, one has to ask whether the benefits of smaller classes can be applied to all students from kindergarten through to grade 12. Whether smaller classes make a difference seems to be linked to the available research and how much the class size is reduced.

Again, such studies vary considerably in their conclusions. One of the most well-known studies on this issue is the Tennessee study of class size in the early school grades, which was published in 1995. The study itself was a three-phase project that began in 1985 and aimed to determine the effectiveness of small classes. The first phase of the study involved about 6,500 students in 80 schools over a four-year period, tracking their performance from kindergarten through grade 3.

Classes were split into three types for the purposes of the study: first of all, small classes of 13 to 17, regular classes of 22 to 25 students with a teacher aide, and classes of 22 to 25 students without a teacher aide. The researchers did conclude that smaller classes with fewer than 17 students can be effective in improving student achievement but not necessarily for all classrooms

inclusively. The study found that improvement rates were most noticeable among the economically poorest areas, minority children, and in the youngest grades.

As a result of this study, Mr. Speaker, the Tennessee state government did take action to reduce class sizes, but not the universal, across-the-board reduction of the sort proposed by the member opposite. What the state government did do was to implement these small classes in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 3 but only in the 17 poorest districts of the state. The children in these 17 districts were at the highest risk of dropping out of school early, so it was these students that stood to gain from the increased attention. Not all students required this increased attention in order to do well.

Other studies have shown anything from no effect to minimal to substantial effect of class size on student achievement. Some studies set class size at different levels: 15 students, 23 students, 18 students. We have to recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the methodology used in the study can also affect the outcome. Some studies use class size while others use student/teacher ratio, although they are certainly not properly the same thing. As educators know, class size refers to the number of students in a classroom with one teacher. Student/teacher ratios, on the other hand, can include teachers in a school who are not actively involved in teaching classes, such as administrators, guidance counselors, or perhaps librarians.

3:50

Certainly where class size has been shown to have a noticeable difference, research has tended to find the improvement in the youngest grades, in the poorest neighbourhoods, and for specific demographic groups, but these are, of course, not the only factors that are relevant to a student's degree of need. Smaller classes have also been found to be more effective in subjects like home economics or for children of different academic abilities.

Alberta Education does not regulate class size in elementary schools or instructional loads for teachers in secondary schools. Class sizes and teachers' instructional loads are determined by the locally elected school boards on behalf of the parents with the superintendents, the principals, and the staff included in the decision-making process. These decisions are best made by the people closest to teaching and to learning.

Mr. Speaker, the kind of one-size-fits-all administration proposed by this motion is not consistent with the individualized approach of school jurisdictions throughout Alberta. Local school boards, school councils, and schools are responsible for making decisions that will serve students best. Decisions are made according to their individual needs, taking into account their age, subject matter, and community environment.

Schools have been given considerable flexibility on decision-making in order to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of students and parents. In addition, students in secondary schools have the ability to choose courses and optional programs to meet their individual needs. This flexibility of the Alberta education system also permits ease of flexibility and transferability for parents and students throughout the province. Families often move between schools during the school year as do students move between courses and classes throughout the year.

This mobility and flexibility I believe would be hampered by the narrow focus of the motion put forward by the Member for Lethbridge-East. A student could be kept out of a course in his or her own school because the class size was already at the maximum number and physical space or teachers were not available to create another class. Can you imagine the situation,

Mr. Speaker, where a few students were unable to access a class because the legislated limit had been reached?

Mr. Speaker, it's been my experience that students consider a teacher a more important consideration than class size when selecting their courses. In some cases a class is allowed to increase because it's the intention of the administration to split the class later on. In many cases students would choose to stay in a class of 35, 36, 38 students rather than move to a different class, much smaller, with a different teacher. They are selecting their teacher of choice. It's not the number of students that's the critical factor alone; it's the ability of the teacher as well that is very important.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Education is listening to Albertans and is developing specific strategies to meet the diverse needs of the students in the classroom. The Alberta Growth Summit identified people development as the number one priority facing our province, and Alberta Education has developed initiatives to improve student achievement and assist teachers in carrying out their duties. These include targeting more funding for instruction to address local needs and priorities.

At the beginning of this year, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Education announced a reinvestment plan for education. This plan was entitled *First Things First: Our Children*, a 12-point action plan for education. It puts the emphasis on young children with new early intervention programs, such as focusing on early literacy, improved classroom support, providing more teacher aides in the classroom, expanding English as a Second Language funding to children that were born in Canada, expanding support for children with special needs, and issues concerning increased enrollments. This plan eases classroom pressure and improves student achievement. School authorities are able to hire teacher interns, teaching assistants, more teachers or other professionals as needed to assess student literacy skills and needs and also to assist those at risk of falling behind. A teacher aide program will also be instituted for grades 1 to 6. Funding for the teacher aides is based on a per student basis, and school boards will assign the aides to meet the needs of each individual school.

Technology integration in the classroom has also been a priority, Mr. Speaker, for Alberta Education. The initial targets are to improve student access to computers and provide teachers and administrators with the benefits of resources on-line. Alberta Education and Advanced Education and Career Development have a three-year contract with Learning and Skills Television to develop materials for math 30, chem 30, bio 30, and physics 30. This development of multimedia products as an enhancement to curriculum encourages an environment conducive to teachers acting as facilitators and moves away from the traditional teacher-centred classroom. The implementation of technology as a means of facilitating learning in the classroom allows for more individualized learning and may allow a teacher to actually handle more students. This is contrary to this motion, which seeks to cap the total number of students that a teacher can have in high school.

Recent pilots, including *The Learning Equation* mathematics 9 that was tested in three western provinces, have had some interesting results. Accepting the proposed motion would preclude the possibility of using newer and better ways of doing things as well as the promising new multimedia computer learning systems.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe a large factor, an important factor in class size and effectiveness of teaching and learning is student behaviour itself. If student behaviour is inappropriate, almost no class size is too small, whether it be 10, 15, 20, or the 18 students proposed. However, if students are focused on their studies and attentive to the teacher, large class sizes are much more possible and teaching and learning is much more successful.

Mr. Speaker, it's been the goal of this government to find the most efficient and cost-effective ways of getting things done while at the same time respecting the rights of communities to manage their own needs and set their own priorities. There's a balance that must be established between what is provided and what the costs are of providing those services, and we must work hard to establish that balance.

We've worked hard to establish a balance in the education system, and by targeting specific areas of need in education, this province is providing a quality education system for the students across Alberta. With input from the students, parents, and teachers throughout Alberta we will continue to address legitimate concerns and continue to improve education in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of Motion 514. I'd like to start with a quote that came out of the Townsend report that our leaders referred to earlier this afternoon in question period. In that report are some quotes from principals and superintendents about the state of public education in our province.

One of the quotations that struck me was the one that started:

Like the fingernails of the dead, public education gives the impression that it lives on despite the cuts. The corporate body, however, is dead or, if not dead, emaciated and emasculated. A mortal blow has been dealt.

That's a judgment of one of our principals about the state of public education in the province, and I think it is that kind of judgment by professionals and laypeople alike across the province that leads to the kinds of motions that we have before us today and that has led to the action of Legislatures south of the border in attempts to improve the quality of public education. One of those attempts for improvement has focused on the number of students that a teacher must face every day.

4:00

The numbers 18 and 80 that appear in this motion are not arbitrary. They aren't numbers that we picked out of the air. They aren't numbers that came from the Tennessee study that the member opposite quoted a few minutes ago. These numbers are the standards that have been arrived at by the Pew Foundation and Education Week in the States. They spent considerable resources and considerable time trying to arrive at a set of standards that could be applied across the states south of the border. They have standards in terms of fiscal responsibility, in terms of student achievement, and one of the standards they have is the one that appears before us in Motion 514 this afternoon.

It was their judgment, after reviewing the research like the Tennessee study, like the study out of Texas, like the work that was done in Toronto, that the appropriate number for an individual to have responsibility for during any one term or part of a term was 18 for K to 7 and 80 for 8 to 12. So those numbers are not arbitrary. They're backed by considerable research and considerable thought on the part of those people who put them forward, and it's the reason why they appear here today.

The debate over class size has long raged in our province, and until recently the research was inclusive. One of the reasons that had been put forward for that is that the research was looking for: does a class size of 20 make a difference over a class size of 19 or a class size of 18? It wasn't until the Tennessee study and

some of the other class-size studies started to look for breaking points that they were able to find some conclusive evidence that, yes, class size does make a difference.

Parents didn't need research to tell them that class size makes a difference. If you look at this province, one of the strongest arguments that the supporters of private schools and charter schools make is that they have small class sizes. They make that argument time and time again to attract parents to those institutions. It's rather curious that we have a government that will support those private schools and those kinds of class sizes and deny those same sizes to the public school system. But parents and teachers have long known that class size does make a difference.

You don't have to be a noted researcher to realize that a teacher dealing with 18 students does things quite differently than the same teacher dealing with 35 students. They are able to do activities that are completely different. They are able to make assignments that are different. They are able to spend more time in parent/teacher conferences. They are able to spend more time tracking individual performance. They are better able to track some of the things that most of us deem just as important as achievement test scores, and that's students' attitudes. So parents and teachers have long sought smaller class sizes.

The member opposite referred to the Alberta experience, the Calgary boards of education coming out of an election and a teachers' strike putting teacher/pupil ratios in their contracts. Those ratios didn't appear in those contracts without some debate. Many people found it unpalatable that teachers should be having to trade off an increase in their salary for a smaller class size. The two didn't seem to be two items that should be balanced in a teacher's contract. Elsewhere in the province the experience in Calgary was not followed, but there have been cries and pleas for smaller class sizes, particularly from the Teachers' Association, and always supported by groups of parents.

In Edmonton public we did have classes capped at 30, and it's only since 1993 and the restructuring by this government with the cuts to education that that board was forced to abandon the cap. The 30 cap is no longer in existence. The member opposite is quite right when he talks about children not coming in nice neat packages of 30. But like all other things in education in schools, common sense prevails, and certainly the schools, when the cap was in place, used 30 as the ideal. But they didn't create classes of three or four or 10 students when the size in one class exceeded 30. They used common sense and tried to work within the spirit of the cap, and that's what, if and when this motion is passed, we would expect to happen elsewhere in the province.

One of the arguments the government uses to not adequately fund education in the province or, in this case, to reduce class size is that our students are already doing all right. They're doing well on the achievement tests, they're doing well on international tests, so quit your bellyaching and be happy; everything is fine. [interjection] I'm sorry; quit your complaining.

The achievement tests are deceiving. I had the privilege of helping put some of those achievement tests together, and what happens in the achievement test committee is that the committee sits down and makes up an achievement test for third grade social studies. But one of the most important things they do is they decide how many students are going to pass the test. When we were dealing with third grade social studies, we would set 85 percent as the success rate for passing that achievement test. So isn't it amazing that we have students doing so well on the achievement tests?

The government through those committees sets the standard, and they adjust the standard. It's not done by an independent body.

This is Alberta Education, the department that serves the Minister of Education. So to pretend that those achievement tests somehow or other are independent measures is a little misleading. I think what we are eventually going to have to come to, the more telling measure of our students, are those independent measures that are made by people who are not part of the system and in no way owe their existence to the success and the furtherance of that system.

There's so much that could be said about the motion, Mr. Speaker. The arguments against class size: we've heard some of them, that it really depends on the teacher, that it really depends on the kinds of other resources that the teacher has, and that it really depends on the other personnel available for the teacher. All of that's true, but if the class sizes were 18, if high school and junior high school teachers were only responsible for 80, then they could do just that much better with all that extra support too. So I think those arguments are not valid arguments in terms of arguing against having class sizes capped at 18 and 80.

I guess I would just conclude, Mr. Speaker, with a plea that this motion be passed, and it may not be something we could achieve right away. But I think back a number of years ago, 25 years ago, 30 years ago, when people talked about elementary teachers in this province, and at that time most elementary teachers had one year of teacher education or at the most two, and the odd one had a university degree. Who would have believed that 30 years later we'd have 100 percent of those teachers with a minimum of a bachelor's degree of four years and most with more than one degree? So if we can't achieve this immediately, at least it's a statement of where we'd like to go in terms of class size. I think if the motion is passed and joined enthusiastically by the government to make it a reality, then the kinds of statements that I read at the beginning of my remarks would no longer be ones that could be quoted in this House.

Thanks very much.

4:10

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in opposition to Motion 514, sponsored by the Member for Lethbridge-East. I'd like to say at the beginning that I do appreciate the obvious intent of Motion 514; that is, to improve classroom instruction and the overall classroom environment. However, I cannot support this motion as an appropriate and effective means of achieving this objective.

Mr. Speaker, this motion addresses an issue which is close to the heart of not only every Albertan but especially the parents of our schoolchildren, and for this reason it must be carefully considered. I find, however, several significant problems with the motion's proposal, problems that would severely undermine the motion's own good intentions and overlook the individual needs of students.

First, this motion would seriously limit the authority of school boards and school councils and schools themselves to determine how best to direct their resources. Second, it will result in significant additional costs to schools without generating optimal use of those educational dollars. Third, it is a simplistic approach to a very complex issue.

Motion 514 would effectively be a straitjacket for schools because it denies the necessary flexibility to choose how to provide the best service to students at every school and in every classroom. For example, many schools throughout the province have one class per grade level. If a class was at the proposed limit of 18 students, would schools be forced to turn away new

students that may have moved to the community midway through the school year? Would they be expected to divide the class in two, disrupting the entire class? How impossible if there were no extra classrooms available for newly created classes. Could this mean an increase in split-grade classes for teachers, especially in rural areas? It could well be a split-grade situation. This would have a greater negative effect on student learning and teacher stress than having a class perhaps of more than 18 students.

This motion overlooks individual students at the time it is trying to help them. Further, it does not necessarily lead to the best use of funding available for education. As was mentioned by the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, there is no conclusive evidence to indicate that small classes are the best means of improving student achievement as compared to other approaches that can be taken, such as peer tutoring, co-operative learning, or team teaching. The Canadian Education Association has produced research indicating that decreased class size is a high-cost method of achieving modest and often temporary improvements and that alternative methods in fact produce better results. This motion does not in any way guarantee better results. It may not be the best investment of our dollars.

This simplistic approach to instruction does not adequately consider the individual needs of students and teachers and the many possible varying circumstances. It doesn't consider the specific subject matter being taught nor the grade of the students at the elementary level nor the ability of the students. As an example, a class size of 18 students would not be appropriate for special-needs students, yet requirements could be met under this proposal. On the other hand, a class of 25 highly motivated grade 6 students would be manageable yet not possible under the regulations of this motion. There is a definite need for flexibility, and it is most important that local school authorities have the flexibility and responsibility to exercise that decision-making for the greater good of the students under their care. The motion's proposal "to limit the instructional load of secondary English, mathematics, and science teachers to 80 students" is once again too regulatory to accomplish the intended objectives.

As one who represents rural constituents and who has had experience teaching in the rural areas of this province, I recognize that there is stress upon our teachers, especially those called upon to teach in several subject areas. But how does this motion apply to high school teachers of subjects other than English, math, and science? How about teachers of social studies or physical education or second languages? Are those teaching a combination of subjects, as is often the case in smaller schools, considered in this limitation? Once again, I believe the motion is too restrictive and simplistic.

Earlier I mentioned additional resources. Mr. Speaker, in the examples I have raised, schools and school boards would have major expenses to keep class size below Motion 514's limit, not to mention limiting the instructional load of secondary mathematics and science teachers to 80 students. Motion 514 would no doubt mean that more classrooms would be required. If schools were forced to set up an additional class during the school year to accommodate new students, the costs could be high and of course unanticipated. Where would the offsetting savings be to allow this to occur? Could it mean an extracurricular activity such as a band, a drama club, or sports activities would need to be cut back? Again, I am led to what I consider an obvious conclusion, and that is that we must preserve the local flexibility that we now have for decisions to be made closest to those who are most affected: teachers, principals, school boards, and even the students.

The issue of class size cannot be addressed in isolation, as it is in this motion. First we must address the more important issues

of the classroom, including the skill level and aptitudes of the children in those classes, the special needs of each child, including special instruction and assistance in developing literary skills, computational skills, and social skills. The principals and school boards are in the best position to determine the number of students that are manageable for each teacher. They are best able to determine whether the class size should be 10, 18, 25 or even higher. They should be able to determine whether there shall be one teacher and one or two assistants in a classroom. They should determine if some students should be given tutorial help, even one-on-one. Local teachers and principals are best able to address these situations and provide the best programming for the diverse needs of students.

Mr. Speaker, our resources must be directed to the enhancement of the education system, with adequate funding available especially for instruction. We know that Albertans have told us to make education a high priority in this province, and Alberta Education has put our children first by investing \$380 million over the next three years in education to secure the future of the children of this province. We need to use these resources wisely, and I believe we have taken important strides forward through the 12-point action plan for education introduced earlier this year by the Minister of Education. There we address in a substantive way such important issues as special-needs children, early literacy skills, ESL needs, technology advancement, and enrollment growth. This is a far better way to address the all-important area of instruction than to limit class size to a magic, arbitrary number for all situations.

We all have a vested interest in the success of the students within the education system today and in the future. These are our children and the children of our relatives and friends. Each one of them deserves a chance to develop their skills and knowledge under the best of circumstances within our financial means. This could involve a variety of instructional strategies, including tutoring; traditional classroom instruction, that is one teacher in a group of students; a classroom with teaching assistants, especially to respond to integration trends within our schools these days; or team teaching. We must allow flexibility for all circumstances.

While the sponsor of this motion obviously has the concerns of the education of our children at heart, this motion does not adequately speak to the necessities of educating our children in today's complex world, and therefore I will be voting against Motion 514.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that I only have a few minutes to say what I would really like to speak to on this, and I know that maybe I'm biased because I'm a mother with kids in school and because I was a teacher, but I think maybe that gives me a better background from which to speak.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. When I'm talking to people and I say: you know, class sizes are atrocious right now; they have skyrocketed since 1993 -- and I've mentioned in here that at one high school that I know of the grade 10 classes are swamped. My child is not in a class under 34 kids. I'll say that to somebody, and they'll say, "Well, you know, when I went to school way back then, we were three grades and there were 40 of us, and look how well I turned out." Actually they say, "Look how good I turned out," which is a point in itself. Some of you didn't get that. Anyway, to make my point, then I say: "You know, isn't it funny? I'll bet you live in a bigger and better insulated house than you did when you were 10 years old, and I'll bet you drive

a better vehicle than your parents did, and I'll bet you have a bigger colour TV and VCR and stereo, and I'll bet you've improved all of these things in your life. Why, then, don't you want a better education for your child?" I don't get it. You know what? They don't have an argument back for that, because they can't argue that.

4:20

Why don't we value education in this province? We do. It's obvious by this motion. You don't value it when you can't even support a motion that would indicate that we should lower class sizes in this province. You don't support it. You can stand up and vote for or against this motion. Then stand up for what you believe if you say you do value education, because you don't. [interjections] They don't have the floor, Mr. Speaker; I do.

Here are just a few things that would improve with smaller class sizes. Everyone here knows it, and everyone here denies it because they can't give the bucks for education, but the bucks would pay back a thousand times over if we properly invested in our children. I know class size equates money. I know that. So spend the money wisely, and you will get the dollars back.

You know what? Kids will do better in a class with fewer in it. That's a given. That's a given. Students would receive more individual attention. When you have 37 children in a class -- and I bet there are ministers across the way whose family members teach. In fact, I know that the minister of intergovernmental affairs' sister is an excellent teacher, and I would love to hear some of their discussions about class size. I know that she's eloquent and she believes in public education, and she knows that she can do a better job as a teacher with fewer children in that room, better for those students. So, Mr. Speaker, they would get more individual attention.

You know, if a high school teacher has 34 kids in a class and 80 minutes, how can each child get individual attention? They can't. That's barely two minutes per child, and you should give some instruction and some work. Those of you who have never been in a classroom maybe don't get it, but you know what? Take it from someone who knows. That individual attention is ultimately important for not just learning but for the well-being of that child.

The things that happen in society now that come to the classroom that have to be dealt with are far different than when any of us went to school. And you know what? The fewer children you have in that class, the better you can deal with those issues. There are fewer discipline problems when you have less children in a class. It's a given. And you know what? More participation by all students. Why wouldn't we want every child to be involved in education? Why wouldn't we want them all to be given attention?

I know that even the Member for Fort McMurray knows many teachers up there, one in particular that has often spoken out on these issues about the reality of class size and that they're climbing. That's why this motion is forward. Maybe it won't pass today, but maybe there will be a time when this Assembly actually thinks a little bit -- go figure -- and when this government would take education seriously, would value our children and realize that a dollar spent wisely right now on each child would pay back a thousandfold.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, with that, I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly but very passionately to this motion.

THE SPEAKER: On the motion as proposed by the hon. Member

for Lethbridge-East, would all those in favour of the motion please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:23 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Blakeman	Laing	Pannu
Boutilier	Leibovici	Paul
Calahasen	Massey	Sapers
Carlson	Nicol	Sloan
Dickson	Olsen	Soetaert
Fritz	O'Neill	Tannas
Hancock		

Against the motion:

Cardinal	Hierath	Melchin
Clegg	Hlady	Nelson
Day	Jacques	Paszkowski
Doerksen	Johnson	Pham
Ducharme	Klapstein	Renner
Dunford	Kryczka	Severtson
Fischer	Langevin	Strang
Forsyth	Lougheed	Taylor
Friedel	Magnus	Thurber
Graham	Marz	Woloshyn
Haley	McClellan	Yankowsky
Herard	McFarland	

Totals:	For -- 19	Against -- 35
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[Motion lost]

head: Government Bills and Orders

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I've received certain messages from his Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor which I now transmit to you.

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

THE SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province and certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1999, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: Government Motions

35. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the message of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to point out that this tabling represents the government's ongoing commitment to reinvesting in priority areas when required, and that will be reflected in the items which are and will be before us.

Health will see an increase of some \$223 million to regional health authorities for the new agreement with the Alberta Medical Association and to cover Alberta's share of costs for assistance to hepatitis C victims and for the startup of the Canadian Blood Services agency, for our provincial portion of that. To Environmental Protection, \$191 million for higher fire suppression and reforestation costs resulting from the very severe 1998 forest fire situation. A \$130 million transfer from lottery funds to Transportation and Utilities to fund assistance for municipal transportation infrastructure. A \$10 million transfer to Municipal Affairs for regional co-ordination, and \$9 million from the lottery fund to support development of a medical laboratory in Calgary. Also, in Treasury \$72 million to address the outstanding tax objections between corporations and Revenue Canada. In Family and Social Services some \$14 million for increased spending on support programs.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on this, I think we will agree that we're fortunate that we have built a solid foundation through prudent budgeting and are able to weather a turbulent global economy and also sustain prosperity at home and reinvest in Albertans' priorities.

With those highlights, Mr. Speaker, I would move Motion 35.

[Motion carried]

36. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the message of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates for the lottery fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

37. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(2.1) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund shall be one day.

[Motion carried]

38. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(2.1) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates for the lottery fund shall be one day.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

MR. SAPERS: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to debate Government Motion 38.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please take your seat. I refer you to Standing Order 58(6). Standing Order 58(6) is very, very clear in its reading, and it says, "The question shall be decided without debate or amendment."

[Motion carried]

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Opposition House Leader, I ruled on the point of order. Standing Order 58(6) clearly covers the matter.

**Point of Order
Items Not Debatable**

MR. SAPERS: With respect, Mr. Speaker, 58(2.1) talks specifically about the lottery fund. There is in the structure of Standing Order 58 and its subsections some disagreement between all of the sections. Clearly the Standing Orders treat Committee of Supply for general revenue, for the heritage savings trust fund, and for the lottery fund all differently. Otherwise, they wouldn't be mentioned differently, as they are.

While I appreciate very much the reference to subsection (6) in 58, there is a lack of agreement between the two subsections. Clearly these can't all just be read as one continuous sentence. If they were, Mr. Speaker, for example in 58(6), which was the basis of your ruling, then the Leader of the Official Opposition may also be called upon to designate committees. That's part of that subsection you referred to as well.

I'll also refer you, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Order 18(1), which says:

- Motions which are debatable include every motion
(a) standing on the Order Paper, except a motion for the Assembly to go into committee [later that day].

So, Mr. Speaker, the rules are unclear and internally inconsistent as to whether a supplementary supply estimate for the lottery fund is covered by subsection (6) in Standing Order 58. I would argue that there is some precedence in parliamentary practice that when there's a conflict, the resolution is on the side of allowing the debate, not restricting the debate.

MR. DICKSON: On the point of order.

THE SPEAKER: No, hon. member. Please take your chair.

First of all, this motion has been carried, and the tradition of the House is that the House cannot go back once a decision has been made. Secondly, Standing Order 58 very, very clearly talks about "in respect of the supplementary estimates." If I read the motions, that's what we're talking about, supplementary estimates. That's very, very clear in what we're doing. These are not main estimates. These are supplementary estimates, and 58(6) is very, very clear on it: "In respect of the supplementary estimates . . . the question shall be decided without debate or amendment." The matter has been dealt with.

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

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order. Those members that are on their way out, continue on their way out, or if they wish to remain here, take their places.

**Bill 44
Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 1998**

THE CHAIRMAN: We will begin the afternoon seeking comments, questions, and amendments. The first one we'll call is the hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. A couple of questions arose at second reading which I indicated I would endeavor to address as we moved into the committee stage of this particular bill.

There was a question related to the extension of the royalty tax deduction to mining companies. The royalty tax deduction provides for an additional deduction when you're computing taxable income for Alberta purposes to the extent that a company's nondeductible oil and gas, bituminous oil sands, and coal royalties paid to any government exceed its resource allowance. This, however, does represent -- or represented before this bill -- some inconsistent treatment of oil and gas vis-à-vis mining companies. Oil and gas companies can reduce their taxable income in Alberta by the royalties paid to other governments, but mining royalties paid to other governments have not up to this point in time qualified for that same treatment. So the proposed amendment will extend the royalty tax deduction to mining companies on a trial basis. Those companies will be eligible for the deduction in the taxation years that start in 1998 and will carry through to '99, 2000, and 2001.

4:50

There was some question about revenue impact. It's very difficult to estimate that, and that's why the amendment is being introduced on that basis, so that it gives the government time to evaluate the permanent extension of the deduction and have more clearly the knowledge of the revenue impact of that particular deduction.

The other question related to: was there going to be a change in calculation of the late filing penalty to consider the Alberta royalty tax credit installment eligibility? The member's comments, as I could determine them from *Hansard*, reflected on changes to the ARTC program contained in the bill. I agree that maybe it seemed a bit confusing, but in fact there are no changes to that program in this particular bill. The provision under discussion is actually the calculation of the penalty for filing an income tax return after the date that it should have been filed. I can inform members that ARTC entitlements are treated as installments in the calculation of installment interest, and they do reduce the base on which that particular interest is charged. They don't reduce the base for arrears, interest, and for penalties. The amendments deem the ARTC entitlements to be paid even when a taxpayer doesn't apply for the ARTC installments to reduce those arrears, interest, and the late filing penalties. These amendments bring consistency to the treatment of the ARTC entitlements and the calculations.

I also have here a list of the consultation that's happened to date related to the Alberta royalty tax credit. I'll table this so that members can have that. Considerable meetings took place with various organizations in March, April, May, June, July, and September, so there's been some extensive review already with that.

That's to, I hope, address the questions which members had at the second reading stage.

At this point, Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce a House amendment. It is indeed a housekeeping amendment, and I believe members have this before them. Basically it's to clarify for housekeeping purposes a possible concern that could have been used inadvertently. It's an administrative item, but basically if we don't do this amendment, what would happen is that because of the amendments that are being talked about, we need to make sure that there's consistent treatment between taxpayers that receive the monthly installments under the ARTC and those that don't. Presently people, if they wanted to, up to this point in time, with what's being proposed, that I'm speaking of right now, could take assessments from another year, where that assessment period is still open, bring it forward, and have the new amendments applied to it. Obviously that would be inconsistent with legislation. You should be governed in the year under which that particular

legislation applied. So this merely closes the door on somebody having the ability to move that forward and get the benefit of what we're doing here, whereas other companies would not have that same benefit because they've been judged and assessed on the years prior to this change. So it's a housekeeping amendment that will just close the door and eliminate that possibility.

The amendment to the bill is amended as follows. Section 1(17) is struck out and the following is substituted: "Subsection (16)(a) applies to taxation years that end after subsection (16)(a) comes into force." So it effectively closes that loophole if somebody had wanted to use it, and that is the amendment that's being proposed at this time, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The amendment that has been moved by the hon. Provincial Treasurer is called amendment A1.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on the amendment.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. On the A1 amendment. The interesting thing about this is that the minister had an alternative. Because there's an offence provision in an act, the offence is not triggered unless there is a prosecution. Unless the government of the province of Alberta initiates a prosecution, people are not liable to fines in the abstract. There is a process that has to be initiated. So the minister had an alternative, which would be to give instructions to the Minister of Justice that steps would not be taken in certain circumstances. Now, he's chosen not to do that, and he's decided instead to introduce the amendment.

One of the things that I wonder, though, is if the provision means that the new penalty section does not apply until after subsection (16)(a) comes into force. What the minister didn't share with us is what his contemplation is in terms of when that's going to happen. In other words, in the six years I've been an MLA, we've seen the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act, the condominium act -- we've seen bills passed in the Assembly that aren't proclaimed for years and years and years, in some cases not at all.

One of my questions is: can the minister clarify what the current intention is of his department and the government in terms of whether this bill will be proclaimed at a later date than the balance of the bill? The reason I say that is that I think all Albertans would agree with the proposition that the offence section has to be in place and part of the law before you can breach it. In other words, you can't retroactively be penalized for things that have been done before the legislation was passed. I understand that and I support that principle, but I guess I'm sitting here and I'm saying: what's the impact? Is there some plan not to proclaim that section for some deferred period of time? Because I think there's some value in the new penalty provision, and I'd like to see that brought in. At minimum I'd like to see that brought in with the rest of the act so that the proclamation would be not of bits and pieces of the act, but in fact the whole bill would be proclaimed and effective, hopefully at an early date.

The other comment is that I'm wondering if the minister received some other feedback around this penalty provision that's relevant to the proposed House amendment that's in front of us right now. It just seems to me that answers to those questions would be helpful in determining whether the amendment is as benign as it appears. Clearly I'm very much in favour of ensuring that the offence change doesn't take effect until after the act is in place. I don't support retroactive prosecutions, but I do have those queries, and hopefully the minister can dispel any concerns I have very quickly.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DAY: The member raises some good points with which I

agree. It is my intention, barring something totally unforeseen, which I can't even contemplate at this point, that this not be done in bits and pieces, that it be done as together as we can get it, all at once and as expeditiously as possible, again barring something that our federal tax people inform me of that I totally haven't contemplated. The member has raised a good point, and I agree with him on that.

5:00

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very brief. There are a couple of points I want to raise about the amendment. The first point I want to raise is that I received a phone call earlier today from the Treasurer's office from one of his staff alerting me to the form and substance of the amendment. I appreciated receiving the advance notice. Being given that alert, I was able to take a look at the section in Bill 44 as well as the section in the original statute that was to have been amended by the original amending section in Bill 44 and was able to compare that against the wording of the House amendment that's been proposed by the Treasurer. All in all, I believe that the issue is as straightforward as it is purported to be. I don't question that.

[Dr. Massey in the chair]

One of the concerns I have, though, is -- and maybe this is a limitation of my own that I'm acknowledging -- that I did not yet look back through the other companion tax legislation in Alberta to determine whether or not we now have some consistency on these kinds of penalty provisions. I simply haven't had the time to do that because the first alert that I had that this might be an issue in fact came about as a result of being told about this amendment.

So my question to the Treasurer is this: can he provide for the Assembly, perhaps while we have Bill 44 before us but perhaps just as quickly as possible otherwise, some assurance or some review that the corporate tax and the personal income tax and the other tax bills and laws are now all internally consistent and some do and some don't allow for this after the fact or ex post facto imposition of a penalty. I think the taxpayers of the province would like some clarity of the rules to know that they can't be pursued for something tomorrow that they failed to do yesterday but didn't know it was wrong not to have done it.

So with that I'll conclude my comments on this particular amendment, and thank the Treasurer for doing the housekeeping to clean up the bill.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, the member also raises an appropriate concern, and I can say to calm that concern, which is a legitimate one: as far as my understanding goes, this does provide this consistency. That's why we're bringing in this amendment, to make sure of that.

When I say "as far as my understanding goes," there is nothing more complicated that I've come into -- and I'm sure the member would agree -- in terms of law than tax law. Finance ministers, both provincial and federal, for years have commented to that effect. I remember the words of a former federal Finance minister, a Liberal as a matter of fact, Donald Macdonald, I believe. He said that he didn't think there were eight people in the country at that time who understood the tax act, and he was speaking as an expert. So I say with that proviso and in sincerity that as far as I understand it -- and that's why we do search this legislation -- this does provide the consistency that the member is talking about and that taxpayers in our province want some

assurance of. He's raised the point quite properly, and as far as I can know from my understanding of our law, it does provide that.

I would move this amendment, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The Official Opposition House Leader.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks. We're back to the debate at committee stage on the bill, I take it. I have a couple of questions, as I indicated in my second reading comments, about a couple of sections. I'd like to start off by particularly looking at some amendments to the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 1996, proposed section (2), which reads:

Section 16 is amended by repealing section 36.1(3) and substituting the following:

(3) A return of income of a corporation for a taxation year that is sent by way of electronic filing by a person referred to in subsection (2) is deemed to have been filed on the day that the Provincial Treasurer acknowledges that

- (a) the return has been received, and
- (b) the return is in an acceptable format and is in the prescribed form.

When I compare that to the current wording of the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 1996, I have difficulty appreciating the subtlety and the nuance in what it is the Treasurer wishes to accomplish. The current wording, which was proclaimed back in '96 but not yet brought into force, talked about the electronic filing being done in a prescribed form and talked about the data being deemed received on the day that the transmission was completed.

I have a number of questions that come to mind. One is just a general one about the fine-tuning of the wording here. What was it that the department was concerned about?

I also have a couple of more specific concerns. One is around privacy. I note that there was little discussion back in '96 regarding the privacy of electronic filing. Certainly the world has become a little bit more sophisticated in the last two and a half years since those amendments were before the house, sophisticated in both ways: more sophisticated security around electronic data transmission but also more sophisticated means of breaking security. My question specifically: have these amendments been submitted to the Information and Privacy Commissioner for a privacy review or a privacy audit to determine whether or not the tax information of corporate Alberta, which is amongst the most sensitive personal information, will be protected adequately through electronic filing? What assurances has Treasury, and are there some liability issues should that information go astray? Not that I want to club this issue to death, but the data management and the security around the digital information is one question, but I would hope that the Treasurer would also refer in his answer to the physical hardware issue.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

We have had more than one example in the province of surplus computers being disposed of through auction sale ending up having contents on hard drives and computer disks being thrown away but being found to still have personal information on them. We've also had, I believe, hard copies of printouts provided that were in boxes. So there have been in Alberta unfortunately some breaches of privacy and security. The question is: what has Treasury done to address those kinds of concerns, to preempt them, prevent the kinds of difficulties that I'm referring to?

The third set of questions I have around these proposed amendments has to do with the standard that may or may not be in place for electronic filing. The wording of the proposed amendment is fairly specific. It says, "in an acceptable format" and "in the prescribed form." Now, I'm assuming that "acceptable format" and "prescribed form" are somehow going to come up in regulation, that there'll be a whole list of things prescribed by the LG in Council that'll say this is the acceptable format and the prescribed form.

5:10

Well, given once again the speed at which the electronic world is changing, what kind of certainty or clarity is the Treasurer providing to those corporations that would choose to file electronically? How can we be certain that those regulations will be flexible enough on the one hand to take into account innovation and technology change that corporations may utilize but concrete enough that there is a certainty about the quality of the information, the accessibility of information, the reliability of the information that is being transmitted? That sort of links back to the question about privacy. If the regulations are too flexible, then the protocol that's set up may be very weak in terms of security. If the regulations are too rigid, you may exclude some corporations from using some means of electronic filing that otherwise may be considered legitimate.

Lastly, in the issue of the prescribed form and acceptable format or the standard for electronic data transmission, I'm wondering whether or not the Treasury Department has consulted with Revenue Canada to make sure that corporate Alberta is not being forced to pursue two different kinds of data protocol in terms of electronic filing. Revenue Canada, I believe, is a little bit ahead of most provincial jurisdictions in terms of both prescribing the form and working with industry to ensure privacy on the one hand but also data accessibility on the other.

My last set of questions regarding these proposed amendments in proposed section (2) of the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 1986, have to do with the legacy that is left as a result of the electronic filing. Will it only be an electronic legacy? In other words, at what point will a corporate income tax return filed electronically transform into another form of record? Will it become a paper record? If there's an appeal, if there's an audit, if there is litigation of some form or another, if a penalty is being pursued for some other breach of the act, at what point does the electronic form metamorph into another kind of form? Is there going to be a standard so that there will always be a hard copy record made of the electronic or the digital record?

There are several reasons I ask this question. One of them is: even on my little home PC I have data loss even when I do a backup. You know, sometimes it's not a hundred percent successful. Sometimes the power goes out and there's a problem. Sometimes there is a large-scale technology changeover. I'm sure Alberta Treasury is, as is every other department, pursuing a Y2K initiative right now. That's an example of a large-scale system turnover. So that's another reason I have a concern about what kind of legacy is going to be left with the electronic filing.

I guess, finally, if there is no standard for either backing up the information electronically, in hard copy, transferring it to another format, or making it accessible for those other legitimate purposes that may arise such as some form of prosecution under the penalty sections of these acts, is it really in the best interests of the province to allow for electronic filing as quickly as we seem to be on the verge of doing until all of those issues have been addressed? Again, I'm very sensitive to the fact that we're already about two and a half years into and trying to anticipate some of

these issues.

As I noted earlier, these sections were proclaimed but not brought into force. If the Treasurer has more current information, I'd appreciate knowing it. My understanding is that the reason they weren't brought into force is because there are a number of these technical issues. I guess I'd like some assurances that they've been not only looked at but that they've been resolved and resolved in such a way that involves the potential users of the system, Revenue Canada, and meet the needs of Alberta Treasury in terms of consistency and the ability to carry on its job of collecting the appropriate -- and I will add, not a penny more than the appropriate -- amount of corporate taxation.

[The clauses of Bill 44 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the Bill 44 with some amendments. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, in light of the hour I move that we do now adjourn until 8 p.m. this evening and that when we reconvene, we reconvene in Committee of the Whole.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

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

