

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, December 2, 1998 1:30 p.m.**

Date: 98/12/02

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

From our forests and parklands to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land.

From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in response to Motion for a Return 89 I'm tabling summaries of memoranda of understanding and amended schedules of memoranda of understanding between the government and the AI-Pac joint venture and the joint venture partners for the period from January 1, 1989, to January 6, 1998. These set out the obligations and commitments of the government and the joint venture and joint venture partners to construct and operate a kraft pulp mill and paper mill.

I'm also tabling in response to Order for a Return 88 a breakdown of the \$1.196 million in expenditures contained under vote 3.1.4, project management/transition, department of Treasury, from '95-96 public accounts, volume 2, page 113. That provides a breakdown of expenditures on consulting services and an identification of each fee-for-service contractor and the nature of the project engaged in by fee-for-service contract.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings. First, I would like to table copies of excerpts from the school grants manuals from the years 1986, 1988, and 1989 showing that no matter what members opposite say, the per student grants for children in private schools increased during the time the Leader of the Opposition was Education minister.

My second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the speech I made yesterday morning at the Alberta School Boards Association.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table four copies of the government of Alberta, city of Edmonton, and community joint task force report on the homeless in Edmonton entitled Proposal to Meet Immediate Priority Inner-City Shelter Needs for Single Adults in Edmonton. I'm pleased to be co-chairing this task force with Councillor Jim Taylor and to advise that this community-based task force has addressed the emergency of the situation for the short term and will continue to work toward long-term solutions through a subsequent report, which will be due out in April or May of next year.

I'll conclude by thanking the Minister of Family and Social Services, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the city of Edmonton, with the community, for their immediate response of \$177,000 to help the homeless. Thank you.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a copy of a letter that was sent to all MLAs from the Free the Children group in Fort McMurray, Alberta, wherein it states that in May of this year the MLA for Fort McMurray "signed an agreement to work with Free the Children to ensure that the Government of Alberta sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling with the appropriate number of copies, which I understand is now five, to leave with the Assembly. It's in response to a question put by the Treasurer to me in debate just the other night when he rose under *Beauchesne* to ask me a question during debate, and I said that I would respond by providing the information. This is the detail of the number of inquiries that have come into my constituency office regarding Alberta Treasury, including Treasury Branch concerns, supplementary estimates, and other Treasury matters.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table copies of opinions expressed by individuals in my constituency who are opposed to Bill 219. There are six people who have registered with me so far, and I am pleased to present their feelings to the Assembly.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four documents to table today: the three-year business plan of the Alberta Boilers Safety Association, the Alberta Propane Vehicle Administration Organization 1997 annual report, the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta three-year business plan, 1998-99 to 2000-2001, the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta 1997 annual report.

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

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table five copies of a draft document prepared by Alberta Health, HIV in Alberta, 1998-2001: Alberta Health's Strategy, a draft for discussion. Apparently it's just discussion so far.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, did you have a tabling?

MR. MacDONALD: No, Mr. Speaker. I have no tabling today.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, placed on your desk are two items that may be of interest to Members of the Legislative Assembly. The first is a new lapel pin designed specifically for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. We all know that the cattle industry and ranching are a mainstay of our province's economy and that cowboys and rodeos are a key part of our western heritage. In recognition that 1998 is the Year of the Cowboy, I'm pleased to announce that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta now

has its own duly registered brand. We're the only Legislative Assembly to have one.

If you'll look at the pin, you'll see the symbol "rafter AB." The rafter represents the roof of this Chamber, and AB is the abbreviation for Alberta. I'd like to remind you as well that this is a working brand. This means that if the Assembly decides to graze cattle on the grounds south of this building or water them in the pools to the north, we've gotta brand 'em on the right shoulder.

It may also be in the future that we will have to call on a committee of the Legislative Assembly to deal with the annual maintenance of such a herd, and in the event that there are certain delicate surgical procedures that would be required, I'd hope all members would agree that we should call on the Minister of Energy and have the committee include the minister of agriculture and perhaps the minister of science, research, and information technology accompanied by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East and the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to conduct this very humane and delicate procedure.

The second is information announcing a new venture, Mr. Speaker's Alberta Youth Parliament, which is a joint venture of the Legislative Assembly and the Alberta-Northwest Territories Command of the Royal Canadian Legion. The Youth Parliament will involve 83 grade 10 students, one from each constituency, as well as 12 teachers from across the province. With your support the participants will have an experience of parliamentary democracy that should ultimately make Alberta an even more vibrant democracy than it already is. The Alberta-Northwest Territories Command of the Royal Canadian Legion are prepared to fund this project to a maximum amount of \$25,000, and April 15 and 16, 1999, are the dates.

I also wish to advise that our Clerk, Dr. David McNeil, has been invited to participate in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Expert Group on Innovative Training Methods for Parliamentarians in the 140 jurisdictions in the world that our system of parliament prevails in. This is a great honour for Dr. McNeil and for this Legislature.

head: Introduction of Guests

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly two dedicated, very super individuals who are responsible for overseeing the transfer of delivery of services to adults with developmental disabilities from the provincial government to a provincial board. Their mission is to integrate these adults into community life. Would Bert Sparrow, chair of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board and a constituent of mine from Calgary-West, and Norm McLeod, CEO of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board, please rise and receive a hearty welcome from this Assembly.

1:40

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

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two special guests to introduce today. First of all a grade 6 student from Newton school who is job shadowing me today: her name is Dona Nham. I can assure you the best part of her day was when I told her that I had to go to three Christmas parties. That really excited her. She's seated in the public gallery. I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Secondly, I'd like to introduce to members of the Assembly Robert Smith, who is the education and outreach officer for the

AIDS Network of Edmonton. I'd ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 48 visitors from the Duggan elementary school in the heart of Edmonton-Rutherford, 43 grade 6 students with five adults. Four teachers accompany the group, Mrs. MacLaren, Mrs. Fahlman, Miss Sabo, Miss Paches, and one parent helper, Mrs. Hsu. They're seated in the public gallery. If those 48 special visitors would rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and to members of the Legislature two very special friends, constituents, and, more importantly, community workers. I'd ask Mrs. Rianne Edwards-Switzer, who is the director of the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre, and Mrs. Judy Unterschultz, who is the executive director of the same centre, to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that at this time I introduce three guests through you and to members of the Assembly. One is a constituent of mine, Leo Winter. Along with him are two guests from Wales, Bill Hanks and Dave Little. They're in the members' gallery. I would like them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council I'd like to introduce the councillors from the Northern Alberta Development Council: Alvin Billings from High Prairie, Don Erno from Sexsmith, Gerald McIvor from Whitecourt, Greg Lindsay from Fort McMurray, Doug Sklar from Athabasca, and Don Wieban from Fairview. Floyd Thompson could not attend. He had a meeting here today with some MLAs. I'd like them to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and introduce an elementary class from my constituency. We have 17 students from Parkallen elementary school in the members' gallery this afternoon. They are accompanied by teacher Mr. Joseph Ewasiw and parent Silvia Caleanu. May they rise please and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a very good friend of mine, probably well known to a lot of people here, Mr. Peter Bidlock, who's also on the Capital regional health authority. I'd ask him to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly four gentlemen who are in the members' gallery today: Mike Duff, who is the president and CEO of the Design Group and a recent 1998 Fraser Milner pinnacle award winner. He is accompanied by associates Blair Dunlop, who is the Edmonton general manager of Bantrel Inc.; Wayne Sartore, who is the vice-president of development and services of Enbridge, and Jim Hutton, senior partner, Colt Engineering Corporation. I would ask all four gentlemen to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon on behalf of the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two very, very special people in his life: his granddaughter from Calgary, MacKenzie Symons; and his wife, Janis Marz, from Three Hills. Would MacKenzie and Jan please rise to accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Premier. Municipalities, school boards, and regional health authorities are looking for stable and predictable funding arrangements, not the gambling-based, pressure-point, crisis-induced, patchwork funding championed by this government. My question is: why would this provincial government with a multimillion dollar surplus create a deficit in municipalities of nearly \$400 million over the last five years?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we haven't created the deficit. Yes, we have challenged municipalities and school boards and regional health authorities to find those new and better and more effective and more efficient ways of doing things. Many of these jurisdictions have risen to the cause, and some of them are having more difficulty than others, as pointed out yesterday and the day previous, relative to some of the deficits being faced by some school boards, not all school boards.

Some municipalities are in better shape than other municipalities, Mr. Speaker. With respect to municipalities we recognize that there were indeed some pressure points that had to be addressed, particularly in the city of Calgary, to a lesser degree in the capital region -- but it could become a more serious problem as economic development occurs here -- and throughout the rural areas. Yes, we did allocate this year out of lottery funds onetime funding only to address severe pressure points, something to the tune of \$130 million.

Mr. Speaker, we have committed over the next three years to municipalities for infrastructure \$150 million for each of the three years, and for that, I can tell you, the municipalities are very grateful.

MRS. MacBETH: Not many of them are talking tax cuts.

Why would this provincial government with multimillion dollar surpluses force deficits on 40 percent of our school boards?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the answer is the same. We did not force deficits on school boards. As pointed out, we have committed significant dollars to various classroom activities. [interjection] This is not being a spin doctor; this is a fact. We have provided funds to hire 500 frontline intern teachers to become involved in the early intervention program as it relates to early literacy to make sure kids can read by the time they reach grade 3. We have committed additional dollars to special-needs education, to English as a Second Language. We've restored funding to ECS. We have committed more dollars to transportation problems relative to sparsity and distance. There has been a significant reinvestment in education.

I'd remind the opposition that out of the Growth Summit education in all its forms -- diaper through kindergarten, kindergarten through grade 12, postsecondary education and lifelong learning, job retraining, skills upgrading -- should be the number one priority, and we have adopted education in all its components as our number one priority.

1:50

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, finally: why would this provincial government with multimillion dollar surpluses force deficits on regional health authorities in Calgary, in the Capital region, in Lakeland, and Northern Lights?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, we have not forced deficits on anyone. We have made a concerted effort to address pressure points in health. I would remind the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition that we have reinvested \$700 million in health care, Canadian dollars or dollarettes or little dollars but significant dollars anyway, very significant dollars, to alleviate pressure points. The health summit, which will be convened early next year, is to identify and address precisely the issue of how much is enough and where these dollars should be directed.

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

West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From time to time cases arise concerning rumoured instances of lapses in accepted standards of public administration . . . which cannot be dealt with by ordinary civil or criminal processes but which require investigation to allay public anxiety.

This quote was taken from the 1978 Alberta public inquiry of Royal American Shows and captures government's responsibility to give Albertans all the facts about its role in the Alberta Treasury Branch refinancing of West Edmonton Mall and serves as a precedent for a public inquiry proceeding simultaneously with civil and criminal actions. My questions are for the Premier. Albertans want to know why the government scuttled a private-sector solution between the Alberta Treasury Branches and Gentra in favour of a made-in-Alberta solution that put 418 million taxpayer dollars at risk.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, this goes to the heart of what the Auditor General is now investigating. I've turned over to the Auditor General all the information I have on this particular issue, and I'm prepared to be patient and wait for his report.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that the government apparently believes that the \$418 million solution was the right choice, why was this government afraid to fully disclose its involvement in this deal to Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not afraid to fully disclose our involvement in this deal. As a matter of fact, we have asked an officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General, to do an examination which will be reported to the public.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe that this matter should go to public inquiry. Therefore, is there anything else the Premier would like to put on the record before Albertans about this government's role in the Alberta Treasury Branch's refinancing of West Edmonton Mall?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have submitted a statutory declaration to the Auditor General. He will be examining that declaration, I believe, along with a number of other declarations that have been submitted by certain individuals. As a result of that and other material turned over to the Auditor General, he will obviously draw some conclusions. I'm willing to wait to see what the Auditor General has to say about this issue, and I would advise the Liberal opposition to be patient. He will come out with his report.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Three Sisters Resorts Inc.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. Why has Three Sisters Resorts been talking about attracting an internationally recognized private medical clinic to its development project in Canmore?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea. Honestly, I have no idea. Now, if the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has some information relative to this issue, perhaps he can provide me with that information, and I'll do my best to check it down.

MR. DICKSON: My supplementary question, again to the Premier, would be this: what discussions has this government had with Three Sisters Resorts about new legislation that would welcome private medical clinics to the province of Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have had no discussions, but I would put my question to the hon. member this way, much the same as the leader of the Liberal opposition put it to me: is there anything else that he knows that he's not telling us that he would like to send to us?

MR. DICKSON: My final question to the Premier is this: will the Premier confirm that his blue-ribbon panel is a device to allow Three Sisters Resorts to slip past the, quote, political hurdles mentioned in the document filed by that company with the Alberta Securities Commission?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, he sends me over a piece of paper now. You know, it just goes to show you where these people are coming from. I haven't had time to read this, but I'll examine this document and take it under notice.

I have no knowledge nor have I had any discussions with Three Sisters relative to the issue he's talking about. Whether the Minister of Health has had those discussions, I don't know, but I'll ask him to respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, no, I have had no such discussions nor am I aware of the particular item the member raises.

However, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to point out that the Canmore hospital and the Mineral Springs hospital, which serve the Banff corridor rather well, in addition to taking care of Albertans, provide services to visitors from all parts of the world, quite frankly, that come there as tourists, and they do a fine job of it. Incidentally this business is very important to maintaining a wide range of services in that particular area of the province, and it's well served.

Thank you.

HIV/AIDS

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta has been without a provincial AIDS strategy now for two years. According to the three-year draft strategy that I tabled earlier, HIV infection rates are again on the rise in Alberta particularly amongst injection drug users, youth, and aboriginal people. Meanwhile, funding for community service organizations that work on AIDS prevention has been frozen since 1993, and what that means is that funding that once supported four organizations is now supposed to support 12. My question to the Premier is: how can he justify his government making no provision for increased funding of community organizations that work on AIDS prevention at a time when HIV is affecting a growing and more diverse population of Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure if that indeed is the case. The person who obviously has the details is the hon. Minister of Health, and I'll have him respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this goes down, and I think credit should be given to the previous minister and Alberta Health at that time. In Alberta we committed a very significant amount of money to an overall AIDS strategy for Alberta, and that strategy has within it several different programs which do deal with the target populations that the member is referring to.

The document evidently tabled earlier this afternoon is, yes, a document where we are looking at assessing and looking forward in terms of what needs to be changed in the future with respect to HIV treatment and prevention in this particular province, but the commitment we've made in this particular area has been there for a number of years, is quite significant, and I think compares well with other provinces.

2:00

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, instead of defending the stagnant funding since 1993, will the Premier, on the day after international AIDS day, when all the organizations were expecting an announcement, commit to significantly increasing funding for community AIDS service organizations so that they can respond to the HIV epidemic amongst injection drug users, youth, and aboriginals?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, this all relates to the business planning and the budget planning process. I don't know precisely what the hon. Minister of Health has planned for this particular situation, but again I'll have him respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as is well established with this government, we have an overall three-year business planning process, something that applies to all aspects of government. I recognize that people do have days of recognition and celebration, but you can't announce your budget just because there is a particular day. This particular disease is a very important and

very major area of concern as far as health care is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just repeat for the hon. member that Alberta was out front in terms of establishing programs in this area and committing money on a long-term basis for it. The money I think that has been committed in this area and the diversity of people or groups in the population that have been served is commendable in this province. Before we set our next plan in this particular area and decide where it should be targeted and what funds might be available to it, we have, yes, a discussion paper or strategy paper in terms of developing that plan. I think that is a reasonable way to approach it.

MS BARRETT: Service organizations would say to the minister: show us the money. That's what counts.

What assurance can the Health minister give to Albertans that smaller communities like Lloydminster and Fort McMurray who need to start up AIDS service organizations will receive funding to do so in a timely fashion; i.e., before the calendar changes?

MR. JONSON: I hope the calendar doesn't change, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps it has come to Alberta Health, to my department, but I think they are quite diligent in reporting these things to me. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, although we recognize in Alberta Health that it is something we need to do further planning on and make the program as effective as possible, I have not had recent representation from anybody about increased funding for HIV treatment programs.

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

Pork Industry

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Premier. Lacombe county has the highest per capita density of hogs raised in this province. My producers generally expect to work on pricing cycles, balancing their income and expenses against swings in the market. However, as this record 27-year low continues to loom, deemed by many as an extreme crisis situation, many producers feel threatened, anyone new with high debt totally at risk. On behalf of my hog producers I would like to ask the following questions. What has caused this sudden downturn in international prices for pork, and are there indications that these disastrous prices will continue in the long term?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously this is of tremendous concern not only to Alberta hog producers but indeed hog producers throughout Canada and throughout North America. Basically, it's as simple as this: we're suffering from an international decline in pork prices. This has been brought about, according to the experts, by the Asian financial crisis and the serious economic problems that they're now feeling in Russia. That has all coincided with an increase in production worldwide to create a glut on the market.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that many people went into the hog production business about two or three years ago when pork, and rightfully so, was being promoted worldwide as the meat of choice and was demanding a premium price. But when you produce so much and when the economic conditions in other countries prevail, understanding that most of our pork is exported, then you're going to experience a serious downfall.

Relative to the hon. member's second question, we have been advised, unfortunately, that prices are likely to stabilize to, I understand, \$1.20, \$1.30 per kilo until sometime in March or

April and aren't really expected to get much better than that until the end of 1999.

MRS. GORDON: What can the province do to sustain Alberta's production base so there will indeed be an industry left when prices recover?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the federal government of course has announced an aid program for hog producers in particular. Our own Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has been working with the industry to identify the immediate needs. We do have the farm income disaster program, but unfortunately that won't kick in until sometime in February. What the hon. minister has agreed to do on an emergency basis is to provide the opportunity for quick loans, with a payback period that would start some two years down the road, to provide an immediate cash injection, hopefully an injection that will sustain operations until the prices stabilize.

MRS. GORDON: Why haven't pork prices dropped at the grocery store? How can retailers justify premium prices for pork when prices paid for hogs are so pathetically dirt cheap?

MR. KLEIN: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is the question that is asked the most right now. We all seem to know what the problem is. I think that hog producers are aware that they're going to have to face this problem for some time, but the question is: why do we not see a drop in prices on the shelves in the retail outlets? I don't know what the answer to that is. I can only hope that those prices will come down so that more product can move through.

Mr. Speaker, to put in another plug for the hog producers, pork is still the meat of choice. Not to the detriment of the cattle producers, but pork is the meat of choice.

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

Capital Region Governance Review

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past four years this government has cut grants to 20 local governments that comprise the capital region by nearly 76 percent. Now the Minister of Municipal Affairs has established the capital region governance review under the guise of creating a greater efficiency and eliminating service duplications. My questions today are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Is this review a prelude to a legislated supercity, like they did in Toronto?

MS EVANS: Absolutely not.

MR. GIBBONS: My second question to the same minister: is the mandate of the project manager to create a supercity model?

MS EVANS: What I heard the member ask, Mr. Speaker, but failed to hear the first part, was if we were creating a supercity model, and again the answer is no.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Irrigation Canal Repair

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs on

behalf of the Member for Little Bow. In 1995 Environmental Protection's main canal, which crosses through the Peigan Nation in southern Alberta, was damaged by severe flooding. Since that time there have been ongoing negotiations with the Peigan council and your own department, Mr. Minister, along with Public Works, Supply and Services and Environmental Protection to see that the necessary rehabilitation work is completed. Thousands of people in our part of the province, many of them from Little Bow, rely on this canal to transfer water for municipal and domestic use and agricultural production. My question is: why is it taking so long for this reconstructive work to begin?

2:10

MR. HANCOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a good question, and it has to do with the sensitivity of the problem. As the member indicated, the canal and the headworks are located on the Peigan Nation reserve. We've had ongoing discussions since the damage to the headworks and indeed before that about many issues of concern to the Peigan Nation. I guess the short answer to the question is that there are a number of issues which have been bundled together by the Peigan Nation in terms of resolving this issue. I would ask the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, who is directly involved in the negotiations as well, to supplement with respect to the specific repairs to the headworks.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true. For the past couple of years we've had direct negotiations with the Peigan. I do feel that we are getting to the point where they will feel comfortable with us working a partnership on the repair. That's the direction we're taking. We're trying to partner with the Peigan band so that they will do the work and we'll pay the bill.

The other part, I think, that has to be made very clear in this particular instance: the canal is still 60 to 70 percent effective, and there is not, at this point in time at any rate, a danger to an interruption of water supply to the communities downstream.

MR. COUTTS: My first supplemental, then, is to the same minister of intergovernmental affairs. Would this reconstructive work take this long to resolve if it was located on any other land?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, probably not. Again, I would indicate that it is taking so long because, as my colleague the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services has indicated, there's no emergency at this point in time. There are a number of sensitive issues which must be dealt with with the Peigan Nation surrounding this issue, and we don't wish at this time to push it. If it becomes an urgent matter, then we would have to deal with the issue on that basis.

MR. COUTTS: My final question, then. We feel it is a matter of urgency. What will be done to allow this work to proceed before this spring's runoff?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, we recently signed a protocol agreement with the Peigan Nation, on October 22. There are some issues for discussion around that protocol agreement, which are currently being worked on. In fact, I believe the next meeting of officials with respect to this matter is slated for December 7, and we hope that we will be able to resolve the issues for discussion, one of which in the priority for the province is the repairs to the headworks. With the co-operation and the work that's being done now, we're quite confident that we'll be able to deal with this issue before this spring.

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

Alberta Opportunity Company

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mandate of the Alberta Opportunity Company is to provide start-up financing for small businesses with an emphasis outside the major cities or else in rural Alberta. My question to the Minister of Economic Development: in the last annual report why did AOC loans for purchase of existing businesses by other businesses double in the past year?

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, AOC has done a tremendous job in this province supporting small business start-ups and expansions of small businesses throughout Alberta, not only in rural settings but in the major cities as well. In fact, they've done such a tremendous job that many of the small businesses that have been financed though AOC have gone back and reapplied for expansion loans or mergers and acquisitions through their expansion.

So we're delighted with the performance that AOC has had, and quite frankly they have realigned themselves so that they are working very hard within our small communities and helping them succeed. We're seeing right now that small business development in the province of Alberta is at an all-time high.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems now that start-up means expansion.

My second question is also to the Minister of Economic Development. When the focus was supposed to be on rural business development, why is it that less than 50 percent of the loans of AOC were in rural Alberta?

MRS. NELSON: The question that came was: why is the focus not only in rural Alberta? Well, it's an amazing thing, but the hon. member opposite surely must realize that small business development occurs throughout the entire province. When the focus is on creating new opportunities and having small business development occur, it occurs throughout Alberta, whether it's in the major centres or in the small, rural communities. AOC has reached out throughout this province from north to south, east to west and been very successful, I might add. But keep in mind that they're focusing on new small businesses, and they are, in fact, very successful. Those businesses have been leading the way in small business development within this country.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the Hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Second Language Programs

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I read an article in the *Globe and Mail* which asserts that this government has abandoned French language classes in elementary schools. The article states: "The English-is-good-enough-for-us mindset . . . is nothing short of absurd in a world where other countries routinely go about teaching their children two and even three languages." To the Minister of Education: has the government abandoned French second language programs in our schools?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, two comments that I'd like to make at the outset, first of all with respect to programs, secondly with respect to policy changes. There have been no program cuts by my department and no policy changes regarding the support we

provide to second language instruction. The only changes we would consider are changes that would strengthen these programs. We encourage opportunities for all Alberta students to learn French by making available programs and services for French as a second language. We've worked hard at developing programs of study, support materials. One very good example is our careers and technology studies, or CTS modules, that are done in French. Those materials have not only had a great take-up in the province of Alberta but have demonstrated their success in the interest they've received from other parts of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, school boards have received financial support for instruction in all subject areas through the instruction block under the funding framework. That portion of education spending has increased by \$400 million from 1994-95 to 1998-99, demonstrating our commitment to providing resources where they're needed the most, and that's in classrooms.

MR. DUCHARME: To the same minister: since the article is attributed to the *Calgary Herald*, are second language programs in Calgary becoming less available?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Alberta second languages are optional programs. Elected school trustees determine in consultation with their administration and with the public which optional programs will best address the needs of students based on their needs and interests. At the school level, principals work with teachers and parents to determine what optional programs will be offered. They will take into account the resources of the community, the priorities of the community, and what is available there. School boards may choose to offer a variety of different languages. As is the case in many schools throughout the province, there may be programs in French immersion or in bilingual or second language instruction starting at different grade levels, and different school boards and schools can choose to concentrate on different programs in different schools.

It would be an interesting question to pose to Albertans, Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not second language instruction should be mandatory. That would be an interesting question that should be posed to Albertans.

MR. DUCHARME: To the minister: for parents wishing second language instruction for their children, how can they access that instruction?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, because of the outline that I've given with respect to how those decisions are made, it seems appropriate that parents who want second language instruction should contact their school principal and their trustees to determine how that instruction might be provided. They should work with local school officials to indicate that there is a need or a desire or a priority established for second language instruction.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I want to refer you to *Beauchesne* 408 (1): "Such questions should . . . (b) not inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are correct."

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

2:20

Slot Machines

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In just two years the number of slot machines in Alberta has more than tripled, from approximately 700 to approximately 3,000 between 1997 and 1998. My questions today are to the minister responsible for

lotteries. Was the purchase of all these machines put out to tender?

MRS. NELSON: No, Mr. Speaker. The government buys the machines directly and places them within the various gaming facilities throughout the province. That's done for a very good reason. We control the electronic gaming machines in this province so that we can monitor them, maintain them, and make sure that they are run cleanly and effectively so that the payouts are there and we can police those machines. So we do not go out and bid out on those machines.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, secondly, to the same minister: when we talk in terms of \$2 million worth of taxpayers' dollars, would it not be more appropriate to put it out to tender?

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member sometime to come by, and we can go through a demonstration as to how we control these machines, because there is a centrally located computer system that feeds into these machines that we control through the gaming commission. The gaming commission, remember, is charged with the responsibility for policing and controlling gaming activities in the province. If we went outside of that system, we could not give assurances that the gaming activities in this province were in accordance with the law, which is the Criminal Code of Canada. We in fact have a responsibility to make sure we control the gaming activities and the actual function of those machines in this province. So we have a policy decision that we do not go outside for the purchasing of the machines. In fact, the commission contracts directly with the manufacturer for the purchase of those machines.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the same minister: were any of these machines purchased through an Alberta company called Applied Gaming Solutions?

MRS. NELSON: No, they were not, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Social Studies Curriculum

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Several months ago a book called *Who Killed Canadian History?* by J.L. Granatstein was published, and since that time there's been a fair amount of concern that our students do not have to study Canadian history in order to graduate from high school. To the Minister of Education: how much Canadian history instruction is provided to students in Alberta?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, history instruction in Alberta is provided through our social studies curriculum. Social studies, as members will know, is mandatory at all grade levels, and students must complete grade 12 social studies in order to receive a high school diploma. Of course, students will write social studies achievement tests in grades 6 and 9 and diploma exams in grade 12.

Canadian history is taught at various grade levels with the depth of study increasing as the grade increases. In grade 3, Mr. Speaker, students are introduced to the study of history in general terms, in grade 4 the history of Alberta. In grade 5 they study

historical events and issues related to the discovery, exploration, and settlement of this country. In grade 8 they learn about the building of our nation with topics such as colonization, the Quebec Act of 1774, the 1837 rebellions, the Act of Union in 1841, the BNA Act, Louis Riel, the building of the CPR, and the creation of the provinces. In grade 10 students study Canadian history of the 20th century, including both world wars, the Cold War era, and our participation in international organizations like NATO. In grade 12 students focus on global interactions in the 20th century.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: are revisions to the social studies program being considered to incorporate more Canadian history?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I would make this summary right up front. I think we do a good job of teaching social studies and history, but we can do better. Within Alberta the social studies curriculum has recently been reviewed by an MLA committee. I'm currently reviewing the recommendations of that committee and how they will influence our curriculum revision process.

On a very positive note, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a partner in the western Canadian protocol on the development of a social studies curriculum framework for western provinces. We're also partners in developing a proposal for pan-Canadian frameworks and learner expectations for citizenship education. We are the lead province on this project. If it is adopted, it should be incorporated in the curriculum in school activities to provide students with knowledge and skills that they need to be good Canadian citizens. At all three levels -- provincial, western Canadian, and national -- the amount of Canadian history to be taught is a serious topic of discussion.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, my last question to the same minister is: how do we ensure that teachers receive a good background in Canadian history before they enter the classroom?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, to receive an Alberta teaching certificate applicants must, of course, complete a bachelor of education degree. Social studies content courses like Canadian history and political science are normally offered through the faculties of arts, but in this province local school boards and their administrators are responsible for making decisions about teaching assignments that are appropriate for individual teachers based on their qualifications and their experiences as well as their students' learning needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta teaching quality standard includes the expectation that teachers know the subject area they teach in relation to the desired curriculum outcome. In addition, we do involve teachers in the development and revision of curriculum, and we share draft curriculum with teachers so that they can become familiar with the content prior to provincial implementation of new curriculum.

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

Violence against Women

MS BLAKEMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Development signed the Iqaluit declaration on violence against women. To the Minister of Education: as agreed to in the declaration, what is the minister's department doing to create a long-term focus on awareness of violence against women in order to change attitudes and behavior?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, many of the ideas that are contained in that declaration I'm familiar with because the Minister of Community of Development has brought them forward to me. I also am familiar with them because of my own personal interest in my former capacity as the minister responsible for women's issues.

Mr. Speaker, in our curriculum and in our teaching it is more than just learning about facts and acquiring skills. It also, I think, fairly is said that our education system is about learning attitudes. Those are important parts of the overall balance in education, of knowledge and skills and attitudes. Specifically, I'll take the member's question under advisement.

MS BLAKEMAN: To the Minister of Family and Social Services: as agreed to in the declaration, what is the minister's department doing to provide accessible and responsive services to provide safety for women, to support victims, and to prevent revictimization?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In talking about that document signed in the Northwest Territories by the Minister of Community Development, I think there's one very important thing that we need to remember, and that is that in Alberta we concentrate on family violence as opposed to violence against women. Family violence is something that encompasses violence against women as well.

Mr. Speaker, in the last budget year we spent an extra million dollars, which is roughly 12 percent. We have, I believe, 330 spaces in 17 institutions across Alberta that deal with family violence. We have support teams that go out and help with family violence, victims of family violence. Probably the most significant thing that I can say is that no one in Alberta who is a victim of family violence should be expected to stay in that situation.

MS BLAKEMAN: My final question is to the Minister of Justice. As agreed to in the declaration, what is the minister's department doing to hold perpetrators of violence against women accountable and provide treatment programs for abusive men?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, the department treats violence against women very seriously. In fact, there was the Petrasuk case some months ago where we took forward a complete review of our bail procedures. That's ongoing at this time. We've also asked the federal government to expand under the Criminal Code the ability for bail to be reviewed beyond change in circumstance or error in law. So we're pushing on that side. We do have some programs in place through our facilities for men who we think it will help regarding violence against women. We do treat this very seriously.

I'd like to also mention, as the hon. member is well aware, that we are working closely with the Member for Calgary-Currie regarding the family violence legislation.

2:30

MRS. SLOAN: What are you doing in your own department?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I've just explained what I'm doing in my own department.

We anticipate that act being implemented in early summer of 1999. At the present time our department is working with community service providers to facilitate implementation of that legislation. We're also meeting with aboriginal and Métis groups to try and work with them regarding the whole matter of family

violence and violence against women, and we are looking at amendments to the Rules of Court to enable Criminal Code charges to be laid to enforce breaches of protection orders as an alternative to civil contempt proceedings. So we are working in a number of different areas.

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

Charter Schools

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education. I've been contacted by a constituent whose children attend the Foundation for the Future charter school in Calgary. The school's lease is due to expire in June 1999 for the elementary students and March 1999 for the junior high students. The school is having difficulty renegotiating the leases. What is the minister doing to help charter schools in Calgary find space so that they can continue to be a choice in education?

MR. MAR: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the particular circumstance of Foundation for the Future charter school, which is a very fine school. Secondly, I think it would be fair to say that charter schools in general in the city of Calgary have had some difficulty finding appropriate space. My department has been working with the Calgary board of education but also with the Calgary Catholic board to find suitable school space for Calgary charter schools that are having difficulty finding appropriate accommodations.

We recognize that the availability and affordability of space is an issue for some charter schools. Charter schools can now apply to the school buildings branch for assistance with temporary leasing costs if they encounter financial hardships in this regard. Where existing educational space or private facility space is at a premium or where the cost is prohibitive, we are encouraging charter schools to have a shared use with other available government-owned space.

MRS. LAING: Thank you. To the same minister, my first supplemental question. Mr. Speaker, the Calgary board of education has excess space for students that it serves. Can the minister tell us what he's doing about underutilized space?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the very positive results of the Calgary board of education review that was conducted by the review team was that the Calgary board has responded in a very positive way with respect to the identification of the issue of underutilized space within that system. What the Calgary board of education did is establish a task force that conducted an extensive inventory of their existing space in their facilities. They did that last spring, and they provided a report to their board on student accommodation within their schools.

Again, a very positive move on the part of the Calgary board: they've created a number of strategies to deal with declining utilization rates. I applaud the board for doing this. A committee has been struck by the board to review those strategies and develop a plan of action for the board. In my discussions with members of the board, both the new chair as well as the senior administrators, I expect there will be a plan for how to deal with that excess space coming forward in the spring of 1999.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: what support is the minister providing to charter schools to help them operate more efficiently?

MRS. SLOAN: A 20 percent increase.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview talking about a 20 percent increase, but she is clearly mistaken. The difference between charter schools and private schools . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. minister, please. It would really be helpful if the conversations were conducted through the chair. It would be much more effective and much more efficient. Let's get on with the question from the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, charter schools are public schools that receive the same instructional grant rates as other students in the public system.

With that clarification aside, I wish to say that my department has worked with charter schools on a number of different fronts to support their operations. We have an agreement right now with the Department of Community Development to work with the boards from charter schools to provide them with board development workshops. My staff is providing them support for board members, superintendents, school councils, and principals to improve the issues of school governance.

Mr. Speaker, my department has assisted boards in the formation of the Alberta Association of Public Charter Schools, which is an umbrella organization to which all charter schools belong, that provides a forum for sharing of ideas, issues, and concerns. At this time we're also reviewing the regulations that apply to charter schools, taking input from stakeholders. We're drafting regulations at this time, and we will be reviewing them in the near future. Also, as I indicated in my answer to the main question, the School Buildings Board is supplying assistance to those boards having difficulty with leasing costs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recognitions

THE SPEAKER: Seven hon. members have indicated their intention to participate in Recognitions today, and we'll begin with the first one, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, 30 seconds from now.

Hon. members, we will call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, then the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, then the hon. Member for Leduc.

Employment Standards

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, fellow members. I would like to recognize the people who initiated and implemented a practical and commonsense solution that is beneficial to all working Albertans.

On Monday, November 30, 1998, the employment standards branch of Alberta Labour and Human Resources Development Canada combined their call processing systems. Albertans can now get information on employment standards issues from both the provincial and federal jurisdictions with one-stop shopping, calling just one number, 24-hour access, and fax-back service.

In the past Albertans often had difficulty determining which jurisdiction, federal or provincial, applied to their situation. Alberta Labour employment standards telephone counselors handle about 800 calls a day from all parts of our province, serving more

than one-quarter of a million Albertans a year. The call combination initiative was identified by Alberta staff directly responsible to the customers' needs.

This joint project with the federal government clearly demonstrates quality service. On behalf of all Albertans I would like to thank them for their efforts and encourage them to keep up the excellent work.

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

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

MS BLAKEMAN: Mr. Speaker, this Sunday is December 6, the ninth anniversary of the death of 14 women who were murdered at École Polytechnique.

In 1990, while executive director of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, I was asked to organize a memorial event for Edmonton. In just under 10 days and with the guidance and help of women from the community I did just that. Today in recognition of December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, I would like to thank the women who joined with me from 1990 to '94 and those who continue to carry on the tradition.

Together we continue to give people a place to gather and an event to attend. Women-centred, pro-active, and based in the community, this is a truly astonishing group of people. I hope you can join with us at noon this Sunday at the Tucker Amphitheatre in the Citadel Theatre or mark it in your own way wherever you are.

Thank you.

2:40 Impaired Driving

MRS. FORSYTH: Our government in co-operation with local communities, enforcement agencies, impaired-driving groups, and businesses joined forces to further combat impaired driving. I would like to read a poem that was written by one of our young Albertans who belong to Students Against Drinking & Driving.

I went to a party, Mom, I remembered what you said.
You told me not to drink, Mom, so I drank soda instead.
I really felt proud inside, Mom, the way you said I would.
I didn't drink and drive, Mom,
even though the others said I should.

I know I did the right thing, Mom, I know you are always right.
Now the party is finally ending, Mom,
as everyone is driving out of sight.

As I got into my car, Mom, I knew I'd get home in one piece.
Because of the way you raised me, Mom,
so responsible and sweet.

I started to drive away, Mom, but as I pulled out into the road,
The other car didn't see me, Mom, and hit me like a load.
As I lay there on the pavement, Mom, I hear the policeman say,
The other guy is drunk, Mom, and now I'm the one who will pay.

I'm laying here dying, Mom. I wish you'd get here soon.
How could this happen to me, Mom?
My life just burst like a balloon.
There is blood all around me, Mom, and most of it is mine.
I hear the medics say, Mom, I'll die in a short time.

I just wanted to tell you, Mom, I swear I didn't drink.
It was the others, Mom. The others didn't think.
He was probably at the same party as I.
The only difference is, he drank and I will die.

Why do people drink, Mom? It can ruin your whole life.

I'm feeling sharp pains now. Pains just like a knife.
The guy who hit me is walking, Mom, and I don't think it's fair.
I'm lying here dying, and all he can do is stare.

Tell my brother not to cry, Mom. Tell Daddy to be brave.
And when I go to heaven, Mom,
put "Daddy's Girl" on my grave.

Someone should have told him, Mom, not to drink and drive.
If only they had told him, Mom, I would still be alive.

My breath is getting shorter, Mom. I'm becoming very scared.
Please don't cry for me, Mom.

When I needed you, you were always there.
I have one last question, Mom, before I say goodbye.
I didn't drink and drive, so why am I the one to die?

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

University of Alberta

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the University of Alberta, which co-sponsored the just held international conference on universal human rights and human values in the city. The University of Alberta is also to be congratulated on establishing the annual lectureship on human rights. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the Nobel laureate, was the inaugural speaker of this lectureship and delivered his finely argued and inspiring address on antiracism last Sunday, November 29, 1998. The University of Alberta, by co-sponsoring the international conference on human rights and by sponsoring in full its lectureship series on human rights, has taken a world leadership role in the area of human rights.

For over a century now the university, its students, staff, and alumni have participated in many spheres in the community here in Alberta, other provinces, and indeed in other countries. They have shown our young people that as individuals and as groups and institutions we can make a difference in furthering the human rights of those here in Alberta and in other countries.

I take this opportunity to personally thank and congratulate President Rod Fraser and the academic students and other leaders of this great university for their exemplary and indeed visionary leadership on human rights.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Lorne Tyrrell

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure this afternoon to congratulate University of Alberta infectious-disease specialist Dr. Lorne Tyrrell. This week Dr. Tyrrell is celebrating the federal approval of Lamivudine. This wonder drug discovered by Dr. Tyrrell will purge chronic hepatitis B for up to 98 percent of those who suffer from this debilitating disease. Hepatitis B is listed by the World Health Organization as one of the world's most infectious ailments and the ninth most common cause of death, killing 4,500 people each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, the significance of Dr. Tyrrell's discovery is borne in the number of men and women who will benefit from his many years of work. Over 250,000 Canadians and hundreds of millions of people around the world suffer from chronic hepatitis B. In fact, more than 30 countries are now looking to regulate this new drug.

As the Canadians Frederick Banting and Charles Best, discoverers of insulin, did before him, so too has Dr. Tyrrell reinforced Canada's international reputation for excellence and for our commitment to the common good. I'm very proud to congratulate Dr. Tyrrell on this significant achievement.

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

Coaches

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to recognize all the coaches who give so much of their free time to our young people. Coaches in community schools and on the rinks give countless hours because they believe in team play, skill development, and the enjoyment of the sport.

Just this past weekend many teacher coaches across this province ended the volleyball season with final tournaments. I was fortunate enough to have a special interest in the Sturgeon school division junior high volleyball competition this past Saturday held at Sturgeon composite high school in Namao. The jubilant winners were the junior high girls from Sturgeon Heights school coached by Corrine Hutchings and Emil Yereniuk, and the junior high boys from Camilla school in Rivière Qui Barre won top place and were coached by Richard Kniel.

My thanks to all those coaches who give up their precious personal time to help young Albertans learn the skills that help them become good citizens.

Swimming World Cup

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I attended the 1998 Speedo FINA World Cup of Swimming at the Kinsmen Sports Centre in Edmonton. This was an opportunity for me and many other Albertans to see world-class swimmers and competitive swimming at the highest levels. As an Albertan I was also very proud of the excellent facilities our province has to offer the world. Many athletes and spectators commented positively about the Kinsmen centre facilities and its friendly, capable staff.

I want to acknowledge the key role played by the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, in obtaining government support for the retrofit of the Kinsmen pool. The retrofit has already proven to be a good investment, and it leaves us well positioned to host other international swimming competitions in the future.

I also want to acknowledge the excellent work of the competition organizers, Jim Wheatley and Cheryl Gibson. They led a dedicated team of hardworking volunteers in hosting a very well run and successful event, of which all Albertans can be proud.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I just simply want to say congratulations to all of the hon. members who participated in Recognitions not only today but in this fall session. The level of quality and sincerity in these recognitions has improved dramatically from the spring session, and this is what the purpose of this segment was all about, so congratulations to all the members.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Written Questions

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: Motions for Returns

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 218

Environmental Bill of Rights

[Debate adjourned December 1: Mr. Amery speaking]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close the debate.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to close debate on this bill. We have seen many, many instances over the past couple of years of why it's so important to have an environmental bill of rights in this province. Just the most recent example of that is the arsenic in the water in the Cold Lake area. We have seen repeatedly the government being called to investigate this or to take some action, and it is only just now, after this issue was first raised in 1990, that we see the government acting in the hearings that are ongoing.

In this particular case there is some public input. Some of the people from the public have intervenor status, but the problem with people from the public always having to get intervenor status to have their concerns raised on an issue is that it isn't always granted, Mr. Speaker. If we were to pursue an environmental bill of rights, then definitely people would be able to have the right to protect the environment by giving them a platform to comment on policies, by requiring government policies and business plans to be compatible with the principles of sustainable development and the protection of the environment. This would give people access to an environmental commissioner within the Auditor General's office, who could receive and respond to concerns and complaints.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would urge every member in this Assembly who believes that protection of the environment is important and who believes that the people of Alberta have the right to stand up and protect the environment to support this bill.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: All hon. members in favour of second reading of Bill 218, Environmental Bill of Rights, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:50 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Blakeman	MacDonald	Sapers
Carlson	Massey	Sloan
Gibbons	Nicol	Soetaert
Leibovici	Olsen	White
MacBeth	Pannu	Wickman

Against the motion:

Boutilier	Graham	McClellan
Broda	Haley	Melchin
Burgener	Herard	Nelson
Cao	Hierath	O'Neill
Cardinal	Hlady	Pham
Clegg	Jacques	Renner
Coutts	Jonson	Severtson
Doerksen	Klapstein	Smith
Ducharme	Kryczka	Stevens
Dunford	Laing	Strang
Fischer	Langevin	Tannas
Forsyth	Lougheed	Taylor
Friedel	Magnus	Thurber
Fritz	Mar	Woloshyn
Gordon	Marz	Yankowsky
Totals:	For -- 15	Against -- 45

[Motion lost]

Bill 219
Education Employment Relations Statutes
Amendment Act, 1998

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Someone once told me that the art of politics is the building of consensus, and I'm really pleased to see that we've managed to put together such a large group of people who have taken such a strong position against Bill 219. So consensus building is an interesting aspect of governing. However, that does not in any way take away from my commitment to bring forward an issue that has been bothering me as a taxpayer and as a parent and as an official involved with school issues since the mid-80s. Most specifically, that issue is the fact that I believe students have a right to learn. I believe they have a right to continuous learning, and I believe that as a society, in order for them as young people to understand our commitment to that, every opportunity should be made to provide them with a continuous, confident schooling environment in which they can maximize both the resources of the taxpayer and their own capacity and willingness to learn.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I got involved at the provincial level in politics deals with our financial obligations to honour the resources we have as taxpayers and citizens of this province yet use that responsibility to meet the financial responsibilities we have to our teaching profession and to our entire school community. So it is with great pleasure that I begin the debate this afternoon in second reading of Bill 219.

In order to clarify for purposes of further discussion, I want to make it very clear to the House and to all who participate in this that this is not a government bill; this is a private member's bill. In bringing it forward, there is no sense from my perspective of challenging issues of autonomy and power and control and some of the negative elements that have been relayed to me by the postcard campaign, the media campaign, and petitions. This is an opportunity, which I believe this forum allows us, to put forward some thinking about what the future can look like for education.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, following the questions we've heard in this session and the fact that 26 of our school boards are running deficits, that parents are fund-raising in excess of what they think is appropriate, and teachers are concerned about the future of their

compensation, funding becomes a serious issue. So I'd ask all colleagues to have the courtesy to pay attention to some of the issues and allow them to be considered and discussed in their own communities.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member. To both the Minister of Labour and the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, the ultimate insult that can be provided to the House is for an exchange to pass between the chair and the hon. member who's been recognized with the floor.

So, please, hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For clarification, the bill has three essential elements. The first element that I would like to put on the table as a point of discussion is the ability to assert the rights of students to learn by restructuring the legal right of teachers to strike or boards to do lockouts. The second principle for discussion is the repositioning of the principles outside of the collective agreement. The third principle for discussion is the development of a provincial bargaining model to address sustainable and appropriate funding for education.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that as this bill was tabled in the spring, there are some ramifications to the membership of the Alberta School Boards Association vis-à-vis their membership. I recognize that should this bill be successful either today in the House or in further discussions about restructuring, that situation would have to be addressed. I also appreciate the fact that each of these three elements in and of itself could constitute a private member's bill or, indeed, a policy discussion for government to consider. My point in combining the three is so that in our overall framework of educational reform, some of the elements that have eluded us in our restructuring of education can be included in an overall package.

Each of these principles deserves merit for debate and discussion, but as I said earlier, it can't be premised on an issue of power and autonomy, and it certainly cannot be premised on the issue of status quo. I can tell you that I was very discouraged by the campaign that came out of the Alberta Teachers' Association clearly suggesting that the status quo was okay, because it is not consistent with what teachers have said to me about the remuneration they wish to receive nor from parents who had serious concerns about the long-term funding of education. Having said that, I would like to speak on the three elements individually.

With respect to the concept of continuous learning, I include in my comments the commitment to talk about continuous learning rather than lockout and striking activity, because I believe that student achievement and the ability of students to have a competitive access to our postsecondary opportunities is going to rest on their ability to have a confident, sustainable, long-term access to education. We have restructured education within our department and within our boards to look at achievement testing in grades 3, 6, and 9, including our departmental achievement test at grade 12. We have also set school-based planning based on the achievement tests that these schools and students accomplish. We also look at professional development strategies, the opportunity for extracurricular activities. We look at curriculum development. Mr. Speaker, every one of those elements requires that our students are not interrupted in their ability to learn and that they have a free range of access to as many extracurricular programs as possible.

3:10

I will reference probably a few times in my comments some of the impacts of strike that have disrupted not only whole communities because of students losing the opportunity to move on from grade 12 to their postsecondary opportunities but also the fact that

any interruption in student learning can perhaps reduce a student's ability to achieve at their maximum level. It certainly interrupts a teacher's student planning and curriculum programming. I believe that in the context of our overall restructuring of education within the model of accountability, the commitment to leave students free to learn on a continuous basis is absolutely essential.

Even on the work-to-rule basis, which some schools have used, pulling out the extracurricular activities as an option for students to access can seriously hamper their ability to stay committed to learning, can seriously inhibit their ability to find that one key element of their own learning skill and style that allows them to maximize the teaching opportunities in the regular grades and other curriculum programs. Mr. Speaker, as a society, as a community, and as a government I personally feel that the responsibility to develop a model of continuous learning is absolutely essential. I think our students demand no less, and we are obligated to provide them with that consistency.

The second principle deals with removing the principals from the bargaining unit. Those of us who sat through the debate on the firemen and the managers in the fire department can recall many of the issues that were relayed in that discussion, and I encourage you to refer to *Hansard* for some of them. I want to address the fact that we have moved to a site-based management. In fact, parents and communities have demanded that we do that. In order for parents and students to be effective in their role in education, in order for communities to have a say, principals need the freedom to be more effective in their evaluation of teachers. They need a new range of accountability to deal with their community. We have demanded that school boards divest themselves of large, centralized administrations, and quite frankly the key people that pick up that role are our site-based managers, our principals.

I'm further concerned, Mr. Speaker, that when work-to-rule issues are ways that boards and unions use to negotiate issues, the principal is left to honour his obligations or her obligations within their ATA membership by restricting their hours at school before and after by something in the nature of about half an hour. Notwithstanding that, principals today have to carry the serious responsibilities of managing their facility. They deal with staffing, maintenance, community outreach, business partnerships. They have an increased range of administrative responsibilities. I'm very, very distressed with the fact that even though principals do carry a teaching load -- many of our principals still do -- we have to recognize them as the key, significant administrators that they are. In order to maximize the professional development and administrative skills that most boards and principals themselves access, it is time to address the outdated union-based limitation that confines principals to one role and one role only. In no way do I want to not recognize the fact that principals are the key instructional leaders in a school, and that role as a teacher is respected by their fellow teachers, but at some time we must look at change.

Lastly, on the funding framework. Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on about what adequate and accessible funding for education can look like. I oppose provincial bargaining for a few reasons, and I'll put them out for you. Clearly, we need to look at equity in education. I just want to quote to you from a letter from our minister to a Mr. David Oakleaf, chair of William Aberhart high school council, following the CBE review. He goes on to say in the letter that

over 83 percent of the instruction block is spent on instructional staff salaries and benefits, and that provisions contained in the collective agreement between the board and its teaching staff severely restrict the CBE's ability to allocate its financial resources and impose limitations on the availability of discretionary funds.

Mr. Speaker, that encapsulates a fair amount of the background that's within the CBE report. Now, if we have recognized contracts that are our responsibility to honour and obligate and if we control the funding in government, which we now have done through our provincial funding framework, there is no mechanism, absolutely no mechanism to see the effect of those dollars which are allocated to the teaching contracts, which is the responsibility of boards, and the impact of resources left over to the classroom. It is not appropriate to pit one board against the other in the middle of 1998 because in 1996 or '97 or '98 certain contracts were signed, certain obligations were met. It is inappropriate to say that one board has hired at a higher level or a lower level.

You need the ability to fund a human resource strategy for our teachers that this government and this province respect. You need the ability to look at curriculum. You need the ability to look at professional development, and you cannot do that on a piece-by-piece, 60-board-member contract negotiation. It is not the most effective use of the trustees, who sign on to support the policies of the educational community they represent. It is not the best use of our teachers' time to be concerned about whether or not they're going to get paid next month, next week, or next year. I appreciate that there is a concern about the provincewide lockout component. There's no doubt in my mind that that kind of concern is serious, and that is why the first element of this bill is in front of you.

If this government is going to control the funding and take away the right to tax, it has the obligation and the responsibility to put a framework in place that allows for a funding mechanism that meets teachers' needs, not just teachers on a board-by-board level but on a provincewide level. If we have a weakness in any area of curriculum, it is the ability to meet that obligation through a provincewide initiative that makes provincewide bargaining important. When our nurses were at risk a few years ago when we were in health care restructuring, one of the key things we could do was to target dollars and put them into frontline nursing without disrupting the entire system. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of opportunities to look at this human resource component of management based on curriculum needs, student needs, and financial ability. We can only do that on a provincewide basis for provincewide goals to be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that it is controversial, it is difficult to consider, and it imposes a severe amount of pressure on individual politicians to face some of these issues in their constituencies. I respect the fairness with which this issue has been understood and the way in which parents, teachers, and the community at large have asked: what does this issue mean, and how can we go forward?

I would like, in conclusion, to ask that the House consider, when we look at the further review of the funding framework in the context of the discussions we will hear this afternoon, that every opportunity be made to avail members of that committee and MLAs to understand what our future obligations are. We are not able to do merit pay for our teachers. There are those who say that it's impossible to do it. We don't even have a mechanism. We are not able to deal with strategic curriculum changes that come on a provincewide basis. We are not even able, Mr. Speaker, to look at weaknesses in our site-based testing and achievement testing, whether that's a shortage of human resources, whether it's a lack of training, or whether it's a new curriculum that might come onboard that the province sees as something they should deal with.

Mr. Speaker, without that provincewide ability to look at a funding mechanism that allows us a human resource management strategy, that takes the stress off the teachers wondering whether they're going to get paid, and that utilizes administration and

trustees from our 60 local school boards in their most effective way, without doing that, I firmly believe we have not met the obligations of restructuring that we started in 1994. I think the importance of recognizing structural change as a mechanism for meeting the financial obligations of our boards and our teachers and our communities is something that we should not shy away from.

I look forward to the comments of my colleagues this afternoon, and I appreciate again, with all due sincerity, the fact that many of you have had to deal with some difficult questions. I appreciate the fact that many of you contacted me to find out what the elements were that I was pursuing and were very thoughtful about how they could be used in further discussion about the overall health and wellness of our education system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the debate.

3:20

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join in debate on Bill 219. As the previous speaker indicated, this is a private member's bill; it's not a government bill. It doesn't reflect government policy, and I think that that's fortunate.

In crafting my remarks against the bill, I tried to simplify what I saw as the purposes, and those purposes seem to be three. One is to take the principals out of the same bargaining unit as the teachers. The second is to establish one big, provincewide collective agreement for all teachers and school boards and remove the ability of local boards to bargain, and third, to take away the right of strike and lockout from teachers and from school boards. When you go through the language, that in essence is what this private member's bill would accomplish were it passed.

I think the part of the bill that I would like to focus on is that part of the bill that would remove principals from the local bargaining unit or from the same bargaining unit as teachers. If you start and look at the underlying view of schools held in this bill, you find a view that was prevalent in this country in the early parts of this century. In the early 1900s people in education and other human endeavours discovered what they called scientific management. That kind of a management model was embraced by educators and schools of economics and business for a long time. Unfortunately, the view still prevails a century later in some people's minds. It's a view that I thought had been rejected by most people but lives on in Bill 219.

That view would view schools as factories. It would see schools and children, I guess, as widgets, widgets that come out at the end of an assembly line after they have been placed under the care of teachers and principals. It's a view of schools where there are standardized rules that must not be broken, where there are standardized roles, where everyone knows their place, and where it's the principal's major task to help people adhere to those roles and to fulfill the roles to which they have been relegated. It's a very mechanistic model. It's a technical model, and it has very little to do with being human and being involved in a human endeavour.

The role of the principal is that of a supervisor, and I think we heard it in the language of the previous speaker. The speaker indicated how important it was for principals to evaluate teachers and indicated the notion of the principal managing the community that works with schools. So it's that very, very technical view of schools, that factory model of schools, that schools are to be managed and the people and the individuals in them to play a particular role.

I think it stands in stark contrast to what most people would hope our schools would be like as we enter a new century, and most I think would agree that we should be viewing schools more as small communities of people that are dedicated and who are working with one another in the interests of children. That community draws principals and teachers, community members, resource personnel, the entire community into the service of children and tries to provide for those youngsters the best, the highest quality in terms of program. That community is linked by these shared goals, that service to children. I think this bill, in casting the role of the principal as supervisor, would break that link. It means that the principal plays an entirely different role within that community, one that I've described existed in the past.

The principals have to work with a lot of people. Teachers are under their direct control, and many school personnel are under their direct control, but they also have to work with a lot of other people. They have to work with parents, whom they can't directly supervise. They have to work with teacher aides, volunteers of all sorts, organizations. They have contacts with multiple individuals in their community where they don't exercise complete control or any kind of administrative control. The notion of school as community recognizes that there is that difference. I think if we want to do anything that can help that community, we would want to make those community members stronger, make them feel more a part of the community, and to take actions just opposite to those that are proposed in Bill 219, actions that would help staff and principals work together, as I said, in the interests of children.

The bill raises the question of what it is exactly we want from principals and what schools are all about. Well, certainly high-quality programs for children has to be the goal: the very best we can do in terms of instruction, the very best people we can draw to help in that instruction and the designing of learning experiences for children. One of the key roles for the principal is to help give teachers professional autonomy, to help make sure that those teachers that they're working with are free to do and to ply their craft uninhibited. That's a very, very special role for any individual, but it makes the role of a principal a very key one in every building. If you look at a lot of the research on schools and what makes good schools, certainly principals play a major role in the quality of what happens in a school. So that role of helping teachers to be the best they can be is a major role for the principal, and anything that would alienate the principal from those teachers, as this bill would, I think has to be resisted and resisted vigorously.

As a school trustee I was elected, and within a few months we had a teachers' strike. Welcome to the board. It was a teachers' strike that lasted nine days, and it wasn't a very friendly affair. In terms of strikes, what happens during the strike is bad, but what happens after a strike can be even worse. I'm not sure how many principals made the point of speaking to me after the strike was over and said how important it was that they were with those teachers and that they weren't left in the schools as managers and that they were part of the staff. That was a number of years ago, in 1978, and I've remembered those comments as expressing at the time the feelings of those principals. It really underlined for me the very precious links between teachers and principals and how we have to make sure that we do as little as possible to sever those links.

I think we want principals to help teachers create and design the very best in programs, the very best in learning experiences. The focus is on that help and not on the evaluation of how well that help is being crafted. Again, if you take them and separate them from the teachers and focus on the role as it would be, that of evaluation, I think you're performing a disservice to children. I

ask the question and I'd ask the question of the bill's sponsor: would making principals strangers in their professional organization be in the interests of children and be in the interests of good teaching? I think that there's only one answer to that, and that answer has to be no.

3:30

I go back to the image of school that seems to be built into the bill and how incompatible that seems to be with 21st century thinking and how unfortunate it would be if we were to entrench ideas that in many jurisdictions have been discarded. This private member's bill is inconsistent with many of the actions that the government has taken in the restructuring. Certainly the move to site-based management casts the principal in a different role than was occupied in the past, and it makes the working relationship between staff and principal even more important than it has been in the past. There have even been moves by school boards across the province to try to define that relationship in terms of how decisions are made at schools in terms of site-based management, again recognizing how important that link between principal and teachers really is.

The member made some comments that I would like to refer to. One of the things I am left somewhat confused by is that I took it that the intent of this private member's bill would be to make things better. Yet as I heard the mover talk about the bill, the mover spoke of this as being a way of controlling costs. I have to admit some confusion, because it seems to me that that would be the topic of a different bill, likely a government bill, if the intent was to bring down the teachers' salaries, if the intent was to make sure that school boards didn't spend money. I think that that might be a different bill.

I also was, I guess, confirmed in my notion that the mover has of schools as being somewhat factory with the references to managers and managers in the fire department. I would hope that although there would be many similarities, there are some significant differences in those organizations. The fire department management problems are still not resolved in some areas.

The last comment I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, is on the provincial bargaining. One of the things that we have lost with the centralizing of financing of education in the province is local control and the ability of local communities to respond to the needs of their students. I go back to my own experience as a trustee and the things I look on with pride as things that those boards that I was fortunate enough to work with accomplished, things like the international baccalaureate program for students who had those kinds of talents, the alternate programs for students with special abilities in art, the special education programs that we were able to work out with the Department of Health for the very, very severely handicapped, and the creation of facilities like Capilano school. I look back at some of those accomplishments and recall that they didn't come from the provincial government, nor were they initially funded in total by the provincial government. They were drawn out of local resources through the tax base, and they allowed the board to respond to local conditions.

One of the boards that preceded me had passed some motions that I think the mover of this motion might have found interesting. The Better Education Association, when they took control of the Edmonton public school board, immediately passed a number of motions, and one of those motions was to hire the very best qualified teachers that they could. That stood in sharp contrast to practice at the time, which was to hire the least experienced and the least educated teachers in an effort to keep costs down. That is why I'm worried about the notion of provincial bargaining and

the kind of focus that that might have. I think local boards being able to determine the kind of teacher or the kind of support staff they want and then going out and negotiating, if that's what it takes to get that kind of personnel, is an important piece of local control of schools. So I found the arguments for provincial bargaining less than convincing.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude and look forward to the further debate on Bill 219.

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

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill 219. While I support the right of the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to propose a private member's public bill, I cannot support Bill 219. I feel that Bill 219 would create too many negative consequences in Alberta's schools, particularly in rural areas of the province, such as Highwood, which I have the honour to represent.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, Bill 219 has three main purposes which it would serve, the first being to prohibit strike action by teachers and/or lockouts by school boards. The second purpose would be to remove school principals from the bargaining unit, and the third is to establish provincewide bargaining between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Boards Association. I would hope that any bill concerning education would be predicated, first and foremost, upon the improvement of learning and of teaching, and frankly I don't see any connection between this bill and such important educational improvements.

Mr. Speaker, teachers' wages and benefits are currently decided through periodic local negotiations between individual school boards and members of the Alberta Teachers' Association. If these negotiations fail to produce a settlement, the school board and the teachers follow the steps for the bargaining process outlined in the Alberta Labour Relations Code. Under the Labour Relations Code teachers hold the right to strike, and local school divisions have the right to lock teachers out in the event of an unresolved and prolonged labour dispute. The bargaining process in Alberta has developed over many years, and if I may say so, it seems to work fairly well in that we have not had a teachers' strike in 1998 nor in '97, not in '96, not in '95, not even in '94 and '93, in the years of the big education and budget cuts, although I would have to add that education was cut lowest of all the provincial budget cuts. Nevertheless, not even in those years did we have a teachers' strike.

Mr. Speaker, the situation in Alberta doesn't show that there's any practical need for this sort of measure at this time. The numbers show instead that there has not been a teachers' strike for the last six years. This fact indicates to me that the current system is working reasonably well in addressing the needs of school boards and of teachers and, through them, of the students they serve.

This brings me to the second principle of the bill, which is, presumably, to foist provincewide bargaining upon separate and public school teachers. I believe that the maintenance of a local system of collective bargaining has many distinct advantages. In a potential strike situation it would make a provincewide strike very unlikely because you would have 60 different bargaining units. A provincewide strike would shut down Alberta's education, disrupting the education of thousands of students, and that's what Bill 219, it seems to me, encourages and invites.

[Ms Graham in the chair]

Our present system of local bargaining takes into account the economic state of the local community and the specific needs of its schools. In addition to teachers' wages and benefits there are other issues bargained. Issues such as class size, extracurricular activities, lunch fees, recess duties, teacher transfers, and others are addressed in these collective bargaining agreements. How do we address these conditions in blanket form for the whole province? In my opinion, Madam Speaker, we can't create a collective bargaining agreement for the whole province that will meet all of the needs of Alberta schools, of their students and teachers.

3:40

Madam Speaker, what works in the city of Calgary will not always suit the rural areas or even other urban areas such as Edmonton or Fort McMurray or Medicine Hat. Similarly, the priorities of my constituency, Highwood, and the south vary, I'm sure, from a region and a constituency like Peace River in the north. They are distinct from one another and have distinct needs. The differences that I'm speaking of include variations in the density of population, cost of living, the distance between the communities within those rural areas, the distance that students need to travel whether in the urban area or the rural area, the size of the schools that are able to be there, among other factors. I believe that our current system, which allows teachers and school boards to negotiate with one another on a local basis based on local needs and local situations, best addresses Alberta's wide diversity.

It seems to me, Madam Speaker, that in a province as diverse as ours a provincewide collective agreement will take one of two possible shapes. The first may be a general document with general terms which would fail to take into account the wide variety of local conditions that are obtained in our different communities and would, as a result, leave some rural teachers and rural school districts at a distinct disadvantage. We only have to look at the hospital agreement with nurses, where it's driven primarily by urban nurses and urban hospitals. If you know anyone in a rural hospital who's trying to work out some of the issues, it's very difficult to apply those city regulations and agreements, which make sense in the city but don't in a small community, in a small hospital. Well, Madam Speaker, I'm suggesting that's very much so, and I have been elected to represent a rural area.

The second option that would seem to be facing us would be for a provincewide collective agreement to be not general but all-inclusive. It would have to have such a great number of footnotes and appendices added to the agreement to address the recognized and special needs of 60-some very different school boards that the agreement would end up being cumbersome, complicated, confusing, and would look not unlike the New York City telephone book.

Madam Speaker, neither of these scenarios improves learning and teaching in the schools of our province. Instead, I believe that the better scenario is the system we've got in place right now, where local teachers sit down with the local school board to negotiate an agreement that works best for the community they serve.

Madam Speaker, the public teachers in Highwood have not asked for any of these changes. Indeed they have sent hundreds of cards opposing Bill 219. I have not had any school boards request this, nor have their trustees requested the changes proposed by Bill 219. To date not one of Highwood's school councils has asked for these provisions. There currently appears to be very little interest in establishing a provincewide system on the part of either teachers or school boards in my constituency of Highwood.

In 1993 the departments of Labour and Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, and the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association did a review

on the bargaining process for education. As a result of this review, during which at least 1,500 stakeholders were involved, provincewide bargaining was discussed, considered, and rejected. Rejected, Madam Speaker. It's been the goal of the Alberta government to establish a right balance between provincial involvement and local autonomy. It has looked at what the most cost-effective and efficient ways are of getting things done while respecting the rights of communities to manage their own needs and set their own priorities. We've got that balance now in our education system, and we would be wise not to disturb it.

Madam Speaker, as members we ought not to be intimidated by impractical changes because we might be charged with only supporting the status quo. Change, if it is to be useful, must be practical if it is to be supported, and it would have to in this instance improve teaching and learning.

I now wish to turn to the third principle of Bill 219 as it probably is nearest and dearest to my heart, based on 27 years of teaching experience. I referred earlier to the difficulty of trying to impose a provincewide solution on local situations. I was employed with the Foothills school division as a teacher and for two decades served as a school-based administrator. During these years as a principal or school-based administrator I taught between 50 and 90 percent of the school time. That still obtains in our area as most administrators in the rural schools teach part of the school day, and those administrators could really best be referred to as principal-teachers.

Madam Speaker, imposing an industrial management model on a professional group who work independent of one another is really inappropriate. It has not been demonstrated how removing principals in rural schools from their teaching role would improve teaching and learning in these schools. As members, we've all been in different schools in our constituency, and I'm sure most of us can tell when we're in a good school. Invariably the teaching staff, students, and support staff are in harmony with the principal and the vice-principal. The school has a happy and purposeful air to it. Studies on good schools show that collegiality, shared goals, and professional respect for each other are the hallmark of such fortunate places, where the principal is the leader among equally dedicated teachers. Why would we want to impose an industrial-type manager/employee relationship or a line-and-staff military model, such as a fire or police model, on education?

Talk to people from the teaching profession in the province of British Columbia, where there's separation of principals from teachers. Ask them: has it helped improve teaching and learning? They'll give you a quick answer: it sure has not.

Madam Speaker, can you imagine a noted educator and principal like Steve Ramsankar being separated from his teaching staff? Show me an unhappy and unproductive school, and we'll no doubt find a model where the principal is very separate from the teaching staff and where collegiality is a word in the dictionary.

If the principals, teachers, trustees, school councils, and parents of my part of Alberta are not calling for the proposed changes and if no discernible benefit to learning and teaching accrues, the question begs then to be asked: why would I support Bill 219? Madam Speaker, I find that I am unable to support this bill, and I trust that many other hon. members will find it equally difficult to support it.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. members, before proceeding with the next speaker, is there unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. MAR: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to recognize in the gallery today the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Ms Bauni Mackay. I would ask that hon. members recognize her with the customary warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Bill 219
Education Employment Relations Statutes
Amendment Act, 1998
(*continued*)

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and address this House regarding this proposed private member's Bill 219. This bill has attracted a great deal of interest across the province. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has received over 2,700 postcards urging all Members of this Legislative Assembly to say no to private member's Bill 219.

3:50

This bill proposes three very different things, and I disagree with any of the proposals. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Highwood and his remarks. The first proposal we are looking at here this afternoon, Madam Speaker, is attempting to remove principals from the teachers' collective bargaining process. This is a typical move now in this province, and it shocks me that it continues. It's in the education field. It's in the health care field. It seems to be everywhere where there is a directive from this administration, and that is the divide-and-conquer strategy. All members of the Alberta Liberal caucus believe that teachers and principals must be united in a common goal and effort to provide excellent education to their students in their respective schools. I can't think of a more effective means of eliminating communication and dialogue between management and workers than to separate them in a collective bargaining agreement, as this proposal does. It just doesn't make sense. We have enough labour trouble in this province without entertaining the thought of allowing this private member's bill to pass and become law. It would make a grave situation even worse. Each and every one of us in this House knows that we have to stop and take another look at labour relations in this province because the present system is not working.

Now, another highlight of this bill is to provide for one collective bargaining unit for the entire province. The Alberta Teachers' Association would bargain on behalf of the teachers, and the Alberta School Boards Association would represent all of the school boards. This scheme totally fails to reflect regional differences. There are regional differences relating to the length of drive of a school bus. Some rural schoolchildren, I understand from having conversations with members on both sides of the Assembly, have over one hour each way. This is not in winter driving conditions, which would probably add another 15 minutes to that. The trip has to be safe. We have to consider all these factors. We can't just consider our own little area of the province. We must have legislation that is going to benefit everyone in the province, and we must consider rural and urban and small towns and smaller cities, Madam Speaker. This bill totally fails to reflect regional variances in costs. It is consistent with the theme that is coming from across the House, and that is a

misguided theme and it is harmful, this cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach to education funding.

The third idea of this bill is to propose amendments to the labour code. We're going to prohibit teachers and school boards from engaging in strikes and lockouts by stripping them of their current rights to do so. Madam Speaker, I can only recall one strike in the last six years by teachers in this province. That's not a large number. There have been labour disputes in the meat packing industry. Safeway: probably the largest one in the history of the province. There were over 10,000 workers involved in that one. It went on and on and on. No one wins. Whenever we have a strike, a community is divided. I'm sure the hon. members across the way in the government caucus must be divided on strikes. Some want the minister to get directly involved and stop it right now. Others would say: hold on; we'll let it take the course of time. This is not a good way to govern a province, and this private member's bill, Bill 219, is not in any way going to improve the education system.

We have these objectives. We look at the previous history here. In the spring of 1995 Bill 210 was introduced, the Teaching Profession Amendment Act, 1995. This, Madam Speaker, was a right-to-work bill that would have enabled school boards to hire teachers who are not members of the ATA. Thank goodness this bill was defeated, and hopefully this Bill 219 will follow the same course as Bill 210 in 1995, and it, too, will be defeated.

We are looking at, once again, removing principals from the same bargaining unit as teachers. This idea of establishing one big provincewide collective agreement for all teachers and school boards: it's not in our interest; it's not in the students' interest. And to take away the right to strike and lockout from teachers and school boards is not the way in a democratic society that's compassionate and dignified. This is not how we resolve our labour relations quarrels and our differences, and I hope all hon. members can agree with me on this.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would like to take a look and alert all members of the Assembly to a letter that I have before me that was written I believe in September of this year, and I would like to quote from that letter. This letter is from the Alberta Teachers' Association, and it is addressed to the sponsor of this bill. I shall start.

Bill 219 is an affront to teachers, and it is most unfortunate that it should arise for debate on the floor of our legislature. It ignores the findings of Education Bargaining Consultation (June 1993), the final report of the comprehensive, community-based review of collective bargaining in the education sector established by Elaine McCoy, Minister of Labour. That report found that Albertans support the strike/lock-out options available to teachers and school boards and the rights of these two parties to be the sole dealers at the bargaining table. Bill 219, by contrast, removes the sanctions available to both parties in free collective bargaining and frustrates the community based bargaining relationship between teachers and their employers by establishing a new provincial bargaining arrangement sought by neither teachers nor trustees. To further these contradictions, the bill adopts the outmoded assembly line managerial model by removing principals from bargaining units. The proposals, which are totally inconsistent with Association policy, flow from the simplistic belief that centralization, accompanied by managerialism, saves money, reduces conflict and fosters efficiency. I know that many of your colleagues will be able to provide you with evidence of the opposite. Despite your initial sponsorship of this bill, therefore, I encourage you to speak against it and to urge its defeat.

Sincerely,
Bauni Mackay
President, Alberta Teachers' Association.

Now, when are members from across the way going to leave

teachers alone and let them concentrate on helping our children learn? Teachers have already taken a wage rollback. They face larger and larger classrooms with fewer aides and less support from central services. Teachers have sacrificed and done their fair share of effective savings and efficiencies. I can think of no company in the private sector -- and we're all very fond in this Assembly of the private sector -- that would demean and attack its employees on such a regular basis, yet they continue to do it. We all know what a stressful job teaching is to start with, and this only adds to it. It doesn't matter whether a teacher is from Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Calgary, or here in Edmonton, whether they're in a rural school or an urban school or whether it's an elementary school or a high school, they read this stuff where the government wants to do nothing but attack them and demean their position. And what are they to think? "Oh, my, maybe I should leave the profession if this is how I'm going to be treated." We need more teachers, and we need to respect them, Madam Speaker. They educate our children.

I find this Bill 219 that we have here, that all hon. members have access to and have read -- we always hear that it is necessary to focus resources and attention on the classroom and the teachers, yet each session there is another bill that attacks, and we continue to see the introduction of bills and motions assaulting teacher security and their well-being.

MS OLSEN: It won't stop until the government changes.

MR. MacDONALD: It's not going to stop until the government changes?

MS OLSEN: It's not going to stop until the government changes, until they're out of power.

MR. MacDONALD: I agree with you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

But this bill continues to undermine and disrupt the ability of teachers to focus on the classroom. This is very, very important, Madam Speaker, and I would urge all members of the Assembly to listen keenly to this and say no to Bill 219. Teachers must be acknowledged for their sacrifice, for their professionalism, and for their commitment to educating our children. These repeated attacks are harmful. MLAs on all sides of the Assembly must realize that the high quality of Alberta's public education system is going to be further compromised and the public confidence in it is going to be eroded if we are to continue with this assault on the public education system.

Now, principals, Madam Speaker, are teachers first. Attempting to remove principals from the teachers' collective bargaining process is wrong. This private member's Bill 219 is yet another thinly disguised divide-and-conquer issue. I'm sorry I have to repeat this, but it is very, very, very important that we stand up and say no to Bill 219. Principals would lose their right to be included with teachers. Teachers are going to lose their right to strike. Provincewide bargaining would be imposed. This is a continuation of the ideological attacks we are seeing in this province on our public education system. This private member's bill undermines public confidence in public education.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We have seen this idea, and it further indicates the seizure. The other morning I was at the Alberta School Boards' breakfast, and it was very interesting to attend that. A lot of my hon. colleagues

were there as well, and I am grateful that they took the time from their busy day to attend such an important meeting. In the last few years there has been a seizure, not only from school boards but from teachers and principals, of control over education policy-making. This control and this seizure fits the mold of taking power away from what are called special interest groups. I can think of nothing but a special interest group who would draft legislation such as this. Teachers are not a special interest group. Principals are not a special interest group. Students are certainly not a special interest group, and parents are not a special interest group.

The parents now have to take a more active role with the PACs, Mr. Speaker, as they're called. The PACs are taking a more active role in their school, which is a good thing, but PAC is now standing for parents after cash because we don't have enough funding. That's all they do. That's all they have time for. They're taking up the slack, and there's a void here. This is what we should be dealing with in legislation: how do we make less work for the parents after cash? Perhaps they could afford to take time off from their busy schedules to go on a field trip instead of doing bake sales, bingos, Christmas raffles, craft sales, Christmas seals at \$2 a package. These are all fund-raising initiatives that are going on in this province. It would be much better if we were to address with this private member's bill, Bill 219, the problems that PACs are having and not have this attack on the collective bargaining system in this province.

4:00

Teachers, if they were to go on strike -- and there's only been one strike, I understand, in the last six years -- have to give notice of 72 hours. They just can't lock up their desks, send children home, and go on strike. It's not going to happen. We also have other built-in legislative processes. We saw an example of this last year in Calgary, and I'm pleased to say this: the labour code in this province worked. It actually worked, Mr. Speaker. We have as a last resort to avoid a strike a provincially appointed disputes inquiry board. With that in itself, I cannot understand why the private member's Bill 219 is needed. We have a provincially appointed disputes inquiry board if things get out of hand.

Another response -- this is lot more draconian, and I certainly hope it will never, ever have to be used -- is a cabinet order which would halt a strike if the government believed it was harming students or the general public. This response, I'm told, if needed, could be done almost immediately. So why do we need this private member's Bill 219?

AN HON. MEMBER: We don't need it.

MR. MacDONALD: We don't need it. Sixty-two school boards in this province, Mr. Speaker, reached negotiated settlements with their teachers in the calendar year 1996. So teachers, school boards, principals: there seems to be a very sound relationship there that's based on mutual respect and respect for their job of educating our children. This private member's bill is not necessary.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind all members of this House again that teachers' strikes are very rare, very rare indeed. It is necessary for teachers to retain the right to strike. This helps the collective bargaining process reach settlements without having to go to any sort of disputes tribunal board or inquiry or a cabinet order. We have a fine province. We have a fine public education system that has to be also protected from continuous assaults such as this Bill 219.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to my colleague from Edmonton-Meadowlark. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, may we have unanimous consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

head: Introduction of Guests

(*reversion*)

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the House a member of my AADAC board, Mrs. Thelma Crowther. She is a resident of Calgary and is up here for two days of AADAC board meetings and is a longtime supporter of the party, and I appreciate the moral support in the House. Thanks. Would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

4:10

Bill 219

Education Employment Relations Statutes

Amendment Act, 1998

(*continued*)

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning when I had another look at this bill, I began to have some doubts about my own ability to read and understand. I thought: it couldn't be saying this; it must be a nightmare; I must be having a nightmare. However, the member who brought this bill to the floor of the House spoke with such chilling clarity this afternoon that it came back to reality. What this bill is about is something that's real. The member means it. The member really means what she says here. Several members from both sides of the House have spoken with passionate reason about this bill, including the member who sits there normally as the member from High River, a beautiful town that I visited this summer. I enjoyed sitting in the park there by the river, a very lovely setting.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, speaking earlier on this bill, drew our attention to the fact that the bill seems to have been inspired by a system of management, a theory of managing workplaces called scientific management. Sometimes that theory of managing workplaces is also known as Taylorism. Mr. Frederick Taylor was the originator of that theory. I think the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is absolutely right when he says that it's grounded, that it's really inspired by the scientific management way of looking at the world of work.

Well, I just want to note a few principle assumptions that Mr. Taylor made about human behaviour, particularly the behaviour of the lowly beings called workers, you know, on the shop floor. The basic assumption was that workers are naturally lazy. Secondly, they're malingerers. Third, they respond only to external authority and economic incentives. Fourth, the workers do not know and therefore don't have the right to exercise any control over their own work. That is exclusively the preserve of the foreman, and the foreman was one of the key characters in this theory, the role of the foreman. So what's proposed in this bill really is refashioning the role of the principal as a foreman,

as formulated by Mr. Taylor.

I just want to briefly draw the attention of the members of the House to the historical context in which scientific management grew as a dogma of management. This was the period of the First World War. It was a period when a terribly bloody confrontation took place in the great city of Winnipeg in this country in 1919. The relations between managers and workers were so adversarial, so conflictual at the time that it led to a general strike that lasted for 35 days. Several people died; many dozens were wounded. The army had to be brought in to restore order.

That is the context of this kind of way of thinking about how to manage workers and workplaces. I thought we had left it behind by 1948 when the universal declaration of human rights was brought into being. There was a convention in '87 which dealt with the rights of workers in the workplace. Both of these put together gave us the industrial relations model that has worked so effectively and so well for all of us, including our schools, including our children, including our communities, all of whom have defended and enjoyed the benefit of a high quality, a super quality of education in this province. It is that model of governance, it is that model of managing the place of education and the workplace of teachers that in this proposal is going to be restructured in order to make it what the hon. member said: a place where there's no room for autonomy, power, and control. She said: we are really concerned about efficiency and the interests of our children.

Mr. Speaker, it's not that autonomy, power, and control will disappear somehow magically from the school once this bill is adopted, if it's ever adopted. It's just that all of these things -- power, control, autonomy -- will be usurped entirely by the managers, by the principal, the principal that's conceived in this bill as a dictator who unilaterally will have to exercise power downwards to send orders, as the Member for Highwood said, in a militaristic fashion to exercise control, to establish order, to demand compliance against the so-called recalcitrant, lazy educational workers called teachers.

Mr. Speaker, the proposals made here would be laughable if they weren't serious. If this bill were ever to be adopted by this Assembly, it would irreparably damage the fabric of public education. It would destroy our ability to serve the most paramount interests of our children; that is, to provide them education in a workplace, in a social context that's wholesome, that's reasonable, that's fair, that's just to everybody. Children learn more than solving mathematics equations when they're in the classroom. They learn to be reasonable human beings. They learn to be decent and just citizens when they are at school. We must nurture the workplace called school in order to ensure that our children learn to be just and decent and compassionate and reasonable and fair citizens. If that is what we expect our schools to deliver on our behalf to our children, then I would make a plea to all of you to resoundingly defeat this bill.

I would also like to share with you some of the comments that teachers have made in the postcards they have sent to me. I tabled a document yesterday in which a selected number of these comments were submitted for posterity to look at. It was their reaction to Bill 219. The exact number of responses from postcards from which these comments were drawn was 2,693. That was the count till yesterday. This morning when I came to my office, I had another 75 of those postcards, and they keep coming at that rate, Mr. Speaker, day after day after day. Our educational community is extremely concerned. Our teachers have worked in our schools as co-operative communities, where they have treated each other as respectful colleagues, respectable colleagues, colleagues who are worthy of their respect and who as individuals are deserving of the dignity that each of us also deserve.

4:20

I won't read these remarks word by word. I just wanted to draw to the attention of the Minister of Education a concern that runs throughout these remarks that teachers have submitted to me and through me to all of you for our serious consideration. They've expressed a grave concern that they are not sure whether this bill in fact reflects to some degree the intentions of this government. I am willing to assume that the bill does not. However, I think it's incumbent on the Minister of Education to stand up in this House at the earliest opportunity to lay before us in clear terms what his position with respect to this bill is and what the position of his government is. Where does it stand in relation to Bill 219? I feel very assured there are a large number of members on the government side who would like to see this bill killed, defeated, and/or withdrawn. I know this. I know this. I commend them for this if that's what their position is. But it is incumbent on the Minister of Education. He is the guardian of this very vital public interest; that is, public education and its delivery at the highest level of quality to our students without disruption.

If this bill were ever to be passed and enacted, it would destroy the peace in our public schools that we have been so fortunate to enjoy to this date. To work under conditions of inadequate funding and scarce resources -- and that's what our teachers have done over the last 10 years, particularly since 1993, without once going on strike since 1990. What's the problem? Where is this problem of teachers wanting to go on strike for the sake of striking, not wanting to provide conditions of continuous learning, as the member who sponsored the bill has all of a sudden put before us, that somehow continuous learning is threatened by the present arrangements? I respectfully submit to the member and to my hon. colleagues in the House that that is not the case at all.

Continuous learning is guaranteed by reasonable, fair working relationships between school boards and their employees, which of course include teachers and principals. Why would you want to take the right to bargain away from principals? Why would you separate these teachers who also serve as principals? Why would you want to say: you cannot, even if you choose to, as principals be part of the bargaining unit that your colleagues are part of? That to me would be an act of extreme coercion: to deny choice, the right to choose, to principals. Since this bill has no such room in it, I suggest that you join with me in voting against this bill.

A few more observations, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, if I may, and then I'll sit down.. Children's rights to continuous education has been put, in the member's speech in introducing the bill, against the rights of teachers, again a fantastic proposition. She never tried to justify why she thinks that the right of students to learning, to continuous education -- her term -- is somehow threatened by the rights that teachers presently enjoy. This is putting these little kiddies against the teachers. This is adversarialism in the extreme, while she argues that it's precisely this kind of adversarialism that she's trying to take out of the system, because she thinks that if local bargaining remains, if each one of the 60 school boards is having to bargain with its own employees, including teachers, then it pits one school board against the other. Well, what her bill does is pit the two most fundamental, two most essential, two most notable players in the educational system one against the other: the students, in whose interest this system exists, and the teachers, who are there to serve those interests. It pits students against teachers, teachers against students. I think it's an act of extreme folly to pursue that kind of program of pitting teachers against students or teachers against the families of students.

I think this bill will be terribly destructive, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could say something constructive about the bill. Unfortunately, I'm having difficulty. I must admit frustration and a complete lack of success in finding even one good thing to say about this bill, on which I'm sure the member who sponsored it worked diligently and with good intentions. I'm not here to question her intentions. I'm here to draw attention to the necessary consequences that will follow from that bill. If my reasons lead me to believe that the bill will have negative consequences and nothing but negative consequences, then I'm not only politically, rationally, but also ethically obliged to oppose the bill and see that it's defeated.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will vote against the bill. Thank you.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous member spoke strongly about not being able to speak in favour of this bill or to find anything positive within it, and perhaps in our discussion this afternoon we will find a few things that are positive within the proposed Bill 219.

Let's look at some advantages that exist as a result of province-wide bargaining. Much time is devoted to bargaining at the local level, time devoted by the teachers and time devoted by the board members and the staff; that is, the staff that the board members employ to act on their behalf in the negotiating process. Certainly provincewide bargaining would take away some of that time spent and perhaps time that's taken away from the teaching of the students and paying attention to local issues. Perhaps province-wide bargaining would also contribute to a reduction in conflicts that might arise at the local level. Another advantage perceived by some is that it would provide a uniform contract across the province, a uniform collective agreement, and this may be an advantage in addition to the uniform salary schedule that it may in fact deliver.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out a few disadvantages of provincewide bargaining. There is benefit, I believe, to discussion between the local teachers and their school board. During this discussion it's a good time to identify concerns and together resolve issues that arise. It provides the ability of local jurisdictions to structure their collective agreement to address local issues. These can include many different factors, perhaps the cost of living locally or perhaps the need for an early retirement incentive clause being inserted into the collective agreement. This clause may be beneficial in one jurisdiction and not in another. In fact, it may be affordable in one jurisdiction and not in another, necessary in one and not necessary in another.

4:30

Perhaps through collective bargaining at the local level, some jurisdictions may take on challenges that they may choose to address, things like recognition of master teachers. Some boards may choose to implement use of subject co-ordinators. They may employ teachers in leadership roles of various kinds. In fact, some day in the future we may even see some addressing the issue of merit pay locally. To move this relationship away from the community and into a provincial level of bargaining would take from the hands of the local community this relationship where negotiations take place and issues are resolved at the local level.

At one time I was in a meeting where a board member from one jurisdiction demanded that the province move to collective bargaining provincially. At the time, the minister replied that school jurisdictions could do that if they so chose because they had the opportunity to move to collective bargaining provincially, but their own jurisdictions chose to bargain locally, with the

exception of some moving to larger groups and bargaining in that fashion.

If we look at the bill and its desire to prohibit a strike, there are some advantages, Mr. Speaker, to the elimination of the opportunity for strikes to occur, as has been well stated earlier. The elimination of the opportunity to strike ensures continuation of learning, which is of course the most important function that the schools exist for. Is that the only way this can be resolved? Are strikes the only way to go? Is it possible that prohibiting a strike and stopping in legislation the opportunity for teachers to take this job action is the only way we can guarantee good teaching and continuous teaching and learning? I would like to point out that legislating that there is no strike allowed throughout the province would, in fact, not guarantee that such would not occur. We've seen illegal strikes occurring in provinces across this country from time to time.

There's perhaps even a greater constraint to consider here, and that is the relationship that teachers and professional staff members have with their students. The opportunity for a teacher to work at a maximum hundred percent output can be diminished if a teacher feels that they are unable to express their concerns directly. Through the opportunity to express these concerns with a strike, it may prevent job action such as work-to-rule, as has been discussed in the recent past. There are many ways, Mr. Speaker, for a teacher to do more and to keep on responding to students' needs. If job action such as work-to-rule was in place, there are ways where less could be done and teaching and learning disadvantaged.

To remove principals from the bargaining unit would hamper the collegial relationship that exists between principals and their staff members. Teaching is the kind of activity that requires co-operation. In schools teachers are asked to bring students along through a co-operative model to learn together, to work together, and in fact to be able in the future to be more capable of working co-operatively. That's one of the main goals of education that's expressed in our province today. This is in opposition to the competitive model that exists in the work world in many situations. That relationship between the teachers, the principal, and the staff is critical in order to succeed at this model of teaching. In order for the principal to bring along the staff through changes in curriculum, in mechanisms of offering education to the student, it's important that that relationship exist.

I've received little in the way of communication stating that principals should be taken out of the collective agreement, as has been proposed. Until recently most of the communication said to leave the principals in the collective agreement with the teachers. Recently, though, I received a letter from a person whom I regard most highly, a person whom, when I was involved in ATA functions, I sought advice from very often. He spoke of the difficulties that occur as he is involved in site-based management and the difficulties that he is facing leading the staff through these changes in the way that education is delivered currently and the expectations for him and other principals to evaluate staff. He feels, in fact, a lack of representation by his own professional organization when teacher discipline is involved.

Mr. Speaker, upon inquiring with other principals, I found that he was not the only one who held those concerns. In discussions with these individuals it is felt that at the present time perhaps these sorts of concerns are better addressed within the professional organization itself. If this feeling is widely held among principals, then perhaps they will come up with an alternative to work within their organization to address it.

On balance, Mr. Speaker, there are many things to speak of in favour of this bill, and there are many concerns that need to be

addressed as we consider it as well. I would at this time urge fellow members to join me in opposing Bill 219.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've listened very carefully to the debate in this House. It's not the first time, as we all know, that we've had to think about this particular issue. In fact, a bill very similar to this has come forward in the House in both 1995 and 1996. Quite frankly, at that time there was, I thought, a fair amount of education that was occurring for myself as an MLA on this particular issue. At the time when it first appeared, when it appeared again, and still now I am convinced that this is not a good idea, that in fact it is a bad idea, but unfortunately we are discussing this bill today. I think fortunately it will come to a vote today, and hopefully we can put to rest the notions that are embedded in this particular bill today so that it can rest and not be brought back to this Legislative Assembly again.

The reality is that when I listened to the Member for Calgary-Currie -- and I did listen carefully as to the reasons for this particular bill appearing once more -- the main thread that I thought occurred throughout her explanation was the fact that the member was concerned for the health and wellness of the education system. But when I listened further to the rationale and how that concern was supported vis-à-vis the amendments to the Education Employment Relations Statutes Act, I found that there was lacking an understanding of what our education system in fact reflects and what it is meant to do.

4:40

What I find when I look at the bill and the clauses within the bill is that the impact of passing legislation such as this would be not to promote health and wellness within our education system but would promote an atmosphere of control and an outdated managerial style that in fact is very misguided when we look at the effects of that managerial style, not only as would be present within the education system as we now know it but as we see in corporations throughout the world at this point in time. When you look at individuals who are studying what would be the best method of managing an organization, what we are finding is that the best methods are not based on the paternalistic, hierarchical systems we've seen in the past. In fact, what the best systems seem to be are those that promote local decision-making and autonomy, respect of the individual, and, above all, democracy within institutions.

When we look at the school system as we now see it, I believe it is an accurate reflection of our democratic system and that the school is a democratic institution that reflects an aversion to the principles of central control that I believe are inherent within the bill we have in front of us today. When you look at the three main principles, the three main proposals in the bill, what we see is a desire to have provincial bargaining, a desire to take away the right to strike, and a desire to separate principals from the teachers' collective bargaining process. To any informed reader I believe what that in fact indicates is the desire to control, the desire to take away decision-making from the local level, and the desire to ensure that children and education become a factory-oriented organization where children, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out, are widgets and education becomes a product to be measured. We know that that is not responsible when we look at education. We know that that doesn't work when we look at education and the function of education. We know that in the past, though this is a private member's bill,

the government has taken away the right to tax from the school boards. The question, of course, then becomes: who is the true decision-maker, and how are those decisions made?

If we were to look at collective bargaining occurring on a provincial level, in fact it would neuter the school board trustees to a degree where the question would be: do we need elected school board representatives? I do not believe that is the case. I believe there is a clear function for elected school board trustees in this province. I believe there is a clear rationale for having a separation of the ability of school boards to control the education that is being provided at the local level.

With regards to the right to strike, that is a fundamental, democratic right that we should stand up and applaud within this province and within this country. Any attempt to erode that fundamental democratic right of individuals to strike should be negated and not approved.

With regards to separating principals from the teachers' collective bargaining process, the reality is that if we do not believe that a management model works within the education system, the old traditional management models that are being discounted on many levels -- and if I can, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just read from the *CAmagazine* of October of '98 that indicates that we do not have an educational problem.

There is simply no way to manage the diversity and complexity of 21st-century society with 17th-century concepts of organization, governance, accounting and control. Until we deal with that fundamental problem, all other problems will grow progressively worse.

In other words, human organizations do not behave like machines. We should not have a mechanized world view of the universe.

So if we recognize that there are newer and better ways to manage, we need to discount the whole notion of dividing principals from teachers' collective bargaining units. That's not the issue here.

Again, to summarize, I believe the central theme in this particular bill is one of control and is one of taking away the democratic institutions that we see reflected within the school systems, within the education system, and I will not support this bill.

Thank you very much.

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

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to join in the debate today on Bill 219, which has been sponsored by my colleague from Calgary-Currie. I think there's no doubt, certainly in listening to the various members who have spoken today, that if we were to adopt Bill 219, it would in all likelihood have a very major impact on the education system in Alberta today. So this afternoon I'd like to speak briefly to some of the merits of this proposed legislation and also highlight some of the serious considerations that need to be addressed before this bill can be fully accepted.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's no doubt that education is the priority of parents in this province, and it also is a priority of this government. This government is committed to ensuring that the students of this province receive an education of the highest quality. However, I would suggest that we should be striving to ensure that Alberta's young people are the best educated in the world, let alone in Canada or in our own province. I would suggest that the quality and effectiveness of our education system is probably the major predictor of our success as a province

economically, socially, and culturally. I believe education in all of its aspects should be the number one priority of government.

Whenever we make decisions about education and in particular when we consider Bill 219, as we are today, we must ask ourselves whether the decision we make will provide the students of Alberta with the best possible education. This is the criterion I suggest we must apply to our consideration of Bill 219.

Knowing that Alberta's children will be able to have an opportunity to receive a high-quality education in a stable learning environment is important to all Albertans. We don't want to do anything to jeopardize the education and future of our children. I mean, this is why we're here: to provide good government and to ensure that the education system works for our young children. This has been alluded to by other members that have spoken this afternoon, and I understand this is one of the main priorities of the Member for Calgary-Currie in sponsoring Bill 219. I do extend to her my support for her good intentions and for bringing this bill forward. I know she's put a great deal of time and thought into this proposed legislation, and she is representing the best interests of her constituents.

The Calgary region, which we both represent, does labour under the burden of a great deal of unresolved educational issues that are complex, diverse, and at times conflicting. I am sure that not only the Member for Calgary-Currie but other members of this Assembly share my frustration in seeing the problems seemingly linger on with our education system, which seems to be a problem for us because of the structural barriers that exist, and they are impediments to real change to the system. So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that there's much merit to the arguments put forth by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie in addressing the educational concerns not only in Calgary but throughout the province, and I believe those arguments stand alone as good reasons to support Bill 219.

4:50

However, I would like to focus on Bill 219 from a different perspective today. I would suggest that most of the debate this afternoon has talked about the potential effect on the adults involved in the education system -- i.e., teachers, school boards, et cetera -- and I would like to talk a bit about the potential effect of Bill 219 on Alberta students. I think it's very obvious, the adverse effect of a teachers' strike on students or the threat of a strike or work-to-rule. I mean, this can be tremendously disruptive, and it's very obvious that a strike during the school year substantially cuts back the time that is spent in the classroom, which hurts students. This is quite different from strikes that occur in the private sector, when there's an opportunity to move your business elsewhere. However, the public education system is a monopoly, and when public school teachers take job action, parents can't simply move their kids to another supplier of education at the drop of a hat. Mr. Speaker, parents and their children are left to deal with the effects of a dispute over which they have no control, and it's very disruptive to these families and can even cause financial hardship out of the necessity to arrange for alternate care.

Bill 219 also proposes to establish provincewide collective bargaining, and this has been discussed by other members here this afternoon. I concur that provincewide bargaining would no doubt reduce the costs of bargaining 64 separate collective agreements with the local school divisions that now exist. This would then free up additional funding for classroom purposes, which of course benefits students. It has also been my experience in the almost two years since I've been a member of this Assembly that our school boards do seem to be preoccupied with education bargaining in their various school jurisdictions. If they aren't in the midst of negotiating these collective agreements,

they're concerned about whether the agreements will expire and what will be the result of that. I question the ability of school boards to keep the best interests of students in mind when these labour relations concerns are always weighing so heavily on their shoulders. I would suggest that the time and effort spent negotiating or being involved in labour negotiations would better serve Albertans if it were directed to the frontline concerns of educating our children.

I also wonder about the message that we're sending to our youth in the province when these labour disputes seem to take precedence over the quality of education. Is this the message we really want to send to children when voluntary services by teachers are withdrawn and their sports and extracurricular activities come to an end? I don't think children really understand why their teachers don't come to school during a strike or limit their activities during work-to-rule, and it really doesn't teach students the concepts of compromise and co-operation. In any event, at a minimum it's a mixed message, and it leads one to question whether education is still considered a fundamental right for students throughout our province or whether it has become a privilege which is dependent upon the local school board and teachers reaching an agreement. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a very salient point and one that can't be overlooked.

Many of the other points, Mr. Speaker, that I was going to address I think have been quite adequately addressed by other members here this afternoon. I can say that the situation in Calgary that exists right now, where parents and students have been given a reprieve and at least until after Christmas there's not likely to be any work-to-rule or strike action, leaves everyone in a real condition of uncertainty. As a representative of my constituents in Calgary-Lougheed I have to tell you that this is just not acceptable and that we really do need to do things better. We need to find a better solution.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would say that in the final analysis, while I share the frustrations of my colleague from Calgary-Currie with the structural barriers that exist within the education system today, I'm not able to support Bill 219 at this time for the reason that I believe that before we go about making major changes -- and they are major changes as proposed -- we have to consult very broadly, and we have to give our very best efforts to obtain consensus and agreement, particularly when the contents of this bill would impose major changes on a major sector of our society. I don't think we serve our students or the education system by passing laws in this manner that have a great potential to really disrupt things, but that's not to say, as I've alluded to earlier, that there isn't much merit to the contents of the bill. With that, I'll conclude my remarks.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont in the few moments remaining.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few brief comments with respect to this private member's bill. I, too, cannot support this bill at this particular time. But I think it's interesting to recognize that over the last number of years there have been a number of bills that have appeared on the agenda in this House and have been debated. I think it's symptomatic of a systematic problem that exists in this province. In my view, part of it and part of the results of this problem stem from the fact that teachers have lost some of the public esteem their profession deserves. In my view, teaching is a very difficult profession, and a good teacher deserves recognition and reward.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Part of the problem is that the system seems to protect the bad ones too, and it rewards them in exactly the same way. This, in my view, diminishes the esteem that the public has for teachers as a profession as a whole. We're constantly being told by their professional association that they can't be measured, but every one of us in this House knows that we've had some excellent teachers. We remember those and they made a tremendous difference in our lives, but we also know that we had some much less than excellent teachers, and obviously there's a way they can be measured.

So, in my view, it might have been better for this hon. member to look at the fundamental reason why the public's esteem has diminished over the years. Quite frankly, I think that the public . . .

5:00

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, but under the Standing Orders that we have, I would now invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to conclude debate on Bill 219.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to everyone for the thoughtful comments that you shared with us this afternoon. As I said at the outset, this bill is about structural change. It's about dealing with inequities in finance. It's about recognizing the new roles and responsibilities of the teaching profession and our principals in that system, and, most importantly, about the opportunity to provide continuous learning for our young people. Many of you have made some specific arguments that I'd like to just reflect on briefly in conclusion.

I think foremost in my concern for the comments that were raised is the sense that some measure of status quo is acceptable, and I temper those remarks with the fact that I recognize, as my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed just mentioned, that it is difficult to make change on a grand scale. It does upset people, and it does upset the system. I think that is why the private member's bill process is important, to put a discussion out there, and why in my original comments I linked it to the considerations of the funding framework review.

Clearly we have changed the financial relationship with our school boards, and clearly we have an obligation and a responsibility to meet those ongoing financial commitments which they negotiate on our behalf but which they have no control over and which, in fact, because of the grid structure and the hiring practices, may compromise their ability to put funds in the classroom. I have every confidence that as these issues are looked at in the future, this consideration will be recognized, because it is in the classroom where student learning takes place and it is in the classroom where funding is having a shortfall at this time.

Another opportunity that this bill poses is for the recognition that the teaching profession is changing and the needs of the classroom are also changing. In order to address that, we have to open our contracts. We have to do it in a thoughtful and considered way, not one that is adversarial, not one that puts one board against another or one level of teaching against another.

In the issues with respect to merit pay that have been mentioned, one could also elaborate on the fact that meeting student needs in the diversity of the classroom and the educational level of many of our students may require a different type of teaching responsibility in the classroom. Therefore, that should be also considered when we look at new teaching opportunities.

I won't elaborate much further on the role of the principal. I

think both of those aspects -- the principal as the instructional leader in a classroom in the school in addition to the principal's role and responsibility under the new guidelines and site-based management -- must be addressed. It's as simple as that. Principals need a voice to be heard on the administrative side of their responsibilities, and I think this bill gives an opportunity for that further discussion to occur.

I think my concluding comments will first and foremost and always be on behalf of our students. We have charged them with the responsibility to learn with the resources we give them and in a society which in my mind does not have as much value for education as it should. One of the key things we can do as we ask them to strive at their various levels of education, at their various levels of capacity and ability is provide them with an ongoing, consistent commitment to their ability to learn, support their extracurricular activities, and respect the fact that in teaching the continuous ability to take a subject and move it through is important. The uncertainty of knowing whether or not they can take classes and achieve their own personal goals is perhaps one of the most serious things we could ever do to a young person.

My final commitment as a parent and as a taxpayer and as a member of this Assembly would be to encourage all of you that in the future, as we look at our responsibilities to education as legislators, we keep our minds and eyes open about opportunities and not simply see status quo as an appropriate way to fund education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Would all hon. members in favour of second reading of Bill 219, the Education Employment Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 1998, please say aye.

AN HON. MEMBER: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:05]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Burgener

Against the motion:

Blakeman	Herard	Oberg
Bonner	Hlady	Olsen
Broda	Jacques	O'Neill
Cao	Jonson	Pannu
Cardinal	Klapstein	Pham
Clegg	Kryczka	Renner
Dickson	Laing	Severtson
Doerksen	Langevin	Smith
Ducharme	Leibovici	Soetaert
Dunford	Lougheed	Strang
Fischer	Lund	Tannas
Forsyth	MacDonald	Tarchuk
Friedel	Magnus	Taylor
Fritz	Mar	Thurber
Gibbons	Marz	White
Graham	Massey	Wickman
Haley	Nelson	Woloshyn
Hancock	Nicol	Yankowsky
Totals:	For -- 1	Against -- 54

[Motion lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:18 p.m.]