

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, November 26, 1998** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 98/11/26

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

Our Father, as we conclude for this week our work in the Assembly, we ask for Your strength and encouragement in our service of You through our service of others.

We thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of petitions from concerned Albertans requesting an accountable Senate.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would rise and ask that the petitions I tabled yesterday be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce and support legislation requiring and enabling the Regional Authorities responsible for Services for Children and Families to make Quality Child Care accessible and affordable for all Alberta Families.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to maintain the operating allowance for day care centres at 1997 levels until a comprehensive public review of this funding is completed.

MR. WHITE: I beg leave to have the petitions that were presented earlier last week read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to examine and amend the Workers' Compensation Board Act to provide appropriate benefits to those Albertans whose spouses died in work-related accidents, and who subsequently lost their benefits due to remarriage.

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

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented earlier be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to amend the Legislative

Assembly Act in such a manner as to make it mandatory for the Government to hold two sittings of the Legislature each year, in the Spring and the Fall.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition which I tabled earlier in this Assembly regarding Bill 37 and the need to protect public health care now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

head: Notices of Motions

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to give notice that later this afternoon I will move to pursuant to Standing Order 40 that

this Assembly recognize the urgent need for a broad public debate on whether the government of Alberta should implement the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

head: Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 50 Traffic Safety Act

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 50, being the Traffic Safety Act.

This bill proposes to consolidate four acts: the Highway Traffic Act, the Motor Vehicle Administration Act, the Motor Transport Act, and the Off-highway Vehicle Act. By combining these acts into one, we intend to provide Albertans and the law enforcement community with a one-window concept for driver and vehicle licences and road safety. This would make Alberta the first province to have one act governing licences and traffic safety issues.

We welcome further comments from the general public and stakeholders on Bill 50. It is our intention to reintroduce the Traffic Safety Act in the spring of '99.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Leave granted; Bill 50 read a first time]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table five copies of the January 24, 1990, letter from then federal and intergovernmental affairs minister, Jim Horsman, to the then federal secretary of state for external affairs, Joe Clark. The letter expresses Alberta's support for the signing by Canada of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and requests a notation regarding some legislative changes prior to ratification.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to table five copies of the December 4, 1991, letter from Mr. Horsman to Barbara McDougall, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, again requesting assurances that ratification of the convention would not undermine parental rights. That issue was never resolved.

MR. SAPERS: Point of order.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling 76 letters to the Minister of Justice that have been signed by 1,082 of my constituents. These letters express their concerns regarding the acts of industrial terrorism that have occurred in northwestern Alberta.

Thank you.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to table five copies of 500 postcards protesting Bill 219. They're from concerned Albertans, teachers, and principals, and they were sent to the Minister of Education and the Premier.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted this afternoon to table copies of 21 letters from as many communities, including Vermilion, Drumheller, Red Deer, High Prairie, Picture Butte, and many more, urging the government to implement the UN convention on the rights of the child.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a memorandum from the Alberta Department of Labour. It's between one assistant deputy minister and, of course, the deputy minister. It is dated November 5, 1991, and here we state that pine shakes are totally unacceptable as a building material.

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to table the appropriate number of 300 postcards from Albertans opposing Bill 219.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to table one copy with the House here. For convenience and ergonomic reasons the other four copies are at the Clerk's office. I know that everybody wants to follow along with the tablings of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I am today tabling all the information released under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act with respect to the topic of pine shakes.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table with you five copies of an original report prepared by the Alberta Liberal caucus which contains several quotations from the Premier regarding the government's involvement with the Alberta Treasury Branch.

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

1:40

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a petition signed by 1,054 Calgarians in regards to urging the government of Alberta to designate the Grand Theatre, Lougheed Building in Calgary an historic site.

Another tabling, Mr. Speaker, of 372 signatures in regards to making St. Mary's Girls School, which was built in 1909 in Calgary, a historic site as well.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are well represented here today by the constituencies of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park. On behalf of the MLA from Sherwood Park I'd like to introduce about 90 visitors from Pine Street elementary school including their teachers, Mr. Werenka, Mr. Newhart, Miss Seutter, and Miss Loehr. If they would stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly, please.

I'd also like to introduce about 55 visitors from Wye school. They are accompanied by Mary Anne Nissen, the recipient of the teacher of excellence award last year, and Luba Lyshak. If they would please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two members of the University of Alberta Progressive Conservative Association. They are Michelle Chalifoux and Brad Smid. They are in the members' gallery, and they have flanked their favorite socialist friend, who is Jenn Smith. I'd ask the three of them to please stand and receive a warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege of introducing to you and the Legislature my favorite two residents of Brooks, Alberta, my daughter Jillian and my son Scott. If you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mrs. Kim Linkletter. Kim runs my constituency office in Calgary, and she is here today. She is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, this government has refused to ratify an international agreement on the rights of children. It has refused to amend its human rights laws to include sexual orientation, has attempted to take away the rights of sterilization victims, and has led Alberta to unacceptable levels of child poverty and overrepresentation of aboriginals in our jails. My questions are to

the Premier. Will the Premier commit to put as many resources into the promotion of human rights as his government puts into fighting those rights all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we have put tremendous resources into the protection of those who are less fortunate in society, the protection of those who cannot fend for themselves. Relative to the four assertions the hon. leader made, I can simply say four times that she is wrong, wrong, wrong, and wrong.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, on what basis is the Premier ignoring the advice that has led 170 countries from around the world to sign the UN convention on the rights of the child?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we have not ignored. This hon. member was in cabinet and part of the caucus at the time the decision was made. I have just filed two letters, one written in 1990 and one written in 1991, both indicating that, with some reservations that should have been noted, we would be willing to sign the convention.

Mr. Speaker, there are concerns in this province. I'm sure there are concerns within the Liberal caucus relative to some articles. I mentioned two of the articles, article 13 and article 15.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to read a letter I have here from Corry Marcos, who represents Women Alive, 25,000 members. She's the wife of a very prominent obstetrician in the city who has delivered something like 15,000 babies and knows something about children. She says:

Please do not rectify . . .

And I think she meant ratify.

. . . the UN convention on the rights of the child. It will take away all parental rights, make children autonomous from birth. Children in 3rd world conditions need it to protect life and for food, shelter and education.

But she's afraid it "will be used here very differently, against parents to raise children in good conscience and [good] values."

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Calgary-*Buffalo* has circulated -- I mean this is the way they do things; that's how they get so many postcards. It reads:

Suggestions for your letter to Premier Klein. The following is simply a suggestion for your letter to Premier Klein. Rather than copying this sample, please send a personal letter with convictions from your heart. A simple handwritten letter on your own stationery or your organization's letterhead has a major impact on elected representatives. If you can add a personal or organizational reason why you are particularly involved in the rights of children, [please do so.] The following suggested format will help get it going.

Then he sends out the suggested format.

Mr. Speaker, we have appealed to the federal government in the past to recognize certain concerns that the people of Alberta have relative to this convention, and we said that if those concerns are addressed, we'd be happy to sign the convention. As I have pointed out, our appeal was not resolved. Perhaps this hon. member -- and I'm talking about the member for Calgary-*Buffalo* -- can appeal to his Liberal cousins to address the concerns that have been raised by Albertans, and perhaps he'll have more success than we had with our cousin Conservatives in Ottawa.

Speaker's Ruling Brevity in Question Period

THE SPEAKER: That was a rather lengthy response to a question. However, you're looking at a chairman who has had experience on the front bench. I can only respond and reflect on

how I responded when I was giving answers to questions when there were encouraging comments coming from the other side, heckling comments perhaps. I tended to expand my response, and the more the interjections there were from the other side, the longer my response became.

So for those on one side of the House who said that the response was rather long -- and on the other side of the House the comment was that there seemed to be a lot of interjections -- perhaps if there were fewer interjections, the response to the question would be less long. Let's try it and see what happens. Okay?

The hon. leader.

1:50 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (continued)

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit today before the eyes of the world that he will in fact implement the convention?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I go back to the concerns that were raised in 1991 and in 1990, when the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition was a member of this government. I again refer to these letters. The letter to Mr. Clark from Mr. Horsman says:

In response to your letter of December 22, 1989, Alberta supports the signing by Canada of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I want to make that abundantly clear.

This support is based on the fact that Alberta legislation and practice related to the rights of children is congruent with the object and purpose of the Convention. However, it should be noted that some legislative change will be required prior to formal ratification.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process.

There was no response.

Then in a letter to Mrs. McDougall, who succeeded Mr. Clark, again from Mr. Horsman:

Thank you for your letter of September 25, 1991 asking for the Government of Alberta's support for Canada's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. After a careful review of Alberta's Acts, we have determined that they conform with the Articles in the Convention.

That is absolutely true, and that speaks very well to our human rights record.

However, over the past few months, the Government of Alberta has received a large number of letters . . .

And I'm sure the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition received some of those letters from her then constituents.

We have received

a large number of letters and representations from constituents expressing concerns with several Articles in the Convention.

Primarily those articles were articles 15 and 13, articles to which I have alluded.

Reservations have been expressed with respect to the perception that some of the Articles may undermine parental authority.

Prior to giving final consideration to the Convention in this Province, I would request assurances from the Government of Canada that ratification by Canada in no way interferes with or undermines the primary authority and responsibilities of parents in the care and raising of children in Alberta.

We care about our children, and we care about parents having responsibility over their children. Obviously they don't.

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

West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said all of the following: the Alberta Treasury Branch "operates at arm's length from the government"; "I offered no direction in any dealings between West Edmonton Mall and Alberta Treasury Branches"; and, finally, "I did not provide any inappropriate direction or instructions regarding the refinancing of West Edmonton Mall." My question is. Arm's length, no direction, no inappropriate direction: which version is the truth?

MR. KLEIN: I would say all of them, Mr. Speaker. This has been referred to the courts in a number of applications and statements of defence. We have asked the Auditor General to investigate all aspects of this particular situation. As a matter of fact it was the Provincial Treasurer who launched the investigation, and it was my personal instructions that he also look into allegations that have been raised through some innuendo that there perhaps was some inappropriate political involvement, to look into that, and we're waiting for the report from the Auditor General.

Again, I ask the Official Opposition and in particular the leader: if she doesn't have confidence in the Auditor General, then let her stand up and say so.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, my second question to the Premier is: what is the difference between appropriate direction and inappropriate direction?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, if she doesn't know the difference, then I would suggest that she's got a problem as well.

MRS. MacBETH: So is the February 22, 1994, memo appropriate direction or inappropriate direction?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what the Auditor General has been asked to determine. By the way, that memo was published -- what? -- months and months before in Mo Rahall's book, so it's hardly news. That memo was simply a memo to two ministers giving my recollection of an account of what took place at a meeting of the agenda and priorities committee. That's all it was.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are demanding answers about this government's involvement in the refinancing of West Edmonton Mall. However, all we seem to get in response from the Premier is that it's either none of our business or: step outside the House. This is consistent with this government's four-year track record of secrecy, denial, and hiding the truth from Albertans on the refinancing package. My question is: how can Albertans be sure that the statutory declaration from the Premier to the Auditor General is anything more than secrecy, denial, and hiding the truth?

MR. KLEIN: A statutory declaration, as the hon. member knows, is very serious. It's just as serious, Mr. Speaker, as the oath she took to represent honestly and in a forthright manner the concerns, and I would assume that she would. If she is saying that I don't take seriously my oath, my oath of office, my oath in a statutory declaration, then I would suggest that she is very dangerously, very deliberately, and very maliciously questioning my integrity. My declaration to the Auditor General was honest and truthful, just as it would be had that declaration been given in a court of law.

MR. HAVELOCK: A point of order on that, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, what exactly is in those 16 pages, considering that the Premier has said in the past that he can't remember what happened four and a half years ago?

MR. KLEIN: Well, maybe the hon. member can remember what happened just after December 1992. It was quite significant.

To ask anyone, including herself, to remember every single detail of everything that happened five years ago . . . [interjections] Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe I'll start asking questions. They won't answer the questions, but I'll maybe do a little research myself or get our researchers to do it and then question the opposition as to what they were doing: where were they, what meetings did they attend, and what telephone calls did they have relative to any issue in 1992? Some of these people have a hard enough time remembering where they were yesterday, never mind five years ago.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, we'd be happy to answer any questions.

The question is: why doesn't the Premier simply table his statutory declaration and make it part of a public inquiry?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we have committed to a process. That process is an examination by the Auditor General of all the facts. We have turned over to him all the documentation relative to this particular situation, and I have given my statutory declaration. We have committed ourselves to a thorough investigation of this matter by the Auditor General. We have faith in the Auditor General as an officer of this Legislature. We have faith in the Auditor General. Again, if they lack confidence in the Auditor General to carry out a proper examination of the facts, including statutory declarations, then have the courage and stand up and say so.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

2:00 Employment Standards Enforcement

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday some government members denied unanimous consent to a motion affirming the right of freedom of expression without fear of violent reprisal. On Tuesday we witnessed the feeble attempt of the Premier to rationalize his failure to ratify the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Yesterday we had the haunting experience of watching the Minister of Labour on CBC television rationalizing his failure to enforce the rights of young workers hired by an employer, Buffet World, who has repeatedly violated them. My question is to the Premier. How can the Premier justify promoting harsh measures against young offenders, including criminally charging them under 12, while giving kid-glove treatment to employers like Buffet World who repeatedly and systematically violate the rights of young workers? Why the double standard?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this matter was brought to my attention just this morning. On the surface what has happened appears to be reprehensible, but the hon. Minister of Labour is on top of the situation, and I'll have him respond.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Speaker, this issue had some media coverage about six weeks ago in the *Edmonton Journal*, followed up by the CBC with a little work last night. This is the first formal question or inquiry I've had from any opposition member.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we are on top of the issue. The issue is that the Alberta advantage works for employees as well as for employers. This company, if it has been in violation, has paid when talked to by our people at the Department of Labour. There are outstanding claims at this stage. This department has talked to the Department of Justice with respect to prosecution. Prosecution for failing to comply with employment standards is not something new. We've done it before; we'll do it again. We value very much the performance and productivity of employees in this Alberta workplace.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier again: instead of building legislative fences around the equality rights of gays and lesbians, why doesn't the Premier build protective fences to strengthen the rights of young Alberta workers through strict enforcement of employment standards?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're looking into this situation, and again I'll have the hon. minister respond.

MR. SMITH: Thank you. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you are aware of the work done by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort when he worked hard on reviewing the minimum wage. One of the keystone changes in the minimum wage was to take the wage differential of 50 cents for those under 18, \$4.50 an hour for those under 18 and \$5 for those over 18, and remove that, because, one, we know that employees, particularly young people, are far more job ready than they've ever been before. Secondly, we had evidence where that training wage was being abused by employers, abused to the point where it had to be eliminated. We took that action.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort continues to work on changes to employment standards. We continue to develop compliance policy. We continue to work hard with employers. We also know that there is a darn good bunch of working people out there, and we want to make sure they get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary is also to the Premier: why does the Minister of Labour still enjoy the Premier's confidence, in light of the minister's gross dereliction of his public duty to take action against Buffet World and other employers who with impunity flagrantly violate employment standards?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this minister has been very responsive to any violations of the labour code. He has been very fair and impartial in adjudicating labour disputes, Mr. Speaker, and has also been very judicious and very prudent in his supervision of violations of the laws and the rules. Again I'll have the hon. minister respond.

MR. SMITH: Well, thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Speaker, I do want to table one copy -- I'm sorry; I didn't know we'd table it. It's a news release June 18, 1998, which is only four months ago: "Charges have been laid against [a company] operating as Biotrend, as a result of an investigation by Alberta Labour, Employment Standards." We do prosecute; we do go to the courts.

Mr. Speaker, we're very concerned about making sure that all sectors of the workforce participate in this Alberta advantage. That's why we see average weekly earnings consistently above the Canadian average. That's why we see more people working in this marketplace than ever before and a greater participation rate

in this marketplace than ever before. It's a good place to work, it's a good place to make money, and it's a good place to grow.

Speaker's Ruling Allegations against Nonmembers

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I would like to refer you to *Beauchesne* 493, which talks about protected persons. It says: "The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply." I simply have no idea if an investigation is under way, if charges are being reviewed, if charges are pending, or if there's some action against someone else. I do know this: that if accusations are made by members in the Assembly, there's some protection for them, and those who might be cited in the Assembly have no resolution if they are unjust citations. So we must always be careful about naming names.

I don't know if the Minister of Justice and Attorney General has something to add to this case. If it's sub judice or not, I simply don't know.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I briefly can advise, Mr. Speaker, that I know officials of our department are working closely with Labour on the matter and providing some direction and advice at this stage. So that's a point well made. Perhaps the less said at this stage the better. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Please. It is not my intent to say "the less said" or anything else. I'm simply cautioning members about what the rules are with respect to the matter.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Career and Technology Studies

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Education. Career and technology studies were introduced into schools to allow students to explore and to start working on possible careers while still in school. However, some schools in my constituency are unable to provide the same level of CTS programming as others. Can the Minister of Education please explain why there are disparities in the career education provided to students?

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say that our career and technology studies program is one of the very exciting things that has happened in education in the last five years that has received a great deal of positive reaction. There are 22 occupational areas in the CTS program, and we do not expect every school to be able to provide all areas of instruction in CTS. What we do expect schools will do, though, is at the local level provide programs that will match the needs of their students when looked at with the experience of their teachers and the potential of community partnerships and resources that are available in that area.

Schools can offer any one of the 22 course areas that they choose from, or they can mix and match from the over 600 modules and create their own unique courses that are suited to their own local priorities. They can also adapt those programs from year to year. So, Mr. Speaker, although we do not expect every school to provide the same level of CTS programs, we do expect them to provide the best CTS programs available, given the local resources, experience, and needs of students.

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that two schools in my constituency did not receive the capital funding needed to

provide CTS programming, how are funds allocated, then, for CTS projects?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, CTS programs can be funded from two different sources. One is from the instruction block, and the second is from the capital block. Every school jurisdiction, of course, as members are aware, receives the same per capita instructional funding at the junior high level and the same per unit funding for CEUs at the high school level.

2:10

The second area that school boards can access for CTS is under our present capital funding model. School boards can apply to the school buildings branch for modernizations that might include a CTS equipment component. CTS, as I indicated in my first answer, has been a very positively received program, and the issue of the funding for CTS capital has been a question from school boards. I'm happy to say that on April 1, 1999, each school board will receive a per student capital allocation that was announced as part of the \$100 million special infusion for school capital. This funding can be used for things like essential health or safety school upgrades, modernization, and includes CTS equipment, but it will be up to local boards, Mr. Speaker, to determine their local priorities for the use of this funding.

Also, a third source of funding for CTS projects is that they may be considered for funding from the innovation fund if the program satisfies the criteria of that allocation.

MR. COUTTS: Then, Mr. Speaker, to the minister again: would additional support be considered to help smaller rural high schools provide this type of CTS program?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue that has been raised with smaller schools, and it comes as no surprise that it is easier to take, for example, per capita instruction grants when you come from a large high school, to pool them together to buy a band saw than it would be for a smaller school. Additional funding for sparsity and distance is available to all eligible school boards in the province, and it is made available automatically under our funding formula.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, my department has worked very hard over the last three years to develop distance education material for CTS programs. Many of these materials have been developed in collaboration with Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development and also postsecondary institutions. Extensive resources are available for distance learning, and more are being developed. We've also worked with community partners to develop CTS programs at the local level, such as the green certificate program or the job safety skills program.

So, Mr. Speaker, many schools have also recognized these particular circumstances. They pool their resources and programs so that they can have things like mobile labs, virtual programs, or the sharing of teachers. All of those have been responses by smaller schools to deal with the demand for CTS programming.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

(continued)

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier suggested that the UN convention on the rights of the

child might allow children to access pornography or to associate with criminals, that somehow the role of parents would be undermined. Those were his reasons for refusing to do what 170 other nations, what every other province in Canada has done; namely, to implement the UN convention. My question this afternoon, following up, is to the Premier. Since the federal government on December 6, 1991, gave Alberta the very assurance that it had been looking for, that "Canada's ratification will in no way interfere with, or undermine, the primary responsibility for parents in the care and nurture of their children," why does this Premier insist on distorting the purpose and effect of the UN convention? Why would you do that, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that goes to the heart of it. There are different interpretations, and this government at that time and many, many people in this province were not comfortable with that interpretation. A simple notation recognizing our concerns would probably suffice. Again, I would ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo to appeal to his Liberal cousins in Ottawa to provide such a notation -- they have provided their own reservations relative to the convention -- and we will bring it back to our caucus for consideration. But there are still concerns relative to the interpretation of the wording, especially with respect to articles 13 and 15. To the best of my knowledge this issue still has not been resolved.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see that the hon. member's name is here. I don't know if he is distributing this, but I think that he probably has something to do with it because they're asking that copies of this proposed letter be sent to Gary Dickson, the Alberta Liberal human rights critic. So I would think that something is up here. We would like to get this resolved as much as the Liberals would like it resolved, but we do want to address the concerns of those thousands of parents who feel that these two articles would indeed undermine their rights as parents. Parents have rights too.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the specific articles. Given that the convention expressly makes freedom of association and assembly subject to the need to protect the morals of children, why did this Premier say yesterday that the convention would allow child access to pornography? That's nonsense. Patently foolishness.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, again it's a matter of interpretation. There are some parents in this province who also write me on the other side, who say that they interpret this to mean that their children would have access to vile and pornographic and very objectionable material. Now, I'm concerned about that. A number of parents are concerned about that. It's obvious that this member is not concerned about that.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. Premier why he chooses to ignore the provision in article 17 which specifically calls for "guidelines for the protection of the child from . . . material injurious to his or her well-being." Why would you ignore that? It's built right into the articles.

MR. KLEIN: Again, Mr. Speaker, that is subject to interpretation. All we want is a notation relative to some of those contentious articles.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a lawyer, and he knows very well that any law, any clause, or any article is subject to interpretation. All I'm trying to say to this hon. member is that there are thousands of Albertans, not just me and not just this caucus, who

obviously are concerned. As evidenced in the letters that were written by Mr. Horsman in 1990 and 1991, those concerns were expressed but were never resolved.

I appeal once again. I will ask the hon. member: will he either in this House or outside this House, anywhere, commit to appealing to his federal cousins in Ottawa to put on the UN convention on the rights of the child the appropriate notations? Will he do this? If he won't, why won't he?

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

Calgary Board of Education

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary board of education review team completed their report in June of 1998. Unlike other reports requested by the Department of Education, such as the work done on private schools and the work done on capital funding, this report contains no recommendations which would provide advice and direction to assist us in addressing funding issues that have permeated Calgary and other large jurisdictions. My question this afternoon is to the Minister of Education. Is there any intention for this government to review and respond publicly to the report that we have now received?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish to first clarify the purpose of this review. The review team was asked to examine the board's administrative and instructional spending to see how resources were allocated, to ensure that it was effectively supporting student learning. The review found that while the school board was in compliance with the funding framework and the three-year plan for education, it also indicated a number of pressures for the Calgary board of education, such as provisions contained in their collective agreement with respect to pupil/teacher ratios, significantly higher than average teacher salary costs, wide differences in school-set fees between schools, and confusion about fees among parents.

2:20

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that both the Calgary board and the Department of Education have worked positively together to work on some of these issues. I give credit to the board for doing things like their consultation, beginning with the end in mind to work with parents. Their accommodation task force report reviewing their inventory of facilities is a positive step. The board also implemented a human resource strategy to deal with a more balanced workforce among their teachers.

Mr. Speaker, we as a Department of Education have also responded proactively to some of the concerns raised in the report, most notably perhaps the funding framework review that is currently being led by our colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti. That funding review is charged with the responsibility of looking at some of the cost drivers that have been identified, among other things, through the CBE task force review. So we do want to make sure that we come up with a funding formula that is fair and equitable to all school jurisdictions but of course to Calgary as well.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the boards are running a deficit. Given that this report specifically cites less discretionary dollars available in the classroom as a result of the imposed funding framework, will the minister acknowledge that public education in Calgary has now been compromised?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from the summary of findings section in the CBE review report.

- Average per unit salary costs for teachers are approximately [\$2,800] higher than the provincial average . . .
- Average per unit salary costs for teachers are the fourth highest in the province.
- . . . 83 % of the instruction block is spent on instructional staff salaries and benefits.
- Provisions contained in the collective agreement between the board and its teaching staff severely restrict CBE's ability to allocate its financial resources and impose limitations on the availability of discretionary funds.

Mr. Speaker, in response to all of this the board has taken some positive steps to deal with those issues, but from the provincial perspective we have been reinvesting in education since 1996. Education spending has increased by \$334 million since 1996 and will be expected to increase an additional \$181 million by the year 2000, a fairly significant amount of increase since 1996.

MRS. BURGNER: My final question, again to the same minister: given that the funding framework review currently under way is limited in its terms of reference -- it can't even acknowledge contracts that are in existence -- what is the minister's strategy to recognize size and diversity as a funding priority, which has been identified as a weakness in the Calgary report?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all that this review is about how the pie is divided, not the size of the pie. I think hon. members know that there is a different process, a budget-building process that is employed for looking at the size of the pie and that of course the size of the pie is part of government's overall fiscal plan. That budget-building exercise is currently taking place. With respect to the funding framework review, they are looking at issues of expenditure categories, major cost drivers, size, and diversity. Those are all equity issues, and the initial reaction that I've received from our review team is that there is some amount of enthusiasm to dealing with those issues in determining what the appropriate factors and equity issues are that should be considered by our funding formula.

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

Employment Standards Enforcement

(continued)

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Labour is soft on crime. There has been a 25 percent increase during the last four years in repeat offenders under the Employment Standards Code. This is yet another example of the dismal failures of the Department of Labour.

My first question this afternoon is to the Minister of Labour. Why is the minister protecting these chronic offenders in the service industry and not protecting hardworking young Albertans from this economic exploitation?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely more than pleased to answer that question because that is exactly where part of the pride of the Department of Labour lies, in its ability, one, to be customer focused but, secondly and more importantly, the application of fair standards to both employer and employee have resulted in a level playing field.

The work that is being done on employment standards today, as well as what has been done -- one of the big, I think, flagship

parts of what has happened in the Department of Labour is the minimum wage. When you take a look at the increased level for the minimum wage, the recognition of young people entering our workforce being given a fair shake, doing good work, getting reasonable pay, the removal of the differential so that they could be accorded a reasonable pay at minimum wage levels, the ability for these people to continue to finance their own education.

Mr. Speaker, very proudly in Canada we have consistently the lowest rate of unemployment for people 15 to 24 years old.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What does it take for the minister to start prosecuting these violators? Why are you so soft on crime?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the particular *Beauchesne* citation for not listening to earlier answers, but I thought the member would have probably received a copy of the tabling that I made showing the prosecution of June 1998, which is only 120 days ago.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Minister of Education. Where in the high school program will young Albertans learn of their workplace rights under the Employment Standards Code? Can you protect them? The Minister of Labour certainly cannot.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there are always calls on for what is appropriate to be contained within our curriculum. The matter is that we have students in high schools, as an example, for 1,000 hours of classroom instruction a year. There are always pulls and debates and lobbies for certain things to be taught within our high school curriculum. The hon. member has raised an interesting point, but I've not heard anybody from the education community suggesting that this might be the responsibility of Education, to educate people with respect to their workplace rights.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is appropriate that we provide an education which is relevant and appropriate for students. We are constantly trying to review our curriculum, but this is not one of the matters that has come forward as a serious educational concern.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Environmental Violence

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last 24 months there have been over 160 reported incidents involving either shootings, arsons, or bombings in northwest Alberta allegedly carried out by so-called environmental terrorists. Many of these incidents have occurred in the constituency that I represent. The citizens are experiencing fear, they are experiencing anger, and they are experiencing outrage from these terribly shameful acts of violence. All my questions are to the Attorney General. What actions is the minister taking to stop these acts of terrorism and bring these cowardly criminals to trial?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government and our department is certainly very concerned about these incidents, and we have been advised by the RCMP that they are investigating this. They have dedicated what they feel are the necessary human resources and equipment to ensure that they can resolve this issue, but they are investigating. It is within their jurisdiction to do so, and to get into any further detail would be inappropriate for me at this time.

However, I would like to mention briefly that in order to assist the efforts of Alberta's police, both the RCMP and those in municipal jurisdictions, to address these types of issues, on November 3 we announced a very comprehensive organized crime strategy. That strategy will strengthen the existing capacity of our police forces in this province to address these types of issues. I will not suggest to the member that that initiative will fix this problem overnight. It is a long-term problem. It's a long-term initiative that we are looking at. We expect that to be fully operational by April 1 of next year. We're dedicating approximately two and a half million dollars to that initiative per year to try to assist police forces throughout the province to deal with issues and events of this nature.

2:30

MR. JACQUES: Thank you. Will the minister give consideration to designating one or more special prosecutors to assist the RCMP in their investigations?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly after the RCMP have concluded their investigations and are ready to lay charges, we'll make available any and all resources, including prosecutorial resources, which are necessary to proceed. We do not tolerate in any way violence or vandalism of this nature in this province, and I can assure the hon. member that our department is doing all that we can to support the efforts of the RCMP. In fact we assigned some time ago a senior Crown prosecutor to liaise with the RCMP and assist them with respect to this matter.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is concerning the request by the county of Grande Prairie for an additional three RCMP officers in the area. Could you please provide an update on what you are doing in that regard?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. The agreement has been signed, Mr. Speaker, and it's between the county and Alberta Justice to provide, as the hon. member mentioned, three additional RCMP within the county of Grande Prairie. The next step is to receive the consent of the Solicitor General of Canada, who is responsible for the RCMP. On November 2 I did send a letter to the Solicitor General requesting the additional positions. We are currently awaiting a response at this time. However, I will give my assurances to the member that we will follow up and continue to request that approval coming forward very quickly.

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

Aboriginal Adoptions

MRS. SLOAN: A thousand aboriginal children are in limbo today awaiting adoption. Chiefs have the approval process and authority, but in one year only three new adoptions have occurred. My questions are for the Minister of Family and Social Services. Why has this government not provided adequate supports to bands to expedite the adoption process?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question that the hon. member has asked, believe it or not, is a very good question. One of the concerns that I have in dealing with the aboriginal bands is that when dealing with an aboriginal band, you are dealing with the federal government as well. One of the criticisms I have about the federal government is that the federal government will only pay support, will only compensate the

province for support when the child is in the care of the province. When that child is taken out of the in-care category and actually put back in the home or put back in an adopted home, any funds that the federal government uses to provide for that child are gone. We have this in handicapped children's services as well, where children who are left in the home, which is what we want to move towards, are not funded by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very good point, and quite frankly it's something that I'm not very proud of. As our new business plan comes forward, what she will see is a performance indicator that is built into our business plan this year for the first time that actually measures the number of children who are adopted. I'll pre-empt the business plan a little bit, but the number at the moment is 4 percent, which I will quite readily say is pathetic. It's something that this department has to move towards. It's something that this department has to work towards both in the aboriginal community as well as in the nonaboriginal community.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of working towards this, when will the minister table the overdue February '98 policy review on aboriginal adoptions?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly take a look and see what stage that is at. Quite frankly, I have absolutely no problem in tabling that. I'll undertake on behalf of the hon. member to take a look at it, but as I say, this is something where this department, this government, and this province has not done a very good job. It's also something that we need co-operation from the federal government on to change their laws so that they move into 1998 and they're not stuck, riveted in the 1950s.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, when will the minister table his report commissioned in 1997 by the Child Welfare League of Canada on the Alberta adoption process?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, if it was back in 1997, I'd be more than happy to table it at any time. Again, I reiterate: the adoption record in this province is not something I'm particularly proud of. It's something that we have to do a lot of work on. This is what led to our Forever Homes initiative, where rather than having the child be completely done with child welfare services when they're taken into care, when they're taken into foster homes, I'm trying to expand that strategy; expand it to the social workers to say to them quite literally that your job is not done until that child is placed in a forever home. A forever home is basically an adoptive home or a fixed, regular home. I feel this is an extremely important initiative, and if the report is there, I certainly have no trouble in tabling it all.

THE SPEAKER: Shortly the Clerk will be calling for Members' Statements, and we will be dealing with three members' statements today. But prior to doing that, I'm going to ask for your permission to allow three members to revert to introductions.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: We'll do this before we do Members' Statements.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

head: Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to some of the

colleagues in the Legislative Assembly here the constituency assistant from our constituency of Little Bow, Mrs. Lois McLeod. She and her husband, Rob, have an extensive mixed farm operation. I might point out that they've got three boys, two of whom were members this year of the provincial 2A baseball team, the Vulcan County Hawks. Would she please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The transportation system between Strathcona county and the city has been busy today. In addition to the other 145 members from the school of Archbishop Jordan in Sherwood Park I'm pleased to introduce classmates of our head page, Simone Godbout, who's viewing the proceedings from a different location this afternoon. If they would rise and please be welcomed by the Assembly.

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

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today Katy Tadman, daughter of my assistant, Evelyn Tadman. I was wondering if she would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly -- our numbers are growing -- another University of Alberta PC Association member, Kevin Monk, so I'd ask him to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: In 30 seconds from now I'll call on the following three members to begin members' statements. We'll go in this order: the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Ecoterrorism

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I tabled 76 letters signed by 1,082 constituents. The covering letter of November 15 was from the Saddle Hills Awareness Committee and was signed by Dennis Ganzeveld, the chairman.

2:40

Mr. Speaker, for the record I wish to read three paragraphs from that letter.

With regard to the problem of eco-terrorism now rampant in the northwest portion of the County of Grande Prairie No. 1, we enclose herewith for your consideration a letter of support containing the signatures of 1082 residents of the Beaverlodge, Hythe, Valhalla, and La Glace areas.

Notwithstanding the fact that extra funds and manpower have been allocated by the Province of Alberta for the purpose of bringing this matter to an end, we wish to illustrate by the number of citizens whose signatures are contained herein that this problem has impacted a wide area and that more than a small coterie of residents is affected. These people have the right to quiet enjoyment of their domain, and should not have to live in

fear engendered by a small group of dangerous malcontents who have even caused taxpayers to use certain roads and highways in the area with trepidation.

We trust this letter of support from the residents will urge you to stress upon the authorities that the citizens of this area are not prepared to tolerate any more acts of eco-terrorism or intimidation, and that this has now become a matter of grave concern to Northern Alberta inhabitants.

Mr. Speaker, we have legitimate processes in this province for dealing with environmental concerns, and certainly Alberta has among the most stringent environmental standards in the world. Let our message be very clear to the criminals responsible for these acts of violence: your cowardly actions are unacceptable to Albertans; you will be stopped, and you will be prosecuted. If there is a hierarchy within the criminal society, then the persons responsible for these acts of terrorism have to be considered near the bottom.

Thank you.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

MRS. SLOAN: Seven hundred delegates from 34 nations gather today to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights. In '89 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the convention on the rights of the child. The Canadian government and nine provinces implemented this convention. Alberta refuses. The provincial government has embarrassed Albertans by refusing to sign a convention which was designed with the well-being of children in mind.

Article 6 states that the state has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development, yet in this province over 154,000 children live below the poverty line.

Article 12 states that the child has a right to express his or her opinion freely, yet this government has a Children's Advocate who is restricted to speaking only for children in care.

Article 19 of the convention states that the state shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others, yet child neglect is no longer a reason for intervention by this government.

Article 20 states that the state is obligated to provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is available, yet our child welfare system places children in single men's hostels and hotels.

Article 23 states that the disabled have a right to special care, education, and training, yet in northern Alberta mentally ill children wait up to a year for services.

Article 27 states that every child has a right "to a standard of living adequate for [his or her] physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development," yet in this province there are over 20,000 children annually in the child welfare system and 57,000 food hampers provided in Edmonton and Calgary alone.

Refusal to implement means refusal to acknowledge need. In a land of advantage this position is heartless.

Hurricane Hydrocarbons Ltd.

MS GRAHAM: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to pay tribute to an outstanding Calgary oilman who was recently named the 1998 prairies region entrepreneur of the year in the annual entrepreneur of the year awards, which is a national program sponsored by a number of major corporations. John Komarnicki, as president and CEO of Hurricane Hydrocarbons Ltd., created one of the most remarkable success stories in the Canadian oil industry in recent years.

When John Komarnicki acquired Hurricane, it was a debt-strapped local company producing 50 barrels of oil per day in Alberta, but John Komarnicki had a vision for Hurricane, and that was to use capital and expertise to help others develop their oil reserves. So he took Hurricane to the newly independent republic of Kazakhstan in 1991 after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and in 1996 Hurricane successfully acquired the state-owned consortium Yuzhneftgaz for its substantial oil and gas reserves but along with that acquired a host of other companies and ventures including drilling, production, and service companies, construction and road building companies, a farm the size of P.E.I. with thousands of sheep and camels, and as well 5,000 employees. All of these employees and all of these various ventures were retained by Hurricane, signifying its commitment to the local Kazakhs, their culture, and their economy. The new oil reserves boosted Hurricane's oil revenues, and it was soon producing 60,000 barrels of oil per day by 1998, making it a major offshore oil producer.

John Komarnicki combined good corporate citizenship with a business strategy for a success story that drew the attention of market analysts around the world. Congratulations from members of this Assembly for your achievement and for being the recipient of this very prestigious business award.

head: Projected Government Business

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the Government House Leader inform the Assembly of the projected government business for next week.

MR. HAVELOCK: I'd like to, Mr. Speaker. Just give me a moment. I seem to be learning from the Leader of the Opposition; I can't find my papers.

November 30, next week, Mr. Speaker, we will be going to Government Bills and Orders for second reading of Bill 49 in the afternoon. Then we will be looking at bills 47 and 48 in Committee of the Whole and third reading of bills 44, 46, 47, 48, and 38, and if there's anything left after that, as per the Order Paper. That evening we will be in Committee of the Whole discussing bills 21 and 2.

December 1, 4:30, Committee of the Whole, Bill 49, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1998, and any third readings that happen to be on the Order Paper. That evening we will be in Committee of the Whole and third reading as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, 8 p.m., Committee of the Whole with respect to whatever happens to be on the Order Paper; also, third reading of Bill 49, as I mentioned earlier, and as per the Order Paper.

Thursday afternoon, December 3, following Oral Question Period, Members' Statements, and Projected Government Business, I will be moving that the Assembly adjourn until Monday at 1:30 p.m. to accommodate everyone's participation in the Premier's lighting of the lights later that afternoon.

THE SPEAKER: Two hon. members rose today at different times on purported points of order, so we'll deal first of all with the one from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Calgary-Buffalo on behalf of Edmonton-Glenora.

Point of Order Tabling Documents

MR. DICKSON: Yes, I am indeed. I cite Standing Order 23(1) and Standing Order 37. Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Speaker, you

will recall admonishing all members about the rules with respect to tabling documents. There had been a concern about multiple tablings of the same document. Clearly good advice to all members. This afternoon we saw the Premier table documents which were in fact elements of sessional note 1063/94, Second Session, 23rd Legislature. At that time the opposition had tabled the entire series of correspondence between the government of Alberta and the government of Canada because we thought it was important that the whole package be put on the record. Now, what's happened is that the Premier today apparently has taken some of the package and in fact tabled them again.

I just wanted to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, that under Standing Order 37 and particularly with your interpretation, I thought all members were going to be held to a higher standard in terms of ensuring that we avoided repetitive or duplicate tablings.

Thank you, sir.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Premier did not in any way intend to offend the Standing Orders by retabling a document which had already been tabled. He was simply, I think, trying to make a point. Certainly if it was inappropriate, I'm sure he wouldn't have a problem with the argument that's been put forward by the other member.

The hon. member across the way mentioned repetitive tablings. Well, we witnessed repetitive tablings from the other side since we came back into session, so if you wish to enforce the Standing Orders severely, then I would suggest that you make sure it applies to both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

MRS. SOETAERT: He's challenging the chair. He is. I can tell.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert on this purported point of order.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, no.

THE SPEAKER: I have a witness to this statement, hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. Because you seem to like to participate in all of these discussions, the other day I asked a visiting delegation of parliamentarians from another part of the world -- there were witnesses, and they are in this Assembly today -- as they sat in the Assembly and looked down, "What do you think is among the strangest things in performances you have seen in our Assembly?" They said with a big smile on their faces, "The performance of that Official Opposition whip." Their intent was that they thought that the purpose of the whip was to provide leadership, and they thought that this particular whip certainly liked to interject all the time. They said that in their understanding of parliamentary democracies, that wasn't the role that most whips took. Now, it's true that they perhaps have only seen maybe 20 or 30 different parliaments; they haven't seen all 140. So maybe if they continue their tour around the world, they'll find one other that perhaps is quite similar.

There's been a great deal of liberties taken by all hon. members, not necessarily even in this fall session but at other times as well, with respect to tablings. I've made certain statements with respect to tablings when it's appropriate. Hon. members on both sides -- both sides; this is equally across -- oftentimes read from papers in front of them and quote excerpts from papers in front of them and are not necessarily prepared to table documents of all of that for all hon. members, which is among the rules.

The highest point that we could all reach as parliamentarians is

to have the ability to stand up and do our craft in the following way: unaided by the paper in front of us to raise the question and unaided by the paper in front of us to respond to the question and unaided by any paper in front of us to rise at a time to debate and to debate for 20 minutes under our rules without the paper in front of us. Should we ever arrive at that point in time, our craft will find a higher level than we are at currently, at the moment, which seems to be inundated with all kinds of paper in front of us, which sometimes we can easily access and sometimes, unfortunately, not so easily access.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General on a purported point of order.

Privilege

Imputing Falsehoods against a Member

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has requested that I raise a matter of privilege with respect to the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition, and I would beg your indulgence in allowing the Premier to review the matter over the weekend, and it may be raised on Monday. I do that under Standing Order 15(5).

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

MR. HAVELOCK: What I would like to do at this point in time is make reference to Standing Orders 23(h), (i), (j). Quite clearly, the Leader of the Opposition made some allegations. They were of such a nature to certainly generate debate in the House, debate which I think you've warned against time and again. She imputed false or unavowed motives. Quite frankly, I feel that an apology is in order. It had to do with her comments regarding the statutory declaration of the Premier.

I think you've indicated in the House before, Mr. Speaker, that we should take members of this Assembly at their word when they make statements. The Premier filed a document with the Auditor General, and I believe it's a very serious allegation to suggest that he was not forthright in that document nor telling the truth.

THE SPEAKER: So I take it there is no . . . [interjection] Sorry.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm not exactly clear, listening as carefully as I could to the Government House Leader, whether he was advising the House that there's going to be a point of privilege raised, whether he's advising the House that the Premier wants to think about whether he wants to raise a point of privilege, or whether the Government House Leader was in fact rising on a point of order. So I'll try to restrict my comments for now to I what I think may have been a suggestion that there was a violation of Standing Order 23 in one of the subsections. If it turns out that I'm wrong in interpreting what he was attempting to do, you may permit me a chance to speak again after your interventions.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, in asking a quite appropriate question to the Premier, was in fact trying to determine which words of the Premier we should take at face value. It's not a question of whether or not we accept the Premier's words but trying to figure out which ones, because the Premier has alternately said that he has trouble remembering what happened in the past and that he's issued a statutory declaration. The question that's on the minds of many people trying to understand those two statements is: what could take 16 pages to say in a statutory declaration if the Premier has trouble remembering the details that are supposed to be the subject of that statutory

declaration? Mr. Speaker, there is in fact a sequence of contradictory statements, and some of those contradictory statements were tabled earlier during tablings in this Assembly.

So there can clearly be no point of order, because what the question was trying to do was elicit from the Premier a response as to what is his official position regarding his and his government's involvement in a very serious matter before the public; that is, government interference with the operating decisions of the Alberta Treasury Branches.

So, Mr. Speaker, if in fact the suggestion was that Standing Orders had been violated in the question, I would argue that no such violation has occurred and that the question itself was an appropriate and legitimate question that fully meets the test of the rules of this Assembly.

MR. HAVELOCK: I'd just like to clarify, Mr. Speaker. I actually thought that I had made it clear that the Premier wished to review the issue of privilege over the weekend and that on behalf of the Premier I was giving notice under Standing Order 15(5). It may or may not come up on Monday. Then I went on to discuss what I felt was an infringement of Standing Orders; to be specific, 23(h), (i), and (j).

So there are two matters which I addressed in the House. Hopefully the opposition is clear on that at this stage.

THE SPEAKER: Today, hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, did you want the chair to deal with a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j)? I'm sorry. I'm not exactly clear because there were two points raised. If a point of privilege is to come, Monday is early enough, because that's certainly within the rules, but if it's a point of order, we should deal with it today.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. I guess I'm not making myself clear. I raised a point of privilege which may come up on Monday on behalf of the Premier. I then stated that I would like to also raise an infringement of Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j), and it's on that that I would appreciate your ruling today.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, sir. Please, would you like to assist me in terms of what the specific concerns are that you have about (h), (i), and (j)?

MR. HAVELOCK: I'll make the arguments again, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(h), "makes allegations against another member." The words spoken by the Leader of the Opposition, I believe, alleged that the Premier was not truthful with respect to the comments in his statutory declaration.

Standing Order 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." Again, same argument: the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that the Premier has some motive behind his statutory declaration and for that reason has not told the truth.

Standing Order 23(j), "abusive or insulting language." Quite frankly, to put a question of that nature and make that type of allegation certainly raises the temperature in this House and does not do anyone any good.

That would be my argument with respect to the Standing Order specifically.

3:00

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. So we are now on a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). That's what we're on.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make the observation

that I think it's wholly inappropriate. A member cannot stand up and say that the same conduct is subject to both a breach of privilege under Standing Order 15 and a point of order at the same time and try and invite double penalties. He has to make an election . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, I took the time to very specifically ask the Minister of Justice and Attorney General what he wanted the chair to deal with today. He has made an election, and I pointed out very, very clearly that it's a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). That is what I'm listening to. I'm listening to nothing else.

Sir.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Now that we have that clarity, I will stand by my earlier comments and add simply the following. The Government House Leader, try as he may, cannot and should not ever put words into the mouth of any other member, particularly the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

There was no suggestion of motives. There was no allegation. There was a legitimate request for information. The words were carefully chosen, and no matter how sensitive or defensive the Premier or the Government House Leader may be about those questions, their interpretation and their sense of guilt should not in any way be used as a lever or a club to try to beat back freedom of speech, which this Assembly is supposed to stand for. The Leader of the Official Opposition did not violate the subsections of Standing Order 23, and in fact I think the Government House Leader's own confusion over how to proceed with the point of order indicates that they are grasping at straws and are simply trying to recover from what was a very telling exchange this afternoon between the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. HAVELOCK: The only sense of confusion I have is why the Opposition House Leader couldn't understand a very simple argument, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Are there additional members on this purported point of order? I'll wait. That's it? Okay.

Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j):

(h) makes allegations against another member;

(i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another member;

(j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

And we have *Beauchesne*, which is great reading for us, and I particularly enjoy *Erskine May*. This is the one I particularly enjoy because it's just loaded with specifics and has all kinds of statements with respect to it. It keeps me awake at night.

Here's what the Blues say. Here is the question: "Mrs. Macbeth" -- and I have the right to use that name without citing the member because that's what the Hansard Blues say.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are demanding answers about this government's involvement in the refinancing of the West Edmonton Mall. However, all we seem to get in response from the Premier is that it's either none of our business or: step outside the House. This is consistent with this government's four-year track record of secrecy, denial, and hiding the truth from Albertans on the refinancing package. My question is: how can Albertans be sure that the statutory declaration from the Premier to the Auditor General is anything more than secrecy, denial, and hiding the truth?

Now, the purpose of question period of course is to seek information. Well, we ask the question: is there a seeking of informa-

tion? Is the question hypothetical? What's in a person's statutory declaration, which goes to an outside source and is given under oath?

The most important rule that we have in this House, cited in our history, our tradition, our precedents -- *Beauchesne, Erskine May*, all the other ones -- is the acceptance of one hon. member's word in this House when it is given. That is a fundamental principle of all parliaments in all jurisdictions everywhere. When an hon. member rises in this House and makes a statement, our tradition is that we accept that statement. If an hon. member chooses to challenge that statement, there are provisions for dealing with it, but they demand the most rigorous amount of scrutiny by this Assembly, not the chair, by this Assembly ultimately. So on the point of this matter, when an hon. member gives a response, our tradition is that we accept the response.

If one seeks information on issues, there are ways of seeking information on issues, but not to come back and then question the statement made by the individual. That is a truism. That is a fundamental principle; that is something we've always followed. If anyone needs any basis for all of this, they can spend their time this weekend reading *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, and you can begin at page 380 with Personal Allusions and Unparliamentary Expressions, particularly the sections dealing with allegations against members.

So for all intents and purposes, if one adopts and one accepts what *Erskine May* is saying and what *Beauchesne* says, that it's well accepted that one cannot make imputations of falsehood against a member, if a member makes a statement and answers the question and then another question comes back, "How can Albertans be sure that the statutory declaration from the Premier to the Auditor General is anything more than secrecy, denial, and hiding the truth," and if the other member comes back and says that the oath one takes represents honestly and in a forthright manner the concerns and goes on to say, "My declaration to the Auditor General was honest and truthful just as it would be had that declaration been given in a court of law," that is what our tradition demands we accept.

So, quite frankly, there is a point of order. I've ruled on it, and we're going to continue recognizing that we're going to accept the words of hon. members in this Assembly, and we're going to avoid getting involved in these kinds of situations in the future.

head: Motions under Standing Order 40

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on a Standing Order 40.

Mr. Dickson:

Be it resolved that this Assembly recognize the urgent need for a broad public debate on whether the government of Alberta should implement the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had indeed given notice earlier.

Speaking briefly to the urgent and pressing necessity, I'd say this. This evening the glitterati of the human rights world are meeting in the city of Edmonton in this province at an international conference to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. Some of the foremost leaders, speakers, commentators in the entire world in terms of human rights advocacy are going to be here in this city. I think our reputation as a province nationally and internationally

as a civil, tolerant, progressive place and province is at risk.

I think it's absolutely fundamentally important, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly seize this last opportunity before this major international conference starts, one that's supported by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, supported by the Department of Community Development. Indeed, the Minister of Community Development is one of the welcoming speakers this evening at 7 p.m.

Whatever has happened in the past, we have an opportunity to move on something that's been outstanding for all too long. I'd just make reference to members that the sessional note that was referred to earlier in a point of order and the correspondence included in that made it clear that since at least December 6, 1991, Canada has been waiting for Alberta to act. We have the chance to debate whether we should act, and that debate can't wait any longer. So for all those reasons I'm asking for the requisite unanimous consent of the Assembly to be able to have that urgent and pressing debate.

Thank you very much.

3:10

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, on the Standing Order question the chair puts forward the question. Might we have unanimous consent to proceed with the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo? All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: All those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: The Standing Order 40 request, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, has been defeated.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: The chair asks for your indulgence. When you're surrounded by a mound of paper, to find the right document is of some concern, particularly when you're dealing with the number of pennies and dimes that we might be considering.

The Committee of Supply is called to order.

head: Lottery Fund Estimates 1998-99

THE CHAIRMAN: Deputy Government House Leader, do you have any comments to lead off?

MRS. NELSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to stand and bring forward supplementary estimates for the lottery fund. This estimate is for \$149 million in payments from the Alberta lottery fund. These would be in addition to the lottery fund payments already approved in the current fiscal year.

The supplementary estimate is to authorize payment for three initiatives: \$9 million for health and wellness initiatives, specifically the development of a laboratory under the Calgary regional health authority; \$130 million to Transportation and Utilities for municipal transportation infrastructure; and \$10 million to Municipal Affairs for regional co-ordination in the capital region.

The first initiative falls under the category of health and wellness. The amount requested is \$9 million. These dollars would be applied towards the development and construction of a

\$16 million centralized high-volume laboratory testing facility in Calgary. The Calgary regional health authority will support the balance of the \$7 million.

This facility would be operated by Calgary laboratory services. Calgary laboratory services provide testing services to all hospitals, continuing care facilities, community health centres, and medical clinics in Calgary. The new facility would replace lab facilities at five existing leased locations. As a result, they are expected to save about \$1.9 million a year due to reduced lease costs, reduced data communication costs, and staff efficiencies. The facility would accommodate 85 full-time equivalent staff, and it will also be designed to accommodate high-tech medical equipment. Approval will be subject to satisfactory agreement with all the parties involved.

The municipal infrastructure grants. This past August the government announced a municipal infrastructure funding program. This funding program was in direct response to the recommendations of the Premier's Task Force on Infrastructure. The task force studied infrastructure issues across Alberta. There are pressures placed on infrastructure due to the province's enormous growth over the past few years. This was identified also at the Growth Summit. As an example, in population we've had a 6 percent average growth from 1992 to 1997. We have increased traffic problems, and we have transit ridership problems. They're increasing dramatically. Our infrastructure is in fact aging, and there are a lot of other pressures that are associated with infrastructure. The task force identified priorities in specific areas needing immediate improvement.

[Mrs. Laing in the chair]

This is onetime funding, and it is subject to these supplementary estimates. The funding will be used to cost share municipal transportation programs. The task force agreed on a distribution formula for these dollars. Some of the funding priorities across the province include street improvements and rural transportation; as an example, the north/south trade corridor, among others. Infrastructure is important to the quality of life in this province. It benefits all Albertans, and it truly is an initiative which warrants our support.

The third is the regional co-ordination initiative. This is a regional initiative through the Municipal Affairs department. It's \$10 million that is being requested through this initiative. It was announced in August along with the government's three-year infrastructure program. These funds are slated for the capital region, which covers Edmonton and its surrounding communities. All municipal councils in the capital region agreed to the use of these funds to extend Anthony Henday Drive in Edmonton as part of the north/south trade corridor. This general agreement is a first for municipalities, the first time that municipalities, in fact, in the capital region have agreed to support provincial funding on a single project in one municipality.

All three initiatives will make a valuable contribution to the quality of life, Madam Chairman, in this province. I would therefore ask hon. members to support these supplementary estimates, because truly they are supportive of our communities and of Albertans.

Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. It should be an interesting debate, and I ask you to bear with me because it's

quite difficult to talk about the supplementary expenses and where the dollars are going without also talking about where the dollars come from. That's extremely important. Any expenditure that we make of course has to have a source of revenue, and I want to talk about that source of revenue.

Most of these additional dollars that are being spent on the programs the minister referred to of course are going to come from the escalating number of slot machines we see in the casinos. The previous documentation the minister had distributed at a press conference clearly indicated that. Madam Chairman, I want to take off from question period yesterday, when my third question of the Premier asked specifically about the operations of the slot machines, as to who was responsible for the operations of the slot machines: the Premier, the minister of lotteries, the gaming secretariat, or the gaming commission. Of course the Premier provided the answer: the gaming commission.

The reason I asked that question was that I felt it's only fair for Albertans to realize that whenever this government has a hot potato, they seem to bounce it off on somebody else. When the government was having a problem with health care, for example, they created health authorities. When the government was having problems with their budget, they passed the downloading on to municipalities: just cut them back and let them worry about balancing the books. Now when it comes to the contentious issue like the slot machines and the VLTs, they leave it up to the gaming commission to decide how many machines a casino is going to be allowed. The renovated Edmonton casino: pump them up from 200 to 400. What happens if they come and ask the gaming commission for 2,000? Does the gaming commission say that that's fine?

Is there no process for the Premier, for the minister, for the gaming secretariat to step in and say, "No; 2,000 machines in one casino is not acceptable"? Do we want to become the gambling mecca of North America? We're already the gambling mecca of Canada. There's no question that stats show that we have the highest per capita gambling in the province because of the accessibility of the various forms of gambling in this province.

Now, if I was in the position of the Premier, God forbid, and having to make these decisions, with all due respect to the minister of lotteries, I would recognize that we're now talking about something that could be approaching a billion dollars a year in a matter of two or three years. A billion dollars' worth of revenue to this government: that's a great deal of money. To have the minister that is responsible for Economic Development, which is fine, and then, as an afterthought, for lotteries . . .

3:20

MRS. NELSON: It isn't an afterthought.

MR. WICKMAN: It's an afterthought. The main function of the minister's portfolio, of course, is economic development, yet we have this other component bringing in that kind of revenue.

I would suggest that the Premier has to appoint somebody from that side of the House, because that side of the House is the government, and say: you're responsible for what's happening throughout this province in terms of gambling. It's not acceptable for the gaming commission to say, "We're not going to remove the machines in Wood Buffalo," or "We're not going to do this," or "We're going to do that." It's simply not acceptable. So that's the first point I wanted to make.

Secondly, my understanding of these additional revenues is that when it was brought to the Treasurer's attention sometime after the fact, the Treasurer was quite embarrassed: "What are we going to do with this newfound money? How are we going to

justify to Albertans that we have all these dollars coming in from this particular source, the increased slot machines?"

I point out on that very topic another question I asked the Premier yesterday, related to the numbers of machines, now 2,267. One year ago it was 667, and that's not counting the doubling that's taking place right now in some of the casinos, like Edmonton casinos, which brings me to that question. Where is the government going to cap the number of slot machines? I realize that there are some advantages to the slot machines over the VLTs. One is that at least the nonprofit groups get 15 percent of the proceeds, and the slot machines are not quite as addictive. So possibly I wouldn't have a problem with slot machines in casinos if they were restricted to a reasonable number.

But on the same hand we recognize that a quarter million people in Alberta that chose to vote do not want VLTs in the hotels and bars. So when that vote took place, the issue was not resolved by any means. In fact, it was just starting, and the matter is going to continue to heat up because this government fails to deal with the problem. They fail to recognize it. It's something like one-fifth of 1 percent of Edmontonians. That was the margin that voted in favour of keeping the machines in the bars and hotels. I think in Lethbridge it was even less than that. Even throughout the province you probably have a ratio of about 55 percent versus 45 percent. After the vote the minister made two commitments. One was that there were going to be additional resources pumped in, recognizing that there was an addiction factor, and that was good that he recognized there is an addiction factor because . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. Could you address the estimates, please? Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Getting to the estimates -- and I wanted to get to them. I want to spare time for my colleagues, who all want to speak on this particular topic. I want to look specifically at page 11 in the estimates, at the very first one, the municipal transportation infrastructure. That's the bulk of it. That's the \$130 million that the Premier announced at a press conference that I had the opportunity to attend, and the minister of lotteries and the Minister of Community Development were there as well. Now, to this \$130 million the municipalities would say: yeah, this is great. There is recognition that there are potholes in the highways and the streets and such and that there have to be additional dollars put into infrastructure, and nobody is going to argue that point.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

A point, however, that is going to be argued is: why did all the downloading take place in the first place -- in other words, the grants to municipalities being cut back -- and then the province turning around and saying: now you've got to be beholden to these VLTs? I myself think it was an attempt to manipulate the outcome of the vote; in other words, to try and put a squeeze play on people like His Worship Mayor Bill Smith and His Worship Al Duerr in Calgary and others throughout the province. It probably did work to a degree. The only thing that surprised me is that the government didn't go one step further and make up a whole bunch of little signs, orange and blue, that would read: thanks to lottery revenues this pothole has been fixed. Make them blue and orange, Madam Minister. Make them blue and orange. That's a manipulation. This government has a responsibility to provide basic core funding in certain elements: health care, education, and infrastructure. We all as Albertans use the roadways and the streets, and to say that it is going to be dependent on how much

people gamble as to whether a particular pothole is going to be fixed, you know, just kind of blows my mind. It just really, really shocks me.

Madam Chairman, it's a privilege to see you there in the chair. You have demonstrated some sensitivity towards these machines, and you have proposed some things that I would like to see the minister listen to and slow down those machines, reduce the numbers; in other words, do things to make them less damaging.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, we really do have to keep with the estimates.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. I was speaking on reference item 9, the municipal transportation infrastructure.

Then I looked at the health and wellness initiatives: \$9 million. Since when has something as vital as health care in this province, so vital to Albertans, who in the last while have become so sensitive to the mess that health care has suddenly found itself in, although it's been working itself in that direction for the last three, four years, since the government started to do these cutbacks -- to say that something to do with health and wellness is dependent on gambling revenues is worse than the pothole issue.

The minister responsible for lotteries has to say: are we headed now towards a direction where the number one concern to Albertans, health care, is going to be dependent to some degree on how much people put in these machines? When we pay our taxes, can't we feel assured, feel comfortable that we are going to have a good health care system? Do we have to watch people destroy their lives putting money in those machines to help assist the health care system?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let's get back to the estimates, hon. member.

MR. WICKMAN: Pardon me?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I said: try to continue your remarks to do with the estimates.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah, I am.

Now, the other one in here, the regional co-ordination initiative. That, again, was an interesting one, Madam Chairman, because that came on the heels of the \$130 million announcement on the infrastructure. That's when His Worship Mayor Bill Smith objected, kind of woke up to the fact that Calgary had outdone Edmonton in terms of the dollars that were going to be received. There's only -- what? -- two Conservatives, three Conservatives in Edmonton and a whole bunch in Calgary, and some may suggest that that may have influenced it. Bill Smith, the mayor of Edmonton, has made it very, very clear and doesn't hide the fact that he's a card-carrying member of the Conservative Party. With the civic election coming up, suddenly the government rose to his defence and said: "We're going to bail you out. We're going to take \$10 million and we're going to give it to you so you can work with the region and do something good," to make it appear like Edmonton was on an even basis with Calgary. Unfortunately, that wasn't the question.

But the bottom line still is, Madam Chairman, that it's wrong to use these lottery funds to manipulate civic leaders -- it is really, really wrong -- or to try and influence Albertans into voting in a certain direction. I think that is really, really wrong.

3:30

MRS. NELSON: Point of order.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

**Point of Order
Imputing Motives**

MRS. NELSON: On 23(h), (i), (j). I think the member opposite is imputing motives to my portfolio and to myself as to lottery fund usage, and I would like you to rule on that. We do not manipulate people with lottery funds, and I take great exception to that. I've listened to him trying to cast aspersions on the activities this summer, that I tried to do something, which I did not, that would violate a democratic process. I would ask you to rule on that, Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On the point of order.

MR. WICKMAN: Madam Chairman, I'm sitting here as a member of the opposition, as the critic responsible for lotteries. I'm trying to get some answers. There's a perception out there that the minister has to recognize. Whether she objects to it or not, that's what Albertans are thinking. I don't see anything wrong with me asking these questions. If the minister chooses not to answer them, that's her right not to answer them. But you've got to understand that a lot of these perceptions come from the government itself. When the Premier after the VLT vote said that all VLT revenue and gambling revenue is now going to go into some special fund, again that raises a perception. That raises the perception: is this going to be used as a slush fund? I'm not accusing the government of doing it; I'm simply asking a question. The minister should have no hesitation to answer questions that members of the opposition put forward on behalf of Albertans.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. members, I do believe that part of this process of course is to ask questions, to seek information. When we deal with estimates, though, we do have something that we have to look at and confine our discussion to. So possibly, yes, I understand the need to ask questions, and I'm sure the hon. minister recognizes that. Hon. member, if you could ask your questions more directly as questions without a lot of extra wordage and try to keep within the parameters of the lottery fund estimates, that we are looking at, you might possibly find that you will get some answers to those questions. I think that we right now have a difference of opinion more than anything else.

I'm sure there are a number of people in the Assembly, in committee that wish to speak this afternoon, so let's try to seek some answers, hon. member. The minister will listen to your questions and at some point in time, I'm sure, try to answer the questions for you.

Debate Continued

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My time is running short, and others want to speak, so I'm going to conclude by asking three specific questions. The minister may choose to provide the answers later on, which is fine. I understand that.

Now, number one. We talk in terms of the revenues that are coming in from various forms of gambling, like the VLTs and the slot machines, and we see what's happening with it now. Of course, the Premier has indicated that from here on in things are going to happen differently; it's not going to be used for normal

program-type things. My question specifically to the minister: what is the intent of the government in terms of gambling revenue for the future? That's number one.

Number two. Is it the government's intention to come forward with a specific plan for gambling in the province in terms of the amounts of revenue they want to achieve, the caps on machines, and so on? I just want to know: how far are we going to go? Is it at \$1 billion where we'll say, "Now we're satisfied"?

Thirdly, will the vital components that taxpayers in this province have become accustomed to expect, and rightfully so, to be there regardless of how people may gamble or not gamble -- health care, infrastructure, and so on and so forth -- will these vital programs continue to have portions of them funded by VLTs and slot machines and other forms of gambling?

Those are my three questions I'd like answered. Like I said, the minister can answer them now, or she can answer them in writing. On that note, I'm going to conclude and either let the minister respond or allow my good colleague here to continue.

**Chairman's Ruling
Relevance**

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just before I recognize anyone else, hon. member, I would point out to you and all hon. members that we are dealing with the lottery fund supplementary appropriations, those amounts you have in front of you. Basically what I heard, Edmonton-Rutherford, was you seeking answers to some questions that you consider to be issues and that were not really relevant to the dollar amounts that we are dealing with within these estimates. I realize that people are seeking answers to questions, but I do want everyone to focus on the dollar amount that we have to vote on later.

The hon. Minister of Community Development, followed by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Debate Continued

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Madam Chairman, I listened very carefully to your ruling, and I also listened very carefully, as I always do, to my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. I understand your ruling very clearly; however, I hope that you will grant the same degree of latitude to my response. I do want to deal with these estimates.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talked about where the money came from, and I want to deal with where the money goes. We can debate the issue of where the money comes from for this program, and we will for a long time, but I don't think enough is said about where these dollars go. Where the dollars go is important to this discussion because where the lottery dollars go in this province is decided by the people of this province.

It is decided in a number of ways, and I'm proud to say that the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, which is governed by a board of citizens from this province that make the decisions, is one of the distributors of those dollars. I'm proud to say that the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, also governed by a number of citizens -- most of us know these people well -- distributes funds. All of us know about the Wild Rose Foundation and the wonderful work that they do to support the volunteer groups in every one of our communities in this province. They are the same group that hosted 2,700 delegates from 93 countries to a volunteer conference, where we had an opportunity to share ideas and shape direction.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member.

**Point of Order
Clarification**

MRS. SOETAERT: I'm asking for a point of clarification, if I may. Is the minister allowed to respond to the lottery estimates? I know that as a cabinet minister she cannot ask questions. I appreciate her answers. I'm just asking for clarification on that.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes. She certainly can.

MRS. McCLELLAN: We did have that discussion, and it was clarified that, yes, we can.

MRS. SOETAERT: Okay.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think that was clarification; right? Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Point of Order
Relevance**

MR. WICKMAN: Again, Madam Chairman, you kind of hedged me in to speak specifically about what we're dealing with, and we're dealing with three supplementary appropriations here. The minister is getting way off base in terms of talking about other programs under that. That's not part of it today.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'll speak to the point of order, Madam Chairman. I was very careful in this because I suspected this might happen. I timed the hon. member, and it was exactly 16 minutes before he got to the estimates. I don't intend to take near that amount of time. I do, on the point of order, suggest that I am talking about distribution of lottery funds, which is what these estimates are about.

So, Madam Chairman, I suggest there isn't a point of order.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Seeing that this is Thursday afternoon and I think there must have been a full moon this week or something, I'm going to actually rule here that what's good for the goose is good for the gander. So continue on for 16 minutes, hon. minister, and then we'll stop you and tell you to speak to the estimates.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Madam Chairman, thank you for your ruling. I hope that it won't take me that long.

3:40 Debate Continued

MRS. McCLELLAN: I do want to point out a couple of other areas that I know all members are interested in. The human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts are also distributors. I raise those because I think each one of us in this Assembly is touched by grants that are provided to those groups. For example, the Sunset Park Committee in Daysland, for building a children's playground. Who would argue? Medicine Hat & Area Safe Community Coalition, granted dollars for promoting an active lifestyle. Edmonton Wheelchair Fencing Society, for purchasing fencing equipment. Goodfish Lake Recreation Board, for promoting healthy lifestyle. I mean, Madam Chairman, as you can see, these are distributed across our province.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

One area of distribution of funds that's important to mention is

the indigenous youth at risk program, and that is more commonly known to us as the future leaders program. I have spoken in this Legislature about that program before, and I know that members on both sides of the House agree with that program. Those are dollars that come from this fund that provide opportunities for leadership development in our aboriginal communities. It is one of the most successful programs we have, and it goes from Assumption to Cadotte to Fort Vermilion to Gift Lake, Kikino, Morley, Rocky Mountain House, Sarcee. It's across our province.

We could talk about the funding for the arts programs, which I think enhance all of our quality of life in this province. We could talk about ArtsTrek and the writers' program that allow our young people, whether they're in rural Alberta or urban Alberta, to have an opportunity to learn to write and to experience art. But today, Mr. Chairman, we're going to talk about some other areas of distribution of lottery funds. I'm not talking about whether lottery funds are appropriate or not appropriate here today. They are a fact of life. Lotteries are a legal activity in this province, as they are in most provinces in Canada, and we're not here to debate the degree or the placement, I don't believe. We are here today to talk about whether the Empress Theatre Society should have received their funding. It's a more appropriate conversation, even though it doesn't deal with these direct estimates.

To deal with the estimates, Mr Chairman, I would like to speak in support of the additional dollars for the health and wellness initiatives. We all talk about the need for quality health care in our province. We all wrestle with the dollars that are required to maintain this very excellent system that we have in this province, and while sometimes in this House I know that we get focused on what we don't have, sometimes we should focus on what we do have. We should remember that two scientists in Alberta about two weeks ago made what can be a very amazing breakthrough in the treatment of cancer, some very difficult cancers. That isn't common in every province in Canada, that research has that type of support. We have some of the most advanced MRI facilities in Canada. We can always talk about how we don't have enough, and that's probably true in many cases, but we have one machine in Calgary that nobody else in Canada has, unless they've just acquired it.

So when we talk about these costs and the escalation of them -- and we know that those costs are escalating at about 10 percent, maybe up to 13 percent a year -- we have to ask ourselves: can we keep adding \$430 million and compound that year after year after year and maintain this system, or do we do some things differently? Do we try to make more efficiencies in our system so that we enjoy that quality system? Mr. Chairman, here is the answer to lowering costs in health care. No, it's not the open heart surgery that you need tomorrow at the age of 55. It's talking about starting with young people. It's talking about prenatal, pre-conception really. It's talking about wellness. That is what will contain the costs in health care.

Ladies and gentlemen in this Assembly, we are going to continue to live longer. We want to continue to live longer, and we are going to. If we deal with the issues around wellness, if we promote healthy lifestyles and start with our children, we're not going to feel the results immediately, but maybe this group of young people, when they reach 55, aren't going to need bypasses at the rate that our generation, many of us of this generation, do now, because they have better information, better education. I can tell you that the young mothers today are much smarter than I was. They know more about nutrition. They know more about care, and they know more about care while they're carrying a child. They know that they shouldn't smoke. They know that they shouldn't drink alcohol to any excess. They know that they

should be active. And you know what? We're raising better babies.

That's what this \$9 million is about. This is about wellness initiatives. This is about ensuring that our health care costs can be contained in the future and that we'll continue to have a health care system in this country and in this province that we can all be proud of and that we can all count on. So I support these dollars. I think it's a very good use of these dollars in this area.

Infrastructure. Alberta is enjoying in fact the strongest growth of any province in our country. Mr. Chairman, it is a fact that in our province we export most of what we produce. Our roadways are an important part of that transportation model that carries our products to market. I remind you that the same roadways carry our children to schools, carry our ambulances, carry our everyday traffic. The minister of transportation today tabled a bill that really will deal with traffic safety. The infrastructure part of these estimates are extremely important.

So, Mr. Chairman, I support these supplementary estimates. I support the very positive use of the lottery fund in these ways, and I encourage every member in this Assembly to support this vote

Thank you.

Chairman's Ruling Relevance

THE CHAIRMAN: Before I recognize Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, I would just observe that we may have had some transgression at variance with the direction, but if we could in the next however long we're here -- certainly until 5:15 if something doesn't intervene in the meantime -- stick to the lottery fund estimates that we have.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, followed I think by the hon. leader of the third party.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we've heard from the goose and the gander, and now we may get on with estimates.

I would like to start by saying that I appreciate that the hon. minister is here. I know we're not supposed to talk about people who are not, but I would like to acknowledge that when it is her estimates, she is here and responds accordingly. I know it's rare that I do compliment the other side, but she's here, and I appreciate that.

I have been debating estimates since '93, and it still has me wondering a few things. So if the minister could clarify some of this. Maybe you did in the beginning, but that seems so long ago, I've forgotten. When you just allot money to another department, is it like a blank cheque? If they say, "Transportation can justify \$130 million," do you just say okay, or do they come to you with a plan and it's very specific? I would love to see that in here. I'd love to see specifically what is done. So when we talked about transportation estimates last night, that was the money from you, that you gave to transportation? That's good, because we only got 10 minutes on that last night. So in a way I can combine my questions on both transportation and lotteries, and it's relevant. [interjection] Thank you.

So the breakdown of the expenses comes to you, and you allot it from there, kind of. I'd appreciate you explaining that process. I would really appreciate knowing that. Because the lottery fund has often been called a slush fund.

3:50

MRS. NELSON: When you sit, I'll answer your questions.

MRS. SOETAERT: Are you going to go 20 minutes, hon. minister? Okay. But wait. To the chair, I don't want to lose my spot.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have two ministers standing at the same time. The only speaker that was recognized was Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. If you wish to ask questions and then sit down, that does provide a minister with . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: Will I lose my spot to someone else?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, since we're going on and on, yes.

MRS. SOETAERT: I would lose my spot then.

THE CHAIRMAN: But then you can get up again.
Okay, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, which may help the hon. member with her train of questions coming in. She asked about the funds going into the infrastructure program and in particular the transportation area. When Transportation put forward its request for this funding as a result of the infrastructure committee's report, they set the priorities. This fund was just utilized to service those requests. The ministry of transportation goes through a process through Treasury Board, et cetera, and then the request comes here. Alberta Gaming and Liquor do not set the priorities for other departments. The requests for funds come from the various ministries, the priorities are set there, and this is simply a transfer of funds over to service those particular requests that come from the various departments. In this case it's three departments: Transportation and Utilities, Municipal Affairs, and Health.

Those priorities, Mr. Chairman, with due respect, were debated last night, and the commitment from those ministers that stood up and talked to their estimates last night was that if there were questions from members opposite, they clearly would answer those questions, but today we're dealing with the lottery fund. So if we can focus on that.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Madam Minister, for the clarification. Then once it goes through Treasury, it's an automatic. Like, once the request has been made, you don't decide on that request? The request has been made through Treasury and those priorities made.

MRS. NELSON: Treasury Board.

MRS. SOETAERT: Treasury Board. Okay. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that clarification.

When the \$9 million for health and wellness initiatives went out -- and I have a feeling the Minister of Community Development was listing some of those. I would love to see a comprehensive breakdown of that \$9 million. I saw the minister flipping through a list, and she just said: you may ask about the Empress Theatre funding if you so desire. But I don't have that list, and I'm wondering if that's possible, because to me that would be a better explanation about where the lottery dollars are going. So I would like to see that if that's possible. If it's not, okay.

Lottery dollars are a fact of life in this province, and I don't think the way they're distributed is structured enough. I think it's too ad hoc. If one minister is a better lobbyist to the Treasury Board than another minister and can justify that maybe something else is needed in another department, then they can get those lottery dollars, because there's no structure for actually distributing lottery dollars, and I think that's why the perception is out there. As a result, I have the mayor of Spruce Grove saying: how come we don't get as much lottery dollars as Stony Plain? Then I'll say: we'll have a look; if a community qualifies for it, they get it. Right? I have never had anyone refused unless they legitimately didn't deserve a CFEP grant or a Wild Rose grant, something like that, truly, but the perception out there is that way. So the distribution of the lottery fund I think should be addressed. It should be more structured and clearer to the public. Those kinds of perceptions are out there, and you could have read it in the paper last week, if you read the Spruce Grove paper. I know we do get once a year, I think, a breakdown of every CFEP grant, et cetera, and I appreciate that.

Now, I will go to the municipal transportation infrastructure. If the minister gives it to the ministry of transportation, then I can ask questions about where that money went; correct?

MRS. NELSON: Of him.

MRS. SOETAERT: Of him. So I will do that.

The municipal transportation infrastructure. The timing of that transfer was rather interesting, because it was awfully close to a municipal election time. I think the pressure was on during election time, certainly for municipal councillors, to get some support from this government, because they certainly had to raise taxes. I think we saw quite a few changes in municipal government, and I think part of that may have been because of the downloading. So I am wondering if that \$130 million transfer wasn't a bit of political pressure. I'd like an explanation about that.

The regional co-ordination initiative. I'm hoping that's not a \$10 million blank cheque. Is that the Anthony Henday or meetings on it? [interjection] The actual construction of Anthony Henday. That \$10 million, then, was just on Anthony Henday. How much of it did it do then? Because regretfully I know that \$10 million doesn't go very far when we're talking construction of highways and overpasses. So I'd like a real breakdown of that. How did you decide to give that \$10 million to them? Did they come to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and say, "We need help"? I'd like to know the motivation behind that.

The constant upkeep of transportation infrastructure in this province I know is a phenomenal expense. I'm glad to see the \$130 million there. I am. I do question: how do you decide? Who gets the money? I'd like to see a provincial plan with priorities. As we work on that north/south trade corridor, I would hope that the most dangerous stretches of that road are done first rather than the best lobbyists'. Talking about overpasses on the Yellowhead would be one.

I'd like to know how and why it wasn't in these supplementary estimates that a portion of the funding go to the overpass at Campsite Road, which was promised for the year after the fifth meridian road and was postponed to the year 2007. Rumours around there are that it's political favours, and I said: no way; that wouldn't possibly happen. I'm sure that will be explained and justified by either the minister of transportation or maybe lotteries, since the money came from there. So I'd like that question addressed. Three municipalities got together, decided the areas that were unsafe and the overpasses that needed to be done before this minister had made that promise, and now that promise no longer holds. So when you talk about the slush fund and

lottery dollars, when those kinds of overpasses happen two miles down the road in another constituency instead of mine, it's no wonder people question the use of . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: Campsite is not yours.

MRS. SOETAERT: But it ties into Spruce Grove. Yes, sir. [interjection] Yes, it is. Stand up and speak there, Mr. Minister.

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, through the chair, if you'd address them to the chair. Hon. minister, if you wish to speak to your part of the lotteries estimates, the chair would be pleased to recognize you.

Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

4:00 Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you. Campsite will access Spruce Grove, which is in my riding, and the minister is well aware of that.

Within the transportation infrastructure grants I'd like some clarification about how the secondary highways get money. Is the cost-sharing arrangement on that changing? Are they different for different municipalities? Because there again we create the problem of question marks. And I'd like the definition of a resource road. What defines a resource road, and would a road like 794 qualify? I would also like to know: within the transportation infrastructure lottery dollars, how did the government come to give priorities to different roads and different projects? How did the transportation department come up with that and then the minister responsible for lotteries deemed it was a good enough request?

Health and wellness. I know I asked for a breakdown of those. Some of the conferences, especially for women and women's health and wellness across the province, have been funded out of different programs, and maybe the Minister of Community Development is aware of this and could send me a list. I would truly appreciate it, because if that's part of the \$9 million . . . [interjection] I'm not asking the minister to respond; honestly I'm not. Please don't. No offence.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Can I write you a note?

MRS. SOETAERT: I would really appreciate that. There have been several conferences, and I have seen that they are very powerful, I think especially -- I was going to say in rural Alberta but I guess across this province -- for women who are more isolated than others. These wellness conferences I think are great mental health days; do you know that? I'd very much support that. So if the \$9 million could be broken down, Madam Minister.

You said earlier that I could question whether the Empress Theatre deserved the money. I don't have the breakdown of that. I'm sure I would get it in a report sometime tabled in the Leg., but for these supplementary estimates I don't have that. But I would really appreciate that. Then I could ask questions all day. And we have all day.

I realize there are other people who want to ask questions, and I know the minister will respond. It is difficult to ask just lottery questions when it goes to transportation. I don't mean to upset you, but the reality is that if they go to transportation, those are the questions I think I have a legal right to ask, because they are dollars spent in transportation, though they come from the lottery fund.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. NELSON: Just to alleviate any further confusion. The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert raised some obvious questions as to the workings of the lottery fund. I'll refer her to page 11 of the supplementary estimates booklet, which clearly identifies the 10 areas as to where lottery dollars are allocated through the lottery fund.

MRS. SOETAERT: All of those are lottery dollars?

MRS. NELSON: All of those. It's called the lottery fund. If you read at the top of it, it's a summary of the payments.

Now, during the regular estimates last spring, this fund was debated in the Legislature, and it's debated separate and apart from the Department of Economic Development. I really think that hon. members should focus on the lottery fund and look at the things that are being supported by lottery dollars.

MRS. SOETAERT: Give us the list.

MRS. NELSON: Well, the list is here.

I then provided, Mr. Chairman, earlier in the year a listing of all the dollars, whether they were through Wild Rose funding or through CFEP funding, to everyone so that they would have accurate information as to what dollars actually are going into their community in all aspects, whether it's sports and rec or culture, et cetera, so people could clearly see that the dollars were flowing back to their communities, not necessarily through a CFEP grant but through the other elements where the lottery fund supports different programs. I thought it was very important.

The hon. member was quite right that people looked at the lottery dollars and believed that they were just going into the big black hole of government and being used in government. That's why our government accepted a recommendation from the gaming summit in Medicine Hat last spring. People wanted to be able to clearly identify where those dollars were being spent, what they were being used for, and how they were being spent so that they could go back to their own community and say: lottery dollars supported this, this, this, and this within my community or throughout the province for that matter. They wanted to clearly be able to identify it instead of the dollars going right into the general revenue fund.

We've accepted that recommendation, so this next year in the budget process the presentation will be somewhat different. It will be more extensive and will identify how those dollars coming in are being used, whether it's in transportation infrastructure or whether it's in some special health initiatives. But, again, the priorities will not be developed by the lotteries minister. They will be developed through a process between the various ministers and set by how they've developed priorities all along. It will not be the responsibility of the lotteries minister to set priorities in health initiatives or in transportation initiatives or in cultural initiatives or in any of the other initiatives. We have ministers who have the responsibility to do that. But clearly it will show a picture to Albertans as to how those dollars are being utilized, and I think that's an important step forward.

One of the other initiatives that I talked about in this House that will be coming up was to deal with another recommendation from the gaming summit that I think is a very important one as it pertains to lotteries. It involves, again, the Ministry of Community Development and the AADAC group to deal with the issue of addiction. We will in co-operation be establishing a research program that will provide us with some hard-core research so that we can make clear decisions going out. That's one element that I think is very important, and instead of second-guessing results,

let's have some hard-core research. That will again be filtered through the various departments, Community Development, and over to AADAC and through the gaming commission. That's another recommendation that came out of that summit.

The hon. member also alluded to the announcement on the infrastructure program being motivated at a time when it wasn't appropriate. In my opening remarks I clearly said that there had been the Premier's Task Force on Infrastructure that had been created as a result of the growth pressures that were being felt within the province. Surely it's not news to anyone that there are a lot of pressures from growth that we were not in position to deal with prior to this last year because of the financial situation of the province. We are now able to reinvest in some of these things and bring them up to date. The task force involved municipal representatives, and they identified some areas that needed immediate attention.

Now, we had an option. When their report came to us, we could have sat on that report until after the plebiscite issue was dealt with or we could have put it out when we did in July and said: let's get on with the work. So we were in a situation of: do we politically delay the progress at hand from going forward to deal with these immediate concerns on infrastructure? Or do we put it out and say: "Let's get on with it. We'll take the political hit from," I might say, "the opposite side"?

It was difficult because we were accused of trying to manipulate things, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has already said today. I take exception to that, because we went out as fast as we got that report and had the final allocations ready to go so that people could get on with the work. I know it's tempting when you're sitting on the opposition side to try and make a point by using statements and things like that, but that's not reality. We had to get that work going fast, or we would be a year behind on moving forward on those infrastructure programs.

4:10

In addition to that, the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert asked about the \$9 million, and if you'd like to pay attention, I'll tell you the answer. I also spoke about that in my opening comments. The \$9 million is going to a specific project. It's going to the Calgary laboratory services. This project is in co-operation with the Calgary regional health authority. As I said, these dollars will help the lab facilities streamline their process by putting better equipment in and by hiring additional people but focusing in one area and being located in one area. So it's a specific project for the Calgary lab services. It's a great project. It was much needed and will be partially funded, by the way, by the Calgary regional health authority. It's to deliver health services, and I think that's an important program.

What it exemplifies, once again, is that lottery dollars are being used for onetime funding aspects. Again, recommendations from the gaming summit were that lottery dollars could be used for charitable or not-for-profit government initiatives. Putting in specific programs such as a lab is a good utilization of those dollars.

I will take the hon. member back to last spring. We transferred \$130 million to the Health department to deal with the Y2K. That was in last year's budget. That helped the Health people not take program funding to deal with a computer problem. It was to deal with a problem that wasn't delivery of health services necessarily but had to do with computer services. The transfer of those funds I think was very appropriate, so that the Health ministry didn't have to use program delivery funding to deal with computer situations that are very important but could have been funded. That's a good use of lottery dollars.

I think if we focus on using lottery dollars in a good way that is supportive of our communities, charities, and our not-for-profit government initiatives, then I don't see how anyone could possibly have difficulty with those funds being supportive of the things in all of these issues that are listed here, in particular the three we're voting on in these estimates.

To answer your question on the Anthony Henday, that was a very important project. That actually was the first time communities came together and supported and said: that's the project we need support on. That's the \$10 million. I think the capital region deserves a round of applause because they finally came together on this project, and it will move forward. That's an important use of lottery dollars. That's where they should be used.

I don't want you to go off thinking that we just randomly pick projects, because we don't. The Anthony Henday project has been around an awfully long time, and it was a pressure point for this capital region that had to be dealt with. I'm sure that when you go back and send questions over to the minister of transportation, he will explain the other infrastructure programs, but that program is very important. There are lists of where the dollars are going throughout the province, and I'm sure that if you write a note to the minister of transportation, he will tell you where those dollars are going. All of them were examples of pressure points that needed to be dealt with now. They couldn't wait until after an October 19 date. They had to go forward so you could get in the ground. That was a choice we made. We knew we'd take a hit, particularly myself, but I was prepared to do that.

For next year's reporting I think you'll be very pleased to be able to see the visual of how these dollars are laid out. I'm very supportive of that process. We accepted that recommendation in principle because we were not able to deliver on last year's budget, but we will do it for this next year.

So we've accepted the recommendations from the gaming summit. We believe there has to be a clear explanation as to where these dollars go back into the community, and clearly we will continue to provide members of this Legislature with information on their own ridings, no matter if it comes from CFEP, Wild Rose, sports and rec, agricultural initiatives, all the way through the things that are funded through lotteries. If you need that information to take home, all you have to do is ask me for it, and we will pull it out from the system and put it together in a package for you. I'd like you to be able to go back and say, "These are lottery dollars coming back to our community, supporting these initiatives," and be able to tell the people how they're being spent.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll look for more questions.

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

MS BARRETT: Thank you. To the transportation minister, I'll be quite brief. The first question is to the minister of community health, who referred to something earlier about -- sorry; Community Development. You know, it's easy to mix up. You were Minister of Health for so long. I thought you were going to be in that portfolio for 30 years, you know, so I just now conveniently put the word "community" in front of there. The Minister of Community Development referred a little while ago to some particular diagnostic device in Calgary, the only one in Canada. Was that funded through this? No. Oh, okay. Well, maybe she would just let us know.

MRS. McCLELLAN: All of the other MRIs are.

MS BARRETT: Right. But was it an MRI to which she was referring?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes.

MS BARRETT: I see. Okay. Thanks very much.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'll write you a note.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Sure. Thank you.

Just a couple of observations in response particularly to the comments made by the Minister of Economic Development. Yes, I think the government has responded to the directives that it heard for the most part from the gaming summit, and yes, I am very much looking forward to the new accounting system that we'll be seeing in the spring, but I really must express concern when a department gets such a huge grant through what should be the gravy bowl, the money that doesn't go into regular programs ordinarily funded by our tax base.

Now, I can see why that happened. The Provincial Treasurer did a news conference a couple of days ago and did the quarterly update. What I could see in there is that the net income from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission is up \$22 million over the original projection of \$357 million. The funding from the lottery fund is up to \$768 million from the budget estimate of \$660 million, which already was well, well ahead of money that we were getting from the oil and gas sector. Up by \$108 million, so I can see where the money came from. That's for darn sure. I must say that even though I'm glad the Anthony Henday project is going ahead and is being funded, I really believe that funding to the basics, including roads, transportation upgrades, that kind of thing, overpasses, whatever, should not be coming from lottery funds.

MRS. NELSON: Why, Pam?

MS BARRETT: Why? I think the clear directive that was expressed from the lottery summit and from the public at large is that if you're going to be collecting these incredibly high volumes of money from lotteries -- and as you know, this province split 50-50 on that question during the municipal elections. I have my personal opinion. I've never stated it very strongly, but I do believe that getting money from people who shouldn't be gambling -- it's not the rich people out there gambling. It isn't.

4:20

Let me give you an example. I used to go out with a large group of people. We used to play electronic trivia. It was driven by a satellite system. Every once in a while we'd get fed up with a certain location, and we'd have to test out other locations to see if the food was any good and if we could get good-sized screens that were appropriate for our needs and stuff like that. Quite a sophisticated group. We'd have to check out other bars, and we were always saying: "Oh, we love this place. Why do they have those things beeping and blinking at us and yapping and spitting stuff out and chewing it?" That's a pretty superficial objection to them. I personally think that raising funds from gambling is not healthy, but as you know, I've never made a federal case out of it. It's just my opinion; all right?

Having said that, the reason I don't like the bread-and-butter stuff, like Transportation and Utilities getting -- the odd chunk here or there I really don't have any principled objection to, but that is a pretty big chunk of change, \$130 million, and I think it crosses the line over the message the lottery summit gave to the government. That's my objection. It's the size of it. An occasional injection is not a principled concern to me.

Just finally on the Calgary regional health authority. I under-

stand what the minister was getting at in terms of the construction and development of the centralized high-volume lab testing facility, but it sounded to me like more of the money was actually being used to co-ordinate the efforts. [interjection] Oh, okay. Because I would just make one observation, and that is that, as you know, the Edmonton area is now engaging in pretty serious discussions with the surrounding communities.

MRS. NELSON: Development and construction.

MS BARRETT: Okay. It was just pure development and construction. Because I would like to see the Edmonton area get some funding, if Calgary was, for the purposes of co-ordinating projects, because we are now looking very seriously, as you know, at a regional authority to provide some of our services under the auspices of one umbrella. I just wanted to make sure we're not being treated unfairly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to their comments.

MRS. NELSON: Just to answer a couple of questions from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. The dollars that are going to Calgary laboratory services are for the development and construction of the actual facility, and it is being partnered with the Calgary regional health authority. It's a large project, and it will provide services to all of the hospitals and the care facilities. All of them. It's a good facility that will not only be able to expand its services and provide better services but at the same time will save dollars in the long run because they're consolidating under one large facility. So it's a good project, and I think it's the type of program that should go forward.

The comment was made that dollars shouldn't be spent to deliver what I call core programs or ongoing funding programs. I agree with that, and our government does as well. That's why, when we accepted the recommendation from the gaming summit, the recommendation said that it could go to charitable or not-for-profit government initiatives. We carried that a little further, that ongoing programming should not be covered by lotteries, and by moving it out and clearly showing the picture in the other recommendation that we accepted, as to where lottery dollars go, you will see that this is not going into ongoing programming, because quite frankly you can't determine what those dollars are going to be. You don't want to have programs in Health or in Education or even for ongoing maintenance in Transportation relying upon lottery dollars, because those dollars can move. We believe that they shouldn't go into that kind of funding, that they should go into not-for-profit initiatives.

I'll give you an example of a very good facility in Edmonton, which I was very proud actually to attend the opening of, the Winspear music hall. That is the best acoustical facility in North America. It's a phenomenal one. Fifteen million dollars of lottery money went in there to help with the construction, and I didn't have any qualms about being there on the opening night and being proud to say that I was the lotteries minister that put those dollars there. That to me in a roundabout way maybe supported cultural development in the city of Edmonton, and it created the environment for it to occur. It's world renowned, that centre. I was very pleased to be able to accommodate \$15 million of lottery funds to go into that initiative. It's a not-for-profit program that benefits the entire province, but it does in fact benefit Edmonton more so than anywhere. I was very proud of that project, and I don't have any qualms about putting dollars there and standing up there and having a sign that says that the lotteries supported it

MS BARRETT: Roads are something that we do all the time.

MRS. NELSON: The hon. member is talking about roads. I have to take you back. I have a note from an hon. member -- whoever this note came from, I can't read the writing on it -- saying that the huge cutbacks have hurt us, so we're playing catch-up. You bet that has, but when you're in a province that was sitting in a deficit position like we were, when you have to put a fiscal house in order, things get behind. The choices we made to put this fiscal house in order has placed Alberta in the best position of any jurisdiction in North America. If you haven't been paying attention, the economy worldwide has been in a bit of a flux and a turmoil to say the least. Alberta is the best positioned in all of Canada and North America to be able to weather the storm, mainly because of the moves that were supported by Albertans that were taken to put the fiscal framework in place in this province. If we hadn't gone that route, we'd be in terrible trouble. Now we're coming out of that. Our Treasurer has been reporting on the fiscal framework and how we've made progress on it. We're reaching a point where we're almost ready to pay off what I call the second mortgage, which is the net debt.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

As we move up, we have to recognize that some things fell behind. Infrastructure was one of them. It was identified at the Growth Summit we held a year ago in the fall as one of the key elements for economic development and prosperity. When the task force went out and identified things, there were some critical things that were there that had to be brought up fast. So that's why we put the onetime funding through that program, to try to catch up, to make up for some of those things that couldn't be dealt with in the years when we were bringing things into alignment and getting rid of a deficit.

Now we've been able to put programs in place and work with our communities to deal with those pressure points, because all of a sudden Alberta took off. For years Alberta was looking at a downturn in growth, but we've been leading the nations for the last few years, and there are pressures with that growth that municipalities can't deal with on their own. We heard earlier today about municipalities struggling. Yes, they've had to. This is a program that is helping them get ahead. When you have cities like Calgary, which has a 27 percent growth rate occurring, they have pressures. It's a great scenario to have, growth, but it's got lots of pressures. That's what this program was for, a onetime infusion in there to help these communities get caught up. Clearly it was supported by our mayors and our municipal bodies as well as the infrastructure program and the infrastructure committee, and I'm very supportive of it.

I'm going to put my other hat on, as Minister of Economic Development. It was absolutely needed. You cannot have us going out and promoting the development of products and telling people that this is the place to do business, the place to invest, the place to live and then not have the infrastructure to support it. You've got to be there, and that's why the Department of Transportation and Utilities works very closely with the Department of Economic Development. That fits into this.

So I'm very pleased with this program, and I'm sure that if hon. members write to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, he will identify where those dollars are going on a specific basis. Thank you.

4:30

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just three points I'm going to raise, because I'm sure there are others that want to. I see the Member for Edmonton-Calder is now here. I'll keep it very, very short to allow others to speak.

Just three points I want to raise. First of all, I want to point out that the ministers tend to be very, very sensitive to any criticism. As opposition our role isn't to say what a great government we have over there, the good job the government thinks they're doing. Our job is to ask questions and poke on behalf of Albertans, and we'll continue to do it. It may upset some of the members, but so be it. That's what we're opposition for.

Secondly, the two ministers involved like to promote the good that the money does, and none of us have argued that these programs aren't worth while. The infrastructure of \$130 million, certainly it's good. No one is arguing those points. The dollars that the Minister of Community Development referred to going to the arts, going towards wellness, going here and going there, those are great programs. However, the government fails to look at the source of those revenues and the harm that is being caused in raising those dollars. In other words, you have the good and you have the bad, and many Albertans are starting to question: does the bad outweigh the good? Years from now people will look back and say: all those gambling dollars, certainly they did some good, but look at the harm they've caused as we see addiction continue to grow and the harm that addiction is causing the families in this province. So the government has to recognize that along with the good comes some bad, and when you want to speak about the good things these dollars do, remember that there's another side to that coin.

Thirdly and the last point I'll raise, the minister referred specifically to the \$15 million for the Winspear that came from lottery funds. I can remember prior to the days of lottery funds, when I was on the Edmonton city council, the then Premier, Peter Lougheed, stepping in and giving what was then called the Edmonton Convention Centre \$20 million to assist it. A great facility. No lottery dollars there to dip into. They still gave it. Is the government trying to tell us that if it were not for lottery dollars, all these things would not be happening? That none of them would be happening, that we wouldn't see wellness in this province? We wouldn't see infrastructure; we wouldn't see the Anthony Henday; we'd see none of this stuff? Prior to these dollars coming from lottery funds, we had programs like the community recreation/cultural grant program that was well over 20 bucks per capita. The clock ticked back then just like it's ticking now. So when you represent your side of the coin, which I understand you're going to do as government just as we do as opposition, you tend to focus on the one side and we tend to focus on the other side. That's government. That's the way it is, and that's the way it's going to continue to be.

On that note I want to conclude and let my good colleague from Edmonton-Manning continue.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity of sharing in the discussion here today, and with your permission I'll try and answer some of the questions that were asked last night as well.

First of all, I just want to share how fortunate we really are.

Indeed, with the growth that's been identified and the growth that's on the drawing board, there's something like 50 billion dollars' worth of projects that have been identified. This puts tremendous pressure on infrastructure. This was the reason there was an additional \$130 million infused from the lottery funds, to allow for that tremendous growth and allow a onetime funding to accommodate that tremendous need.

The problem that we face with that growth is that the whole province is doing well. We don't have any one particular region that's really functioning much better than any other region. So ultimately the pressures are across the province, north, south, east, west, and these pressures have to be addressed. We've done that with the reallocation from lottery of \$130 million basically to accommodate growth. The formulas that were put in place acknowledged growth and recognized growth, and that was part of every formula that was put in place to deal with the issues of growth.

Have said that, the \$130 million was broken down into the Calgary/Edmonton region. The basic capital was \$24 million and the transit capital was \$29 million, for a total of \$53 million, or 41 percent of the total amount. Other cities, towns, and villages received basic capital of \$4 million, transit capital of \$1 million, streets improvement of \$15 million, for a total of \$20 million, or 15 percent. The rural municipalities received for secondary highways an infusion of \$10 million. The access roads to Métis settlements was \$2 million, and rural transportation received an additional \$20 million, for a total of \$32 million, or 25 percent. The north/south corridor, which benefits all Albertans, is receiving an additional \$25 million, or 19 percent, for a total of \$130 million.

There have been many questions asked regarding the money that's been basically granted as basic capital grants to Calgary and to Edmonton. I'd like to share with you, Madam Chairman, that between 1990 and 1997 the total for Edmonton was \$103.3 million and for Calgary was \$106.5 million, relatively the same amount for the two cities. So there really wasn't a discrepancy between Edmonton and Calgary as far as primary highway funding is concerned from 1990 to 1997. They're very, very similar.

Questions were asked regarding funding for Calgary and funding for Edmonton as far as the basic transit capital grant. Calgary is receiving \$22,222,304, for a total of \$45,181,805, and the Edmonton region is receiving a total of \$32,222,021 for the transit funding. Now, the formula that was used for the public transit funding was that 50 percent of the funding was based on the '97 population, using the statistics that were provided by the communities, and 50 percent of the funding was based on growth indicators: population, equalized assessment growth, and ridership growth. Those were the three factors that were used to indicate what the funding would be as far as transit was concerned.

As far as the north/south corridor is concerned, out of this \$130 million pot Calgary is receiving \$8,100,000 and Edmonton is receiving \$16,900,000 for the work to be done on the north/south corridor within the cities. The city of Lethbridge is receiving an additional \$1,391,059. The city of Red Deer is receiving an additional \$1,156,043. The city of Medicine Hat is receiving an additional \$1,065,763. Fort McMurray is receiving an additional \$426,706. Grande Prairie is receiving \$671,785. Airdrie is receiving \$387,596. Camrose is receiving \$153,898, Lloydminster an additional \$220,815, and Wetaskiwin is receiving 122,509 additional dollars from this lottery funding.

So indeed the formula that is used is one that's recognizing growth, and ultimately that was the purpose of this whole process.

As far as the questions last night. The north/south corridor, \$25 million. Where is it going? Does it include the Anthony

Henday funding? No, it doesn't include the Anthony Henday, and I've just pointed out the breakup of the \$25 million.

Cost sharing with rural municipalities: it will be the regular cost-sharing formulas that are used, and that's how the infused money will be spread.

Results from highway 794: we haven't received those results. They were done by the municipality, and to date we have not received those results. I expect they will be here shortly.

The overpass at Campsite Road: what was done? Because the priority was put on the north/south corridor -- and we've met with the mayor of Spruce Grove, and he is well aware of the process that has taken place. Because of the huge cost involved in interchanges, the funding has been placed on construction of the road itself. That's the number one priority because that's where the greatest pressure is, to complete the road, and then we will be looking at building the overpasses, at the tail end of the program rather than at the front end of the program.

How much is going to Métis settlements? Two million is going to Métis settlements. And how is that decided? The Métis themselves decide on the priorities. They have developed a priority list, and that's how it's being prioritized.

Which cities receive money? All the cities receive money, and I've gone through the list of which cities are receiving money. How is the distribution for the cities? I've just gone through that.

How are the priorities for the street assistance program? Because we had a backlog and the applications went back to December of 1996 as far as dealing with applications from the towns and villages was concerned -- we obviously were well behind -- what we've done is simply elevated the priorities, and we'll be able to deal with that many more applications.

4:40

MR. WICKMAN: What about the LRT to Southgate?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The LRT? As I mentioned, the money, the allocation -- I've just talked about that.

MR. WICKMAN: But to Southgate.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, that's not our decision. That's the city's decision. We don't get into dictating where the moneys . . . [interjection] Well, there is extra money. We've just allocated extra money. We don't make those decisions. That's up to the city council.

So indeed this has been money that is well recognized. This is money that's being well used. It's money that's defined to work with Alberta, because indeed without proper infrastructure your economy can't flourish. We recognize that, and I commend the Premier for his recognition. I commend the chairman of AAMD and C, the chairman of AUMA, the mayor of Calgary, the mayor of Edmonton, plus three, four, five colleagues that were on the committee. Everyone came to unanimous agreement on this, not only the process but the formulas and how this money should be distributed. It was a good feeling to have the consensus. I compliment everyone that was involved, because indeed it is a challenge to distribute money at any time. I think in this particular case everyone came away a winner. The province is a winner, and certainly we want to recognize the positive contribution that lotteries have made to the development of our infrastructure, to the development of our economy, and to the welfare of our people, because with the better infrastructure of course comes better safety, a better economy, and certainly a better future for this province.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'd just like to make a few statements on this. It comes from going to the summits on gaming, one being the one in Edmonton at the U of A and the other one in Medicine Hat, which was recognized by the government. One of the main things that came out of that was the fact that people there wanted to see money coming from lottery funds into a fund by itself, not back into the general revenue, which could be just the Treasurer's right arm putting money in or buying votes in a certain part of the province.

I for one have spent 23 years in the volunteer system, and I do know that working bingos and working casinos and everything else was very important for all the groups that I was involved with. The main part of it is that there aren't those dollars out there anymore, as VLTs are taking more of the money away because they're too accessible in the local pubs. The bingos are down. The dollars are not coming in for your local soccer team, hockey team, and whatever.

But the main thing that I want to bring out -- and we had figures put in front of us from the minister of transportation. He talks about money going back into areas, but the people realize here that in the city of Calgary there was \$56 million that was not there for the last five years, which actually you could call the hidden deficit to that city. For other places like the town of Drumheller \$135,000 is less dollars they've got today than what they had before. So if there is more money going in right now through lottery, if it is up above and it is out of a lottery fund, then I recommend that that's the way it keeps going.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just a moment, hon. member.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, why don't you go around and take a seat beside the hon. minister.

MR. GIBBONS: As people argue about the city of Edmonton and we look right now at how the city of Edmonton is \$38 million short on this year's budget and there's going to be a tax increase, over the last five years there was a hidden deficit of \$58,581,000 put on to Edmonton. With those kinds of dollars, they wouldn't be in debt. They have done their homework. They have tightened their belts.

MR. WICKMAN: Is that counting the money the VLTs take out of the city of Edmonton? That's extra?

MR. GIBBONS: No, that doesn't even count the dollars the VLTs take out.

MR. WICKMAN: Then you're talking over \$100 million.

MR. GIBBONS: Oh, easily.

Well, the fact is, I have been putting out information throughout the province and talking to local municipal councillors as well as city councillors, everything. I've been stressing that what this government should be doing under municipal, under transportation, under education, everything, is looking at sitting down and producing a three-year plan, producing a partnership between the local municipalities and the government so you can actually build something, so you can plan for the future.

Since 1989, in graphs that we've done, from other than VLTs the money has been consistent, the money coming in and the money going out. But in 1993-94, when the VLTs were intro-

duced, we're up to a massive amount of dollars. With these kinds of dollars and the fact that the VLTs aren't going to be removed in Edmonton and Calgary and other parts of the province, then sit down and make a plan. Plan it out so that the lottery dollars are going to help citizens of Alberta and everybody gets treated under a plan. Until then, people are going to keep thinking and showing distrust of the way the government is actually doing it.

So I go back to the figures that the minister of transportation says. I've done a complete graph of the whole province of the lack of dollars that all the towns, cities, and municipalities have got over the last five years. I do have that for anybody that would like to take a look at it.

Other than that, thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, thank you, Madam. Chairman. I rise to speak on the allocation of these funds, and first I have to deal with the moral question of how the funds were raised and ask simply this. The funds are -- correct me if I'm wrong -- 100 million and some odd dollars over what was projected in the last budget to now, well over what's projected. Where in the estimates here is the commensurate amount of money set aside to deal with the addiction problem? It's simply not here. In early '95, as I recall, that was a commitment by the minister that was in charge at the time, who said that one of the things that would be happening in this Legislature was that as the revenues increased, it was natural that there would be increases in addiction -- it was admitted at that time -- and there would be commensurate dollars for it. Quite frankly, we haven't seen any of that. They're not here, and this government doesn't seem to be overly concerned about those that find themselves addicted. I think studies say that 17 persons are adversely affected in a major way because of that addiction, whether it be employers, employees, or fellow workers, but mostly the families.

I should move on to the program for the dissemination of these funds. Now, when you have an addition of this kind of money to a government, there should be some kind of an overall plan as to where, not sort of like feed the chickens, as it were, and just dip into the bucket and spread it out willy-nilly, however it manages to arrive. I point in particular to the one that really, really bothers me, Transportation and Utilities. You know, there's a 25 percent increase in the expenditure for this year. There are words like "backlog" in it. That's in the document: to cover off a "backlog." Well, that should say something to somebody. This government is so penny-wise and pound-foolish that it has forgotten totally and completely about the difficulties in all of those infrastructure areas. Absolutely forgot about it, said it doesn't exist, so we'll catch up to that deficit later. In the interim we'll feel good. We'll feel so good about paying down this debt. There is no better record than paying it down. There is no higher rating that this government can get than for paying down debt. You can't get any better than that. That's admirable; accept that. Don't ever let this government think it's good management that did it. The facts are that we stand over one of the biggest resources in the world. Here it is. It's really nice. We stand here on it. So let us not forget that that is the reason for it, and we have the ability, always, to pay it back. [interjections]

I wish I could hear these interjections. I'm missing them. The Minister of Economic Development is saying something, and I can't hear.

4:50

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Calder, through the chair, please.

MR. WHITE: Through the chair. Well, it would be nice if I could hear it. If they're going to say something, it would be nice if they could interject loud enough so I could hear it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. WHITE: Question? Now, that's rather rude of you, I'm thinking. Coming from that quarter, it's strange too.

I'm sorry, Madam Chairman. You're quite correct.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's 4:50 on Thursday night, but let's continue the debate through the chair, please.

MR. WHITE: Yes, I'm sorry. I will do that.

Well, the fact of the matter is that there's a backlog of programs in the transportation and utilities area throughout this province. That is the infrastructure in which the economics of this . . . [interjections] Speaking is darn difficult here. You think you have trouble with her. I'm doing the best I can with distractions over here.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, your best is not quite good enough, so let's just . . .

MR. WHITE: I come from a family of four girls, and this is like the supper table back in the old days.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On the estimates, please.

MR. WHITE: On the estimates, yeah. The estimates are much more sane than that was, I can tell you.

The backlog, it is clear, is an admission, in the last line of the Transportation and Utilities part. That says something, and it's not being dealt with. When it is being dealt with, \$150 million is a very, very good start. So it's a shame that -- well, I can't say that, but I'd compliment him on how the money was disseminated. It was disseminated on a very, very rational basis, particularly in dealing with the Métis settlements. I know it's very difficult to deal with their jealousies amongst themselves, yet they have found, the minister has found a way for them to prioritize their services, which is wonderful except that it's only about a quarter of the way there. If you've been to any of these settlements lately or you've been to any municipality lately, if you ask them what their list of priorities is in the transportation area of their budget, they have an endless list. They can take you and show you where they have money to spend, and it is critical that they spend this money as soon as possible. I correct myself. It's actually investing, because if you allow the rust on the old Ford to get so bad, it's an entire paint job. You can't just sort of patch it up, and therein lies the problem. This is not paying nearly enough attention to the infrastructure of this province, and this ad hockery, a 25 percent increase in that one budget alone, is absolutely appalling. This shows a complete lack of planning.

You have to ask yourself the question: why? Why would one have a \$400 million cushion in a budget to start off a year, get partway through the year and say: ah, not only do we have that \$400 million, but the increase in the surplus is rising, even when

we have almost \$10-a-barrel oil. I mean, the predictions of these people are just absolutely appalling. I can't think of another entity that could be so in error in the prediction of expenditures and income as to find themselves in this position. If you are going to find yourself in this position, you plan as best you can. You can't be perfect -- that's not the intent -- but what you do try to do is to predict as closely as possible where you intend to be.

We have been consistent every year since this government took the reins of power, consistent in our bad judgment in this Legislature in predicting what is going to be the income. And then ad hockery at its worst, halfway through the year saying that we're going to put some money down here and here and here. Now, that does not lead to any confidence, in anyone who has to deal with this government, to know where to expect the expenditures to be.

Now, in Transportation and Utilities, dealing with municipalities, all those expenditures are long-term expenditures. They're well planned. It is not difficult to get a priority list from virtually every small town and village in this province to find out where their needs are and evaluate their needs on a pretty universal scale. It's simple engineering. It's not rocket science for sure. Say to them: "Look; if we are to invest funds here, how would you do it?" And it's not spend, spend, spend, as the minister across the way would like to say. This is invest, invest, invest in the future of the province of Alberta: in the land, in the infrastructure, those things, and services that build, the fundamental building blocks of economic development. It's not providing funds here and funds there for risk capital. No. Let the private sector do that. This government I believe is doing its best to do just that.

Madam Chairman, I gather that there's some reason to move on to some other business. I'll allow others to speak on these estimates, as I've had ample time to say my piece, and I've listened to all the other debate. Thank you for the time.

Agreed to:

Health and Wellness Initiatives	\$9,000,000
Municipal Transportation Infrastructure	\$130,000,000
Regional Co-ordination Initiative	\$10,000,000
Total Lottery Fund Payments	\$149,000,000

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

The Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I move the committee do now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'd call the Assembly to order.

MRS. GORDON: The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates for the lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Health and wellness initiatives, \$9 million; municipal transportation infrastructure, \$130 million; regional co-ordination initiative, \$10 million; total lottery fund payments, \$149 million.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

5:00

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Bills.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there unanimous consent from the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Bills?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? You have your unanimous consent.

head: Introduction of Bills

(reversion)

Bill 49

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1998 (No. 3)

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 49, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1998 (No. 3). This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 49 read a first time]

[At 5:03 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]