

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, November 25, 1998 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 98/11/25

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd call the Committee of Supply to order. This committee, very much like Committee of the Whole, involves one member standing and speaking at the same time.

MR. HAVELOCK: Committee of Supply?

THE CHAIRMAN: That's what I say. Committee of Supply is very much like Committee of the Whole: only one member standing and speaking at a time. Thank you, Government House Leader.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund**

Justice

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll call on the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to make his remarks.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [interjections] Actually, the sooner I get started, the sooner we get out.

The supplementary estimate required by Justice relates to judicial compensation. Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on September 18, 1997, required all provinces to establish independent commissions to set the pay of provincial judges. An independent Judicial Compensation Commission, which was chaired by E. Susan Evans, QC, was subsequently established in Alberta to publicly examine provincial court judges' pay, pensions, and benefits. The commission's recommendations were accepted by cabinet with modifications in the areas of salary and pensions. The estimates include a provision for additional compensation for justices of the peace and for additional presiding justices of the peace and support staff for implementation of Bill 25, along with a provision for 24-hour access to justices of the peace.

There are three components to the supplementary estimate for 1998-99, totaling \$4.298 million. The majority of this amount is for judicial compensation. Secondly, judicial and justice of the peace compensation commission expenses are included. Lastly, Mr. Chairman, onetime start-up costs for the additional JPs, such as office renovations, furnishings, and equipment, are also included.

The ongoing costs related to judicial and justices of the peace compensation are estimated at \$3.157 million in 1999-2000 and \$2.857 million in 2000-2001. The amounts for these two fiscal years have been reduced to coincide with general compensation increases already included in the 1998-99 to 2000-2001 business plans.

That concludes my remarks. Thank you.

MS OLSEN: I didn't hear much of what the hon. minister was saying, so I'm going to have to ask him some questions here. I'm still having difficulty hearing, Mr. Chairman.

Point of Order Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we have you continue, then, hon. member, the chair was having the same kind of difficulty. Those

of you who wish to engage in lively conversation, please do so outside the Chamber. You will be forgiven for leaving and not for staying and talking. So guide yourselves accordingly. If you're here, we presume that you're here to listen or to work, and if you are not, then please go outside and come back when the bell rings, should it ever.

Debate Continued

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have just a few questions in relation to this. I recognize that the bulk of this money is in fact for the increases for judges and of course for JPs. I guess I'm looking for a bit of a further breakdown between the judges. We know that 42 percent of the budget for the supplementary supply is in the general administration section, so I guess my question is: what percentage of this is in actual increases, what percentage in pay and benefits, and how is that separated out?

I also notice that between 1995 and '96 for general administration there's been a 20 percent increase to date with this new additional funding. Knowing that this funding is going to judges and JPs, I guess I'm wondering what the overall 20 percent increase is and if there was a cut at some point that was too drastic and the department wasn't able to manage with those cuts and now we have a dramatic increase by 20 percent. It looks rather ugly on a chart actually. It indicates that there was at some point quite a shortage, so when you chart it, it looks pretty dramatic. Quite a dip. It would be helpful if the minister could identify for us exactly why now a 20 percent increase.

In fact, where is the other money going to, because it's not all accounted for for judges if \$707,000 is going to general administration. Correct me if I'm wrong. We have 89 Provincial Court judges, so that roughly comes to just over a million. What about the 17 supernumerary judges? Is that included in that figure? Also, are the nine assistant judges included and of course the Chief Judge?

MR. HAVELOCK: I've found the references. But to speed things up, it would be helpful if you referred to the specific line entry in the appropriation.

MS OLSEN: I'll be helpful and give you element 2.1.1.

Point of Order Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, if we're going to ask questions back and forth, that's quite acceptable, but we do it in some organized fashion so that *Hansard* doesn't go crazy trying to respond to the questions and the answers and in true parliamentary fashion. So if you ask a number of questions, hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, then it's appropriate for you to sit down and let the hon. Minister of Justice or whomever you're addressing your questions to get up and answer, and then you can continue asking your questions. So you've asked a series of questions. Hon. Minister of Justice, are you prepared to reply?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, has she finished her questions?

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The Chief Judge's office has had an increase of \$49,000, but his pay increase was \$11,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps there's a delayed receiving of the voice from the chairman, but in any event the interruption by the chairman was so that the hon. member could ask questions, sit down, and let the hon. minister answer. So the hon. minister was about to answer.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I was attempting to respond to the interruptions from the member across the way, Mr. Chairman, but I'll let them go because we're getting used to them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hopefully we can now rely on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood to continue her questions and to from time to time allow the Minister of Justice to reply. Other questions can be asked following the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I'm going to make this less painful and get through this really quickly.

Debate Continued

MS OLSEN: I guess I have a couple of other questions. The issue of the \$8 million for the organized crime fund: is that coming out of the existing budget? Where is that money coming from? The issue of dealing with the positive workplace initiative and the money for putting together the programs: where is that money coming from? Is that current budget, out of the supplementary supply in general administration? Maybe some of those questions. Were there any contingent liabilities set aside for the harassment claims at CAPS?

I think at this point maybe, Mr. Minister, if you can answer some of those, I'll take my seat.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Justice.

8:10

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you. Part of the difficulty we have in giving you some of the specific numbers is, as you're well aware, the justices of the peace compensation commission is just in the process of being established, so we think we've included enough in the supplementary estimates to cover that off. I can't give you a specific breakdown regarding that matter. I'll have to get back to you on the general administration number.

You did ask some other questions. The organized crime initiative: that was already budgeted for with respect to the start-up costs associated with it until the next budget comes into effect. Then we'll be requesting additional funding for that next year.

The positive workplace program. Again, that's within the current budget. If we feel we need more, that will be added next year.

You've mentioned contingent liabilities. It's very difficult to budget those types of things, as you're well aware, because of course until decisions are made and settlements are entered into, you never really know what the exposure is. However, if and when we do settle matters -- and I can use the sterilization as an example. We did put some moneys in last year's budget to handle some of those settlements. So in the event that we do need some dollars, we will either be able to access them or, alternately, we will make provision for that in next year's budget.

MR. DICKSON: I'm not sure whether my concerns have been responded to by the minister or not. I'm particularly interested in

the compensation for JPs, justices of the peace. Now, as I understand it, there's been money set aside, but there's been no resolution yet of those outstanding claims. Is that the case? There's been a contingent element built into the budget, and it's only the Provincial Court judges who in fact have a fixed amount that they're going to be receiving, and that's budgeted for in this item.

MR. HAVELOCK: Again, I'm not trying to evade your question, but the commission has not yet actually kicked off nor made a recommendation to government with respect to the JP pay. We've tried to build some dollars into this request. However, because of course we haven't had the commission report, I don't wish to stand here and tell you what the exact amount is that we've built in, because we'll be pre-empting those discussions and negotiations, and that would be inappropriate.

We have, however, built in the specific amount for the judges pertaining to their increase in salary and also the pension benefits.

MR. DICKSON: I understand the sensitivity around the negotiation, but I'd ask the minister: where is the contingent funding for justice of the peace compensation? Is that in 2.1, or is it in one of the 2.2 elements?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I'm really not trying to avoid the question, but I don't want to specifically identify where it may be built in, because of course you could do some calculations and determine what amount we've built in for that purpose if you were to work back. So I'm not trying to mislead the House, but it's not something, quite frankly, that I feel comfortable getting into in any detail. That's the problem I'm faced with.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, it's an interesting proposition we're in. We're the people with a mandate to ensure that the funds that are voted in this Assembly this evening are appropriate, are responding to some need to advantage Albertans. In effect, if I can put it this crudely, what the Minister of Justice is saying is: there's an amount of money in here, and I don't want to tip my hand in terms of how much of that is going to be available to compensate justices of the peace, because we haven't worked out the formula yet. I'm just thinking that there must be some alternative so that there's the kind of accountability that I think our constituents and taxpayers expect.

Well, let me ask the Minister of Justice this. We expect the Legislature is going to be sitting again by February of 1999. What's the expectation in terms of when the process to resolve compensation to the justices of the peace is to be finished so that this will be reduced to a finite number?

MR. HAVELOCK: We're in the process of selecting the individuals who will participate in that commission, and I expect that they will be reporting, oh, I would hope within six to eight weeks. So I think the number would be available certainly prior to budget discussions in April. It's not going to be as lengthy a process as it was with respect to judicial compensation.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just came back from the ladies of the Legislature Christmas party, where I was assisting Santa Claus give out gifts in the capacity of elf.

I wonder if the Minister of Justice has thought of the victims of

sterilization who are going to litigate, I guess, their claims against the government. I wonder if he has thought of giving them at least \$100,000 until the cases are settled and if in this amount there's any attempt made to address that issue.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Justice, that part which is relevant to your current supplementary estimates.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I guess none of it, quite frankly, is relevant to the supplementary estimate that's before the House.

With respect to the sterilization generally, as everyone is well aware, we settled approximately 540 claims, and we're working to settle others. As I mentioned earlier, there has been a budgetary provision put in place with respect to those settlements, and if it's determined that we need to seek additional funding for next year to settle more, we will.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question to the minister. During your introductory remarks you made a comment that some of the dollars here were to provide for the 24-hour access to justices of the peace across the province. Now, this results, I guess, from some of the problems that are arising with the changes that were made.

We had a lot of concerns raised in southern Alberta when in order to get that 24-hour justice of the peace access they were going to have to go to Calgary by fax or by some other mechanism to get it. There was a lot of discussion and concern that from the period of some time on Saturday till Monday morning, the likelihood of access there would be very low. Has the minister looked into that, and has that problem been solved in these new budget dollars? That's, I guess, what I'd like to know.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. That's a very good question. We are going to provide 24-hour access to JPs. As the hon. member is well aware, pursuant to the Wickman decision we had to restructure the justice of the peace situation in the province. We now have three classes: there's presiding, there's sitting, and there's nonsitting. Where we've run into some of the challenge is those who are nonsitting. For the presiding and sitting it was determined that they had to have a certain amount of years of legal experience in order to carry out their duties, and that has resulted in a number of communities now no longer having that type of service available to them because those providing that service before did not have the legal background.

We have put in place a provision for 24-hour access throughout the week so if the communities do need access to those services, they will be able to do so. We're going to test it and see how much those services are utilized. That problem has been resolved, and it is incorporated in these numbers.

DR. NICOL: A short follow-up on that. So what you're telling me is that if I get picked up some Sunday night, I can get bail before Monday morning.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, it depends if anyone would want to give you bail. But, yes, you would at least be able to access a justice of the peace to make that determination. Whether you would be able to get it personally or not is another issue.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members are reminded that we are working through the construct of through the chair.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I just want to follow up a bit on the justice of the peace initiative here. You have allotted more money for the centralization of JPs. I'm just wondering if that's correct. If that's correct, have you hired more JPs? How is the process going to work in terms of the amount of money you've allotted? In some regions I know this is going to be a problem, and not for any other reason than that other jurisdictions across this country have had considerable difficulty accessing a justice of the peace to deal with some of the more immediate issues.

So can you just clarify how that's going to work if you haven't hired more JPs? What's the mechanism? How are you going to kick this off?

8:20

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, we're in the process of evaluating how many JPs we will need. I don't have that exact number in front of me. I can get you some detail on that. This relates to an earlier question. We have allocated some funds to cover off some of the start-up costs with respect to the JPs to provide office renovations and furnishings and equipment for the 24-hour presiding justice of the peace, for example. I can get you some specific detail at a later date on how many we're looking at having in place, their location, and actually the types of services that each level will also be providing. We can get that for you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These supplementary supply estimates are another in a series of challenging ones for me to deal with, and that's for a couple of reasons. One is that I am absolutely convinced when we get to the detail of the justice request that this Minister of Justice is not going to spend a penny more on judges or justices of the peace than he has to. I don't think there is anybody who has been observing this minister that would argue that point.

Before I go any further, I believe that the new deputy of the department is with us. No, he's not? Oh, I was going to welcome him. He couldn't make it tonight, eh? [interjection] All right.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hazel's here.

MR. SAPERS: And thank goodness for that, Hazel.

Mr. Chairman, the difficulty is that even though I'm sure the Minister of Justice is going to be absolutely parsimonious when it comes to spending money on members of the court, this request for supplementary supply comes in the context of what is now the third set of supplementary estimates in the past 10 months. This Legislative Assembly has been asked to approve over \$1.1 billion worth of supplementary supply requests this year. I think that's a record. I think that makes this current government sort of the Stanley Cup winning team of supplementary supply, with the current Treasurer being I guess the king of supplementary supply. It took Dick Johnston, when he was Treasurer, I think four years to bring forward in supplementary supply what it has taken the current Treasurer to bring forward in the last 19 months.

So I have this problem, and the problem is: how much real accountability are Albertans getting from their government when we see the budget process so flawed that time after time after time we're being asked to approve supplementary supply? I mean,

who's not getting it right? Is it each minister, as the minister of advanced education seems to be indicating, Mr. Chairman, who's responsible for the mistake? Is it the lack of control that's imposed through Treasury? Is it just sloppiness? Is it just that really the provincial government doesn't care about the bottom line as much as they purport to? I really need to know how many times we're going to be asked in this Assembly to vote on supplementary estimates.

Now, all of that is just context for the current request for almost \$4.3 million. It may be unfair, Mr. Chairman, for me to raise these issues when we are debating the request from the Minister of Justice, because the Minister of Justice's request is probably far more driven by a court decision and by the department trying to actually do something that it needs to do than it is driven by any sloppiness. So I recognize that it's probably unfair for me to raise this point with this minister, but I just felt that it would somehow be dishonest of me to participate in the general debate on supplementary supply without informing the Assembly and members of Executive Council about what my concerns were first, because I wouldn't want anybody to think that I was being hypocritical about this.

My specific question to the Minister of Justice is this. I'm not going to call you an administrative dip, Mr. Minister. We've got a pattern that's very uneven in terms of administrative allocations within your department, and if you go back year over year, you see the ugly chart that my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood was talking about. The plot line is all over the place. With the increase in JPs that comes as a result of Wickman and the three categories of JPs that you refer to, what is going to be the impact on your department over and above their remuneration? What's going to be the administrative charge that accompanies this supplementary supply request? How is that going to factor in on your other performance measures in terms of administrative costs in your department?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, we've certainly taken into account the fact that there are going to be increased administrative costs with respect to the new justice of the peace system we're putting into place, and we're working that through the business plans. We've captured that, and we've requested additional dollars, but of course I can't disclose that at this time because it's part of the budget process.

As I indicated earlier, under the administration costs you see before you, most of them are onetime start-up costs associated with the two commissions that we had with respect to judicial compensation and the JP commission, which will be sitting shortly, and, as I mentioned earlier, the need to provide some office space and some associated equipment

Regarding the request for supplementary supply generally, but for the court decision and the commissions that were established, I would not have been coming for supplementary supply. In fact I don't believe I did last year, and we were operating well within our budget. However, we knew and it was no secret that we did not have the funds in our budget request from last year to take into account any increase in judicial salary or JP salary we might be putting in place.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Minister of Justice. While the minister is asking for about \$4.2 million extra in supplementary supply, I notice that in the

support for legal aid item there's a huge surplus that's estimated for this year and has been going on for some time. I'm trying to understand why it is necessary for you to ask for supplementary supply when in fact close to \$18 million seems to be sitting in surplus in the legal aid item.

MR. HAVELOCK: What line?

DR. PANNU: I'm on page 29. The amount for legal aid is \$22.5 million. I have in my hand the Auditor General's report, which shows me that the estimated surplus in that particular area this year will be \$18.5 million. So while that amount is sitting in surplus, Mr. Minister, you are asking for more money just to tide you over to the next budget. Why can't you use the moneys from legal aid, where they're sitting?

MR. HAVELOCK: I don't have that document at this time. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, dollars are given to legal aid on an annual basis, about \$22 million. Those funds are transferred directly to them, and once they are transferred to legal aid, they're within their control with respect to providing support services. We do not take money back from legal aid. I'm not sure what you're referring to, an \$80 million surplus.

DR. PANNU: It's right there.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. Let me see here. I'll have to take a look at this, Mr. Chairman, and respond to the hon. member. If I'm looking at this correctly, it's not \$80 million; it's \$18 million. Am I reading this correctly? I'll have to get back to the hon. member on that. I'm just going to hazard a guess, and that is, there were a lot of contingent liabilities in legal aid, and perhaps what they've been doing is trying to set aside some dollars to take care of those contingent liabilities. That may be the case, but I'll have to find out from the member. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that legal aid has those dollars now. Those are not dollars that we then access. They are transferred to legal aid to provide legal aid services, but hon. member, I'll have to get back to you on it, because I don't have the answer for that off the top of my head.

Agreed to:

Operating expense	\$4,298,000
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THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Family and Social Services

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

8:30

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Tonight on behalf of the Minister of Family and Social Services I'd like to enter the reason for the supplementary estimate. This supplementary estimate of \$58,740,000 is requested to restore the ministry's 1998-99 spending authority to the level approved in the 1998-99 budget.

The 1998-99 spending authority was reduced by a onetime

charge for the expense recorded in 1997-98 for the settlement of legal claims relating to decisions made by the Eugenics Board of Alberta pursuant to the Sexual Sterilization Act of 1928. The Progressive Conservative government in 1972 as one of its first acts repealed the Sexual Sterilization Act of 1928. Since the expense was recorded at the end of 1997-98, it was not possible to vote additional spending authority in that fiscal year.

Over the past two years our government has been committed to resolving these outstanding claims and working hard towards achieving fair settlements. Of the total of over 750 cases, settlements have now been reached for more than 500 individuals. Negotiations are continuing with other claimants.

Finally, it is important to note that a settlement panel has been recently established which provides an option for people who are looking for a straightforward approach. It's a voluntary option for people to reach a fair settlement without going through the courts. The process is available now for any claimants who would like to pursue this alternative.

[Dr. Massey in the chair]

Now, I understand, Mr. Chairman, that likely there would be questions from members of the Legislature regarding this supplementary estimate. All I would suggest is that the questions be clearly articulated so that they can be picked up in *Hansard* and answered at an appropriate time. I do not believe the Minister of Family and Social Services wants a person such as myself to be determining policy this evening.

So with that, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I would ask: does that mean that the vote on the supplemental estimates for Family and Social Services is going to be deferred given that the opposition's questions will not be answered?

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: No, it doesn't.

MRS. SLOAN: That's very unfortunate. So in essence this is a token discussion that we're going to have this evening.

I would register, then, for the record that I will not be voting on these estimates, because I feel it is a breach of process that we have this whole opportunity to come forward to ask questions about a substantive amount of money and in essence the questions cannot be answered. We're talking about \$58 million, a significant amount of money. It's unfortunate that as a representative of the Crown, there was not sufficient priority placed on the debate this evening, that this discussion could not occur and questions could not be answered, but for the record I will ask the questions that we have prepared with respect to this.

In terms of the claims, the Minister of Justice has said that there have been 540 claims settled and the minister of advanced education has said that there are 750 cases. I'm wondering what the severity of injury was in those settled and the severity of injury in those yet to be settled and what implication that's going to have on a financial level with respect to not only this fiscal year but subsequent fiscal years in Family and Social Services.

The minister of advanced education also made reference to a settlement panel. I would ask where the remuneration for that panel is coming from. Is it coming from Family and Social

Services? If so, is that incorporated in the allotment of money that we're discussing this evening, or is that going to be funded from another pocket?

I'm wondering if the government would care to give an estimate of what the final dollar figure is expected to be to settle the entire sterilization issue. That's certainly relevant, and it would certainly be something which should be a consideration in the budget planning process for possibly next year and the year after for sure.

It's puzzling to me that we see an allocation for the settlement of sterilization claims, but I'm wondering: in light of the additional funding the minister awarded to social supports for individuals and families, where did that additional \$122 million in funding come from? Is it creative accounting? It's not obvious to me in the estimates here this evening.

As well, in the last year we've had over 1,600 new AISH clients. I'm wondering how the ministry hid the additional need for funding without requiring an appropriation.

In addition, we've had child welfare cases the highest they've ever been in the history of this province, over 20,000 children now on the child welfare caseload. That obviously is costing this ministry money, yet we don't see an allocation for that. Where is that money coming from? How did the ministry avoid an appropriation without denying services to other client groups? You can't tell me that what you allotted last year for this fiscal year, given the dramatic increase in child welfare alone, is covering those cases. You have got to be compromising care and the provision of services in other areas, yet it is not evident in what is brought forward tonight.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Point of order, hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. I'm seeking some assistance here. We're trying to accommodate the supplementary estimates this evening, and I think I reported on a past expense and why it had to be brought into this current year. We now have opened up for the debate here in the House a whole raft of questions and inferences that deal with the general budget for Family and Social Services. I understand looking for the opportunity, but I would seek the chair's guidance in drawing us back to the supplementary estimate that we are here to deal with this evening.

8:40

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: On the point of order, Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I did not hear the hon. member make reference to a particular Standing Order or to *Beauchesne* with respect to his point of order, and quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, the questions I'm asking are entirely relevant.

It's unfortunate that the hon. member is not in a position to speak with any degree of, I guess, background in relation to the Family and Social Services' budget, their allocations or what additional expenditures or utilization they may have had in the last year. The reality is that those things exist, increased utilization and increased expenditures, yet this government is not bringing it forward. They're not bringing it forward in the supplemental estimates.

I don't think there was a point of order, but I'm waiting, Mr. Chairman, to hear your ruling.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: On the point of order. It is my

understanding the Committee of Supply allows a wide latitude in allowing members to discuss the estimates, but I would remind the member about relevance. We are speaking about the dollar amounts contained in the supplementary estimates.

The hon. loyal Opposition House Leader.

Debate Continued

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the estimates. We had a little procedural wrangle earlier this week over the motions that pave the way for tonight's debate, as to whether or not those motions would be debatable. The motions, of course, talked about the government's desire to limit debate to one day. I would have thought that given the government had decided that the supplementary supply estimates only deserved one day's worth of debate -- and of course in Alberta one day could mean just a couple of hours. It's not the same definition of "day" that's used in the rest of the English-speaking world. One day could mean only a couple of hours. So I would have thought, given the government's determination to limit debate to only one day, that the ministers who were coming cap in hand to the Legislative Assembly asking for money, in this case asking for nearly \$60 million, would have made it their business to be here to participate in that debate and would have made it -- I was careful, Mr. Chairman -- their business to make sure that answers could be provided prior to the men and women of this Assembly having to go home to their constituencies and looking at their constituents and determining and answering their constituents' questions about how their tax dollars are being spent.

The position that we are being put into tonight is being asked to vote for an expenditure of \$60 million to be paid out or to help pay out and settle law claims against the government. Just parenthetically let me say that this is in the wake of Bill 26, when this government wanted to deny the legal rights to pursue settlements earlier in this same legislative session, and then that failed because you can't use the notwithstanding clause to limit those kinds of rights. I think the government learned that lesson.

Now we're being asked to okay this expenditure of \$60 million to deal with the same set of issues. We're being forced to do that tonight by 11:45, because that's what the Standing Orders say, and we're not going to be given the courtesy of a response to a legitimate question. We're not going to be given the courtesy of having the minister stand here and be accountable to us so we in turn can be accountable to our constituents. I am deeply troubled by that. It goes back to the earlier point I made, and I was trying to do it gently and with some good humour, but I want no mistake to be made. This is a very serious issue. We are being asked time and time again in this Assembly to clean up a budgeting mess through supplementary supply. We are now dealing with \$1.434 billion of unbudgeted expenditures, if we pass these requests before us tonight. The previous Treasurer, Mr. Jim Dinning, brought forward barely over \$600 million worth of supplementary supply in his entire reign as Treasurer.

We now have not only to deal with cleaning up this budget mess and this lack of planning. Mr. Chairman, these claims against the Treasury weren't unknown to the Executive Council. The sterilization victims didn't just happen. The lawsuits weren't just initiated. The claims just didn't come out of the ether. The government has known and certainly could have provided contingencies for these claims in the budget. Instead, we're being asked to top up the fund, as though they couldn't anticipate payments would have come out of it. This is a pathetic form of budget control. There's no other way to describe it.

I would ask the detailed questions that I have about this, but there's nobody to answer them, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, let me take a stab at it. Now, Mr. Chairman, I too have been accused of using hyperbole and some rhetoric, and we're certainly hearing lots of it this evening. I think earlier my mouth was moving but maybe my words weren't being heard. Let me repeat what this \$58,740,000 is all about, and I'll speak slowly.

This supplementary estimate of \$58,740,000 is requested to restore -- highlight "restore" -- the ministry's 1998-99 spending authority, the year we are now in, to the level approved in the 1998 budget, on which you have already voted some time ago. The 1998-99 spending authority was reduced by a one-time charge for the expense recorded in 1997-98, last year, for the settlement of legal claims, the settlement of legal claims related to decisions made by the Eugenics Board.

So we are here, folks, discussing the fact that we had to spend some money in 1997-98 out of the budget that was already set for '98-99, and we're simply replacing it. Now, is that so difficult to understand? I don't think we need a lot of hyperbole and rhetoric to understand it.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The Opposition House Leader, and through the chair, please.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the minister of advanced education for so dramatically repeating himself. He said it with such emphasis and such flourish that it is a shame *Hansard* is not also a video record, because I think all Albertans would like to see the large upper body movement that accompanied those words. The point is that no matter how much flailing of arms that minister may accompany his remarks with, it doesn't satisfy the points raised.

There is no lack of understanding on these benches of what the budget process is. I would suggest that that minister should put some accountability questions on the cabinet agenda, and he could share his insight into budget management with his Executive Council colleagues.

Mr. Chairman, rather than taking the risk of provoking the minister of advanced education into a further display, I would ask that at the very least he undertake to ask his colleague the Minister of Family and Social Services to provide the rationale, the justification, the explanation in writing. So even though it's going to come long after the vote, long after we've lost the opportunity to be accountable, long after the money's already been spent and the cheques have been written, at least we'll have it on the record what that minister says about this request.

8:50

MR. DUNFORD: I undertake to take that undertaking.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a great deal of respect for the minister of advanced education, and therefore I take his word seriously. He is trying to do the best in a very difficult situation. The question is really one of the propriety of the minister of social services being absent when in fact a substantial amount . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, according to our rules, the attendance or nonattendance of a member is not subject to the debate.

DR. PANNU: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I thought the minister of advanced education in fact had broken that rule to start with. I'm sorry about this.

We really need the minister's first-hand knowledge available here for us to really vote on this, and that's my only concern. I do appreciate the fact that the government, after having been forced by the courts and by this Legislature, did come around to making payments to the sterilization victims. That's something that I'm not speaking against. It's just the context in which you are discussing it which bothers me, and I think I want to make sure I'm on record expressing my concern about that.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if the hon. minister of advanced education would clearly commit on the record to what commitment he's making on behalf of the Minister of Family and Social Services this evening with respect to answering the questions that have been entered on the record.

MR. DUNFORD: The commitment that I made to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora -- he wanted an answer in writing to the reason for the estimate of \$58,740,000, and that's the undertaking I committed to. As far as the questions that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has, I think they will be clearly articulated in *Hansard*, and I will undertake to ensure that the Minister of Family and Social Services answers those questions to that particular member in writing as well.

Agreed to:
Operating Expense \$58,740,000

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Municipal Affairs

MS EVANS: Presenting the supplementary estimates. First of all, \$10 million for regional co-ordination. I think the key points to identify here: based on a recommendation from the Premier's task force on the infrastructure, the province announced a reinvestment of \$580 million in transportation over four years. The announcement on August 24 included a commitment to provide up to another \$10 million for the Alberta capital region under an Alberta Municipal Affairs program being developed for regional co-ordination.

On August 26, 1998, I convened a special meeting of the chief elected officers in the capital region, and we discussed the infrastructure announcement, specifically the additional \$10 million that would be available for transportation in the region if they could reach consensus on a project to which the funds would apply. At the meeting the mayors and reeves came to an agreement regarding regional transportation needs.

On September 17, 1998, we issued a news release announcing

that all municipalities in the Alberta capital region had passed council resolutions supporting that the \$10 million would go to the city of Edmonton for extending Anthony Henday Drive as part of the north/south trade corridor. This is the first time that municipalities in the capital region have agreed to direct provincial funding to a single project in one municipality. The city of Edmonton will have to apply for the funds, and we're establishing a format and a criteria for this. This \$10 million for regional co-ordination will come from the Alberta lottery fund but will be paid out through Alberta Municipal Affairs. It's an important step, I believe, towards the positive and productive regional co-operation.

Did you want me to continue further on the Senate election, or did you want to take those items one at a time?

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Keep going.

MS EVANS: Okay. On the \$3.4 million for the Senate election, I think the key points here that I should relate to the Assembly are the following. The Senate nominee election was held in conjunction with the general municipal elections on October 19, 1998. The government appreciates the role played by municipalities during the Senate election process. To help offset the costs incurred by municipalities in running the Senate election, the government provided \$3,248,550 to municipalities. This represents approximately half of the cost of conducting municipal elections. The money was distributed to municipalities according to amounts established following discussions with 28 municipalities on their estimated costs for conducting the Senate nominee election.

Municipalities received payments according to the following schedule. Municipalities that held an election received the greater of \$750 in total or 90 cents per resident. Municipalities not holding an election due to acclamation were paid the greater of \$1,500 in total or \$1.80 per resident. Where a municipality is divided into wards, separate payments were calculated based on whether an acclamation or an election occurred. Payments to municipalities were made once the Chief Electoral Officer received the statement of official results from the municipality's returning officer.

The supplementary estimate also includes \$193,500 to run the operating result centre.

I have more details, should that be required, but I'd just make one observation to this Assembly, and that in fact is that if there is only one taxpayer in Alberta, the dollars that were paid by the province to offset the Senate election costs were dollars that were not paid at the local level. While we had some 600 elected officials that were acclaimed, and that may have in some respects changed some of the first predicted figures for the election, they fall well within the guidelines that we were given for the Senate election.

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

9:00

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to put a few questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The \$10 million to fund the government commitment to the capital region for regional co-ordination will be received by the department. I'd like to ask a few questions around that. How will the \$10 million in funding be distributed among the 20 communities that are eligible for funding under this regional co-ordination?

The second question to the minister: what specific formula has been utilized to arrive at the allocation of \$10 million in regional co-ordination funding for municipalities? Is it, for example, population?

The third question: what is the status of the Anthony Henday project as part of the north/south corridor, and how will the \$10 million in regional co-ordination funds contribute to this completion?

Number four: how does the \$10 million regional co-ordination program fit into the Alberta capital region governance review that has been initiated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs?

Just to add to this particular question that I want to ask: is the ministry looking at anything to the east and northeast part of this province, because that has been a major concern that's coming to me on that particular item.

I have another question here. When will the project manager for the Alberta capital region governance review be selected? How many applications have you had? Is it what was announced on October 30?

The last question I have on this particular one: what work has been accomplished by the steering committee and Municipal Affairs to this point on the Alberta capital region governance review?

My next one is around the \$3.442 million. [interjection] Okay. All right. We're going to stay on the \$10 million, then we'll talk about the \$3 million. I'm going to sit down.

MS EVANS: First of all, I think there was a real motivation for the people in the capital region to get together on a project and demonstrate that they can build consensus. I started meeting with the people that are mayors and reeves, chief elected officers in the capital region in June of this year. When they talked about the kinds of things that they were doing already through the voluntary organization of the alliance, they suggested to me at the level of the alliance that 100 percent of them had agreed that the most important road to be built was the Anthony Henday connection between the west end, enabling people from the northwest to reach highway 2 south more easily and also enabling the transportation corridor to the airport to be developed.

At the meeting with all the mayors and reeves it was observed that the west end -- in other words, Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland county -- were not a part of that alliance. They quickly rose to the occasion and said, "We, too, support, in fact we unanimously support the extension of Anthony Henday as an important and probably the number one priority for a trade corridor," and for the safety reasons of that highway, that connection they believed was supremely important.

So when in fact we were talking about the final disposition of funds on the Premier's Task Force on Infrastructure and we talked about a recommendation that would be brought forward on the occasion of meeting with the municipalities, the AUMA and the AAMD and C, we discussed what the possibilities might be in order to assist in the process that's already under way in the governance review and discussed on the basis of a recommendation that I made at the time that perhaps there would be an amount of money that we should include in the business plan not only for intermunicipal co-operation but something to really, in fact, give them some incentive to put their money where their mouth was. In fact, if they really believed this was a good idea, then would they follow through if the money were available?

When the Premier recommended and discussed at the task force the \$10 million, I took it back to the mayors and reeves, asking if they concluded that they would like to still follow through with the motion they'd made previously. They agreed, and they took it back to their councils and individually selected that corridor.

Mr. Chairman, the questions relative to further work on the capital region review I don't think are really relevant to the

expenditure of the funds in this instance. I would be pleased to provide the hon. member any type of information about the capital region review, but I'm not sure that they are contingent on this particular dollar amount. Certainly, if those people in the region had selected the east side, another transportation corridor, or as it was suggested even plowing snow all together, then that would have been a recommendation provided it met a criteria of common use among all municipalities and could have been agreed to.

Actual work on the Anthony Henday. At this point I'm understanding that the \$10 million will be applied to design criteria. The money will not be released until it has satisfied what we believe to be the parameters of providing funds through a grant based on their regional co-operation and will not be under the funding formula of transportation at a 90-10 level.

It's at your pleasure, Mr. Chairman. Should I respond to some of those other concerns about the regional review or the project co-ordinator, which I could well do, but I don't know if they are part of the \$10 million, which was from a different program allotted to really be a part of this funding?

MR. WHITE: Mr. Chairman, it's difficult to look a gift horse in the mouth from a municipal point of view, and the hon. minister knows that well, having been the recipient of the largesse of the provincial government time and time again in her former life as the reeve of a county. But let's put this in context. Here we have provincial money, \$10 million, going to a highway project through the municipal government. While I can understand how that can occur, I can only understand it for one reason. It's pure, pure, pure politics.

Let's remember that on the 24th of August the government announced with largesse 580 millions of dollars in the infrastructure funding program. Remember the hue and cry that came from the Edmonton region versus the amount that Calgary got in comparison? Edmonton was feeling terribly slighted. So what magic does it come from? It pops out of a lottery fund. Out of the hat comes this solution, and it says to the Edmonton area municipalities, notably the mayor of the city of Edmonton: "Here. This saves your butt. You get to go off and say that this is a wonderful gift from the province and how you worked hard to get it."

Now, \$10 million ain't diddly in transportation when you're talking about a transportation budget of 670 million odd dollars a year. This is relatively peanuts, but it does buy political peace, and it does it at a minimal cost because the vote was on at the time for VLTs and the government still had a good bucket of cash. To get the members of the capital region to agree is not too darn difficult when you wave a \$10 million bill at them and say: hey, if you folks agree about a project, this is yours. That's not that horribly difficult. I have to admit that what the minister is doing now in trying to bring the members of the capital region together is considerably more difficult and will require all her skills.

Now, this is not to be meant as a criticism of the minister at all. This is the government in general that happens to be delivered through her ministry. So I hope she doesn't take offence to this personally, when quite frankly I know she shall not.

9:10

This is the worst kind of politics dealing with the municipalities: divide and conquer. If Calgary gets something and there's a perceived slight, then Edmonton has to get something, and if it's urban, then there's a rural somebody that has to get something. So this is a trading off, and the net effect is that the municipalities in this province are woefully underfunded. I heard the minister say earlier that there's but one taxpayer in this province. Actually, two ministers earlier this evening said that there's but

one taxpayer. Well, that's true. Unfortunately, the municipal pocket has big, gaping holes in it. It is flat, flat broke. We all know that. Those that have been very close to municipal government know that they cannot find enough money to service debt oftentimes. They're doing their level best to keep the cap on their debt, and they're going terribly in debt in an area that cannot be exactly measured in financial terms. This is the debt and deficit of the municipal infrastructure: the sewers and the substrate of all municipal roads and lanes and the like. This province is woefully inadequately funding those areas. I'm sure the minister knows that and is doing her level best to get over about eight or 10 seats there and rip some money out of the Treasurer's office to put into that particular fund. This is the worst kind of ad hockery.

Then to top it off, to hold it out that all this money is coming, and it comes but once a year, and it comes in this great big gob, well, it's like trying to teach a child about finances and then throwing a \$50 bill at them once every two years. I mean, what kind of management is that? There's no way that any one person could gauge how they're going to expend that money in a logical fashion. It's just woefully inadequate, and quite frankly every single member of this Assembly should be ashamed of the way municipal funding is done in this province, except perhaps the minister because she's probably trying to do something about it.

Thank you for your time and your patience, Madam Minister.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Chairman, colour me flabbergasted. Almost any other member in this House could have raised those objections and I'd have been less surprised, but for a member from the capital region to say that this is the worst kind of politics, to almost argue that we should never have entertained the thought of giving \$10 million, not for the purposes of transportation but to in effect try and ameliorate some of the difficulties that have existed for the longer term in getting municipalities together -- I am absolutely surprised.

Let me stress once again that it has not been easy to build consensus. Many municipalities do turn down funding, seeing it as the thin edge of the wedge, as something that might further drive them on a course they would not like to pursue. Mr. Chairman, my own view is that they continued with their principle, followed it up with their action. They agreed with coming together on the Anthony Henday project as their first priority. They agreed to put their money where their mouth was as soon as they got the money and realized they had that choice to make, but they might well have said that the criteria were not significant enough to take the risk of a partnership without any idea where the end of the road actually is. To be very honest with you, if I could have at least \$20 million more in the budget to build consensus between partner municipalities, to do better things in regional areas of this province, I would gladly give any argument to get it, whether it was the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, or any other place in this province, because I believe that ultimately, if we can build consensus between municipalities, we will be able, without threatening their sovereignty, to deliver better functionality, better efficiency in governance. That was what we were trying to do.

I believe also that on the comments on what amount of money municipalities get, those are arguments for another day, but in this instance I really believe that those municipalities also took a risk, because they were heading down a path of co-operation with some temerity.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, Madam Minister. As chairman of the Calgary Liberal caucus I wasn't going to join the debate that we just heard a moment ago, but I was going to focus on perhaps what I don't find in the supplementary estimate. I know you hear a lot from the city of Calgary in terms of transportation, Madam Minister, in terms of infrastructure funding, but in my downtown constituency there's only one number one issue, and that's affordable housing.

Madam Minister, you're here -- I appreciate that -- and you're defending the two items, but I have to ask: why are we not addressing on an urgent basis through supplementary estimate what I think it's not overblown to describe as a housing crisis in the city of Calgary? We've been seeing this thing continue to build. The pressure continues to build, and fortunately it hasn't been particularly cold yet. That mitigates or at least forestalls some of the problems. But I don't want to go through another winter of trying to explain to constituents why, in the wealthiest city in Canada, I have people sleeping between the doors of walk-up apartment buildings throughout Calgary-Buffalo. I don't want to see that happen again this winter. This is a -- well, I don't have to tell you because I know you get that information from the city of Calgary and from the Member for Calgary-Bow, who is involved in work in that area. But I'd just like an explanation in terms of why I don't see either of the items that you're here requesting funding for, particularly the \$3.4 million for a Senate election. I know that's happened. But I'm just having a lot of trouble. We can find money for that, but we can't find money -- and when I say "you," I mean you're here as representative of the government. Why aren't we addressing the housing crisis? And it's not just in Calgary, but there's no place where it's more acute, and the impact on people is enormous. I just have to put that question to you, Madam Minister.

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, having tabled the final report of the housing symposium today, I'd like to make a couple of observations. Why we're not providing any supplementary estimate at this time to address the affordable housing needs in Calgary is because, in fact, we are still in the process of examination. Previously -- and I have discussed Mr. Jim O'Dea -- a release was issued on the basis of the fact that I brought in the chairman of the B.C. housing authority to have an analysis of what savings could have been earned had the consolidation been endorsed by this ministry. The analysis that's being done there will hopefully help us define and redefine ways of releasing money to municipalities for the purpose of providing affordable housing.

The refinancing in 44 municipalities netted, again, in this city as well as in Calgary approximately a million dollars, \$965,000 in Calgary. I believe, Mr. Chairman, it would be safe to say that it would be premature to actually go further along that path until we have a plan, until we have a request that's coherent from all of the partners. Until we have a little better understanding -- and I'm meeting again with Mr. Gagliano, public works minister for the federal government, on December 4 -- I believe it's safe and sufficient to say at this time that we are pursuing every avenue in order to lever dollars to attend to the affordable housing needs in this province, but we want to do it on the basis of a plan. We want to do it on the basis that we're co-ordinated with other ministries providing service to the needy. We want to account for the child care services and the needs of looking after families in need. We also want to co-ordinate with health care. The long-

term care review, as you know, has been done. The aging and place study by my colleague the Minister of Community Development and all of these various components are coming together.

Now, I would offer to you this. In the first instance of looking at the Calgary consolidation the city of Calgary presented to us, they asked if they could have the dollars they would save from such a consolidation. My only fear of that is that it may not be sufficient to address the needs of the affordable partnership that actually should occur between the province, the city of Calgary, and the other high-growth areas. So rather than just say that, yes, you can have savings from that particular consolidation, we will be looking at whether or not that is the ultimate formula for success for the city of Calgary or whether there are some other measures. But I would remind the members, then, and the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who has provided the question, that we are actually working actively on a plan in concert with the city, in concert with management bodies, one of which I met with again today. So we are looking at those needs. I know it's not happening fast enough to take care of some of the homeless that are there, but I believe that rather than ad hocery we will be able to provide a plan that actually addresses the problem in a responsible fashion.

So, I'm pleased, Mr. Chairman, to hear that there may well be support, unquestioned support for any future supplementary requisition in housing, and I will bear that in mind as I address the figures.

9:20

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Madam Minister, the \$10 million amount towards completion of Anthony Henday Drive, I suppose. Is that the only project for which all of this money will go? I understand that's what you have said. I have a couple of questions about this. Do the capital region municipalities receive this money if they match this amount? Or are they obliged to put in funds on their own, and if so, what's the amount of that? In other words, is this \$10 million simply given to them and then you say to go and complete Anthony Henday Drive? Is this enough money, if that's the case, to complete the drive? We are three or four months away from the next budget. I'm curious why \$10 million is being asked for now, unless I can assume that this is all money that the municipality was short of in order to complete that particular project.

So two questions. Why just \$10 million? Why not \$15 million? Why not \$5 million? Is it because that's all that is needed? Is it an adequate contribution on the part of your department to the completion of that project?

Secondly, going a little bit beyond this, obviously finding \$10 million or asking for supplementary supply of \$10 million somehow indicates to me the priorities that the department has set for itself. It wasn't, I think, more than 10 days ago that this government set up a task force to find out the numbers of the homeless in the capital region area. That task force wasn't struck, put together until the day that we had snow on the ground and the temperature went to 10 below; a very shortsighted way of planning for the plight of the homeless and the need to provide them with some housing. Now, I was talking about priorities. I'm sure the municipalities, obviously, are pleased that they've got some more money to complete that particular project, but they're also saddled with the responsibility of finding shelter for the homeless, shelter for those who are so poor that they cannot afford to pay the rents. Why isn't there any request here to help out municipalities during the winter so that they can look after the

needs of the homeless and the very poor who are unable to afford even a minimally acceptable type of housing?

My last point. I think I've lost it. You've got two questions, so please answer those then.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MS EVANS: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me just discuss further why no more than \$10 million. In the first instance, we were not even sure that there would be \$10 million over and above the \$130 million that was available from the lottery funding. It was our hope, our optimism I would suggest, that suggested there may be \$10 million more there that could accrue to this infrastructure task force and the recommendations of the Premier's committee. Obviously if the sky was the limit, one could have gone further, but it was not. In fact, there was some real doubt whether or not there would be \$10 million there over and above the \$130 million, based on some of the temerity surrounding some of the issues that were related to the lottery funding and the basis for lottery funding.

I'd like to talk about the project on the Anthony Henday Drive. The Anthony Henday Drive was not the pick of this government. The Anthony Henday Drive was the pick of the people that were in the region. As I indicated to my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, in actual fact they might well have picked an opportunity to share graders and snow shoveling in the wintertime as their exercise in mutual co-operation. The fact that they chose Anthony Henday was because, it is my understanding, they believed that the designing of that route, in fact even the preliminary drawings, et cetera, might well cost and consume a good part of that \$10 million. How will it be allocated? We have been waiting for suggestions on what type of allocation methodology should be used, but there will not be cheques cut for every municipality. They have actually agreed by motion that those dollars should be applied as they would be received today, if the criteria were complete, directly to the city of Edmonton. It would be \$10 million not as a transportation grant on the 90-10 formula, as I stated previously, but as a grant they have provided from their fair share of that allocation if we were doing it on a per capita or an equalized basis, in the case of the rural municipalities, on their fair share of that funding so that it can make a contribution towards a major arterial route that they consider important for all Albertans but particularly for the safe conveyance of traffic.

I want to talk just a little bit about your comments on the fact that it would appear that the homeless task force was not announced in the city of Edmonton until after the first day of the snowfall. I can assure you that there were many more efforts that were going on, not the least of which is a partnership with the McCauley project to rejuvenate a place for the hard to house and for people who truly have difficulty. We have been working with the Salvation Army, a number of nonprofit agencies, a number of church groups, and a number of foundations who have been equally involved in some of the planning behind the scenes. They will no doubt through Mr. Zwozdesky's committee be enabled to knit their work with the kinds of activities that are actually being looked at now as it relates particularly to the homeless and in articulation with the city of Edmonton.

Mr. Chairman, I don't believe we've been shortsighted. In fact, the efforts we've been making have had some results in Calgary. For example, the private donations for the Art Smith foundation for people to be provided affordable housing have actually already gleaned \$2 million, and I would suggest to you

that they will more than exceed their anticipated \$6 million. Further, within this city we have had overtures from private corporations who have suggested they believe it is their duty as well. So we have not overlooked those. In fact, we are doing a very complete needs analysis, and we're working with the other social agencies in this city to do so.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I must say that I've never seen a finer looking chairman, and I just think you're doing an excellent job. I hear cheers of agreement.

If I may then, Madam Minister -- and I appreciate the fact that you are answering questions tonight and you're very present in this Chamber. I appreciate that.

You know, every time I talk to the mayor of Spruce Grove, he says: "Poor Spruce Grove gets nothing in grants in lieu of, you know, government buildings, government properties. There's zip all in Spruce Grove." Then he looks at me like it's my fault. So I will look at the minister now and say: give the man a call; tell him it's not my fault, please. Seriously, this is one thing that Spruce Grove really does complain about. They have no provincial facilities there. They get absolutely no funding. Well, I realize it is in grants in lieu. They have absolutely no provincial buildings there. [interjection] What are you saying, Member for Little Bow?

MR. McFARLAND: We haven't got any either.

MRS. SOETAERT: There you go. You should talk to the minister like I am.

But, through the chair, I have to say that I even get comments in the paper sometimes about that. I realize we're not in a big construction mode in the government, but if you are, Spruce Grove is a fine city with an excellent location for many things. So please put that on my Christmas wish list. If anything's coming up, Spruce Grove is a grand place for it. So is all the rest of my riding, but Spruce Grove has no provincial buildings. Of course there's no hospital in any part of my riding, but that's another story. So I just wanted to make a point of that, and I realize that's not specific to the funding.

One of the things with the Anthony Henday Drive, the connection through St. Albert is a rather interesting one. I believe it's kind of in the air right now, or maybe you have more information that I don't right now. Would you mind telling me where that is at? I'd appreciate that.

9:30

I can't help but take this opportunity to say what a waste of money the Senate election was. It was for nothing; there was no spot to elect anyone to. I think that in a way this provincial government got hoodwinked by federal Reformers and hopped onto their platform and got sucked in to the tune of \$3.4 million.

MR. BOUTILIER: Not true. Not true.

MRS. SOETAERT: Then stand up and speak, Fort McMurray, if you've got a point.

Honestly, I heard nothing but negative comments about the Senate vote. I honestly asked people. I think you were truly suckered in for \$3.4 million, and I know that's not you specifically, Madam Minister. I don't mean that personally; I mean that collectively as a government. I'm very disappointed in that,

because I know and every one of you knows absolutely a better place to put that \$3.4 million.

MR. BOUTILIER: It helped municipalities.

MRS. SOETAERT: I know, Fort McMurray. [interjection] I know you do. Democracy has a price, yet the whining and complaining about sitting here at night is phenomenal. Democracy has a price, yes, but let's make proper use of it and not in a joke of a Senate election.

That was about it for concerns of mine. This capital region governance, I have to tell you honestly, Madam Minister, that there are grumblings out there. I'm sure you've heard them from people who think that this money is -- and I realize the money is for the Anthony Henday connection. Very concerned people talking about forced amalgamation. I would appreciate a firm statement from you that says that is not on the agenda. These towns and cities have their own identity, and unless they choose to buy in, I would hate to see a forced amalgamation, though it would guarantee re-election for someone like me. But I really do think they deserve their own identity. The big Toronto megacity is something that they're worried about.

So with those few comments I appreciate the minister taking the time to listen.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to point out that I have heard as well from the mayor of Spruce Grove about grants in lieu. In fact, our budget for grants in lieu of taxes has been reducing steadily because my colleague the hon. minister of public works has been selling lands, so grants in lieu of taxes for Crown lands within communities are fast disappearing. As these lands are sold, the private sector or other people in fact buy and develop those lands, so it is not as bad a story as it appears to be.

One of the things you addressed was the connection through St. Albert and questioning the Anthony Henday. Although the St. Albert connection, in fact even a northeast and southeast connection was mentioned, the discussion was on a basis where I did not try to influence their priorities. I only suggested that it was important for them to agree on their priorities. It was agreed that the St. Albert road was an important connection. In fact, the entire ring around the city, the entire opportunity for developing safe transportation on all of the corridors around the city is equally important here as it is in the city of Calgary.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

I want to just talk about what has been identified in your words. First of all, hon. colleague, a waste of dollars. Well, I could point out that there is really no waste of dollars. If you're challenging the concept of electing a Senator, that's one thing, but those dollars were not wasted because except for those areas where there were acclamations, there were relatively few dollars that were expended that would not have had to be expended by those municipalities. My hon. colleague to my right knows, as I do, that after the first complaints about having to run a senatorial election, there was actually applause from some municipalities who said, "Good; you paid my costs." So the province picked up the tariff at the point of \$3.4 million for relatively fewer costs that had to be paid out at the local level. Rather than being concerned

about that, I think that was a good-news story. On the matter of the Senate election, I think that's a discussion for another day.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I just had a question and an observation. I might just say that as we've been dealing with the Municipal Affairs supplementary estimates, it strikes me that no minister has tried harder or been more forthcoming in terms of responding to the questions that have been put. I hope that those ministers yet to introduce estimates are also going to defend their estimates in as much detail.

My comment would be this. It strikes me that the consolidation of the three agencies, Calhome and Metropolitan Foundation and Calgary, may have some impact, but the best information I get from agencies in the city of Calgary is that we're dealing around the margins of the homeless problem. I mean, there's an argument about administrative efficiency and whatever, but whatever is decided there, at least in my respectful opinion, is not going to make a huge dent in terms of the number of people looking for places to stay and so on. So that's my comment.

The question would be this. What's the anticipated date? You talk about the process being ongoing. You talk about working towards a set of conclusions. I guess I'd like to know, Madam Minister, when my constituents in Calgary-Buffalo and other Calgarians can expect that you're going to unveil your plan on behalf of the government of Alberta to provide safe, affordable housing to ensure that everybody, certainly in the city of Calgary, has safe and affordable housing. When is that likely to happen? Hopefully it's going to be before the end of the 1998-1999 winter.

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, on one point I'll agree with the hon. colleague, and that is this. Housing of its own accord will always only nip around the edges of the crisis of anybody who is homeless because that crisis started long before they reached the stage of being homeless, no doubt in their families. I read every word of the homeless study that was done in the city of the Calgary by Alderman Hawkesworth and our hon. colleague from Calgary-Bow. What I really understood was that finally some who had actually received shelter in the city of Calgary, albeit on a transient basis, had really believed for some time that they had never felt so listened to or so cared for. So the homeless problem is a societal problem. It is much bigger than providing shelter. It is something that starts in the home long before they ever reach the opportunity to be homeless.

When can we provide an assurance? I would like to suggest to you that only this week, once again speaking with our Premier and the other ministers who have any part of looking after the whole of the housing dimension -- low-income, modest-income, homeless, seniors, special-needs housing -- we are going to spend some time in dialogue with what each individual department is doing, what pieces of the puzzle we can put together. I can't give you a final date for when that plan comes out, but surely we hope to present it early in the new year to our colleagues and see whether in fact that will be satisfactory.

In the interim, however, we are not ignoring the needs of either the homeless, the seniors, or those other projects. This week I've been in consultation with about 16 of the management bodies. They are presenting plans. We will put them through the process of the Alberta Social Housing Corporation and see whether in fact the policies will permit us to engage in the ones that I would identify as those of greatest concern, those that are in crisis

proportions. I should identify for you that the city of Calgary on a very specific application, to the best of my knowledge, has not come forward yet, nor has the other body, the Calgary Housing Authority. I think they, like myself, are waiting for some results of the study from Mr. O'Dea.

We have had dialogue with the mayor of the city of Calgary. I believe he is satisfied that we are making progress on the issue from our point of view, and I'd welcome any other suggestions that come forward so that we can accelerate the process.

9:40

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for losing one of the points that I wanted to make. It's come back since, so I'd certainly touch upon that. I want to say a few other things that will ultimately connect with that point.

What I was going to say towards the end of my last remarks was a news story that I heard today around 6 o'clock as I was driving from one place to another. It had to do with the dramatic rise that has taken place in rents for apartments. The headline of the story was that apartment owners have got an early Christmas gift both in Calgary and here and perhaps in other urban centres. The rents are going up quite substantially. That has bearing on the stories that I hear from my own constituents. I had personally to deal with requests from four of my own constituents over the last month, all of them women perhaps in their late 50s, early 60s who are living on fixed incomes and were being pushed out of their rented apartment accommodations because they were in arrears in payment of their rents. Rents have gone up, and their fixed income simply did not allow them to be able to keep up their payments to their landlords.

Now, in your estimates here I want to turn to the question of priorities. There is a real housing crisis in this province, in this city and other cities. Madam Minister, to justify clearly, you know, \$3.5 million or close to it spent on Senate elections, we could argue about whether it was a waste or not. But don't you think it would have been much better spent looking after the homeless and people who need some assistance with making their payments to apartment owners? That would rescue them from the risk of being thrown out and losing their place where they have lived for years and years. And look after the homeless. After all, if we have priorities, priorities are the ones where you put your money. I have yet to hear from the two Senators-in-waiting, or whatever you call them, a single word about our national politics. Not a word. So shall we call that a waste of your money? I'm saying it's misplaced priorities of this government, and that's the point that I wanted to make. I would have liked to see you as a concerned Minister of Municipal Affairs seek some new funds in order to deal with the problems that the homeless and people with low incomes face. Homelessness might start in the home, but the homeless end up on the street in minus 20. We've got to look at them as human beings in need and not blame them for something that their parents might have done for which they should pay now.

Thank you.

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Chairman, rather than engage in the debate about the individuals that are homeless, let me just identify that we have the rent supplement program. We are working in the business plan to provide more dollars in the rent supplement program. We have engaged in negotiations with willing and committed landlords to ensure that the persons that are in need of subsidy are not paying more than 30 percent. That has resulted in more dollars from our

department to engage in relationships with landlords to top up their income so that they can in fact be allowed at least to pay only 30 percent of their actual take-home pay.

It is not as simple as just throwing money at the problem. There are a lot of other things involved. When I speak with the people in this city, when I meet with the seniors in this city, with city officials, they are not anxious to have us do anything without fully consulting them. That includes the people that are being consulted now in this study on the homeless.

Should I have spent more time on the homeless and housing than the senatorial elections? May I assure this Assembly that for every five minutes I spent on the senatorial elections, I've spent 500 minutes on the homeless and the needs of the people that need housing in this province, in this city and throughout Alberta, both visiting them and making myself fully familiar with their needs, making ourselves fully familiar with the problems associated with low vacancy rates.

Mr. Chairman, I want to identify that the hon. colleague is absolutely right about the rent increases. CMHC today released a report that shows that there's an almost .6 of 1 percent vacancy rate in the city of Calgary. Edmonton is approaching that figure. So we are at a portion of our history where we have to take immediate measures but not without some planning, some deliberation, some co-operation and partnership with the city, the private sector, and the nonprofit societies.

I can assure you that everybody that comes to my office for a response on those issues is getting a response, and I am meeting as well with single parents, the ones that talk to me about their eviction notices. I am talking to their caseworkers, and I'm fully cognizant of the needs they have for additional dollars to make something happen for them.

So I can assure you that the amount of time this government has spent on senatorial elections is certainly not outweighing the amount of time this government is spending trying to take care of the needs of the homeless, the needs of seniors and all of those other categories of people that are truly in need.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you. The issue, Madam Minister, is not how much time you have spent dealing with individuals on the issue of homelessness; it's not how much time you have spent looking at the problem. The issue is: how much has this government put towards that problem in terms of dollars expended? What is the policy of the government with regards to the homeless, and what is the government going to be doing in terms of a concerted plan?

Now, you indicated, Madam Minister, that before there is co-operation amongst all the various municipalities, amongst all the agencies, there will be no expenditure of dollars. That is what it sounded like to me. However, when I look at a news release that you put out on September 17 of 1998, you are more than willing to give \$10 million to the capital region co-operation initiative without any details as to how, and I'm quoting from your news release: "According to Evans the details as to how and when the money will be distributed will be finalized later this fall."

[Mr. Zwozdesky in the chair]

In conjunction with that, this government was more than willing to spend \$3.4 million of taxpayers' money without having any kind of an idea as to what the so-called Senators-in-waiting will be doing. What are their performance requirements? What are

the results? What is the reason for them being there? That was not a consideration in terms of providing dollars for an initiative that the government desired to put forward.

So what I'm gathering out of this particular debate is that the government has no political will to help the homeless, particularly in the Calgary area, that the government would rather shut its eyes and walk by those who will be on the streets of the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton in weather that one would not wish a dog to be out in but that that's okay because in fact the problems of the homeless start at home. Well, if I've ever heard of a catch-22 statement, that's it. At some point that cycle has to be broken, and the government has to have the political will and the desire to break that cycle. Unfortunately we're not seeing that here.

We're seeing instead the funding of a particular transportation initiative. In fact Anthony Henday Drive is within my constituency, and we have many blockages within my constituency when it comes to transportation. So, yes, the reality is that there is a need for a north/south corridor; there is a need for dollars for infrastructure in transportation. But what I find curious about how this came about is that this seems to have been a carrot dangling in front of the regional area, the capital region, so that they would get together and come to an agreement as to how they would spend some moneys. There was no real plan from the department that I can see in terms of saying: this is how these dollars are to be provided. In fact it is almost bribery for the department to move towards its initiative of regional co-ordination. So I'd like a little bit more background as to why the dollars were there before the project. I don't quite understand that process, having listened to this government and the way they talk about plans for five years now in this Legislative Assembly.

9:50

The other thing that I would like the minister to provide, because she indicated, and rightly so, that in areas where there were acclamations that in fact the province was subsidizing the municipalities in the municipal elections -- that's what happened this time around. So what I would like to know is which municipalities did receive a subsidy from the government in terms of the election. What was the allocation by municipality of that \$3.442 million that was put forward for the Senate election? Also I would not like to have lost the idea that seeing that we've paid for these Senators to be elected, there is some kind of performance requirement now of these volunteer Senators-in-waiting to show that there is a justification for the expenditure by this province of \$3.442 million for these two Senators and that we will be receiving an annual report from the minister as to their activities and whether or not we will be continuing with the provision of dollars to the next Senate election.

Also, what I would appreciate from the minister is a statement -- this may have to come from the Treasurer -- of what the loss is to the government in terms of tax revenue. It's my understanding that if you contributed to the provincial campaign of the Senators-in-waiting, in fact you did receive a tax credit. If that is not the case, please let me know. If there was a tax credit, that in fact meant that that would have had an effect on the tax revenue of the province. So if the minister would be able to provide me with that information, I'm sure Albertans would be interested in knowing how much of those dollars were in fact lost to the province as a result of the Senate election. So in addition to the \$3.442 million we will know how much more was missing.

Those are my comments for now, and I look forward to the minister's reply.

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, one of the points I'd make is that no

matter how much the province or a municipality spends on getting people elected, it doesn't guarantee their performance in any measure. So in fact to suggest that the Minister of Municipal Affairs or this government, on the basis of the cost paid for an election, should actually identify performance measures, I think is asking a bit much, and I'd really question the criteria for our own performance measures on the basis of what it cost to elect us.

I want to leave no delusions about the fact that there were no criteria for the \$10 million for municipalities, because for years preceding my involvement, I believe from 1995 onwards, we have had \$5 million in the budget for amalgamation and building consensus between municipalities. Those dollars have been expended on the basis of performance criteria identified when municipalities either amalgamate or in fact resolve their differences on intermunicipal disputes. So we have had very careful criteria for identifying what would be paid for, what would be supported, and what would not be supported. The principles involved there in fact are the very basis for how we would approach the \$10 million for this particular expenditure, along with scrutiny by the Auditor General, so that we are not just providing the money without some sort of assurance of the partnership that is provided. At the time that those criteria have been fleshed out by those municipalities and we have responded to it in kind, I will be pleased to provide that to this House.

I might also say that those municipalities may well have chosen not to accept that challenge and build on their consensus for the dollars, in which case to have actually exercised any more criteria or any more principles or any other identification may not work. I should suggest to you that the municipalities whom I've met with again just last Friday and will meet with again on December 16 are most interested in those kinds of things that can build on their relationship. Ultimately I believe they will all save money for the taxpayer of Alberta.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would with respect refer the question of the tax receipts on the provincial campaign for senatorial election to the Provincial Treasurer at such time in the future as he may be able to respond.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has a quick supplemental?

MS LEIBOVICI: Yes, I do.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

MS LEIBOVICI: The minister didn't address the issue of the breakdown of the \$3.442 million per municipality. Will she be providing that information in writing?

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, certainly we will be able to provide that schedule. We do not have that schedule available as yet, but we do have the breakdown of how they would be paid. I could advise that the total payment for areas with acclamations was \$652,189.63. The total payment for areas with low collections was \$2,249,004.39. The total partner payments with the Indian reserves, national parks, and other areas not holding the Senate vote on behalf of the province was \$267,190.52.

Mr. Chairman, at such time as the schedule is available on the individual dollar amounts paid to each municipality, that will be tabled in this House.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, please.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's not usually my practice to quote the minister, but the answers to the questions as they related to the housing shortage in Calgary and the homeless were absolutely appalling. When the minister has an opportunity in a quiet moment to read that and think of reading that standing in a hall where the homeless are looking for a bed and there are no beds there and when it's minus 20 out -- read that and stand and think of the hypocrisy of that in conjunction with the \$3.4 million just in the wind.

This caucus happened to have the opportunity to speak to the management and the staff of three agencies: Calhome Properties Ltd., the Metro Foundation, and the Calgary Housing Authority, I believe. In any event, the summation was: if there were money available today, could you put it to use -- and this was in September -- before freeze-up occurred, since you'd be having a shortage like never before in Calgary? Unequivocally their answer was: yes; don't bother with the bureaucratise; don't bother getting all the ducks in a row.

As the hon. member pointed out earlier, there has often been no plan in place when the government decides to spend some money, particularly in an area where you know it can be spent to good use. It's absolutely appalling that that answer came out, and I hope that it's delivered to some of those people in Calgary that are going without homes tonight. To say at one point that there was an opportunity to be homeless -- that was a quote. I couldn't believe that could come out of a government member that had money to expend in this area. Opportunity to be homeless. It's ludicrous. We'll leave that one for the moment, because time's awasting, and other members want to speak on the same subject, I'm sure.

Let's speak about this gross waste, this insult to Albertans of 3.4 some odd millions of dollars in a vote that they didn't ask for. There it is. Talk about hypocrisy. Here we are now after the vote, and we're talking about it now. I mean, isn't democracy sort of lined up to have the people have a voice before government does things? I would think that would be the case, but oh, no. Democracy does not live in Alberta in this case. That's for sure.

MR. SAPERS: Ready, fire, aim.

10:00

MR. WHITE: Yeah. Ready, fire, aim comes to mind here. The government goes out and expends these funds and throws their pens about holus-bolus without any concern for what the effect is.

Now, look. If you truly want an elected and effective and representative government, an equal government in Ottawa called the Senate, then you start properly where the reform starts. You start in Ottawa, and you build some consensus on how it would occur. But to cause votes here, to have the tail wag the dog way out in Alberta -- the laughing stock of Canada is Alberta when you cause a vote that would do nothing but lock in the present system. It was ludicrous, absolutely ludicrous. To spend that kind of money and in the same breath say that we don't have an emergency \$300,000 or \$400,000 in order to aid in some capital work in the city of Calgary for the homeless -- it's just classically absurd that you could do that and then to cause the vote.

Now, let's put this vote in context here. There's a letter -- it's a public letter, I believe, or at least I've read it -- in response to a letter from a Reform member. I can't recall which one it was, but it was asking to have a Senate vote in the next civic election. The letter was returned from the Premier's office in January of '97 by Mr. Love, and it in effect said: no, no, no, it's too expensive; there is no reason for it. It went through a number of reasons why it couldn't be done.

Then we have the prospect of many of these VLT votes spread throughout the province, much to the concern and consternation of the municipalities. I'm sure that if every single one of them had an opportunity in a quiet moment, they would have told the minister, if she had been able to ask, that they don't want these other encumbrances on the vote at the time. It adds all kinds of dynamics that do nothing for municipal government. It's darn difficult enough to get people out to vote in a municipal election for the right reasons, to support good candidates, good people regardless of their philosophical background, to get them out there to do it. Then to throw these red herring votes in was just certainly irresponsible of this government, to say the least. You ask every single one of them. They just didn't want to have any of those votes at all.

The final thing was to add this other diversion. Clearly in the VLT vote, in the minds of the public anyway, who's the bad guy? The bad guy in this case was the provincial government. You throw in the Senate vote, and the bad guy is painted as the federal government, this hairy monster that lives by the lakes down there. I mean, it's really, really ludicrous that a province would spend 3 and a half million dollars on something as frivolous as that, as trying to somehow change the minds of the majority of Canadians, with less than 10 percent of the population here, particularly on a basis that would put us in a worse position if the vote had been taken up all across the province. We would be permanently in a minority position, which is certainly not the second E and the third E, effective and equal.

The final straw is to say to a member questioning it: well, there is no performance standard for politicians the last time I looked at an election. Well, there is a performance standard for these particular people. It is zero. They have no vote, they have no influence, and they have no means of communicating anything to the public, nor should they. It's absolutely ridiculous, and this government should be ashamed of putting that kind of money forward.

Thank you, sir.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Any further speakers?

MS EVANS: I just can't let it pass, and I probably am going to regret this in the morning. I just can't let it pass that the hon. member has spent so much time talking about the homeless. He met with them in September. He couldn't remember the name of one of the bodies he met with. I have not seen the Liberal plan. I have provided to the hon. members of the opposition invitations to the housing symposium, every bit of the information we could on the issues affecting the homeless. Where is the plan?

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister.

After considering the proposed supplementary . . . [interjections] Order please, or we'll have to have an adjournment for 10 minutes.

Agreed to:
Operating expense \$13,442,000

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: That, too, is carried.

Health

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of Health.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we get under way this evening, I'd like to draw the hon. members' attention to pages 21 through 25 in their supplementary estimates book.

Mr. Chairman, as I speak this evening to the supplementary estimates for the Department of Health for 1998-99, I am reaffirming our government's commitment to a quality, publicly funded health system in this province. Our government has stated that when there is a demonstrated need for additional resources in health, those resources will be provided. As one of the fastest growing provinces in Canada, Alberta is experiencing additional demands being placed on our health system. As a result of this demonstrated need, we seek supplementary funds totaling \$225,165,000 for the current fiscal year.

To explain that in more detail, Mr. Chairman, the new AMA agreement provided for a fee increase for physicians, adjustments for population increases, and funds to further offset the cost to physicians for medical insurance. So this is a very fair and reasonable agreement, as I think all would agree, and one that meets the needs of both doctors and government. It will help to ensure that all Albertans continue to have access to quality patient care and a quality, publicly funded health system.

Mr. Chairman, the agreement significantly increases total government spending on physician services to keep pace with Alberta's increasing population. It also recognizes that individual physician fees should be adjusted to return the 5 percent fee decrease of several years ago. These supplementary estimates reflect the additional \$29.4 million that is required to bring the total funding for the physicians to the contract amount of \$843.3 million.

Mr. Chairman, also included in these supplementary estimates is an additional \$4,200,000 to provide for the new \$5 million rural on-call initiative, which was agreed to at the same time as the new contract with the AMA. In addition to recruiting physicians to the rural and remote communities in Alberta, we recognize the need to retain the physicians currently practising in these communities. We recognize the special circumstances of providing services in rural and remote locations, and we recognize the significant contribution made by physicians already in place.

Mr. Chairman, part of the agreement with the Alberta Medical Association also included the establishment of an innovation fund to address issues such as home care reform, incentive payments, and payment models. Therefore, an additional \$3.6 million is being provided to the existing \$5.7 million for a total of \$9.3 million. Five million dollars will be used for the innovation fund initiatives and the remaining \$4.3 million for initiatives involving physicians, health authorities, and the Department of Health. This comes under one of the other initiatives, in addition to what's in the AMA agreement, called the tripartite initiative.

10:10

Mr. Chairman, we are also here today to seek supplementary funds of \$60 million for human tissue research, banking and transfers, and blood services. Half of that will be for Alberta's share of the transition cost to create the new Canadian Blood Services, which is the successor to the Canadian Red Cross Society and the Canadian blood agency. The remaining \$30 million is for Alberta's share of financial assistance to Canadians who were infected by the hepatitis C virus through the blood system between January 1, 1986, and July 1, 1990.

It's very important to note there that, yes, the Alberta govern-

ment is committed to a compensation program as agreed to on a national basis for those people between 1986 and 1990, as identified in the Krever inquiry and its report. This commitment, as I've said, comes as a result of a very important agreement on a national approach to assist people whose lives have been affected by the tainted-blood situation. The co-ordinated national approach to this matter ensures that Albertans and other Canadians adversely impacted by the blood system during this period, regardless of where they live, are eligible for fair and reasonable assistance.

Mr. Chairman, the last two points outlined on page 24 provide additional funds to health authorities. In early April we announced \$66.6 million to address cost pressures and increases in population. I think that this was a very fine effort, and it was, yes, chaired by the MLA for Calgary-Bow, but also Mr. Jacques, the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, was involved there as well, and his record with respect to designing our overall educational funding structure is well respected. We had the benefit of those two members of the Assembly plus others, and they conducted a comprehensive review of funding of health authorities.

Mr. Chairman, in response to the Laing committee's recommendations, we announced an additional \$61.3 million to ensure our capacity to have key lifesaving procedures accessible when needed and to help address projected deficits in some regional health authorities because of population increases. Of the total, \$37 million is to address population growth, \$20 million is additional funding for provincewide services, and \$4 million is for academic health centres in Edmonton and Calgary.

Mr. Chairman, this additional funding has given health authorities a more stable resource base, and it's based on a rationale that is provided through the Laing report. This additional funding, as I've said, has given health authorities a more stable resource base reflecting the ongoing growth in our province, and it has provided them with the capacity to manage within their allocated funding levels for the rest of this fiscal year.

In total, Mr. Chairman, Alberta Health seeks \$225,165,000 in supplementary funds for 1998-99, and we believe that these funds support our government's commitment to continuing reinvestment, when it is clearly needed, to ensure continued access to quality, publicly funded health care in this province.

One other point, Mr. Chairman, and that is that we have certainly as a government put a high priority on health care, and we are now in a position where if we use the usual formulas that are used across this country, where you take your total population and you make certain adjustments for the age of the population and so forth, we are right up there -- and I'll be very conservative in this -- about third place, within a few dollars of the top. I think this demonstrates that we are really working on having the best possible publicly funded health system in this province, a public health system for all Albertans.

Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo, please.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that presentation and that explanation, however brief.

MR. JONSON: Do you want me to talk some more?

MR. DICKSON: Well, we're going to give the minister an opportunity to embellish and supplement the initial comments.

I want to make the general observation that, you know, it's

almost tough, Mr. Minister, through the chair, to identify just how many additional funding announcements we've seen in the 1998 year beyond the budget. I think when I first became an MLA, there was an expectation that you debated a budget in February and there might be a reason because of some circumstance that could not have reasonably been foreseen or predicted, like forest fires, that there might be a supplementary estimate. What's interesting to me is that the government has now gone from a budget and maybe one correction during the course of a fiscal year to a point where the budget is simply one way station in a whole series of funding announcements in the course of the year. My favorite explanation, Mr. Chairman -- you'd appreciate this -- is when Mr. Garth Norris was questioned about this back on April 10 when this was one of those additional funding announcements being addressed. They have turned the multiple supplementary funding requests into a virtue. In fact Mr. Norris, who gets absolutely top marks, Mr. Minister, for creativity, said that this is no admission that funding has been insufficient; it simply shows why a flexible budgeting plan is needed. So that's what this is all about. It's flexibility, I guess. It's not a lack of adequate planning or miscalculation or lowballing or just inaccurately determining costs. It's a question of flexible planning.

The problem is that the people in the regional health authorities seem not to appreciate the ad hoc funding. I have a voluminous file and a growing file of the kinds of concerns that are raised by many of the health regions simply not knowing how much money they're going to have to be able to hire staff and open beds and that sort of thing. So should more money go into the health system? Yes. But we're still looking, Mr. Minister, through the chair, for that seemingly so elusive goal of stable, long-term funding so people on the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Board, the Alberta Cancer Board, and each of those 17 regions can do the kind of planning that I think they have to be able to do and they want to do.

Now, I've got a whole range of questions for you, Mr. Minister. Let me start off with something really specific. This, I think, would be in element 2.3.4. I think it's there, and I'll invite you to tell me if it belongs in another place. The Calgary regional health authority apparently is going to receive \$9 million to support the construction and development of a, quote, centralized high-volume laboratory testing facility. So firstly I'd ask for confirmation from the minister that that is in fact subsumed in element 2.3.4. If it's not, where does that appear? Why is the Calgary regional health authority receiving \$9 million for that laboratory facility at a time when they have a \$25 million deficit in their overall budget? What's the facility designed to do? Who's going to receive the funding? Is this a private operator who's going to receive this \$9 million sum? Is it being expended in some other way? What's this facility being designed to do? What are the performance measures that are going to be established? I guess on a very practical level, what's the projected decrease in wait time for laboratory analysis throughout the Calgary region?

So that's a specific item, but I do understand it's somewhere tucked in on page 25, Mr. Minister. I can't break it out, so if you could help me in terms of where that is.

At any time, Mr. Minister, through the chairman, if you want to start answering some questions, if you just signal, I'd be happy to take my seat and give you the floor to be able to respond to them. Otherwise, given the time allotment in Standing Orders, I'll just keep on rambling through my questions, if that's okay with you.

10:20

MR. JONSON: I don't want to take away from your time.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Minister. I always appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Let me go right to practitioner services, 2.1. Now, I've got a series of questions relative to that. We see the extra funding for rural physicians. I'm looking here to see some extra funding for obstetricians, and I don't see it anywhere in the supplementary estimate. So you might just confirm, Mr. Minister, that there is not one nickel that appears anywhere on page 25 that would be made available to address a women's health issue which I think is of some real gravity. I have certainly heard from a number of expectant mothers, people expecting difficult pregnancies, and I can only imagine, Mr. Minister, how many of those women and couples you've heard from. There have continued to be, through the better part of two-thirds of 1998, couples expecting a baby experiencing a fairly high degree of additional stress absolutely unrelated to the natural process that they're dealing with, and it has to do with an uncertainty that when they need an obstetrician, they're going to be able to access that service.

You know, we've watched this thing play out between the AMA and the obstetricians and Alberta Health, but at the end of the day, Mr. Minister, as I'm sure you appreciate, there's only one person in that little three-way tango who's been elected by Albertans with a responsibility to ensure that those women have access to obstetrical services when they need them, and that's you, sir. So if in fact you're confirming that there's no money involved anywhere on page 25 dealing with obstetrical services, you might just share with us your reasoning for that.

Some of the other comments I had. We've seen such major changes in the overall compensation to physicians. The medical services budget was going to increase; the original plan was from \$182 million to \$919 million by 2000-2001. An overall increase had been projected, after the agreement had been struck in the spring, of 24 percent over three years -- I think I have that number correct -- which was significant, because I think the overall increase you were projecting otherwise was only about 6 percent in other areas of Alberta Health.

I'm trying to link that with what we found in the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General was paying lots of attention to your department, because I think we've got what must be about 30 or maybe closer to 40 pages of his last report devoted to your department. One of the things was identified at page 149, where there's discussion of physician fees. One of the elements of the fee agreement was

the elimination of complicated reserve and stabilization fund accounts and the introduction of a new mechanism to adjust fees in order to maintain spending within contract amounts.

Now, Mr. Minister, if that's the provision in the fee agreement, you might be good enough to explain why it looks that we're once again in a situation of the government dramatically, not marginally but dramatically, underestimating the cost of the fee-for-service agreement. Given the fact that the Auditor General with his usual vigilance has identified a problem that he discusses at page 148, I think it is, through about 153 of the Auditor General's report -- he talks about the element that was incorporated into the agreement. When is that element going to kick in? Because it looks that the spending is going to exceed the contract amounts. I guess what I then have to ask is: if we thought we had a physician funding agreement for three years and it appears you're sort of way over budget now, what kind of impact are you then projecting for the next two years of that agreement?

Also, there had been a problem historically in terms of physician compensation which meant that there was some significant inability to be able to deal with incorrect payments to

practitioners. We have a significant number of incorrect payments, and I guess I'm wondering: since you're here looking for more money for physicians to provide the physician compensation, I'd sure be interested in knowing what steps have been taken to correct what may be euphemistically described by the Auditor General as incorrect payments. What steps have been taken by you and your department, sir, to manage that better?

Given the problems that Alberta Health has had accurately forecasting physician compensation, I'm asking the minister whether he anticipates that the \$4.2 million for rural on-call is likely going to be revised further or whether that's likely to be a firm number to the end of the fiscal year.

There's been a great deal of frustration, I think, around the tripartite agreement. The notion much supported by the Auditor General of coming up with alternative compensation formulae and systems for physicians seems to have stumbled badly, Mr. Minister. You know, you've got these -- what have we got? -- five projects around the province that were supposed to pilot alternative physician compensation programs. It seems to have taken forever to get some of these things up and running. What I'd ask you to do, since it's one of the things we're dealing with in the supplementary estimate, is to give us a report and an update in terms of the current status of those. I can't remember; it's either five or six different pilot projects going on around the province. So if you can give us some information with respect to that, I'd be appreciative.

I'll just move on to program 2.3, the regional health authorities. In terms of the 103 million additional dollars going to regional health authorities, Mr. Minister, when you describe on page 24 how this money is going to "address emerging cost pressures due to population growth and increasing health services utilization," how is that different from paying deficits of regional health authorities? I haven't gone through and compared each of the numbers, but it appears that all you're doing is trying to address the existing deficit from health regions. If it's something different than that, please say so, but it appears to me that the language you use puts a nice gloss on what is a fairly monumental problem with fiscal prudence and adequate financial monitoring. So you might just clarify the wording there so that nobody is misled.

10:30

I'd like to know how much of that money being paid out, if it's not simply addressing deficits, would be part of the no-loss provision money. One of the things that's been identified by the Auditor General in his 1997-1998 report is I think some fairly serious commentary on your practice of sheltering regions who would otherwise have experienced a decrease in funding. The Auditor General talks about that on page 130. So you might just address how much of what we're dealing with on page 25 is there not because of a deficit in terms of providing services but in terms of invoking the no-loss provision.

I guess the other comment was that the Auditor General reported that as of August of 1998, 13 health authorities had not finalized or had approved by you, sir, their business plans and budgets. So you might confirm that all of that has been done now; that those 13 regions that were in that delinquent position have been able to get their budgets approved, and you might give me some particulars in terms of when that occurred for those 13 regions. As of November 25, 1998, are there any of those regions where their business plans and budgets have not yet been finalized?

Now some other questions for you, Mr. Minister, through the chair. I think I've already mentioned, but you might like to give us a response on the record in terms of why we had to increase funding for regional health authorities on three different occa-

sions. A question: what does that tell us in terms of the planning done by Alberta Health? What steps have been taken to deal with those people who crafted the original budgets which seem to be so badly out of whack? One interest is in terms of why we didn't use population estimates in determining the original budgets. Arguably the most prosperous province in Canada, I thought the government's whole plan was to attract people to this province. Wasn't that the idea? Keep taxes low, maintain the high standard of living, make this an attractive place to move into? So when the people come, what we find is that we seem to be caught flat-footed and we're still funding on historical patterns. The population-based funding formula has only just come into effect. We continue to have the problems.

Mr. Minister, by how many weeks will the waiting period for hip replacements be reduced by the increases that you're asking for tonight? How much will this funding abridge the waiting period to see specialists, a continuing problem we all hear about in our constituencies? How many more acute beds in this province are going to be opened as a consequence of these increases? How much of a reduction is there going to be in the wait for elective surgery around the province? How many more long-term care beds will be opened in the province of Alberta because of these increases you're seeking funding for tonight? How many days or weeks are going to be cut from waiting periods for long-term care placement?

Just moving on to . . . Well, I'm going to have to pick it up a little later. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

Is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising then? Proceed, please.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the minister. I was surprised by a couple of things in your introductory comments and particularly made note of the growth in the practitioner services part of your budget, the \$843 million to doctors now, and talking about that to take into account some special agreements that have been made with physicians, the rural physician action plan, those kinds of things, some growth in demands for services, and also an increase in the pool that's allocated.

As valid as they may be, every time I hear those reasons being offered in support of providing more money to physicians, I wonder about all the other health providers who for whatever reason don't have the ability to come to government in much the same way that physicians do: all of the physiotherapists, all of the chiropractors, all of the pharmacists, all of the nurses, lab technicians, lab technologists, radiologists, all of the other professionals who either operate under contract to a regional health authority or to a provider that is under contract to the regional health authority or as an independent practitioner but don't seem to have the centralized clout. I wonder what it is exactly that you say to them when they do come to you saying: "There are increased pressures on us. There aren't enough of us in rural Alberta. Population demands are driving up requests for service. There's not enough funding." I'm wondering how you respond to them and whether or not you worry about the inconsistency that may be found in that response as compared to the response that physicians receive. I want to be careful to note that I'm not being critical of recognizing the need for more funding for medical doctors, but I'm looking for some explanation of the inconsistencies that exist when it comes to all health providers and health practitioners.

The other thing that I'd like you to comment on -- and I'm not sure if my colleague from Calgary-*Buffalo* dealt with this yet. Actually, I guess we'll get a chance to talk about that tomorrow,

so I'll hold fire on the \$9 million for the Calgary regional health authority, I guess, until tomorrow.

The new allocation. About 10 percent of the allocation is for provincewide services, and I'm wondering whether or not you've tabled recently with the Assembly the list of what's in and what's out for provincewide services. I know that there were some things you were looking at, considering provincewide services and bringing some relief to the two big health authorities, Calgary and Edmonton, who tend to provide these provincewide services. I'm always curious about how it is that your department makes the distinction of what's considered a provincewide service or not. Through the chair, the minister and I have discussed, for example, COMPRU at the Misericordia hospital, and I'm wondering where that is these days. Of course, I'll declare for the Assembly a personal vested interest in COMPRU, seeing as that's where my spouse is employed. The concern I have is that there doesn't seem to be a lot of consistency in terms of what's considered provincewide and what isn't. Maybe this allocation, this new \$24 million, is a move towards some consistency, and maybe I'll never have this issue to raise again, but I'd like the minister to bring us up to date on how he makes those in and out decisions.

I'm also a little bit taken aback by the dollar amount. Ever since the budget cutting in Health started, there's been a concern that Health is being underfunded. The government has talked about it as "restructuring," and the opposition has talked about it as "gutting." There's been a lot of rhetoric on both sides of that argument. The facts, though, are pretty clear. Government rushed to take a whole bunch of money out of health care, and government is slowly putting back a whole bunch of money. Some of that money is being put back in up front, in a very public way: lots of announcements and fanfare. Thank goodness we haven't heard a lot about pressure points lately; we've actually been talking about paying real dollars for needed services, and I'm happy to see that. So some of it comes very up front. The dollars are put into the budget, and there's an admission that the budget needs to expand because demand is up.

10:40

Some of it seems to be coming through the back door, through these supplementary supply requests. I've made the point a couple of times today already that we're now dealing, I believe, with the fourth supplementary supply request this year, and I can't help but think a lot about the managers in the system, in health care, who are told at the beginning of the budget cycle: cut, squeeze, trim, take out, move away from services, ratchet things down because we're losing dollars. They try to do that. It turns out that the services aren't adequate to meet demand. The alarm bells go off. Lots of energy is spent scrambling to meet need at the same time as scrambling to make your case that you need more. The government sets up all kinds of task forces and committees. We're about to have another one, Mr. Minister, that I think you're familiar with now: this new health summit that the Premier has talked about.

So there's this reaction to all the cries of "There's not enough to go around" and "We can't meet needs" and "There are too many red alerts" and the rest of the legacy from all the budget cuts. At the end of the day, after all of that pain and suffering has happened, after all of those managers have put in all those overtime hours, after all of those staff and line people have felt insecure about their jobs, after all of those Albertans who require medical services and health care services have been left to feel very insecure about when and how they're going to receive those services, at the end of the cycle you come in with a supplementary request, in this case of a quarter of a billion dollars, to put the money back into the system. It seems to me to be a manifestly

unfair way of dealing with it.

You know, it seems to me that when you destabilize a system and create the degree of uncertainty and anxiety in the system that's been created in the health care system, you are doing a huge disservice not just to the taxpayers, who support the system and who rely on it, but to all the men and women who work in the system. You know, Mr. Chairman, I don't think this Minister of Health would do that on purpose. I don't think that when he's putting in his budget requests to cabinet at the beginning of the day, he goes into those cabinet meetings and says: "Hey, I've got a nifty idea. I'm going to squeeze my budget so far that it's going to make all the staff in the system feel really insecure about their jobs. Won't that be a lot of fun?" I mean, I don't think that's the way the discussion goes around the cabinet table.

Given that I'm going to make the assumption that it's not done on purpose but seems to be the pattern nonetheless of what's happened year after year after year after year, I'd like the minister to share with us his thoughts on how he's going to put an end to this kind of up-and-down budgeting for health care. Certainly by now it's apparent that the initial round of cuts -- the depth of the cuts, the speed of the cuts, the nature of how the regionalization happened, the discontinuity in service provision -- was ill conceived. The government has admitted as much. I mean, the government has said there were all kinds of problems. I can't remember all the language the government has used to describe the problem. You know, we've already talked about the pressure points and the roadblocks, and we always said that if we came to a detour, we'd back up: all of that good language the media people and the spin doctors came up with for the government to use to explain the fact that a problem had been created. Well, that's all behind us now, so the minister doesn't have to worry about being creative with the language. You can take a deep breath, acknowledge what is evident to every Albertan, that it was messed up, and talk about how it's going to be fixed. How are we going to break this cycle of having a tough, tough budget and making everybody insecure and then at the end of the day putting the money back in?

If the minister doesn't accept my premise that that's destabilizing and that's inefficient, maybe he'll at least accept the fact that it's not a very credible way of doing business. Certainly this government needs every ounce of credibility it can get regarding health. The public debate around Bill 37 is evidence of that. I'm not being particularly partisan when I say that. When this government says something and does something in regards to health care, there is an immediate question mark in the minds of the public. There's a trust issue that's out there. So even if the minister rejects my arguments on what I believe are the merits, at least self-interest should motivate this government to coming up with some way of breaking this cycle.

So before I'm prepared to vote on this request for nearly a quarter of a billion dollars of supplementary supply, I'd like the minister to share with the Assembly some reflection on the issues I've raised.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to respond to some of the issues that have been raised. I think in the remarks of the previous two speakers -- and perhaps they do not mean it this way -- they imply that our health care system is not providing good health care to Albertans. I'd like to just respond to this in a couple of ways. First of all -- and I guess you can always question it, but it's one of the best tools we have in our system right now -- we have surveys that are taken. We are very conscious of the fact that we need to evaluate the performance of the health care system. Through an independent polling agency

we do question Albertans, particularly those who have used the health care system, as to whether they judge as good or excellent the care they've had while being clients of the health care system. That figure remains around 85.5, 86.5 percent, which I think is a pretty commendable performance record. I think it stands up very well with respect to other jurisdictions in this great country of Canada and probably other places as well.

The second point I wanted to make, Mr. Chairman, is that we are very conscious in Alberta Health and certainly as a government -- because this applies to other departments as well -- of the need to set out three-year business plans, the need to have performance measures for our departments and to report on those. The health care system of this province, while challenged -- and this is a positive thing in many ways -- is doing everything from providing thousands and thousands and thousands of additional hours of home care at one end of the spectrum to providing more cardiac procedures than ever before, to providing more people with the service of dialysis in more locations than ever before. I can keep on going down the list, Mr. Chairman.

So I think we have to put things in the proper light or with the proper view. It should not be implied that there aren't a lot of good, hardworking people in the health care system, creative people, people with leadership abilities that are in fact doing a darn good job in this province for the people they serve in the health care system. I really am concerned about any implication that might come into this that we don't have a large number of really good people working in that system.

10:50

Now, another thing, Mr. Chairman, is that there was quite a bit of comment -- and I appreciate the questions from the members opposite -- with respect to the Alberta Medical Association agreement. I would like to just comment on that. Yes, the amounts of money are significant and very large, quite frankly, with respect to the AMA agreement and other collective agreements. I certainly don't mind questions being raised with respect to that agreement, but I do have a little bit of trouble with what seems to be the approach whereby -- if I could go so far to say that there is a lack of recognition across the way that this was a collective bargaining process. There were two parties to it. It was not a matter of government being able to draw a line in the sand, and I don't think that's the way that sort of thing should start out. It was a negotiating process, and I'm pleased to say that we were able to amicably conclude that agreement without too much disruption. It's a good agreement. I think that generally speaking physicians are satisfied with it, and it has a number of good features in it. One of the parts of the agreement, certainly, was that there was an agreement in principle whereby we put into effect an on-call payment for rural physicians. There was also a feature of the agreement whereby we agreed to an innovation fund whereby new models of payment would be pursued. Just to work in one of the other questions that was raised here, the tripartite process is still going forward. We have six projects, one at least which is up and running and others that are nearing that particular stage, and certainly we want to pursue the whole area of alternate payment schemes with respect to our physicians.

But just to get back to the main point, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there is an increased amount of money that is being requested here of the Assembly. But if anybody here thinks that six or seven months before you enter into negotiations with a profession or an occupation or a union you can predict exactly how much it is going to cost you, I mean, this is really quite unfair. I suppose if we'd come in low, they would complain about the surplus. Let's be realistic about the fact that when you get into bargaining

with a very large group of people, you work to come out with a fair agreement, and if it is costing one side of the agreement more than expected, you have to bring that forward as, I guess you'd call it, an unexpected but I think a reasonable and understandable supplementary estimate.

I would like to make one other point, though, with respect to this overall matter. There were various other comments made about payments and bargaining and salaries and remuneration and so forth, and I certainly do have an overall concern in the health care system, Mr. Chairman, because there have also been a number of remarks this evening about how rapidly it seems that health care spending is increasing vis-à-vis these estimates.

One point I want to make is that government is responding to an area which is a very high priority with the government, and also we have to recognize -- and we're recognizing this in these supplementary estimates, Mr. Chairman -- that we have a rapidly growing population in this province, in fact more rapidly growing, I think, than any of the people making predictions provided us with a year, a year and a half ago. We're responding to regional health authorities and so forth with funding for that particular purpose.

The members across the way do raise a point which I think is a very important one. I'd just like to respond to it, because we've had considerable discussion among ourselves about this, and that is that the demands, the expectations of the health care system are increasing very rapidly. In this province we recognize that we have to adjust our funding to serve an aging population. We recognize that we have to make adjustments for certain basic costs, but -- and this is related back to the AMA agreement, Mr. Chairman -- we have to keep in mind that inflation in this province is very, very low right now, and people in the health care workforce have received their 5 percent return of the reduction that we made earlier. In fact, as I remember it, everyone has surpassed that somewhat. We have, as I said, virtually no inflation in terms of the economy. Certainly that's reflected in the average weekly wage index in this province. We still have a real favourable tax environment too.

MR. SAPERS: My property taxes went up.

MR. JONSON: And you have to take up your property tax -- sorry, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the member across the way. We could talk about property tax, but that is not really my responsibility this evening.

Mr. Chairman, I really think that one of the key questions we do have to deal with from this point onward is that there is a need to make sure we have adequate frontline staff in our health care system, whether it's nurses or LPNs or some other group. Personally, I think that if we are able as a province to have any additional funds in this whole area, we should really be looking at that particular side of things, but of course if we have to just look at raising total wage rates, a large amount of money in the future, we won't be able to balance that out with the appropriate emphasis on frontline care. So I just raise that as one of the challenges that we might think about down the road here.

There was also a question with respect to the Calgary laboratory, a specific question. Mr. Chairman, this particular facility will be the property of the regional health authority. Yes, their lab service company will be inside doing lab work when it's constructed, and I think you would find that identified in the overall lottery expenditures of the province, because we have been able to every year to a lesser or greater degree assign a certain amount of money to various projects, be it very high-tech equipment or some facility with respect to regional health authorities and health care, for which we are very grateful.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of other specific things. As I've tried to be consistent in doing over the years, I will provide written answers to members across the way on the more specific items. But I do want to comment just with respect to the number of changes which have occurred in the health care budget, and I think that's probably the best point they've raised this evening.

11:00

I would just like to indicate first of all to the hon. members, through you, Mr. Chairman, that we do have a growing and dynamic province. Population increases, particularly in our major cities, which I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, for instance, is very appreciative of, have, yes, been much more rapid than we anticipated, to some degree in Edmonton and other parts of the province as well. I think that through the overall good management of the government we did have the resources available to recognize that population increase with respect to these supplementary estimates.

The other area, Mr. Chairman, is that there is, yes, a very significant amount of money for provincewide services, but those are services of an acute care nature, a life-threatening nature in most cases, that are funded to the Edmonton and Calgary health authorities, and they are services that are again reflective of the increased demand in the province, the growing population, our aging population. We did once again, I think, through the good overall long-term management of government, come to a situation where we were able to respond to that. The manner in which that was done, the credit for that should go to what is known now as the Bonnie Laing committee. As I said, the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti was part of that plus people such as Dr. Clarence Guenter and so forth. We now are working from that committee report in terms of our overall desire to meet the goal of having a very sound rationale, a formula on which we will be funding regional health authorities in the future.

Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to be speaking to these health estimates. I have a number of questions that I'm hoping the minister can answer tonight, because I think some of these answers I would like to share with my constituents.

I'm quite surprised to see that in spite of the dismal state of health care we're finding in the province and in spite of this government having blown up a hospital, the regional health authorities still need nearly \$104 million to carry on. I'm trying to compare what the minister has said with what I see in these estimate requests. He and this government have talked about the need for health reform and an emphasis on prevention of illness and promotion of wellness, but I don't see this at all reflected in these regional health authority requests for more money, and I'm wondering if he can explain to us where the correlation is. When are we going to see prevention of illness becoming a priority, and when are we going to see the promotion of wellness happening here? I don't see it happening here at all. What we're seeing is more funds being required for tertiary care because these regional health authorities are underfunded, and it's just not living up to the expectations of what this minister has said, in fact, they're going to be doing.

We see them talking all the time and we see it reflected in the Auditor General's report. They talk about "restructuring of the health system involved the elimination of organizations and the

creation of new ones," new ones who are not able to provide the same level of service as the old ones did but who still don't live within the government's financial rules. Now, why is that, Mr. Chairman? One hundred and four million dollars is a lot of money in these regional health authorities.

The government promises us that under restructuring things would be meaner and leaner and better, and we haven't seen the better. We've seen leaner by far, and we've seen meaner by far, but there's absolutely no better here that I can see. I'm hoping the minister can address that for us.

The Auditor General says that to do this, to achieve these goals that I talked about in terms of eliminating some of the organizations and being meaner and leaner, this government needs to provide leadership in efficient and effective business planning. Well, you can't tell me that when at this stage in the budget year the regional health authorities come back for more money in the kinds of amounts we're seeing here, we've seen any kind of leadership in efficient and effective business planning. It's just not happening here.

Mr. Chairman, what is the minister doing? How can this be carried out when every single one of these regions, not just a few of them but every single one of them, is over budget? If accountability is of central importance to the health system, which the Auditor General says it is and which this government says it is, accountability really meaning here the setting of expectations measuring costs and results and taking action to improve results, then where does it fit in when you look at these funding needs?

I don't think it's good enough, as the minister just stood up here and said, to hide behind the stats of the survey they've done asking who's satisfied with this system when the people they surveyed don't have a full set of information to make decisions on. They don't have access to all the information, and they can't see the big picture impact here and what's happening over time with these regional health authorities when they're underfunded. I'm assuming that the problem here is that initially they were underfunded. There are all kinds of needs that aren't being met in regions. How are they able to properly capitalize? How are they able to properly keep up the training of their staff? How are they able to keep good staff when people are operating under these kinds of pressures?

We see regional health authorities here that have gone over budget requesting more money, from .02 percent up to the high of 13 percent. Now, how can that be? How can it be that a government of this size with these kinds of resources can't adequately forecast in a year what kinds of needs are going to be expected by these regional health authorities? What's gone wrong with the system? This efficient system that they've been talking about just simply isn't working. When we see a 13 percent increase at this time of the year over budget, we know there's something drastically wrong.

Let's talk about those on an individual basis for a minute. We've seen not once, not twice, but this is the third time the government has come back for money. We're not through. We've got a whole quarter of the year left to go through. What else are we going to see before the next budget year? How much more money are they going to need to come back and ask for, Mr. Chairman? What's the need for that?

Do we see some regional health authorities being penalized here because they're managing to come close to what their target funding was and others not being penalized? We see the Chinook regional health authority coming back for 3 percent of its budget; Palliser health authority, 6 percent; Headwaters health authority, 8 percent; Calgary regional health authority, 6 percent; regional health authority No. 5, 4 percent; David Thompson regional health

authority, 5 percent; East Central regional health authority, 3 percent; WestView regional health authority, 10 percent; Crossroads regional health authority, 4.5 percent; Capital health authority, 4 percent; Aspen regional health authority, 4 percent; Lakeland regional health authority, 3 percent; Mistahia regional health authority, 4 percent; Peace regional health authority, 2 percent; Keeweenok Lakes regional health authority, 4 percent; Northern Lights regional health authority -- that's the lowest one -- comes in at about .2 percent; the Northwestern regional health authority, 13 percent; provincewide services Calgary, 12 percent; provincewide Capital health authority, 12 percent.

Why are these figures so high, Mr. Chairman, and why do we see the discrepancies between regions? How can it be that the government can't plan adequately ahead of time so we can see that these figures are closer to the budget amount? What it looks like to me when we see all 17 regions and the two provincewide authorities coming in so high over budget is that this government did a really, really poor job at the beginning of the year. They tried to squeeze water out of a rock that just wasn't there.

MR. PHAM: Question.

MS CARLSON: Got lots of time yet. Got lots of time. If you have some questions, get in your chair and ask them.

This minister stood up here and said that one of the reasons now for the overbudgeting is that they're providing thousands more hours of home care than before. Well, that's only part of the answer, Mr. Chairman. The reason why we need more home care now is because people are being tossed out of the hospitals a lot sooner, and they need more interactive care. Well, you can't say that you're over budget for that reason when you caused the problem in the first place, and we should have seen the hospital costs being lowered, but in fact it doesn't seem to be happening.

I would like to see this minister, before I can vote on these budget estimates, tell us exactly the breakdown between hospital care now, how much it's over budget or under budget than it was other years, and the same thing for home care. Let's see those details. Let's debate those details in this House so that when we leave here we can go back and tell our constituents exactly what's happening, exactly why the health authorities are underfunded like this, and then come back here and share the concerns of our constituents with the minister. I'm not prepared to vote on these at it stands here. The minister has shifted the burden from one hand to the other and is using that as a reason to justify coming back here for more money. I don't think that's responsible at all.

11:10

The minister also said that he can't predict seven or eight months in advance how much it's going to cost him to deal with these different groups that he has to negotiate with. Well, I find that very surprising, because business does it all the time, Mr. Chairman, and this is a government who says that that's how they want to operate their government, like a business. Well, then, they should do that. They should forecast properly. They should negotiate anticipating what the costs are going to be. If business can do it all the time, you guys can do it too. There's got to be a lack of planning and foresight at some level of the government for these things to happen, where he thinks he can justify standing up here saying that he can't anticipate what costs are going to be. Of course he can anticipate what costs are going to be -- businesses do it all the time -- especially when he says in the next breath that there's been no inflation. Well, if there's been no inflation and all other costs except for wages are relatively stable, surely he should be able to anticipate what his costs are going to be.

AN HON. MEMBER: He lied.

MS CARLSON: Well, this hon. colleague made a statement about that. Well, maybe that's true. If that's the truth, then we need to get the full answer from this minister out here.

Then he talked about in his response how rapidly health care spending is increasing, and the reason for that is the rapidly growing population, higher than the predictors. Well, I challenge this. We've seen some regions in this province grow by population; there's no doubt about that. I see some of that reflected here. But the biggest areas of growth -- let's talk about the Calgary regional health authority, which had a 6 percent increase in funding needs. Yet we had lots of other regional health authorities that needed more money than that that didn't grow. So how does the minister reconcile those two figures? I think that we haven't seen population growth reflected in all of the requests here in the regional health authorities. What he's saying is once again only part of the answer and not the whole answer, so I'm hoping that tonight he will give us the full answer here.

He says that he needs adequate frontline staff. Well, finally something that we can agree on, Mr. Chairman. So then why aren't they planning for this to happen? That's the role of government, to make sure there is adequately, properly trained frontline staff. We don't see that happening. They said that it would happen, that it would follow in this reorganization they've been doing. Well, it isn't. We're still seeing increased stress levels at all levels of health care providers across this province. This regionalization, this squeezing that they've done, this meaner and leaner style has worked. It's just not doing the job, and it isn't working for the regional health authorities because they're back for more money. There has to be a systemic reason why what they're doing isn't working, and planning, I think, would have more adequately answered this need than the process they're going through.

We don't know what's going to be happening at the end of this budget year. They're all going to be over budget again, we can assume, because it's what's been happening all year. Why? Because the government doesn't plan properly, because they haven't had the foresight to put in place a health care system that actually meets the needs of the people. It's a long, long, long, long way from the prevention of illness and promotion of wellness . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: I think it's even longer than that.

MS CARLSON: I think it's longer than that too.

. . . system that they've been trying to sell around this province, and they're not doing the job. I'm not satisfied with the answers that we've got from the minister so far, and I certainly expect better than that before I can vote on these estimates.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think I heard the minister musing whether he was going to get a recycled speech, and I want to assure him that this is the part of my questioning that I hadn't even gotten to last time.

Let me start off by saying that I have some sympathy for the Minister of Health, and I understand that he's feeling a little beleaguered. This has been a long week for him, and now to be in here at 15 after 11 -- all he wants is \$225 million more, and he has to go through all of these pesky questions, and there are people who are challenging some of the core assumptions that underlie his

budget. I understand that that's probably not a lot of fun, Mr. Minister, and to your credit you're still smiling and you're still in your seat at quarter after 11, and you're making an effort to respond to the questions.

Mr. Minister, through the chair, of course there are some good things in health care in Alberta. You know very well, Mr. Minister, through the chair, that we recognize the incredible work that's done by thousands of people in the health care system from Taber to Peace River and every place in between. You know, we're appreciative of that, and we're proud of the initiatives that are taken where we see some creativity and we see some positive things happening in health care. But, Mr. Minister, recognize what you're dealing with. Your department deals with the services that are probably far more important to Albertans than any of your colleagues'.

My colleague from Edmonton-Meadowlark tells me, as does every one of my colleagues, that they're still getting calls from constituents, constituents that are having to wait too long to see a specialist, too long to get a long-term care bed, too long to be able to access an operation. Mr. Minister, maybe as long as you hold this portfolio, this becomes an unrelenting sort of demand on your time and your energy. All I can say is that as long as you hold this portfolio, which is the biggest expenditure item in the province of Alberta, that has the most serious and direct impact on the lives of Albertans and their families, you're going to have to continue to deal with these questions.

Now, I just want to move very quickly and ask some questions in terms of program 2.2, the human tissue and blood donations, because we haven't touched on that. What I wanted to ask you about is the \$30 million for transition costs to the new blood system. Can the minister confirm that these are one-off or onetime costs? I don't know very much about the transition, Mr. Minister, from Red Cross to the new national blood agency, and what I'd like you to tell me is how much of this expenditure is a onetime expenditure and how much of it Albertans can expect we're going to be dealing with on an ongoing basis.

Just while we're dealing with that, there was a Human Tissue Donation Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, a private member's bill that the government had supported and that had been passed in the spring. I don't think that's been proclaimed yet. I take it that's not a factor at all in program 2.2 in this supplementary estimate? Okay. That's quite independent.

Then what I want to move to is hepatitis C, because as I understand it, the other \$30 million is Alberta's share of financial assistance. What I want to ask, Mr. Minister -- and I'm put in mind of this. We've all seen these very prominent ads from the Ontario government that have run in Alberta's daily newspapers attempting to identify people, and I was reminded again that this province has stubbornly refused to adopt a more aggressive trace-back program, as employed in B.C. In Alberta it's been an advertising campaign. You've been running that for a while, and I wonder if you can tell us: how many Albertans have been identified to date with this awful infection? What's the count right now? Is there any change contemplated in the position of the province in terms of their approach to ensure that everybody who has received tainted blood is informed?

You remember, Mr. Minister, that you were at those meetings in the spring when one of the issues was the most basic one: how many people, how many Canadians have received hepatitis C as a consequence of tainted blood? It seems to me that Alberta Health has had lots of opportunity to consider their position relative to that, so I'm interested in whether you're going to follow Ontario's lead, whether you're taking some other initiatives in terms of the national

strategy. Our caucus has always supported a national approach. Because it was a breakdown in a national blood system, it makes sense that there should be a national response. We want to know and hepatitis C victims want to know what currently is being done by the province of Alberta to press for fair compensation.

11:20

Now, I have a couple of general questions that I want to put. One is: what's the process whereby your ministry decides where overexpenditures will be permitted? You know, the Opposition House Leader touched on it earlier. We see additional compensation for certain health care workers, dramatic increases. In other areas there appears not to be the same degree of attention paid. We're interested in knowing what kinds of criteria you use in determining what overexpenditures will be permitted.

Mr. Minister, you might take a moment and explain. Of the real pressure points in this province, surely mental health is one of the biggest ones. We've talked before in this House about whether the Provincial Mental Health Board has exhausted their budget or whether they're running an unseemly positive balance. But the point is that we have got some real logjams -- and I think you recognize that, Mr. Minister -- in terms of people accessing mental health services.

I continue to be dismayed at the length of time it takes for people just to see a psychiatrist. Mr. Minister, I've told you this before, but when I hear stories of people with severe mental health issues who are going, not on their own, not self-admitting, but with a professional psychologist or somebody who takes them into the Foothills hospital and when people have to virtually battle, verbally battle for eight hours until a bed is made available for this person, I'm thinking to myself that we've got some big, big problems there. I'm most familiar with the impediments to accessing psychiatric services in the city of Calgary, but I know it's not unique to the Calgary region. I hear some of those issues in terms of the capital region and other areas.

There is not a nickel I can see in this that's going to address those problems, Mr. Minister. I guess maybe indirectly some of the RHA money may go in that direction, but we've seen in the past money that we thought was going into mental health being used in regions for, as best I've been able to determine, general operating expenditures and in general operating areas, and that's a concern. If you stand in the House and tell me and tell Albertans that there's a sum of money that's going to the CRHA for mental health purposes and then we find out it's in fact going to some other reasons, I have a problem explaining to my constituents either why I was so ineffectual as an opposition Health critic that I didn't get an accurate response or how I can explain that. So I need your help with that, Mr. Minister.

You know, I have an awful lot of questions. One of the other questions. I know that my colleague in Lethbridge-East has related to me about an absolutely massive fund-raising effort in the Chinook region, in Lethbridge, to acquire an MRI, but it appears that the rules keep changing in terms of what role the province plays, what responsibility the province accepts for funding these things. We understand that all regions are not being treated equally. I think that's really what it comes down to when it comes to acquiring an MRI. You know the positive impact that has in terms of reducing the demand on the machines in Calgary, and you might address that, Mr. Minister. I'll provide you with more particulars as well, but I think you're familiar with the Lethbridge incident. You've had this massive fund-raising effort where virtually every charitable dollar in the Chinook region has been moved into this MRI project that otherwise would be going to a host

of other good causes. Now people have a concern that the rules may be changing and other people may not have to do all that fund-raising. So if you can provide an explanation for that.

Mr. Minister, I do want to leave some time. There's another department that hasn't even been addressed yet. I don't want you thinking I've exhausted my questions on the supplementary estimates. All I can tell you at this time is that I've spent a lot of interesting time going through the 30-odd pages in the Auditor General's report, and it looks to me as if there's lots of work for your department to do. All I can say is that we're going to be looking forward to following up in February when we're dealing in Committee of Supply with the main budget.

I'd like to tell you that we ought not to be voting on this until we receive responses from you, but I think physically that's not going to happen. But I would do this. I'd ask you to show your usual responsible approach to opposition questions. [interjection] Well, no, I'm quite genuine. I want to put the minister on notice now, Mr. Chairman, that when we come to debate the estimates of the Health department, we're going to expect, I think not unreasonably, that we'll have responses to all of the issues and concerns that were raised at this time and before we vote on those main estimates in the spring. There should be no reason why that information can't be provided.

Those are the questions I've got at this stage. Thank you very much.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Health, please.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has other questions to raise. I also have additional answers, and I will endeavour to provide a few of them. I'll try and be very, very succinct here, but before I go into three or four points that I think should be on the record in the Assembly, yes, I'll certainly undertake to provide written answers through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo -- he is Health critic -- and of course to the Liberal caucus and all members of this Assembly.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

I'd like to just comment on four quick points. First of all, there was in the first question or statement of the member that last spoke sort of a general question: well, what's happening, and what is this money doing? Well, in the capital region, in which we are currently located, the additional funding for the regional health authorities has made it possible for them to proceed with their plans to open additional acute care beds at the Grey Nuns hospital, which includes six ICU beds, as I understand it, and to strengthen that particular base in terms of a full-service hospital in Edmonton.

In addition, another very specific thing -- and I won't go on with all the other things that are a result of that funding -- is that they have as one of their priorities announced that they're going to open an additional catheter lab. One of the areas which, yes, they have a waiting list for is that particular type of procedure, and that particular lab being opened will dramatically reduce their waiting list. So there is a very definite connection in terms of the performance of the system with the additional funding that's been announced.

Secondly, with respect to the Canadian Blood Services. This is a complex matter, Mr. Chairman, and one that we will provide a written response to. I'd like to say just two things there. First of all, \$30 million of the amount that is in the estimates is a onetime

expenditure. It was something that was shared naturally in terms of acquiring the previous assets of the Canadian Red Cross and doing certain necessary upgrades and expenditures there.

The second thing, Mr. Chairman, with respect to blood is the hepatitis C question. I'll reply in detail with respect to the tissue donation and so forth. Alberta has taken and will consistently take the view that we are part of a national agreement to compensate victims in the '86-90 period, identified as being an area of, in his judgment, liability on the part of provincial governments. That is what we're working from. We're working with certainly the aid of the provinces and the federal government, and I think that's the way to go on these national issues.

11:30

Thirdly, I think the member correctly identifies, as I've shared in this House and with him, that, yes, we have further work to do with respect to mental health. As far as the acute care area of mental health, this has traditionally always been funded through hospital board budgets in past decades and, more recently, regional health authorities. We do need to make a collective effort in this province, quite frankly, to raise the profile and the priority that people put on mental health, because it is an illness, it is an area that needs additional focus and resources, and we should be all working in that particular direction.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the MRIs, yes, we do recognize that as being an area of equipment that very much needs to have its capacity expanded. We hope to be able to do that in the coming year, depending upon budget considerations. I am very sensitive to the issue that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo raises about being fair and equitable here. When we do have additional money, if we have additional money to put into MRI services, we will certainly try and treat Grande Prairie and Lethbridge fairly in this regard. But I must point out that to this point in time the raising of the money for the Chinook regional health authority's MRI is something that, yes, they've very commendably made a very successful effort at, but we said up front with respect to that particular machine that at this point in time they have to be able to fund the operation of that particular diagnostic equipment out of the regional health authority budget, which of course is being increased under these estimates.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Agreed to:

Operating Expense	\$225,165,000
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THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Transportation and Utilities

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, would you move your estimates.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly my pleasure to provide as much information as I possibly can regarding the supplementary estimates for Transportation and Utilities.

We're requesting a supplementary estimate of \$130 million, and the \$130 million will be used to address infrastructure needs for '98-99. This request follows a recommendation from the Premier's Task Force on Infrastructure that suggested that we should allocate

an additional \$130 million . . . [interjections] Well, it's sad that I didn't get \$150 million. I wanted \$150 million. Nevertheless, the Premier's task force allocated the \$130 million from the Alberta lottery fund, and we're very grateful to the Alberta lottery fund because indeed it is serving a very useful function both in urban and rural Alberta. The cost-shared municipal transportation program will be a onetime only program. The task force of course made further recommendations, but as far as '98-99 is concerned, it will be dealing with the \$130 million, and ultimately that's what I would like to deal with tonight.

I'd like to take a moment, Mr. Chairman, to break down that \$130 million and basically share where that money is going to be spent for the coming year. Twenty-five million dollars will be spent on the urban portion of the north/south trade corridor to accelerate the construction. This will be over and above the money that was already designated for the north/south corridor. As you know, the north/south corridor has been identified as our number one priority, and it is our objective to continue to work on that corridor, with substantive completion by the year 2007.

Twenty-two million dollars of grants will be allocated to rural municipalities, and this \$22 million will assist the rural municipalities to develop rural roads and to expedite the construction of access infrastructure to Métis settlements. Two million dollars of that, Mr. Chairman, will be spent for the development of roads to Métis settlements.

A further \$10 million was requested for rural municipalities and will accelerate the secondary highway projects. As you know, rural Alberta feels that -- well, there is tremendous pressure throughout Alberta, whether it's south, north, east, or west, and secondary roads by and large service the rural areas. There is indeed great pressure on the need to develop our secondary network to be able to meet the needs of the growing economy of this province.

Funding of \$58 million for the Alberta city transportation partnership will accelerate their priority projects as well. This allocation is focused on growth factors such as population, traffic, and transit priorities.

Finally, \$15 million is requested for the street improvement program to reduce the backlog of applications under the program. This will help our towns and villages. Because we have a backlog, what we're doing as far as the secondary roads and as far as the street improvement programs are concerned is we're simply going through the priority list and moving the ones that are at the top of the list into this program. Consequently, we'll be able to shorten that backlog considerably.

I'll make every effort to answer the questions that are related to the supplementary estimates, Mr. Chairman, and those that may not be answered tonight we'll make an effort to answer by mail.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I do agree with the minister. He should have got \$150 million, and I could weep for that too, but I won't.

We have how many? Five minutes left? Then I'll ask this really quickly. No fun at all.

I wanted to ask about this north/south trade corridor. It's going to be improved by \$25 million. Does that include the \$10 million that came from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs? Does that include it, or is that above and beyond? Did you say where that piece was? Maybe you did. Where is that going, that \$25 million? Exactly where is that going to be spent?

My question about 2.4.1 with the rural municipalities. You're giving more money to them? What is the cost-sharing arrangement with that? Is it still 75-25? Is it different for different municipalities, or is it pretty consistent across the board? Do all rural municipalities benefit, or is there a standard amount per population? How is that going to be divided out? I guess I want to know how the priorities were decided.

I also want to know about secondary highway 794. They're trying to call it a resource road. I'm wondering if it qualifies, or is that still in the works?

I also want to ask a question about the overpass that had been slated for Campsite Road, the Campsite overpass. It seems to have been canceled, and it was committed to the city of Spruce Grove that it would happen about a year after the one on the fifth meridian. Then suddenly it got postponed to the year 2007. I've heard a lot of flack from the mayor of Spruce Grove about that one. He certainly wants to know why the postponement, and so do I. Calahoo Road will be closed off; it's very dangerous. So that Campsite overpass has been postponed for 10 years. I think that's unforgivable. I just would like an explanation as to how the fifth meridian got done and the commitment was made to Campsite as well, and now it's postponed to 2007.

11:40

I'm wondering if in the extra money that went to the primary highways there was anything allotted for highway 37 from 794 to Calahoo. That's highway 37, which I really appreciate has been done from 794 to highway 2 and now from highway 2 to Namao. That's been a bad stretch for a long time, and I appreciate that that's been done. I have had calls from constituents about 794 to Calahoo and then, of course, on to Onoway. Mind you, I don't know if there's a change in that plan or not. It had been talked about, and constituents in my riding and in Lac Ste. Anne were concerned about where that new road was going. So I'm not sure what has happened there. Also, I'm wondering if the minister can tell me if anything is happening from Calahoo to Onoway.

How much of the \$22 million is going to access roads, and which Métis settlements will that be allotted to?

I've never talked for this short a time, Mr. Chairman. I just feel under pressure.

MR. SAPERS: Was Ed asking for more pavement in Vegreville?

MRS. SOETAERT: I'm sure he wasn't asking for more pavement in Vegreville, though his wife won a prize tonight, he'll be glad to know.

In 2.5.1 which cities are covered in the Alberta cities transportation partnership? They get \$58 million, the largest sum being paid out from this appropriation. In the business plan this program is for primary highways and truck routes through the cities, which are key components of the overall provincial highways system, so I want to know how the distribution between cities was determined. Are there objective criteria for determining the need, or does it depend on, you know, which city shouts the loudest? I just want to know the criteria for how that money was divided up. Does it depend on the quality of the plans the city puts forward? I want to know who makes the decision on how that's allotted. How are the priorities determined in the grants to towns and villages? Is the extra \$15 million shared equitably? Does the streets improvement program cover any roads in villages and towns, or does it require that there are specific upgrading programs? I can hardly breathe.

I just want to say that this is a very important department, and it's a pity we are slotted at the end of the evening, because I know the

minister has always given me good answers and has always sent them to me written, and I appreciate that. [interjection] I get to keep going? I'll keep going.

In 2.4.4 will the 11 percent increase be shared evenly between all approved projects to speed up completion of those already under way, or will new projects get the go-ahead?

THE CHAIRMAN: We hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, but pursuant to Standing Order 59(3) and Government Motion 37, agreed to on November 24, 1998, I must now put the following question. Those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

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 Edmonton-Mill Creek.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, general revenue fund, and reports the approval of the following estimates and requests leave to sit again.

Department of Family and Social Services: \$58,740,000 in operating expenses.

Department of Health: \$225,165,000 in operating expenses.

Department of Justice: \$4,298,000 in operating expenses.

Department of Municipal Affairs: \$13,442,000 in operating expenses.

Department of Transportation and Utilities: \$130,000,000 in operating expenses.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading

Bill 42

Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1998

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure as the day draws to an end to put a suitable gatepost on this evening and move third reading of Bill 42.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour has moved third reading of Bill 42, Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1998. Does the Assembly agree to the motion for third reading? Oh, sorry.

MR. SAPERS: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was taken aback with the speed with which the minister moved that. My understanding from the previous discussion is that we wouldn't be proceeding to this item of business, so I was a little bit slow in rising to speak to Bill 42. I appreciate the fact that I interrupted your call for the vote, so I'm really at your mercy as to whether we can continue the debate or not.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question had been called. Was it not so, hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora?

MR. SAPERS: As I said, Mr. Speaker, I didn't expect that we would be reverting to this order of business, so as I already acknowledged, I was slow in rising to my feet. I would appreciate an opportunity to participate in the debate, but I request your indulgence to allow me to do so.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, the chair is not involved with deals or understandings that may be made between the House leaders or other members of the Assembly to comply with the rules of the Assembly.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to elucidate.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of co-operation between both sides, I would move that we adjourn debate on third reading of Bill 42.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have, hon. member, a motion on the floor. Would the hon. minister withdraw the motion with the unanimous consent of the Assembly?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me earlier. After the extensive debate through the various readings, I'm certainly prepared to let the motion stand.

11:50

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: On that, unless someone has something contrary, I think we'll have to proceed with the motion.

The hon. Minister of Labour has moved on behalf of his colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill third reading of Bill 42, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1998. Does the Assembly agree to the motion for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:51]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jonson	Pham
Boutilier	Langevin	Renner
Broda	Lund	Shariff
Burgener	Marz	Smith
Cardinal	McFarland	Stelmach
Coutts	Melchin	Stevens
Fritz	Nelson	Tarchuk
Jacques	Paszkowski	Zwozdesky
Johnson		

Against the motion:

Carlson	Nicol	Soetaert
Dickson	Sapers	White
Leibovici		

Totals: For -- 25 Against -- 7

[Motion carried; Bill 42 read a third time]

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. today.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:04 a.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jonson	Shariff
Broda	Langevin	Smith
Burgener	Lund	Stelmach
Cardinal	Marz	Stevens
Coutts	McFarland	Tarchuk
Fritz	Nelson	White
Jacques	Renner	Zwozdesky
Johnson		

Against the motion:

Boutilier	Leibovici	PhamCarlson
	Melchin	Sapers
Dickson	Nicol	Soetaert

Totals: For -- 22 Against -- 9

[At 12:17 a.m. on Thursday the Assembly adjourned to 1:30 p.m.]