

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, February 18, 1999**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 99/02/18

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

O Lord, guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Give us the strength to labour diligently, the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Today's prayer comes to us from the hospital auxiliary in the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod, provided by courtesy of the MLA for that area.

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of young Canadians who are participating in the Ontario Legislature internship program. Visiting us today are Vijay Chauhan, John Crysler, Alexandra Dostal, Karli Farrow, Jennifer Harewood, Erin McGinn, Dagmar Soennecken, and Gord Westmacott. They are seated in your gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 115 citizens that reads in part:

Whereas, excellence in public education is the cornerstone of our future, and students, parents, teachers and community volunteers are being exhausted by endless fundraising for basic educational materials and services;

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to consider increasing the funding of children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

head: Introduction of Bills

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Bill 4

Surface Rights Amendment Act, 1999

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Surface Rights Amendment Act, 1999. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor has been informed of the contents of this bill and recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 4 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

Bill 2

Dairy Industry Act

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to move first reading of the Dairy Industry Act, Bill 2.

This act will consolidate safety and quality issues within the Dairy Industry Act, and consequential amendments will put commercial and marketing issues into the Dairy Board Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 2 read a first time]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 2 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Bill 3

Agriculture Financial Services Amendment Act, 1999

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, the Agriculture Financial Services Amendment Act, 1999.

The main purpose of this bill is to provide clear authority for the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation to market its expertise in Alberta and outside Alberta. There are also other changes which are intended to enable the corporation to improve its efficiency and provide better service to customers.

[Leave granted; Bill 3 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 3 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 7

Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1999

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1999.

This bill provides for the improvement and the uniform use of electronic billing systems in the province with respect to physicians.

[Leave granted; Bill 7 read a first time]

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

Bill 5

Surveys Amendment Act, 1999

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 5, the Surveys Amendment Act, 1999.

This bill will support the production and updating of all plans of survey registered at the land titles office. In addition, the bill will facilitate the transfer of survey standards to the land surveying profession consistent with this government's regulatory reform initiatives.

[Leave granted; Bill 5 read a first time]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 5 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Bill 6
Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1999

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 6, the Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1999.

In keeping with input from Albertans, this amendment provides for increased access to adoption records while balancing individual rights of privacy.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 6 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 6 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 8
Provincial Court Judges Amendment Act, 1999

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Provincial Court Judges Amendment Act, 1999.

[Leave granted; Bill 8 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 8, Provincial Court Judges Amendment Act, 1999, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

1:40

Bill 10
Land Titles Amendment Act, 1999

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Land Titles Amendment Act, 1999.

[Leave granted; Bill 10 read a first time]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 10, Land Titles Amendment Act, 1999, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of the Information and Privacy Commissioner investigation report 98-IR-009, in which the commissioner investigated a complaint that the office of Executive Council did not comply with the legislation for documents pertaining to the West Edmonton Mall loan refinancing. In fact the commissioner found that the Executive Council office did not comply with the legislation.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings to make this afternoon. The first one is a presentation to the Lakeland regional health authority by the staff of Bonnyville Centralized high school wherein they state that rural Albertans are taxpayers too and need high quality, consistent, well-rounded health care.

The second is an announcement by the Health minister regarding the Lakeland regional health authority members' appointments merely five months ago wherein he states that "these individuals will provide leadership and ensure accountability in the administration of health in the Lakeland region."

The third is the interim report by George Cuff & Associates, which has no recommendation within it to fire the board or establish a trustee for the Lakeland regional health authority.

I think I'm going to stop at that. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table with the Assembly six copies of the response to Written Question 58.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table six copies of the report submitted by George Cuff & Associates entitled Comments on the Lakeland Regional Health Authority's Deficit Elimination Plan.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table six copies of Motion for a Return 67.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today with the Assembly the requisite number of copies of a letter I wrote to Dr. David Townsend at the University of Lethbridge which corrects the record with respect to a response that I gave in this Assembly on November 24, 1998.

I'd also like to table a letter I wrote to the editor of the *Edmonton Journal* yesterday regarding an article by Liane Faulder.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings to make today. The first one is a petition from 161 seniors in Bonnyville who belong to the Bonnyville Senior Citizens Society. They're expressing serious concern about the possible loss of either acute care or some community health unit services.

The second document I'm tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter dated February 10, written to the Minister of Family and Social Services by the Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute located in Calgary, which after examining the guide and the survey instrument that was distributed to AISH recipients to solicit their advice calls both documents strongly biased and poorly designed.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 21 students from Northeast Edmonton Christian school; their teacher,

Greg Gurnett, a very knowledgeable social and political analyst; parents Mrs. Darlene Schenk, Mrs. Linda Hale, Mrs. Tina Prins; and my constituent that always keeps my on my toes, Anne Nicolai. They're in the public gallery, and I'd like your permission to ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. STELMACH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 27 members of the Alberta Women's Institutes in the gallery today representing every region of the province. I wish I had the time to introduce them all; however, members of the executive in attendance are Doris Northey, president; Maxean Brigley, president-elect; Mildred Luz, vice-president; Elizabeth Rushton, area president for Canada Associated Country Women of the World; and a special guest in our gallery, the Hon. Martha Bielish, a Senator and very well known in the province of Alberta; and four members from my own constituency, Pat Durie, Hazel Miskew, Selma Willans, and Marguerite Withers; and accompanying them is grandson Joe Rowbottom, four, from Medicine Hat. I now ask the entire group to rise and receive the very special warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Doug Rae, who is the assistant deputy minister, civil law division, Department of Justice; his son James Rae of Sherwood Park, and friend Bronya Tate, who is visiting from Australia, that continent better known as the land of Foster's Lager. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce three women who are in the public gallery. Donna White, Cyndy Joines and Cathy Staring Parrish are all mothers and organizers of the Save Our Schools petition, which has given us these little gifts on our desks. MLAs always like to have a little bit of candy, and the candies and the letters inviting all MLAs to distribute the petitions come as a courtesy of the SOS group. I would ask Ms White, Mrs. Joines and Mrs. Staring Parrish to please rise and receive a very warm welcome from the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have in the gallery today three staff members of the Alberta government. They're seated in the members' gallery. We have there Mahmuda Ali from Alberta Transportation and Utilities, Goldie Edworthy of Alberta Energy, and Licia Paddison from Alberta Environmental Protection. I will be making a ministerial statement a little later, and it will highlight the important role that these people played in the Alberta government's submission to the voluntary challenge and registry program for greenhouse gases. I ask that they rise and that the Assembly give them the traditional warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly a lady in the group that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has introduced, but I would be remiss if I didn't single out Mrs. Marie Plaizier. She's a lady who represents the highest values of the Alberta Women's Institutes and Alberta families. She's held, as far as I know, every position in that organization including that of provincial president. In Peace River she's certainly a true community leader and someone I'm very proud to have as a constituent. I would like to ask her to stand in the members' gallery and receive a special welcome from the members of this Assembly.

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

1:50

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two members of the 13-member Seniors' Advisory Council of Alberta: Margaret Heath, who is also alderwoman of the city of Grande Prairie and chair of the Grande Spirit Foundation, seniors and public housing, in Grande Prairie, and Carol Blyth, who has been director until recently of the further education division of the Calgary board of education and a member of the University of Calgary Senate. Would the guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a former page of the Legislative Assembly, Carolyn Laird. If she would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to join the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and introduce a few more of the members that are joining us in the members' gallery. Those are members of the Women's Institute, so with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Beatrice Deans, who is a member from Edmonton, and Kay McMillan also a member from Edmonton. My hon. colleague from Peace River has already introduced Marie Plaizier, who I met when I was in Peace River. I would ask the Assembly to please acknowledge and welcome these women, our Edmonton representatives.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a constituent as well as a student from Harry Ainlay composite high school. He's job shadowing me today. He's kept up very well with the pace. I would like to ask that Jordan Birenbaum please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

I would also like to make an introduction that I should have made a long time ago of a gentleman in the public gallery, Bill Kobluk, who is a member of my constituency, and I believe if I'm correct in saying he was former New Democrat candidate in the constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs. Bill's often here in the House watch-

ing, particularly when health care issues are discussed, and takes every opportunity to call me after the discussions to advise me as to what I should be doing. Bill is a keen watcher of the proceedings of this House. I'd like you to rise and receive our warm welcome.

head: Ministerial Statements

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Alberta Women's Institutes

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege to rise today to recognize Alberta Women's Institutes as they celebrate 90 years of community service to rural Alberta. It is really an honour this afternoon to say a few words about this very special organization.

The first Alberta Women's Institute was founded on February 3, 1909, by Margaret Graham at Lea Park, north of Vermilion, and was built on three important pillars: commitment to community, commitment to family, and commitment to personal growth. Ninety years later these values are just as important.

The Alberta Women's Institutes today are governed by the Alberta Women's Institute Act, which was first proclaimed in 1909. There are now 100 branches of the Alberta Women's Institutes across Alberta with a membership of over 1,300 women in both rural and urban areas. I am proud to add that past members include two of the Famous Five, Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy, whose portraits and contributions are recognized and prominently displayed in these very hallways.

Volunteerism is at the heart of this organization. Countless hours are given each year to their local communities to support hospitals, schools, libraries, and community centres. Members also volunteer at local agricultural fairs and assist in raising funds for various local community projects. By doing so, they bring you strength and stability to our families and when families flourish, nations flourish as well.

In addition, the Alberta Women's Institutes are an important partner with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Together we further the work of local farm safety programs; for example, the Leading Edge social marketing campaign, A Safe Farm Is A Great Place To Grow with Canadian agriculture safety programs, and the classroom agricultural program. My department enjoys a close working relationship with the institutes, and I look forward to this continuing in the future.

Resolutions by the Alberta Women's Institutes have also strongly influenced government decisions including the enactment of signs warning of slow-moving machinery and the use of flashing lights on school buses. The Alberta Women's Institutes are also successful authors and have published three books: *Tractor Trouble*, the first in a series of children's books; *Yesterday*, a pictorial history of agriculture in Alberta; and *Many and Remarkable*, a history of the organization and of the women of rural Alberta.

Nationally the Alberta Women's Institutes works with the Consumers' Association of Canada and the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada on such initiatives as consumer literacy projects. Internationally the institutes have raised thousands of dollars for projects in developing nations and have represented Alberta and Canada at the triennial meetings of the Associated Country Women of the World. The last such meeting was held in Pretoria, South Africa, in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development I have many opportunities to talk about agricultural trends and products and markets. However, there is never enough opportunity to talk about the unsung heroes of rural Alberta, that being rural

women. Their hard work, often in the shadows with little recognition, their commitment, their determination, and their strength are priceless. It has been said that behind every good man there is an even better woman, and nowhere is that more apparent than in our rural communities.

This truly is a celebration. On behalf of Alberta Agriculture and my colleagues in government we congratulate you on this significant achievement. You are a source of inspiration to us all, and we thank you for your countless and tireless contributions toward Alberta families and Alberta communities.

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister in honouring the Women's Institute and recognizing their 90-year service in rural Alberta. This is much more of a personal tribute because I have such great admiration and respect for the Alberta Women's Institute. I was first introduced to the organization by Sylvia McKinley, who for many years was the executive director in the office here in Edmonton. Ever since, when I go into a new community, I look for the Women's Institute and I look for their members. Now, why would a city girl do that? Well, because I know that the Women's Institute members are the backbone of their communities. If you want to know what's going on, ask the Women's Institute members. They'll know.

I have learned a great deal about women in Alberta from the Women's Institute. They taught me about the issues for rural and farm women, which are different from those issues in the city. Their record of advocacy for women and their children is impressive. These are powerful women in their communities. This group isn't stuck in the past either. They are up to date on the issues and always looking for new ways to promote farm safety, teach agriculture, and educate and co-ordinate the volunteers in their community.

My colleague from Lethbridge-East commented to me that he particularly appreciates the opportunities the Women's Institutes offer to younger women to help train those volunteers and the event co-ordinators of the future. A lot of what happens in Alberta is powered by volunteers.

Finally, I note with awe the extensive contribution some Women's Institutes' members have made to Alberta: 55 years of service, 47 years of service, 60 years of service. That's a lot of volunteer hours. I'm thankful for the opportunity to express my gratitude and that of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus to the women of Alberta's Women's Institutes.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

2:00 Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to pay tribute to some Albertans who have dedicated a tremendous amount of effort toward the voluntary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Voluntary Challenge and Registry, or VCR for short, is a stand-alone, not-for-profit corporation that is dedicated to encourage public- and private-sector organizations to voluntarily limit or reduce their net greenhouse gas emissions. VCR was launched at the encouragement of the Alberta and other provincial governments in 1994. Since then more than 850 organizations from all across Canada, all across the economy have joined this initiative. The federal government and all provincial governments are members as

well. The VCR held its second annual Council of Champions leadership awards dinner late last week. Recipients are chosen from all registrants based on their commitment, action, and leadership towards a voluntary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that Alberta-based organizations won eight awards across the 13 categories. The best new submission is awarded to the best action plan of those registrants who submitted for the first time in 1998. This year's winner was Encal Energy Ltd. of Calgary, an exploration and development company. Encal's past and future emission reduction initiatives are expected to lead to a baseline reduction of 38 percent by the year 2000.

The best education institute was awarded to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. SAIT has already stabilized its greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels. Despite a projected doubling in its student population by the year 2005, SAIT's plan will reduce emissions by 20 percent below the 1990 levels by the year 2008.

TransAlta won the electrical energy category. The largest independent power producer in Canada, it has been a world leader in the development of credit trading systems and has been recognized internationally.

When I was in Buenos Aires at the COP4 conference last fall, Dr. Bob Page, vice-president of sustainable development for TransAlta, led the effort to see emissions trading governed by an organization founded on solid business principles. Also, TransAlta was recognized and held up as one of the four companies in the world to demonstrate their sustainable development plan and action plan. TransAlta has reduced emissions to below 1990 levels despite a large increase in its electrical generation, a reduction of nearly 5 megatonnes of carbon dioxide.

Syncrude of Fort McMurray received the top upstream oil and gas honours. They have demonstrated continual improvements in energy intensity, which has reduced the energy used to produce each barrel by about 12 percent over the last decade.

Downstream oil and gas was a tie awarded to Husky Oil and Petro-Canada, both of Calgary. Petro-Canada reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 2.8 percent despite an increase in both oil and gas production. Husky has a very ambitious target of reducing emissions by some 670,000 tonnes per year by the year 2001, and so far they are very much on track, having reached 30 percent of their goal.

The leading association award was handed to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, a national organization based here in Alberta. CAPP's membership produces more than 95 percent of Canada's natural gas and crude oil. Since the VCR program was initiated, CAPP has encouraged its membership to participate. As a result, companies representing 93 percent of the upstream greenhouse gas emissions are participants in the VCR.

Mr. Speaker, there were three finalists in the government category: Ontario, the federal government, and Alberta. I'm very proud to say that Alberta won. The Alberta government has reduced waste emissions by 10 percent, bettered emissions from the transportation fleet by one half a percent, and building energy use by 6 and a half percent.

This is not the first time Albertans have been honoured. This last fall the Pembina Institute chose Alberta as the best government in Canada in reducing greenhouse gases as well.

Mr. Speaker, I earlier today introduced some senior staff in government who have worked tirelessly over the last few years on climate change. I asked them to join us here today so the House could recognize them as they did. I introduced Goldie Edworthy, Mahmuda Ali, and Licia Paddison earlier. Each of these individuals have dedicated long hours and endured endless meetings to ensure

that Alberta continues to be the leader in reducing greenhouse gases.

Albertans have taken the lead on climate change. They are embracing the environment/energy advantage that the Premier so often speaks about. They understand that voluntarily doing the best thing they can makes good business sense and goes a long way to help the environment.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I would like to recognize all those who are working to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases and especially to congratulate the Alberta award winners in this voluntary challenge and registry program.

As the energy industry is so important in this province, it is encouraging to see that Alberta energy companies feature highly in the awards. TransAlta has long taken a leading role in efforts to reduce emissions. They have been at or near the top of the lists each year in the Pembina Institute's independent evaluation of the VCR program. Encal Energy Ltd. of Calgary, Syncrude, Husky Oil, and Petro-Canada must be congratulated for their efforts to reduce emissions. I hope these companies and other award winners, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, will be an example to others. They show just what can be done in this province.

I am told that the city of Calgary was also nominated for an award, and I would like to recognize their efforts even if they were not on the final awards list.

The Alberta government has been awarded for reducing emissions from their own operations, which is good, but of course government emissions are a very small percentage of the total emissions in the province. I believe that the Alberta government could do much more to help other sectors to reduce emissions; for example, programs to encourage retrofitting, perhaps a revolving fund, tax treatments that encourage investments to reduce emissions, and assistance with energy audits. We are still waiting for leadership in these areas. In fact the government closed down their energy efficiency branch a few years ago, which could have at least provided people with information about reducing emissions.

Although the prizewinners in the voluntary challenge program are making good progress, they're only a small number of the participants. The vast majorities have still to demonstrate that emission reduction is a high priority. The voluntary program will not be sufficient to solve the emissions problem and achieve our Kyoto goals. We need to get everyone responding like this year's winners, and that will require government leadership and action. Federal and provincial ministers agreed that they would provide credit for early action. I hope that this program and other incentives will be announced soon. Cutting greenhouse gas emissions needs to become a top priority for all.

head: Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: First question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Lakeland Regional Health Authority

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know from experience that the action of firing a health board is extremely serious and is a decision never to be taken lightly. I also know that a health board should never be fired for standing up for access to publicly funded health care in its region. This morning the Minister of Health disbanded the Lakeland regional health authority board because they listened to their residents and refused to make further cuts. My question is to the Premier. Is this the thanks this government gives to regional health authorities for standing up for patient care?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister took action that was deemed appropriate. He did it in concert and full consultation with and concurrence of the six or seven MLAs involved in the Lakeland regional health authority.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member pointed out, she's had some experience with this particular situation. As a matter of fact she shut down the Two Hills hospital board in 1990, put the Rimbey board under the supervision of an administrator during her term as Minister of Health. It's very interesting to note that in her press release of 1990 relative to the Two Hills board, it says that the facility was in a strong fiscal position. This was a facility that was in a strong fiscal position,

however, the recent review has raised concerns about the appropriateness of some financing reporting which needs to be corrected.

2:10

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that when the hon. Minister of Health supplements, she will find that some of the reasons for the action taken today are the same reasons that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition took when she was the Minister of Health in 1990.

THE SPEAKER: I think we'll try and deal with a little more brevity.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right. I relied on the unanimous recommendations of the Health Facilities Review Committee to make the recommendation.

My question is: on whose advice is the government relying in dismissing its own appointed board?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'm glad she asked the question, because there was a thorough and independent study of the situation relative to the Lakeland board. Mr. Speaker, just to clarify the reasons, the Lakeland regional health authority has experienced long-standing difficulties in coming together as a team in terms of governing the Lakeland region. There is a governance problem. A recent independent review of the RHA indicated that the current board continued to have significant difficulty in making necessary decisions to effectively manage the health system in the Lakeland region and did not have the confidence of the public or the health authority staff, one of the same reasons that the minister of the day in 1990 closed down the Two Hills hospital.

The difficulties experienced by the board had reached the stage of putting at risk the quality of health services being provided to Lakeland residents, Mr. Speaker. That was a major concern of ours. In the best interests of the health system and the Lakeland residents the Minister of Health took the right action by replacing the board with an official administrator until a new board can be appointed.

As I pointed out, this is not the first time such action has been taken with boards in the health sector. I pointed out also that the current leader of the Liberal opposition fired the board, an elected board by the way, of the Two Hills health centre in 1990 when she served as Minister of Health.

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier also knows, the matter did go to court and was adjudicated, and a judge upheld the dismissal.

My third question, Mr. Speaker, is also to the Premier. Is it the Premier's new health policy to fire every board that refuses to put patient care at risk in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. I pointed out in my earlier answer that the difficulties experienced by the board had reached the stage of putting at risk the quality of health services being provided to Lakeland residents. That was one of the prime

reasons that the board was dissolved and an administrator put in place.

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

Pine Shake Roofing

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thousands of Albertans put their trust in this government and roofed their homes with untreated pine shakes, but this trust has proven rather costly. Instead of accepting responsibility, this government has denied responsibility, has ignored the hardship and refused an open dialogue. My first question is: why did this government authorize and promote the untreated pine shake as a roofing material without proper field testing here in Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: That's a good question, and it's perhaps one the hon. member can answer. She was here, Mr. Speaker, in 1986. It's interesting to note that untreated pine shakes were first listed under the Alberta Building Code in March of 1986. That's when the Leader of the Official Opposition was a cabinet member, three years prior to my election as an MLA. She was in a position then to do something about it, and she didn't.

MRS. MacBETH: You know, Mr. Speaker, I used to be told when I was young that when you . . .

THE SPEAKER: Forget about the preamble and move to the question.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, my second question is: in documents obtained through freedom of information, a Department of Labour official states that "the department was asked to promote the pine shake industry." Who directed Labour officials to promote this industry?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is clearly a question that the Minister of Labour can answer, and I will take that question under notice.

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My third question is: given that the government admits knowledge of the pine shake problem in 1997, why did it take a full year to change the Alberta Building Code?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, I'll take that question under notice for the hon. Minister of Labour.

Education Funding

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, last year two out of three Alberta students were enrolled in school boards which were running a deficit. The total shortfall for these 23 school boards was over \$50 million in 1997-98. Edmonton public's '97-98 financial statements show a revenue deficiency of \$10.7 million, the Calgary board of education a \$27.4 million deficiency. My questions are to the Premier. Do government's calculations agree with school boards' own numbers showing that education deficits could triple to at least \$150 million by next year?

MR. KLEIN: I'm sorry. What was the -- I thought it was a statement. Mr. Speaker, maybe I missed something, but I didn't hear the question. There was no question. There was a statement. No question, no answer.

MRS. MacBETH: Does this government have a plan to allow school boards to run deficits indefinitely, or is the plan to force students, parents, teachers into more fund-raising, larger classes, and higher user fees?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there's been a significant reinvestment in education. I have a news release that was put out a little bit more than a year ago, January 9, 1998. The commitment that was made then holds true today.

The Alberta government is adding about \$380 million to total education spending over the next three years . . .

The first year has already passed.

\$171 million to meet the demands of increasing enrolment
\$93 million to increase per-student basic instruction rate by \$251
over the current \$3686 . . .

\$86 million for students with special needs . . .

\$22 million for an Early Literacy Initiative . . .

one of the finest initiatives undertaken in recent years relative to education, to make sure the kids can read by the time they reach grade 3.

\$10 million for a Teacher Aide Program, grades 1 - 6 . . .

\$5 million to extend funding for English as a Second Language.

The list goes on and on. It refers also to capital expenditures and so on.

So we're now in year two of the three-year program, and the commitment remains today as it did when it was made in 1998.

MRS. MacBETH: Fifty million this year in deficit, \$150 million next.

With increases in labour costs of 3 to 4 percent per year but with increases of only 1 percent per year in government grant support, exactly how are school boards supposed to make up the difference and balance their books?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we're working hard to strike the right balance and make sure that we have a maintainable and sustainable education system. That's a question that is quite specific, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Education respond.

2:20

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has really outlined a number of areas where there have been funding increases apart from the 1 percent grant rate increase that has been referred to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. It is not correct for the Leader of the Opposition to leave us with the impression that there is only a 1 percent increase in funding.

There is a significant amount that has been spent in a number of different areas, but perhaps the most interesting thing about this analysis is that we shouldn't be looking at how much money we spend but how we spend it. What I'd like to do is refer members to *Hansard*, May 7, 1987, when the then Minister of Education said:

I would quote to the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo the words of his own leader . . . I am paraphrasing: "It's not the dollars we spend; it's how we spend them." I couldn't agree with him more.

Mr. Speaker, that's a very odd situation: a Conservative quoting a Liberal who was a Conservative who is paraphrasing a Liberal who is also quoting a Liberal leader. I couldn't agree with her more.

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

National Social Union

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier and the Provincial Treasurer head off to the Unite the Right convention this

weekend, they sure aren't singing the same song. While the Premier and the Prime Minister were in Ottawa two weeks ago inking the social union deal to the tune of -- and I wish I could sing it -- *Behind Closed Doors*, and the Provincial Treasurer was at home singing: *You Can't Always Get What You Want*. Can the Premier please explain what in the social union deal would so trouble the Provincial Treasurer as to lead him openly to express his disagreement in the February 15 *National Post* article on which I'm sure the Premier is well briefed by his staff?

Speaker's Ruling

Questions about Media Reports

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Members, we know that one of the things we don't really do in the question period is discuss the authenticity or the veracity or the legitimacy of statements made in newspapers. To ask an hon. member of Executive Council to verify something in newspapers violates the tradition of the British parliamentary system.

National Social Union

(continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier explain exactly who he consulted with, other than his inner circle and the minister who is responsible for sending out grossly biased and poorly designed questionnaires to AISH recipients, before inking the social union deal in Ottawa two weeks ago? Whom did he consult?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the social union had absolutely nothing to do with AISH. It simply wasn't discussed. AISH is a made-in-Alberta program. We were talking about a social union in the national context. AISH wasn't brought up. The Prime Minister didn't bring it up. Mr. Bouchard didn't bring it up. I didn't bring it up. I don't know where the hon. member is getting his information and how he comes to the conclusion that somehow AISH was part of the discussion on social union. It's beyond me.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When seeking the so-called improvements to the social union deal like balkanizing the Canadian tax system, dismantling medicare, will the Treasurer be singing solo, or will he have the Premier joining him in a duet?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what newspaper the hon. member has been reading or what radio station he's been listening to or what television station he's been watching, but clearly there was nothing in the social union talks to indicate that we're going to break down medicare. As a matter of fact, part of the talks, separate from the whole issue of the social union, was the agenda item on health care and the restoration of funding for health care. Indeed all 10 premiers and the two territorial leaders signed a letter, including Mr. Bouchard, that said that we would commit ourselves, our jurisdictions to the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act, and we would commit to make sure that if there were extra dollars, those dollars would flow to frontline services. That hardly sounds to me like breaking apart the Canada health system.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Grain Transportation and Marketing

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta farmers continue to wait for the federal government to act to remove inefficiencies from our grain handling and transportation system. Throughout 1998 the federal review considered what changes are

needed to improve the overall operation of the system. Given the government of Alberta's extensive participation throughout this effort, can the Minister of Transportation and Utilities advise the Assembly on the current status of this review process?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly a very current and very important issue to the grain producing segment of Alberta's agriculture. Back in the winter of '96-97 the logistics of our grain handling and marketing system were in very sad disarray. As a matter of fact before the end of the year farmers picked up something like an additional \$60 million of cost because the logistics broke down. As a result of that, the federal government with the encouragement of the provinces put together a one-man task force headed by Judge Willard Estey.

The judge has subsequent to that traveled extensively throughout western Canada, met with virtually every stakeholder who had an interest in this situation, and ultimately came forward with some recommendations. The recommendations covered a broad field. As a matter of fact 15 elements were clearly identified as having to be dealt with. At this stage the recommendations that the judge has tabled were reviewed by the stakeholders, by the provinces, and certainly Alberta has taken a very leading role in this process.

MR. SEVERTSON: Can the minister indicate whether the government has commented formally to the federal government on the Estey report?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Yes, indeed, and this is rather a unique situation, because for the first time, at least in my memory, the four western provinces have come together with a common presentation. I'll just quote from one of the letters, which I'll table, Mr. Speaker.

The four Western Provinces continue to work together to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the grain handling and transportation system. We believe the report of the Estey Grain Review contains recommendations that would improve the system and generate savings to producers.

This is a critical element. The producers up until now have really been picking up all additional costing that's coming forward. The system has not been efficiency driven, and that is one of the critical characteristics that has to come forward. The provinces have unanimously agreed with this, the presentation has been made to the federal minister, and certainly we do have a co-operative effort as far as the four western provinces are concerned. We have made three submissions now as joint efforts, and quite frankly we are hoping that the net result will be a more efficient system that indeed will capture more of the potential revenue into the pockets of the producers.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary: what will the minister's activity be in the process from this point forward?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The next step, Mr. Speaker, is somewhat unclear. Indeed the submissions have been made to the federal minister. The judge has made his recommendations. As to what the next step is going to be, we're still waiting direction from the federal government.

We as western ministers will be meeting next week and again meeting with the federal minister on the 5th of March to discuss further this issue and to have clarification of just what the next step will be. It's critical. It's important that we move as expeditiously as possible on these recommendations, because what we really need in this country is a cost-effective, efficient system so that our producers can continue to be globally competitive.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc.

2:30

Education Funding

(continued)

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier. A concerned parent in Entwistle tells in a letter of the overcrowded conditions under which her children are trying to learn. She cites a grade 3, 4 split class with 36, now 37 students and a grade 10 class with 52 students for which "there were plans to hire another teacher to help with the load, but these plans had to be scrapped to help deal with this financial crisis." To the Premier: are split-grade classes with close to 40 children an acceptable outcome of government education policy?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the situation in Entwistle. I'd certainly be glad to discuss this with the MLA for that particular area.

Relative to the appropriateness of split classes and class sizes I'll defer to the Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the provincial government does not have a policy as it relates to class sizes. What we do is provide equitable funding for students regardless of where they are in the province. That equitable funding in many rural areas in particular has been seen to be very, very positive so that the amount of funding that is available for students is not dependant upon the size of a tax base but is based instead on the number of students and the needs of those students.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at individual cases of classroom size, I would be happy to undertake to look into the situation in Entwistle. In looking at some of these cases in the past, we have sometimes found that there have been good reasons for the types of class sizes that there are. In some cases class sizes are small because the needs of the students require those classes to be small, and in some cases class sizes are larger. It will depend upon what is being taught, who is doing the teaching, how it's being taught, and these are decisions that are made at a school board level with respect to policies. What you'll generally find is that smaller class sizes are found in division 1 classes -- that is to say, up to grade 3 -- and then larger classes start to emerge as kids become more independent in their learning.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. To the Premier. I'm sorry; I understood that he had been copied this letter, Mr. Speaker.

Are the dismissal of teachers and packed classrooms to avoid boards going into debt acceptable outcomes of government policy?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, again in examining the classroom size issue, there are different classroom sizes that will vary depending on the school that you go to and the school jurisdiction that you go to. Our commitment is to ensure that the funding is equitable and fair, and I think that Albertans understand that. The whole issue of policies as they relate to classroom size are strictly within the ambit of school boards.

DR. MASSEY: Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: is yet more fundraising and paying more school user fees the only outcome left for this parent and thousands like her across this province?

MR. KLEIN: I'll defer to the hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, our desire is to work with school

boards to ensure that there is good education for students. We want kids to succeed. We want teachers to succeed. We want school boards to succeed. We'll work with school boards to deal with their issues of management so that they will find themselves in the black.

The hon. member earlier referred to issues as they related to the deficits of school boards. It is our intention to work with those school boards to ensure that they will have a plan put in place that is sound and is achievable to ensure that those deficits are no longer the case.

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

Farm Income Support Programs

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of agriculture. Inasmuch as the federal government is making funding available to all provinces to assist agricultural producers that are in distress due to markets or weather, is the minister able to tell the House how much federal money the province of Alberta is eligible for and in what manner that money will be provided to agricultural producers within Alberta?

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next week, February 23 and 24, hon. Minister Vanclief, the federal minister of agriculture, has invited all provincial ag ministers to a meeting to put some further discussion and reach a final conclusion on this agreement that we've been trying to negotiate since the first announcement came out in early November. As of yesterday Saskatchewan has finally agreed to come to the table and participate in the program. We are now working out some of the clauses in the agreement with respect to NISA, looking at some of the caps, et cetera, but once that is identified, we sign on, and then we'll know what dollars are going to be coming to the province.

It seems that the contract itself, the agreement, will be mirrored on FIDP, the Alberta farm income disaster program. There may be some changes to it but not drastic. The bottom line is that the program has to be GATT-green, it will not be commodity specific, and it'll be based upon the whole farm insurance program.

The amount of money, Mr. Speaker, is difficult to determine. The way FIDP guidelines are applied in the provinces, you look in your business plan a year ahead, and you try to anticipate what the 53,000 or so farmers in the province will experience in terms of weather conditions and commodity price drops. We have estimated about \$100 million payment for the tax year 1998. So once all the applications are received and we cut the cheques for all those farmers, then we will know the total amount. The federal government said that they will pay 60 percent of that.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have no supplemental question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Auditor General's report on the Premier's involvement in the refinancing of West Edmonton Mall the Premier is quoted as saying that the policy objective of Treasury Branches is to make prudent "lending decisions based on the commercial viability of the loan applicants." That's the quote. My questions are to the Premier. Firstly, why did the Premier decide in February of 1994 that the private-sector Gentra deal was an imprudent lending decision and not commercially viable?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's all in the report. Sixteen pages of questions were submitted to me. I answered those questions. One was asking for my opinion as to the role of the ATB. I offered my opinion.

Mr. Speaker, I can simply point out that after all was said and done, after hundreds of documents were examined, after statutory declarations were given, with the exception of Mr. Leahy and the Ghermezians, the Auditor General concluded that he "could not find any evidence that any elected official gave a direct order for ATB to provide the October 1994 financing." Again, on page 12 of the report the Auditor General concludes that he "was unable to discover any evidence to support [Mr. Leahy's] assertion that he took this action based on direction from elected officials."

On page 13, Mr. Speaker -- I refer to these because these are really the important parts of the report -- the Auditor General concludes that he "could discover no evidence to support Mr. Leahy's assertion that elected officials directed him to enter into these agreements."

MRS. SOETAERT: Answer the question.

MR. KLEIN: No, I am not going to answer any more questions on this particular matter. It has been thoroughly investigated by the Auditor General. As I pointed out yesterday, there are about six or seven court actions in association with this particular situation. Soon there is going to be filed on behalf of the government a statement of defence to one of the latest statements of claim, and that will completely tie it up in the courts. I assume that if the hon. member wants to contact one of the many, many lawyers involved with this, perhaps he can suggest that maybe he ask some of these questions in a court of law.

2:40

MR. SAPERS: Given the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions contained in the various statements made by government officials and reported in the Auditor General's report, will the Premier at least tell Albertans: whose banking expertise did his government rely on to reach the conclusion that the Gentra deal was inappropriate given that the government's own bank, the ATB, said it was a commercially appropriate solution?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, those were all questions that were posed to various parties by the Auditor General. Replies were given to the Auditor General in statutory declarations. All I can say is that the West Edmonton Mall was then, as it is today, a major economic and tourism force or component in this province, and I'm sure the Liberals would agree with that. It is a huge economic generator responsible for 23,000 direct or indirect jobs. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark was also very, very concerned and urged the government to take action to protect the mall. All I can say -- and I'll say it one more time -- is that whatever was done by the government of that time was done to protect a major economic endeavour, a major economic and tourism enterprise in this province.

MR. SAPERS: Given that the status of the mall is such a major economic enterprise in this province, the Premier surely must have made some cost-benefit risk analysis. Will he tell the Assembly, will he tell Albertans: what did the Premier determine to be the appropriate risk and the cost to taxpayers from the decision to scuttle the Gentra deal? Was it \$200 million to be put at risk, \$300 million, \$400 million, \$500 million, \$600 million? What was the decision that you made, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. member does not listen,

and he doesn't read. All of that information was provided to the Auditor General. On the basis of the information that was provided to the Auditor General . . .

MR. DICKSON: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KLEIN: He can raise all the points of order he wants.

The fact is that statutory declarations were given; various documents were given to the Auditor General. The same questions that the hon. member is asking were asked by the Auditor General, and at the end of the day -- and I'm going to read it one more time -- the Auditor General has concluded that he could discover no evidence to support any assertion that elected officials directed Mr. Leahy to enter into these agreements. That is the long and the short of the situation, that there was no inappropriate political action relative to this issue.

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

Bingo Review Committee

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many clubs and associations and groups in St. Albert that work bingos. Bingos are important to them as a way of raising funds for their many community activities and certainly for the services that they provide. There is a review occurring in the bingo industry which includes a consultation process with members of the bingo industry. To the minister responsible for the Gaming and Liquor Commission: will this consultation process involving the bingo review committee include these individual clubs?

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, yes, it will. It is the intention of the committee to have all of the bingo industry stakeholders involved in the review.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you. I was wondering, too, how the individual member groups, whether they belong to an association or whether they don't, will know when and where to participate, please.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, this committee is being chaired by the hon. Samuel Lieberman, a retired Alberta court judge, and it is my understanding that the steering committee has sent out letters inviting all association bingos and community bingos to come and participate in the review. It's also my understanding that they will be placing advertisements in weeklies and newspapers to further invite people to participate in the review process and that they will be asking for written submissions to come forward to have input into the review. They should be in, I believe, by the 22nd of March. They are hopeful that all stakeholders involved in the bingo industry will in fact participate, because this is a review of their own industry, so it's in their best interests to get involved with the review process and make sure that they put forward their points.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Madam Minister.

My final question is: will there be any change in direction in the use of credits to volunteer bingo workers as they attend these bingos?

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, this question has been put forward by the committee as part of the terms of reference, and they will be asking the bingo industry and the people from the communities to assess that on their own and come back to us with a recommendation, which I certainly will bring forward.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Notwithstanding Clause

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last year we saw the aborted attempt to invoke the notwithstanding clause, to the prejudice of sterilization victims. Then we saw the government's confused reaction to the Vriend decision. The government's response at the time was to create a committee of some cabinet ministers to decide when it might be appropriate to suspend the constitutional rights of some Albertans. My question to the Premier this afternoon is simply this. Will the Premier describe in detail this afternoon the process that Albertans can expect to see used when this government chooses to suspend their constitutional rights? What's the process going to be?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, where has this member been? Where's he living? Is he living in isolation? Well, I see that he spent about \$40,000 traveling around the smallest constituency in the province. Who has he been listening to? I have never heard a comment, ever, that we were about to suspend the constitutional rights of anyone. I don't know where he's getting this. This is absolute nonsense. There has been no mention, no statement by any member of this government. The only statement that I've heard relative to this comes today from that member's mouth. No one here has said that we intend to suspend anyone's constitutional rights. Is that correct? Right. So I don't know what he's talking about.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Premier would be this. Just when is he going to share with members of this Assembly and Albertans the product of over 10 months of work by his so-called fences committee? We're anxiously waiting to see the results, Mr. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Well, we don't have a so-called fences committee. Again, another phrase that was coined. We just call it a committee of government. I don't know what the committee is called. I don't think we've ever given it a name, Mr. Speaker.

Some work is being done on this particular issue to reflect the views and the wishes and the feelings of the majority of Albertans relative to this particular issue. Where we are with it at this particular time I'll have the hon. Attorney General and Justice minister respond to because he's the chair of the committee.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Premier. The committee actually just met this past week to review some suggestions, and we expect to have something to government caucus to consider, I would suggest, within a month.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, my final question would be this. Can we expect that when we see the imaginary report from the imaginary committee, we will see some delineation of the circumstances under which this government proposes to invoke section 33 of the Charter?

2:50

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, believe me; when the report is tabled, it won't be imaginary. It will be in black and white. When the hon. member isn't busy traveling around his constituency at great expense, he might take time to read it.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

Pork Industry

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our farm commodity prices are the lowest they've been in many years, and farmers across Canada and the United States are hurting and demanding that their governments assist them. In fact, U.S. hog farmers are demanding a \$50,000 per farm direct subsidy. The USDA did announce recently a \$50 million program to the American hog producers, and other provinces have established direct loan programs to their hog farmers that our farmers feel are superior to what we've offered in Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Could he please inform the House of the status of the hog industry in Alberta and set the record straight on all these programs in other provinces and in the U.S. and explain what their effect is in Alberta?

MR. STELMACH: I'll try, Mr. Speaker. The situation within Alberta: market prices have increased dramatically since the end of December. In fact, we'll be looking at about \$1.38, \$1.41 or so, forward prices, in April and May. Today they're well over a dollar, so things are improving there.

With respect to the American announcement, when we were in Colorado, we did discuss this with the newly appointed Secretary of Agriculture. The program the hon. member is referring to is a \$50 million program to subsidize the production of approximately 100 million hogs, and it's supposed to be capped at \$2,500 per producer. We haven't got any further details on it, and in fact when we were in Colorado a few weeks ago, they had got no paper at all from the federal government.

With respect to other provinces, the only province that's directly subsidizing production in hogs is the province of Quebec. All other provinces haven't. We so far under FIDP have processed over a million dollars of claims this early part of the year and are moving quickly to finish all of the other applications to date.

MR. MARZ: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, would the minister consider using the Alberta share of the \$900 million national farm aid package as a direct payout to Alberta hog producers?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, no. A direct payment to a specific commodity clearly violates the WTO and our trade agreements, and given the fact that we do export about 60 to 65 percent of our agricultural product outside the province of Alberta, any trade actions, tariffs, would cause great chaos in our market. So we will not be making any direct, commodity-specific payments. All the payments will be based on a whole farm income program.

MR. MARZ: My second supplementary to the same minister: would the minister negotiate with the federal government to use the Alberta portion of the new federal transfers to implement some of the recommendations in the Estey commission report on transportation?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, most of the recommendations coming out of the Estey report are suggesting changes in grain handling and logistics be solely covered and implemented by the federal government. However, clearly when the Crow rate was eliminated, about \$1.3 billion was paid out to western Canadian farmers to compensate, but that only covered really one year's cost of transporting grain to port.

We export about \$622 million of federal fuel excise tax to Ottawa. We're asking for part of that to come to Alberta, because it's integral -- we have to maintain the extra infrastructure that's now necessary to move bulk commodity products by road given the increased

number of closures of smaller grain elevators and short-line abandonment. We are going to discuss these issues in Victoria on February 23 and 24 and will report back to this Legislature on the results of those negotiations. We will try anything and everything possible to ensure that we get the best deal for Alberta producers.

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

Jason Dix Prosecution Review

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Department of Justice and the RCMP have come under scrutiny for the Jason Dix murder investigation. A killer is still on the loose because of an apparently botched investigation and prosecution. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. When will the minister publicly produce his department's investigation of the Dix prosecution?

MR. HAVELOCK: I don't have a specific date for that, Mr. Speaker. However, I will check with department officials regarding the matter.

I would like to, however, rebut what the hon. member stated. The process worked. What occurred in this situation is that after a review of the evidence that was presented before the courts, some very senior Crown prosecutors within the department determined that there was no longer a likelihood of a conviction with respect to the case, and therefore it was withdrawn. So while we certainly didn't get there as quickly as we would have liked, nevertheless the system did work. Also, in light of the decision, we are working with members of the police community and Crown prosecutors and the judiciary regarding some informant testimony guidelines which are out there right now and circulating throughout the justice community to ensure that this type of thing does not happen again.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. My second question is to the same minister. Given that the RCMP have concluded an investigation of this case, when will the minister produce that review?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, if I'm not mistaken, the RCMP review is their review, and if they wish to release that report, I believe that would be their decision. It's not my decision.

MS OLSEN: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister can release that RCMP report if it comes into his possession -- and that's under the federal freedom of information act -- will the minister request the RCMP to agree to its release instead of keeping it secret?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly raise the issue with the RCMP. We need to keep in mind that through the surveys and the polling that we've done in this province, the RCMP are a highly respected institution. They're very responsive to public concern, and in fact they've been very responsive regarding this issue and other issues. What I would like to do is sit down with the assistant commissioner. But, again, I will not commit in this House -- I think it would be inappropriate for me to do so -- to releasing a report which is compiled by the RCMP with respect to their own internal investigations.

I'd like to also comment, Mr. Speaker, generally on some of the remarks which have been made by the hon. member pertaining to the actions of the RCMP in recent weeks. I find them to be highly irresponsible, and I feel that as members of this Legislature we should support our public institutions. Not only should we support the public institutions, but we should support the process which is in place under which those public institutions function. I think it's

important that we underscore that in this Legislature and, quite frankly, quit trying to undermine the credibility of institutions by the types of comments which have been made and also by the way in which the question was asked today.

The RCMP, again, have investigated the matter. If they wish to release the report, then that's their decision.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Education Funding

(continued)

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am visiting school councils and parent advisory committees within the public, separate, and private schools in my constituency, and I have heard school councils within the public system raise concerns regarding funding. There has been discussion of equity within the system, that funds raised within Calgary are not being used to support education within the city. My question is to the Minister of Education. Can the minister explain how education is funded within the province and why Calgary may be a net contributor of education property taxes within the province?

3:00

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member, I have also traveled to schools and met with school councils throughout the province and also within the city of Calgary, and I'm happy to shed a little bit of light on this particular issue. First of all, I want to make it very clear from the outset that Calgary school boards receive the same level of support as school boards in other parts of the province. As I indicated in one of my responses earlier today, the support is not dependent upon the size of the property tax base. All funding is related directly to the number of students and those specific student needs.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we do provide to every school board in the province is an equal per student amount for basic instructional grants, and then we add additional amounts of money for meeting the special needs of students. This could be in many different areas; for example, severe disabilities, students who have English as a Second Language requirements, or young children with severe special needs in early childhood services. As an example, the Calgary board of education has a higher proportion of students needing ESL programming, and accordingly they receive more money to reflect this. The Edmonton public board has more students who have severe disabilities, and accordingly they receive more funding to reflect that. Transportation costs in jurisdictions like the Northland school division are higher, and accordingly they receive money to reflect that.

In 1997 Calgary boards received \$611 million in provincial education funding. Roughly 56 percent came from education property tax, and 44 percent came from the general revenue fund. So even if all of the property taxes collected in Calgary were spent on education in the city of Calgary, they still would have to receive a top-up from the provincial government coming from the general revenue fund in order to properly fund those two school systems.

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental question is to the same minister. Because parents are also concerned about fund-raising, can the minister tell this Assembly whether school councils are required to fund-raise for basic items such as textbooks?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that

school councils are not required to do any fund-raising of any sort. The fact is that fund-raising has always been part of the system that is used to provide extra services, things like playground equipment, field trips, sports uniforms, and extras that staff and parents want for their schools. Now, decisions regarding fund-raising have traditionally been made by the school principal in consultation with the school council within policy guidelines that are established by school boards.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind members of the Assembly that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods last fall claimed that one of Alberta's school boards was forced to fund-raise to the tune of over \$450 per student, in his words, for core services. When that claim was investigated, it was found that the money being raised for core items amounted to about one-half of 1 percent. Large portions of that \$450 were spent on things like school uniforms for sports teams, cafeteria receipts, locker rentals, and a number of other things. So to suggest that this fund-raising is being applied for core things, if that is the case, then always school councils should broach the subject with their school principals and hold accountable the trustees for the policies that relate to fund-raising.

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, my second supplemental is also to the Minister of Education. School councils also appear to be fund-raising for technology such as computers and hardware. Can the minister tell us what funding this government has provided to boards for technology?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has committed \$85 million for the technology integration funding over a period of five years from the school years 1996-97 through to 2000-2001. This commitment is intended to improve access to computer technology for students. In addition to technology integration funding, which is earmarked for hardware, instructional software, and networking components, school jurisdictions also receive the basic instructional grant on a per student basis. If school boards choose to invest some of their basic instructional grant rate into support for technology plans that they identify, then school boards have the flexibility to do that.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: In 30 seconds from now, hon. members, I shall call on three members for Members' Statements today in this particular order: first of all, the hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Calgary Taxi Commission

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to make a private member's statement regarding an important issue in the city of Calgary. During the days leading to the 1995 Quebec referendum, Mr. Roger Richard, the owner of the Associated Cabs company in Calgary, sought and received permission from the Calgary Taxi Commission to place on each of his cabs a bumper sticker that had a picture of the Canadian flag on it and two words: Canada united. Mr. Richard is a very patriotic person, and he wished to make a symbolic and patriotic gesture at a time of great national importance.

After the referendum ended, Mr. Richard decided that it was still important to display his patriotism and left the Maple Leaf bumper stickers on his cars, where they remain to this very day. Sadly -- sadly -- not everyone shares Mr. Richard's enthusiasm for Canadian unity. The Calgary Taxi Commission is requesting that he not place

the Maple Leaf on any new taxis he puts into commission and that he remove the stickers from any taxis presently in service.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that an institution of government would waste its time, energy, and money persecuting someone who simply wishes to display his patriotism on his own private property. Today I'm urging the Calgary Taxi Commission to reverse their decision and allow Mr. Richard and Associated Cabs and his 700 employees to proudly display their patriotism freely.

My constituents called the incident the shameful act of the week, but I say it's the outrageous act of the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Education Funding

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been asked to bring the following letter to the attention of the Premier and the Minister of Education:

I am writing as a concerned parent of Dan Knott junior high school. I have been informed of the current financial problems facing the Edmonton public school board and, more specifically, my child's school. Without additional funds I fear for the education of my child and for the future of education in our province.

It is my understanding that each school has been mandated to balance their budget in the next fiscal year. This impossible task is made only more difficult because each school will be seriously underfunded. This will have drastic consequences for Dan Knott junior high. First, our half-time teacher librarian will be replaced by an aide, who may be in the library half time but no more. This means the door to the library will be locked, or we will have an open-door policy with no security for equipment or resources. It is also unfortunate that at a time when the new language arts curriculum is emphasizing research, there will be no teacher librarian to assist the students and staff.

Secondly, the counselor position is to be eliminated. The Edmonton public school board has as one of their distinct priorities: "high standards of well-being of students and staff." Not having a counselor does not seem to be the way to achieve this.

Thirdly, it is inevitable that Dan Knott will lose teachers. This means increased class sizes. Costs of books, supplies, and paper continually increase. Unfortunately Dan Knott will be unable to purchase new books for the library, nor do they have the funds to rebind or replace tattered textbooks. Dan Knott also has the problem of being an older school desperately in need of paint, repair, carpet, and furniture.

Alberta Education has been pushing technology. Dan Knott has had to put thousands of dollars, including funds raised by the parent group, towards this. This money means other areas had to go without. There is no way Dan Knott can keep up with the continual necessary upgrading of technology.

For the past five years schools have been trying to do the best they could with what they had. This is the wrong message. We will change that message now.*

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

3:10

Canada Winter Games

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to rise and wish the best of luck to Team Alberta's 324 athletes and coaches participating in the upcoming 1999 Canada Winter Games in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Since 1967 the Winter Games have been a Canadian tradition, and Alberta has been a proud participant. For the past 32 years these games have provided young people with an opportunity to learn about dedication, commitment, hard work, leadership, team skills, and sportsmanship, which are so much a part

of growth and development. These are valuable qualities both on and off the field of play.

Over the course of two weeks beginning February 20 to March 6, Team Alberta athletes and staff will represent our province. They will be cheered on and closely watched by family, friends, and spectators. I'm proud to say that at various times those supporters will include the Minister of Community Development, myself, and our colleague the Member for Fort McMurray. I am confident that what we will see in Corner Brook, from Team Canada's youngest member, 10-year-old rhythmic gymnast Theresa MacDonald, to our oldest member, 24-year-old wheelchair basketball athlete Chris Magneson, is the class and sportsmanship that contribute to Canada's reputation of excellence in sport.

Amateur sports systems in the province play an important role in the development of youth. Local, regional, and zone competitions prepare athletes for broader national and international competitions. The Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, of which I'm privileged to be a board member, supports and encourages Alberta's amateur athletes. The foundation has contributed a total of \$900,000 to the 1999 Canada Winter Games over a four-year period to offset the cost of team training, selections, and team operations.

With the opening of the ceremonies only two short days away, I invite all the members of this Assembly to join me in wishing the best of luck to all our fine young Alberta athletes at the upcoming Canada Winter Games.

head: Projected Government Business

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(5) I'm requesting advice as to the order of government business to be brought before the Assembly in the ensuing week.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to start off by indicating that there is some flexibility in what I will be saying, but certainly the Opposition House Leader will be kept apprised of any changes.

On Monday, February 22, in the afternoon we will be proceeding with second reading of bills 1, 2, 3, and 4 and consideration of the Speech from the Throne. The same will take place in the evening.

On Tuesday, February 23, at 4:30 there will be some discussion relating to the Easter and sessional adjournment motions and second reading again on bills 1 through 4 and as per the Order Paper what else might be coming up at that time. In the evening, second reading again on bills 1 through 4 and consideration of the Speech from the Throne again, then whatever is remaining on the Order Paper.

On Wednesday evening at 8 p.m. we will be getting into supplementary supply messages and motions and second reading of bills 5, 7, and 10 and again some time spent on the Speech from the Throne.

On Thursday afternoon we will be in Committee of Supply to look at supplementary supply and then second reading of bills 5, 7, and 10 and some more Speech from the Throne.

THE SPEAKER: We have two notices of purported points of order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Point of Order Tabling a Cited Document

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Just for old times' sake.

*This quote could not be verified at the time of publication .

I'm rising under *Beauchesne* 495, sixth edition, and I am referring to an exchange between myself and the Premier during question period in which at least on two occasions the Premier referred to a document, namely his 16-page statutory declaration, which he has reportedly supplied to the Auditor General. I think the Premier also referred to this 16-page statutory declaration yesterday.

Beauchesne 495(1) is fairly clear: "A Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House without being prepared to lay it on the Table." In sub (2) it reads in part: "It has been admitted that a document which has been cited ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interest."

Mr. Speaker, the Premier even went further as to suggest that I either could not or did not read or understand. I think you'll share with me my frustration that of course I have not been able to read this document which the Premier constantly refers to in his defence because he has not supplied that document. As the Premier continues to refer to it in the Assembly, I would appreciate your ruling as it pertains to section 495 in *Beauchesne*, which I believe would compel the Premier to bring that document into this Assembly.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have expected better from the hon. member in light of his vast experience in being Opposition House Leader. However, if you look closely at 495(1), it states specifically:

A Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House without being prepared to lay it on the Table.

Quite clearly the Premier did not read or quote from the document and is therefore not obligated to table it.

I think also generally, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has concluded and quite appropriately, based on the repeated questions from the hon. member, that he has either not read the Auditor General's report or does not understand the Auditor General's report. The Premier has stated time and again in the House that he has answered all of the queries from the Auditor General, and the Auditor General considered his responses when he issued the report. I would suggest that if the hon. member still has some difficulty with the report, perhaps he'd like to ask the Auditor General some questions.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. members. I think the key citation for this is 495(3): "A public document referred to but not cited or quoted by a Minister need not be tabled." My recollection and understanding of all of this is that the Premier certainly quoted from the Auditor General's report and has made mention of the fact that he made a submission but didn't quote from it. So I think 495(3) is the one that pertains to this matter: it "need not be tabled."

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Point of Order Answers to Oral Questions

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point of order I'm raising relates to the exchange between my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood and the Minister of Justice. My authorities would be *Erskine May*, 22nd edition, page 305; *Beauchesne* 408(2) and 417; and then Standing Order 23(1).

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that there was a very specific question put about a particular RCMP investigation. It was put to the Minister of Justice. He responded to that, which was fine. He then said in effect -- and I'm paraphrasing because I don't have his exact words -- while he had the floor that he had some concerns with observations made by my colleague at another time and another place that had something to do with the RCMP.

It's really quite clear in *Erskine May*, and I'll simply read the first sentence, which I'm relying on.

An answer should be confined to the points contained in the question, with such explanation only as renders the answer intelligible, though a certain latitude is permitted to Ministers of the Crown; and supplementary questions, without debate or comment, may, within due limits, be addressed to them, which are necessary . . . And these are the operative words, Mr. Speaker.

. . . for the elucidation of the answers that they have given.

The gratuitous advice proffered by the Minister of Justice with respect to what members might or might not be saying on other investigations and other issues outside this Assembly are not, in my respectful submission, a proper matter or content for response of a minister in Oral Question Period.

Thank you.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, the way I interpreted the question from the hon. member was that she was perhaps raising some questions regarding the integrity of the RCMP concerning the Dix investigation.

Also, I do need to underscore and emphasize for all members of the Legislature that in the Legislature and in fact outside of the Legislature we should be careful as to what we say regarding matters which are before the courts. If any member of the Legislature inappropriately comments when a matter is before the courts, it is my responsibility as the Attorney General to make them aware of that, and I will continue to do that. "Why?" you might ask. Because we must protect the integrity of the process. I felt that it was an opportune time because the member has raised the actions of the RCMP with respect to a particular case, and I felt it was appropriate to point out to the member and perhaps underscore for all members of the House that we should be very restrained in any comments we make either in this Legislature or outside the House when matters are before the courts.

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

3:20

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In relation to this, my questions today dealt strictly with a specific release of documents.

All my adult life prior to politics I was a police officer, and I at no time in this question or at any other time have challenged the integrity of any police agency at all. In fact, I hold all of those members in the highest regard: my past colleagues, colleagues in other policing agencies. In fact, I also hold lawyers, defence and Crown counsel, and judges in that same high esteem. My job now is as the Justice critic for the Liberal Party, and my role is to hold the Justice minister accountable for the actions of people who fall under his department. I think I've been very effective in doing that, and he's given me a lot of assistance. In that vein I say that the Justice minister has made many comments that I'm sure he wishes he hadn't, and I guess it's just my turn. I will only consider the source of the comments that he made today.

Thank you.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, the hon. member did specifically . . .

THE SPEAKER: We're not having a debate here now. I've already recognized the hon. Deputy Government House Leader once on this point of order and heard the other one.

You know, let's smile, let's recognize decorum is all essential, all important, and let's recognize that sometimes the words that we hear are not necessarily the words the way they were delivered. So let's

all become a little less sensitive, and let's move forward with Orders of the Day.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Fritz moved:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable H.A. "Bud" Olson, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate February 17: Dr. Panu]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. acting leader of the New Democrat opposition.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAVELOCK: Are you going to sing?

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, I'm severely challenged on that side; otherwise I would very much like to.

Let me start by saying that it's my privilege and my pleasure to respond to the Speech from the Throne delivered the other day by the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor. I want to thank him for his presence here and delivering the speech.

The throne speech is an important event. It's an important statement of the government of the day. It lays out in very broad outlines the blueprint of the program of legislative action, of development of policies, of implementation of those policies that the government intends to undertake during the year in question. So in that sense the speech is very important. My challenge is to say a few things clearly and hopefully eloquently in the very limited time that I as acting leader of the third party in the House have at my disposal. All I have is 20 minutes, so I'd better get going.

The main theme, Mr. Speaker, of the speech of course was: striking the right balance. When I read this title first in advertisement leading up to the Premier's address to the province, I was rather pleased. I thought that there is perhaps a reconsideration of the course that this government has followed over the last four or five years, six years, and that it is indeed interested in striking a new balance, a new path, a new course of action. So I listened very carefully to the Premier's speech on TV, and I wasn't unhappy that the Premier in fact did speak directly to the people of the province, the citizens of Alberta. My concern was that since the Premier as a member of the Assembly was doing this and this Assembly is represented by three different parties, what he should have done was invite the parties in opposition to also have an opportunity to respond and to comment on what the Premier had to say on that day.

Secondly, my concern had to do with the expenses incurred in getting the speech onto TV. Having decided to go to a private TV station, the government had to spend close to, I understand, \$73,000 in order to deliver the speech. I wish the government had chosen the public TV station, CBC, which would have provided of course a free opportunity for the government, would have saved us all \$73,000 or more, and would also have provided us the opportunity to respond. [interjections] My friends on the opposite side of course don't like CBC, so they're willing to waste taxpayers' money in order to do

this. However, I have only 20 minutes, so I would hope that I can be heard, Mr. Speaker, with patience.

Striking the right balance is not what this address from the throne speech is indicating. As a matter of fact, it shows to me that the government has lost balance altogether. It doesn't seem to have a very clear vision of where it wants to go, of what direction it wants to follow. There isn't an overarching vision that informs the proposed actions that are anticipated in this address.

This morning I tried to look at very briefly last year's throne speech, and I found that this year's throne speech marks a striking departure in tone from last year's address. Last year's address focused on people development, focused on education, focused on young children, making sure that the young people of this province get the opportunity that they deserve in order to learn, in order to educate themselves, in order to develop skills in order to become both responsive and responsible citizens of this province and also to become productive members and active participants in the economy.

This year's tone is very different. It returns to the message of fiscal restraint. I notice, again, that in last year's speech there was mention of the approximate surplus that the government expects, close to \$2 billion. I notice in this year's speech that while we are asked to consider the question of fiscal responsibility -- in other words, to return to the sort of fiscal conservatism of the last four years -- we are not given any clue as to what the accounts of the province do look like. So there is a hesitation on the part of the government, it seems to me, to share with the citizens of this province information that's so vital for them to make judgments about whether or not the position the government has taken with respect to fiscal responsibility as stated in this address is appropriate, is justified, is something that they can buy into and agree with.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I also find that this year's address is short on promising badly needed investment, particularly in education. In health we'll find out whether or not the additional commitments that this government has made publicly up to this point, which are related to matching the funds that the province of Alberta gets from the federal government in terms of health-related transfers, those amounts in the neighbourhood of \$400 million, are adequate to address the most pressing needs of the health care system and the health needs of the people of this province. There's no reason to believe that just because the federal government has decided to transfer \$200 million and the government of Alberta has committed to match that amount by and large, that amount will be indeed sufficient to meet the needs as they are seen by RHAs, as they're seen by frontline health care workers, as they're seen by hospital authorities, and as they are seen by, first and foremost, the users of health facilities; that is, the people of this province. So that remains to be seen.

3:30

In the area of education I'm certainly deeply disappointed to see that the commitments are vague, that they are minimal, and they are not really articulated in a form where we can understand what kind of new investment, what kind of new funds this government will commit to the area of K to 12 education or to postsecondary education. It's a little clearer in the case of postsecondary education because the minister of course announced a week before the speech was delivered in this House as to the kind of initiatives that his department intends to take, and I'll return to that later if I have time.

It's really disappointing to see the government dragging its feet in terms of its commitment to investing appropriate amounts, adequate amounts in K to 12 education. The area of people development isn't something that can be addressed and accomplished in one year. Last year the government was telling us it's going to invest enough new

moneys in education in order to make sure that our school systems are appropriately and adequately funded and served. This year it's silent on that. That is indeed disappointing.

One group of my constituents was here, as a matter of fact, the Save Our Schools group, that's now engaged in getting petitions signed to ensure that this government pays the attention that the public education system indeed deserves in this province. One of them, Cynthia Joines, who is my constituent, was here this afternoon to see me and other opposition colleagues of mine to impress upon us the need for us to speak strongly in this House today and in the forthcoming days and weeks in support of their request that schools be funded and funded appropriately.

The difficulty I find in the portions of the speech that deal with health and education is complete refusal on the part of the government to acknowledge that there are serious problems. It's one thing to say: there are problems, but given the tightness of budgets, the availability of our funds, we cannot meet all of them now. It's another thing to simply ignore and deny that problems in fact exist. The public school boards of this province met with the standing committee on education just about a week ago, I understand. Parents all over the province are crying out for attention to public education, yet there's no acknowledgment of the nature of the problem, the impending crisis that's upon us with respect to underfunding and the problems that arise from it.

The same is true of course about the health system. RHAs are accumulating deficits. One of them has been in fact dismissed today by the minister partly because they were unwilling to close the hospital beds in order to meet deficit reduction targets imposed on them from the minister's office.

We know that teachers, nurses are all overworked, stressed out, unhappy with the working conditions that have resulted from the fact that both the health care system and the education system have been severely underfunded over a long period of time. The health funding problems of course have now begun to trickle down to the level of individual families not only in terms of their inability to get attention for the illness when their members face it but also in terms of having to increasingly foot a growing part of the bill that's required in order to seek treatment and to get healthy again. Patients are being discharged from hospitals quicker and sicker. As soon as they step out of the hospital doors, drug costs become the responsibility of families, and the cost of drugs is skyrocketing, creating new demands on the budgets of families, rich and poor. So there's a serious problem in regard to the underfunding, which has not really been acknowledged at all.

On the issue of poverty. The question that there are poor children in this province is mentioned very briefly in passing, but there is no serious attention paid in this speech to what the government is planning to do about the eradication of child poverty. They're talking about remedial programs that might be used in order to help particular children who come from poor homes, but there's no attention to the causes of poverty among children and among families. While both child poverty and poverty of families are increasing, while the numbers have been growing in both of these areas, the government doesn't seem to have a clue as to what to do about it. It seems to be treated as if a natural disaster is upon us and we'll survive it somehow. So there's really very little said about how to deal with this.

Time is running on, Mr. Speaker. I want to just draw attention to the fact that with respect to postsecondary education, two major issues that I was hoping would be addressed are not addressed at all. The deferred maintenance of infrastructure is a major problem. In a letter that the minister of advanced education was very kind to send to me by way of the Public Accounts Committee is information

that the University of Alberta alone at the end of last year was faced with deferred maintenance costs of \$131 million, and those costs are growing and growing rather rapidly. There's no attempt to address how to deal with this growing infrastructural crisis which our educational institutions face both at the level of K to 12 and in the postsecondary area.

Secondly, crowded classrooms and overworked lecturers and teachers at the postsecondary level is a common story. When I visit colleges and universities, I see with my own eyes what's been happening there. The students simply are not getting an education under circumstances which are most appropriate for maximizing their learning. They're really facing serious problems at that level: the availability of space, the availability of library and lab facilities.

Tuition fees. The minister's 30 percent solution, which he, again, legislated last year, means for most students, certainly at the University of Alberta, that they should expect to see their tuition fees grow every year at the rate of about 8 to 9 percent before they hit the 30 percent mark, assuming that the operating costs at the universities do not grow and start growing faster in the meantime, which is not unlikely at all. So there again the resulting student debt from increasing tuition costs and other costs that students incur to go to postsecondary institutions are simply not addressed, and the address is completely silent on it.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder how many minutes I have left. Two.

On the economy. Again, I think that job creation and job growth have been mentioned, but there's no attention paid whatsoever to the kind of jobs that are being created. Most of the jobs that young people in my constituency seem to get are McJobs. You know, these are jobs at the \$6, \$5 level, and these are the jobs that also do not have working conditions where they can expect enforcement of employment standards much less anything else. So they're not treated with dignity. They're not treated with respect. They're not treated fairly. Nothing is there in this report to ensure that this will happen.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that we have worked hard over the last two years with the government, with the opposition party, in co-operation, but we also have served, I believe, as effective watchdogs for the people of Alberta. We'll continue to do this. We not only are here to criticize; we're also here to present positive alternatives. We have two bills coming up for consideration before this House, a bill on environmental protection and a bill on health care, both of which are progressive pieces of legislation, and I look forward to the debate on those bills in this House.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I think I just want to say a word on the Justice Summit, because I was closely associated with it as a member of the all-party MLA committee. I worked hard and enjoyed working with my colleagues from all parts of this House on it. It came out with a very good report. That report led to a very good, productive summit, but I find that in this address the Justice department has again been pushed into the background. There's no serious commitment here to address the recommendations coming out of that summit. Many of them had to do with delays in the delivery of justice to Albertans, and there's no commitment here that I see being made by this government to address this very, very important part of that report.

The second element in this report had to do with restorative justice. Again, absolutely absent from the throne speech is any mention and recognition of the fact that we need to make major changes to move the justice system in the direction of the restorative model.

So, Mr. Speaker, with these comments I think my time has just

about run out. I want to thank you for being patient, and we'll continue to discuss, I'm sure, in the next few weeks in more detail the contents of the speech.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne, marking the commencement of the Third Session of the 24th Legislature of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is a vibrant and active community with many attractive qualities that make it special to me and its residents. The throne speech mentions a number of areas that directly link to my constituency; specifically, value-added agriculture and advanced technology.

I'd like to speak briefly on one of the many gems in my constituency that relate directly to those issues, that being Olds College, an institution that has made and will continue to make significant contributions to the agri- industry and will play an important role in helping Alberta meet its \$20 billion goal in value-added agriculture by 2005.

Mr. Speaker, Olds College has had an 86-year tradition of serving Alberta's needs for trained personnel in agriculture, horticulture, as well as land and environmental management. Its curriculum is built on close consultation with business and industry, whether it's in contract training or instruction in a certificate, diploma, or degree course. Olds College has been successful in developing the effective process of needs assessment, occupation analysis, and the building of relevant competency-based curriculum to satisfy human resource development needs in the agri-industry.

The approach to learning that this entrepreneurial college has taken has paid off in spades. Last year Olds College posted the best showing of all 26 postsecondary institutions in Alberta, with a key performance rating of 98 out of 100. With an employment rate for graduates of 99 percent and a 100 percent student satisfaction rating it's no surprise that Olds College saw a growth rate of 13 percent last year. I'd like to congratulate them for their tremendous achievements, that have brought them both national as well as international attention.

Mr. Speaker, another valued asset in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is our energetic and enthusiastic senior citizens. In this special year of recognizing older persons, as the throne speech mentions, the communities of Olds and Didsbury will proudly host the 1999 Alberta Seniors Games, and this is the second time in two years that my constituency will host the games.

This year promises to be another battle of Alberta as last year's host, the town of Three Hills, issues a challenge to Olds and Didsbury organizing committees. The nature of this challenge will be to raise the bar once again after Three Hills elevated the success of the games to a new level of critical acclaim. This year should prove to be another great success, with over 1,100 participants and their guests traveling to participate in this four-day festival of activity and culture. I would wish this year's Alberta Seniors Games organizing committee every success in taking advantage of this fantastic opportunity. The event clearly realizes the International Year of Older Persons' mandate of promoting well-being and recognizing the contributions of older people in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne represents our government's direction for the upcoming year, and once again our expectations are for success. This year's speech is very much a reflection of the priorities of Albertans, and the key to addressing those priorities is to strike the right balance between our fiscal targets and

our responsibilities to protect the quality of life Albertans enjoy. Albertans are telling us that we need to increase spending in some key areas but that at the same time we need to pay down the debt, maintain a balanced budget, and ensure the lowest tax regime in Canada. Measured planning, prudent budgeting, and difficult sacrifices have put Alberta in the enviable position of ensuring that we are capable of striking that right balance.

Reinvestment in key priority areas has been recognized as necessary to maintain the Alberta advantage. However, this government must ensure that cost-effective and accountable spending practices remain the cornerstone of its fiscal policies. Areas such as health care, education, infrastructure, and environment will see funding increases, new initiatives, and targeted programs to address the changing needs of Albertans. While this reinvestment is certainly welcome news, Mr. Speaker, I would like to stress that it is equally important that we continue to follow careful budgeting principles, the very principles that put this province in the advantageous position we enjoy today.

Albertans have clearly told us that we cannot spend more than we earn, a philosophy that I fully support. The concept of spending our way through problems is for this government a long-outmoded attitude. I am confident that our government will continue to ensure that irresponsible spending practices never return to haunt Albertans again.

Mr. Speaker, we clearly recognize the need for increases in health funding to deal with pressure points in the system. Those Albertans who have raised concerns in this area will be encouraged to hear that our government is committing to a predictable funding base along with a spending increase targeted at pressure points that we have identified. Our government has recognized that the health system will never experience a windfall of limitless funding, and because of that fact it remains imperative that we continue to find new and innovative ways of making sure that health dollars are spent as effectively and efficiently as possible. For that reason I applaud our government's efforts to reform the health care system, particularly the emphasis being placed on illness and injury prevention. By promoting healthy lifestyles and reviewing concerns at the Health Summit later this month, we will continue to look to find long-term solutions in preparation to deal with the changing needs of health care users.

I'm pleased that this throne speech maintains our course on financial matters, Mr. Speaker. With the global economy in a state of flux, our province must make all attempts to protect itself. Moreover, this government must work hard to continue to benefit from having the highest credit rating and lowest taxes of anywhere in Canada. I am assured by the actions of this government that we will maintain our course. This spring will mark the introduction of our fifth-straight balanced budget, a distinguished point of pride for our government and a testament to Albertans who shared the burdens while achieving this goal.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of our province are encouraged to hear that we have set the stage to retire our net debt by next year, and in doing so, we'll be the first province to accomplish that goal. As well, Albertans will further be encouraged when our government introduces a new debt repayment plan that will aggressively pay down the gross debt long before any other province.

This throne speech is important because it recognizes the diversity of Albertans' needs and concerns. It shows a commitment of hard work to provide positive growth in this province. It recognizes that priority areas need to be looked after while we continue to protect the Alberta advantage, that ensures our ability to provide necessary support.

The Speech from the Throne concludes by reminding us of

balance, a balance that accounts for the needs of Albertans that are affordable. I feel that following the principles of balance is the best direction for this province if we are to leave it to our children with the same blessings that we have enjoyed and without the burden of past generations' debts.

Thank you.

3:50

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton-Riverview and provide some thoughts and analysis with respect to the Speech from the Throne, delivered on Tuesday of this week.

I thought perhaps to begin it would be worth while to take a bit of a historical journey back to the early days of our province, when the role of government and the existence of the province was in fact very fresh and in the forefront of the government's mind. Actually it was a fascinating exercise to go through because of some of the things that were mentioned in the throne speech in those early days when Alberta first came into existence that were strangely absent in the Speech from the Throne of this week.

In the early speeches, from 1906 through to actually the 1920s, it was interesting. Consecutive times the government spoke to and welcomed the new immigrants to our province. They talked about the diversity, the richness, and the strength those people brought to our province. I did not hear a reference to those new citizens of Alberta in this week's throne speech.

Another consistent acknowledgment that was made, often with gratitude, was to federalism, to the dominion of Canada and to the federal government specifically. The government talked not only about financial leadership but also acknowledged the leadership that the federation was taking and their ability to work with that body in the interests of all citizens of the province and the country. I did not hear reference to our federalism, to the federal government, in this week's throne speech, and I think that's regretful, particularly in light of the efforts that have been highly publicized surrounding the first ministers' meeting, the social union, and the issue of health care.

I'd like to quote directly from a reference made in the Speech from the Throne in 1907 that spoke about justice. It was said in that speech that "too much importance cannot be attached to this matter, as it is the essence of good government in any country that the machinery through or by means of which the laws are enforced should be on a sound basis." I may stand corrected, but I did not see in this Speech from the Throne a reference to justice, to our court systems, to the provincial judges, and all of the issues which have been certainly in high prevalence in the last year in that sector.

Another key reference in those early days and another key omission in this week's throne speech was a reference to and acknowledgment of the public sector and the public servants. At the conclusion of the speech there is a reference of thanks to municipalities, teachers, school boards, health professionals, police services, volunteers, community organizations. I thought how poignant it was that this government did not choose to thank our own public servants, particularly when in the last five to six years, in this government's tenure, that public sector has been required to endure some of the fiercest restructuring and have done so for the most part I think, Mr. Speaker, in a highly loyal, committed, and dedicated fashion. It is perhaps appropriate to make that formal acknowledgment as a Member of the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my constituents, that I value and the public values the work that the public sector does on our collective behalf.

Other points that were raised were in reference to significant events in other provinces, other countries, disasters, things that were of course of a highly emotional and human nature. There were references to fires in neighbouring provinces and earthquakes in other countries, and there was an expression from the province of their heartfelt sympathies to their colleagues in other lands. We, too, have suffered our share of disasters in this province in the last year: the fires, the floods. I'm sure there is not a member of this Assembly that does not know of someone who suffered at the hands of those natural disasters. We have had instances of those types of things in other provinces as well. I would just respectfully point out that it has been past practice that for those types of things an acknowledgment be made in the Speech from the Throne, an expression of sympathy made on behalf of the citizens of the province, and I think it would be a most respectful tradition if we were to start that again.

Leaving that aspect of my review of the throne speech, I'd like to now look at the document from a communications perspective, looking at specifically some of the general terms and references that were made throughout the throne speech. I found it very interesting to observe that the only place where the government believes that they have a leadership role to play in this province is in taxation. Under fiscal responsibility the throne speech says "the government will continue its leadership role in taxation." How odd, I thought, that that terminology, that role the government did not see existed for itself in the areas of health, social services, justice, or education. In those areas the terminology used to describe the government's role was that the government would review, the government will have a forum, the government will have a summit, the government will encourage action, as the reference said, in infrastructure. Why the differentiation between leadership in taxation and the less crystallized roles in these other areas, more of a facilitating role? Why would that be, that we would choose to define the government's role in that way?

It was interesting to look at the document from a short- and a long-term perspective. It's very clear to me that this government has a long-term plan around our fiscal and economic agenda. We've seen no end of legislation about deficits, debts, et cetera. On a humorous note I'm still trying to figure out how, if it's not legal for a province to have a deficit, it is legal for school boards, regional health authorities, municipal governments to have deficits. I haven't really figured that out yet. It's a bit of a contradiction. Maybe it's just all terminology and I haven't matured to the point where I can understand that.

4:00

In any event, there's no question there's a long-term plan economically. We have the agenda laid out in detail about deficit elimination, debt reduction, and we have a leadership role to play, according to the government, in the area of taxation. But where's the long-term plan for health care in this province? Where's the long-term plan for social services or education? Where's the human long-term plan? I don't see any references to those types of things, Mr. Speaker, in this Speech from the Throne.

I, again on a humorous note, could say, adapting a reference that was made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, that in some respects I've become a queen of the health care summits, roundtables, et cetera. I'm sure I could almost write a handbook now about how to prepare and ready yourself for participating in those types of sessions, and we're about to have another one this month.

Again on the point of terminology it's interesting to compare the term "leadership" with the terms "summit, summiting, or summitship." It seems almost as if the government wants to substitute summits for leadership, because in the areas where it's

most desperate for leadership in this province, the only actions that it appears we're prepared to take are to have a summit.

There were a number of other issues that regrettably were not mentioned, and I can only question as to why that was. As I indicated in my earlier remarks, there is very little reference to our human and social plan in this province and our commitment to address those issues. While there are some references to children, I would respectfully say that there are no references to our youth, specifically the children that are between the ages of 13 and 17, which in my experience in this Legislature, in holding the portfolio of Family and Social Services, seem to be almost abandoned when it comes to concrete initiatives, programs, even identification by this government.

Similarly, there was no reference to AISH, to programs for the disabled. I will acknowledge that there was a reference within the speech to disabilities, and it was phrased in the age-old and, by this government, incessantly used context of helping these people participate more fully in society. It was almost like the government wanted to forget what happened at the end of January when the cabinet report came out and we had a public outcry, uprising, reaction that was comparable to that which we had around Bill 37 and the utilization of the notwithstanding clause by this government following the Vriend decision. Yet we just washed that away like it never happened. We're still going to focus on how we can get these people to be more employable. No government commitment that they'd heard the message and that they would work with that community to perhaps undertake progressive reforms but not undertake the regressive kinds of initiatives that the cabinet report contained.

My colleague from Edmonton-McClung mentioned last night the lack of mention of the vulnerable, no references to poverty, no references to the rising number of children that are under the care of this government either in a temporary or in a long-term fashion, no mention of the growing number of single parents, female in gender, with children that are living an impoverished existence in this province. I'm not saying that the government has to say they have all the answers, that they have to define a program, but for God's sake could you not acknowledge that not everyone in this province has not existed and lived to see the Alberta advantage? It was almost that that existence, whether it be a single parent, whether it be a disabled person, whether it be an aboriginal child or family -- not all citizens in this province live or have seen the Alberta advantage. Not all of them live the type of privileged existence that perhaps most of us in this Assembly live.

Also on a financial note one of the things I thought was strange was the fact that there was no reference to ATB, the Alberta Treasury Branch. We know the Provincial Treasurer has talked about some type of private share offering, some type of divestment of that institution, an institution that has existed for some time in this province and which a great many Albertans feel I guess a high level of commitment to and ownership of, not surprisingly. So if all of those things are being undertaken and its future is being determined, why would the government not talk about that in the throne speech? It's very strange to me. I think it's a matter of transparency.

To begin my conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it's almost like this is a marketing document. It's become a mechanism not to speak of the spirit of this province and the wealth and the hardships of its citizens but a cold and callous marketing tool where we gloss over all the issues that we haven't been able to solve and we torque up those things that from our particular perspective we think we've done a good job on, speaking from the government standpoint.

A new housing policy is one of the things mentioned in other initiatives. I thought: well, that's interesting. We have a new

housing policy. What exactly does that mean, and on what is it based? Where is the background? Were there consultations? I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs had a consultation with respect to that issue, but again what does that do to solve the desperate housing shortage in this province? It does nothing, and again it's almost as though we want to say that government doesn't have a leadership role to play in this area, but somewhere someone is going to try and address this while we have a growing number of people, many of them employed, that are living on the streets or in drop-in centres or hostels.

In summary, I'm really beginning to lose a sense of faith that this government, I guess, has any degree of respect or any degree of sensitivity or compassion. It would seem to me that the Speech from the Throne should be an opportunity, not only on a provincial stage but on a national and federal stage, to set out the issues that are of concern to Albertans, the issues that the government is alive to, and the issues which we will work to collectively address. With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, this speech did not fulfill those requirements in my analysis.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before recognizing the hon. Member for St. Albert, may we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

head: Introduction of Guests

4:10 *(reversion)*

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a resident of the minister of advanced education's constituency, my daughter Kimberly Lougheed, who's here for reading week, and she's accompanied by Christen Rachul, a resident of Fort Saskatchewan, from the constituency of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech
(continued)

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise today and express my support for the Speech from the Throne, which has very appropriately set the tone and, I would say, focused the vision for the Third Session of the 24th Legislature.

There are some very fundamental principles upon which I first sought election to this Legislature. I believe in balance, and I would daresay that anyone who has managed a household believes in balance, balance in order to pay the bills and make sure that you have enough money coming in to do so. A province has to be fiscally responsible and balance that with sensitivity to the needs of Albertans. I believe that's what we set out and said in the Speech from the Throne. Whether it be a commitment to health, education, advanced education, or social services, the principles are the same. I'm pleased to see that this Speech from the Throne has once again brought to the forefront the commitment of our government to continue working towards striking that right balance.

Almost two years have passed since I was first elected to this Assembly and since I compared this province to that of a painting in progress. Mr. Speaker, this government has long ago completed the sketch that provided us with the structure on which to build. Over the past couple of years we have continued to work on this painting, working further with the colour to create texture and light on the canvas. Our government is working at highlighting the right balance between financial responsibilities and the quality-of-life issues that we know are so important to all of us.

Just as a household must meet with the needs of its residents while working within a budget, so too must a province do the same. There are choices that must be made -- and they are not always easy ones to make -- in order to arrange the finances. When it comes to the point of decision-making, we sometimes must choose between two outcomes, both of which are desirable. Either way not everyone will have received the decisions they hoped for, but at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it is all about ensuring that the bills are paid, that there is food on the table and a roof over our heads and love in our hearts.

Intertwined in the frame of this picture is our health and our health care system. In delivering the Speech from the Throne, the Lieutenant Governor outlined the importance of health care in this province and the direction our government is going to take. Along with this direction is the recognition that not only is our population aging, but it is also growing in numbers at the same time.

Health care is very important to me, as it is to the members of my constituency and undoubtedly to all Albertans. We are in a position now to focus attention on the prevention of illness and injury, which will do much to address the various needs of Albertans and assist in creating healthy lifestyles.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I held a mini health summit in my constituency earlier this month, and the issues that this government is undertaking in making health a priority issue directly address many of the concerns and opinions that I heard from my constituents. In addressing the issue of injury prevention, I'd like to just mention the work that is being done by St. John Ambulance. Their project 100 for 100, for those of you who may not be aware, is the goal to have 100 percent of able Albertans trained in first aid by the 100th anniversary of the province. This initiative shows remarkable foresight on their part and certainly the encouragement of this government to help them achieve their goal. Projects such as this will continue to work well within this government's commitment to improve health care for all Albertans. This co-operation is of vital importance to the people of this province.

There is one very important point I would like to make. We have to be able to afford our health care system in the future, and we want to be positioned to fund securely our public health care system. The Speech from the Throne indicated such intent. In order to do so, we must be vigilant and mindful as well as supportive of public health reform.

Another of our priorities of course is our children. The children of this province are our future, and we have a responsibility to ensure that they receive the best possible education. As an example, I'm pleased that math teachers in senior high schools and those in junior highs as well will receive support to help students with the new math curriculum. There are three teachers in my constituency whom I would like to mention: Marilyn Resler, Hank Reinbold, and Donna Chanasyk. These individuals have shown tremendous initiative and leadership in meeting the curriculum demands, to serve the educational needs -- that is, the high school math -- of the community of St. Albert. I've also met with them on several

occasions and learned firsthand of their assessment and their astute direction in this very important subject matter.

I think it is also important to note the efforts being made by the department of advanced education in working towards increasing the number of postsecondary students in the fields of computing, communications technology, physics, and computer-related engineering. Greater numbers of individuals trained in these areas will serve us very well in terms of our economy both locally and globally.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is also committed to quality education and promoting continuous learning. There is a great partnership between the business community and our schools, between the educators and our municipality, all of the community in fostering the desire to learn. Together these people are both partners and leaders with respect to education. In fact, a proposal for a research and technology park in St. Albert is being developed and will complement the government initiative of ensuring that schools and businesses and homes in Alberta have high-speed access to information, government services, and especially lifelong learning and electronic commerce. As the MLA for St. Albert I'm very proud of this proposal and the commitment of the people behind the project. I cannot think of a better place for a research technology park.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, there is our precious environment, our natural heritage. In my constituency many people have expressed emotion and concern for the care we are taking of the environment. I'm pleased to be able to say that we have a government that is sensitive to our ecosystem as we begin to move towards strengthening the protection of the environment through legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that is important to me and to my constituents, and that is the announcement of the new housing policy. I think this policy is a very clear demonstration of the fact that the government of Alberta is sensitive and responsive to Albertans and their needs.

4:20

I'd like to mention that there are two co-operative housing projects in my constituency that I would like to say are working extremely well. They are not social housing projects. Instead they are very independent and successful in meeting the needs of the residents in their respective complexes. These independent housing projects deserve all the endorsement that we can possibly give them as a provincial government. We must also do what we can to encourage the federal government to provide legislative assistance in this area.

I'm also very pleased that our government will be taking action with respect to the recommendations from the Justice Summit. I, too, had the experience of being on the consultation committee that traveled around the province gathering the views of Albertans. We received a tremendous amount of feedback and some excellent suggestions on how to address the future of Alberta's justice system.

Mr. Speaker, a sector of the Alberta economy that is very near and dear to my heart is that of the arts community. The continuing support of this government for the arts, the libraries, and the cultural sectors is very important in my constituency. I believe that libraries are in so many ways the intellectual lifeblood of our community, and our cultural groups are those that feed our souls. The new film development grant program will breathe inspiration into the film industry, and Albertans will reap the benefits.

I'm proud to be part of a government that was so strongly committed to striking the right balance between the responsibility for Albertans while being attentive to Albertans and doing all of this without red-inking this province, in fact doing just the opposite: making it one of the most prosperous provinces in all of Canada.

I'd like to close by saying a personal thank you to our St. Albert municipal government and staff, to our teachers and our school boards, to our health care professionals, to our police services and in particular the RCMP detachment that takes care of our community, to the volunteers and community organizations, and yes, to all those government workers who work in our community and for our province. As the representative of St. Albert I am pleased to reflect the concerns of my constituents to this government and in turn help deliver a system that is responsible in planning and preparing for the future. It is so important that for future generations we leave a legacy of a healthy province and people. We live in a magnificent province, one that is prepared to take us confidently and successfully into a new millennium, and this government is prepared to lead us in that journey.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The throne speech response is a unique opportunity for every member of this Assembly. It reminds me of how privileged the 83 men and women in this Chamber truly are, and it reminds me of the families that I have come to know as an MLA, the individuals who have come to me with their concerns, sometimes with their gripes, sometimes with their praise, always with their questions, the opportunity that I have to help deal with some of those problems, to maybe put people in touch with other folks who can give them the right information, to come to their assistance, and I take all of that very seriously.

I've had conversations with some of my colleagues on both sides of the House, one of them remarkably recently, Mr. Speaker, and really what was at the heart of so many of those conversations, as the 83 of us struggle to do our job, is that we have an awful lot in common. Alberta is a remarkable province populated with remarkable individuals with ambitions and with dreams that taken together will only hold good things for the future. While we hold all of that in common and while we all want to do the same thing and we often will even use the same words -- balance is one of those words that probably every elected member in this Chamber will use and will believe they have an understanding of what balance is and what it can mean -- what we often, however, will discover once we get past those things we have in common is that we use the same words but with different meanings. We use those words that mean different things to us, and that's when the fight begins, I guess. That's when we lose sight of those men and women who have come to us in our role as MLA. That's when we somehow no longer share the common vision of trying to improve on what is a remarkable place, that being the province of Alberta, and we get caught up often in rhetoric. We get caught up in one-upmanship. We get caught up in saying: my vision of the truth is better than your vision of the truth.

I don't think anybody in this Chamber has a monopoly on insight, intelligence, or knowing the correct path. What happens though, because of the kind of system we have, is that the government will bring in its agenda through the throne speech, the opposition is left to respond, and it's easy to fall into the pattern of: well, if the government is saying it, we should attack it. And then when we attack it, it's easy for the government to turn up their propaganda machine and say, "Well, no; wait a minute; everything is wonderful," and come up with phrases like the Alberta advantage as though a phrase can mask the difficulties or the problems.

The government's agenda is not inherently an evil or negative agenda. The opposition's criticism is not inherently baseless or valueless. The real challenge to us in dealing with a throne speech is to always keep in mind why we're here, build on the commonalities, and respect one another enough to listen.

Now, the word "balance" -- and, Mr. Speaker, here's where we have some difficulty. If the government says that they have a balanced approach and the opposition says, "Well, it's all out of whack because you're not paying enough attention to the real needs of real Albertans who aren't sharing in the wealth right now," and then we get caught up in only debating the differences, I'm afraid that we'll never get to solving some of the problems. And because we never get to solving some of the problems, that's why people in every constituency -- I just had a breakfast meeting that happened to be in the constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. I don't think it was a particularly unique gathering of people, but what they were telling me at that meeting was: we don't particularly trust anybody in politics anymore; we don't trust the political process because not only do we think you don't listen to us; we don't think you listen to each other. That was a very interesting conversation I engaged in that morning in Calgary-Glenmore. In fact, it was in a restaurant right below the Member for Calgary-Glenmore's constituency office. I don't know whether he has a listening device down into that restaurant or not, but perhaps if he did, he would have found it to be an interesting conversation.

Now, I'm also struck with some other images. I don't mean to be the least bit facetious here, but when I see a government start off a session with a throne speech that talks about balance and I hold in my mind the image of a government that finances a mall and blows up a hospital, I don't see an image of balance, and these are powerful images for all of us to deal with. When I see in a throne speech that there is a move towards more roundtables and more summits and more consultation, on the one hand I think that's good because maybe we'll get some good input. We need to listen to people, and we'll get some more people together. But then I get this other thought, that, you know, a government should be more than the sum of its summits.

4:30

There is in fact a role for government leadership. Now, my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview was talking about how she was struck by the realization that the only leadership the government claims for itself is the leadership in taxation. I wonder, on behalf of all of us, if the Treasurer would really like to be known as the Treasurer who takes a leadership in taxation, because I've heard him talk about how he doesn't want to see one more sweat-soaked loonie collected in taxes than necessary and that he thinks the goal should be to eliminate taxes. Now, I don't think that's what was meant in the throne speech when it said that this government wants to take a leadership role in taxation.

I do note in the context of balance that the government has lost sight of the fact that when it has a surplus budget, perhaps they have extracted more out of the pockets of hardworking Albertans than they needed, that when the government has a surplus budget, it's not a balanced budget. Balanced is when you've got the revenue equal to the expenses and they relate to one another. But when you chalk up billions and billions and billions of dollars of surpluses, that's not balanced. Now, it's not a bad imbalance, but it's not balanced.

Of course, you can't help but be suspicious, a little bit cynical perhaps, that the government knew that it was going to have all these surpluses, so the budgeting process becomes suspect. Then you think: "Well, gee, a leadership role in taxation, but we tax more than we need, billions of dollars more than we need. It's at a balance. Hmm." I wonder, Mr. Speaker: what kind of message does that give to the taxpayers of this province in terms of taking this government at their word with their interpretation of what the word "balance" means?

Clearly not all Albertans are participating in the wealth. The

Alberta social issues magazine entitled *First Reading* in their December '98 issue has a very interesting article entitled: are you rich or poor? They refer to a study by Stats Canada, and they take a look at different measures of poverty. They use the new measure of poverty called the market-basket measure, which differs a little bit from the old measure that was called the LICO measure, which is the low-income cutoff. In either measure what you find in Alberta is that if you look at the LICO cutoff, 17.9 percent of Albertans are considered to be in poverty. If you use the MBM, the market-basket measure, you find that 9.2 percent of Albertans are in poverty. These statistics are troubling.

Now, they have to be put into context. Alberta has the lowest unemployment rate today in Canada. I think that's true. Alberta has I think the second highest participation rate in advanced education in the country at this point. Is it the highest now? Alberta has had more housing starts per capita in municipal-designated areas I think in Canada this year. So these are all positive measures. The measures about poverty have to be put in that context, but Mr. Speaker, when we talk about balance and we ignore the 17 or 9 percent or whatever measure you want to use of Alberta families that are living in poverty, you're not dealing in a balanced way.

We can't simply brag about the good stuff and ignore the bad stuff. We can't simply say that it's good enough to have lots of employment when families still struggle to pay their bills. We can't say that it's good enough to have lots of housing starts when there are homeless in our cities. You can't say that it's okay to brag about the participation rate in advanced education when we still don't have fully funded kindergarten for every student.

Mr. Speaker, today in this Assembly there were some petitions tabled by parent groups, names collected by parent groups, that talked about the shortfall in funding for basic educational necessities. On February 22, 1994, which is a very, very interesting date to me because that was the date, of course, on which the Premier sent a memo talking about the West Edmonton Mall refinancing -- on that very same day petitions were tabled in this Assembly demanding full funding for kindergarten. At that time it was, I think, one of the largest petitions that had come to the Assembly.

Now, what's changed since 1994? Today petitions were tabled in this Assembly demanding funding for basic primary education. That to me is not a sign of balance. Certainly we as members of this Legislature should have learned over the last few years some lessons about the importance that Albertans put on basic primary education, but it doesn't appear that we've done so.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was attending an all-candidates' forum in Lethbridge prior to the most recent municipal elections. I had an opportunity to listen to the more than a dozen -- I think it was about 16 -- candidates vying for public school board trustee positions. One of them made the following reference. I wrote it down on a little scrap of paper, and I've kept it with me since that day in early October. The person who was running as a candidate made this comment about his view of the province's view of education. He said -- and I'm paraphrasing -- that the Premier of Alberta makes the same mistake as Karl Marx did. I thought that was very interesting, that the Premier be compared to Karl Marx. The Premier made the same mistake as Karl Marx did. He treats man as just an economic animal. He says that education to Marx, as is education in Alberta today, is being treated as nothing more than a mechanism to produce workers. As a mechanism to produce workers.

MR. DUNFORD: That guy didn't win by the way.

MR. SAPERS: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I know that that comment from the minister wasn't on the record, but what he said is that that man didn't win, and actually he's wrong.

The issue is whether or not we have a vision of what this province should be doing in terms of its leadership in education, and we don't see that in the throne speech. We do see a re-emphasis of this Marxian model of man as just an economic animal. We see the suggestion that we need to take leadership on taxation, and then we see the government's first bill being another legislated debt pay-down handcuff law. I wonder just how correct -- and I believe I know the answer -- that political candidate in Lethbridge was when he compares this government's vision . . .

DR. WEST: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: A point of order from the Minister of Energy.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

DR. WEST: I'm listening to the debate on the throne speech here with great interest. I would like the Speaker to make a comment. The hon. member speaking has referred to the Premier in the context of somebody else's statement, with the inference of a Marxist. In *Beauchesne* 484(3), referring to members in debate, it says:

In the House of Commons a Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution . . .

That's all right.

. . . or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case; or to use any profane or indecent language . . .

And I don't what Marxism is as it relates to an individual.

. . . or to question the acknowledged and undoubted powers of the House in a matter of privilege; or to reflect upon, argue against or in any manner call in question the past acts and proceedings of the House, or to speak in abusive and disrespectful terms of an Act of Parliament.

I'd say that it's a general area, but it does call to mind some inference on the Premier of this province. I would like an understanding of what his motives were in doing that.

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. minister, the chair is certainly not in any position to determine what the motives are of the hon. Member from Edmonton-Glenora, so perhaps we'll just continue to listen to him, and maybe they'll come out.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be happy to meet with the Minister of Energy at some point to explain a number of things to him, but I won't take my time in the throne speech response to do that.

4:40

Debate Continued

MR. SAPERS: I want to save a minute or two to talk about something that I do believe in, and I think there are certain members of the government that share this belief in something that I think we can be all truly optimistic about the future for. That is the economic diversification and benefit from continuing to invest in education, particularly advanced education and particularly in high-tech education.

I would note that the University of Alberta alone has been able to spin off something in the order of 50 companies, most of them high-tech companies. The direct jobs from these companies exceed 1,200. The indirect jobs exceed 2,300. The companies created last year alone I think are nine or 10. Now, if this government wanted to make a true commitment to children, to the future, to continued prosperity, I would have thought that the throne speech would've

contained much more about the potential for government leadership in this area.

Investing in science and technology is an outstanding way to diversify Alberta's economy. It will position Alberta well for the short-term and the long-term future. I can think of nothing at this point that will give us a greater return on our investment, Mr. Speaker, and starting to prepare our children now without having their parents go begging for technology input costs in public schools but instead seeing an integrated comprehensive approach from this government that involves the Minister of Education, that involves the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development, that involves the minister for science and information technology working together to put in place a co-ordinated, coherent plan that will help Albertans take advantage of the emerging technology infrastructure in this province. It seems to me that we can't just have words about connectivity and the Internet and e-commerce without putting some deeds in place behind those words.

Now, I have the rapt attention of the minister of advanced education. I only wish I could get the rapt attention of the Minister of Education because it starts with him and his responsibilities. Unfortunately, his colleague the minister of advanced education inherits the problems created when the Minister of Education doesn't argue at the table for those input costs at that primary level, because at that point it's often too late. I would like to help the Minister of Education in any way that I can as he brings to the discussion what role his department can play in helping realize this vision of the future. I've had this discussion with his colleague the minister of science and information technology. I know that he shares some of this ambition for Alberta, and I would like to see it governmentwide.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech, as I started out, is an opportunity for each of us to reflect on why it is that we ran for office. It is an opportunity for us to focus as much as we can on those things that we have in common but not to forget those differences, because there are some real, fundamental differences amongst the men and women in this Chamber as well, so focus on what we share, not forget those differences but help weave those differences into a fabric which will be strong and which will withstand the test of time.

Mr. Speaker, I do look forward to seeing how the government articulates the rest of its agenda. I do look forward to seeing how some of the hints contained in the throne speech will translate into solid policy statements and into legislation. I hope that government members will not just rely on the departmental briefings they've had or the caucus discussions they've had but will at least in part also rely on the debate and the discussions that occur in this House as we proceed with this session of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and represent Edmonton-Manning, speaking to the Speech from the Throne. The speech given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor "Bud" Olson was a show. The term "strike the right balance" has me questioning the process.

I listened to the Premier's televised address last week and I read the news leaks in the paper leading up to the throne speech, and as I had mentioned, the throne speech is all for show because nothing was left for suspense. I just can't let it not be said that the copycat provincial government won't give any suspense on March 11, 1999.

We read and hear that the province takes great pleasure and credit for a lot of the happenings in politics in Canada over the last few years. Well, I don't think there is much to brag about. There is only one taxpayer. While the federal government downloads to the

province, guess what? The copycat process happens here in this well-run province, downloading to the municipalities. Most Albertans are understanding my statement that I keep saying, that this government is a one-string guitar. When do we get beyond only downloading payment of the debt? There are a number of members in this Assembly that were municipal politicians prior to being elected to this level. Have you not forgotten that the municipal council administration has a very difficult job? Well, believe me, their tasks at hand have been multiplied many times over with the last five years of cuts and downloading. These elected counselors have done a tremendous job considering that their budgets can't be stretched any further without raising taxes at their level, bringing in user fees.

At the end of the Speech from the Throne the government takes time to thank our provincial municipalities. I find this as an acknowledgment that the municipalities were lumped in with others: our teachers and school boards, our health care professionals, our police services, our volunteers, our community organizations, and everyone else who has worked so hard to serve the people of this magnificent province. Mr. Speaker, isn't it an acknowledgment that everyone that was mentioned above were the ones that were downloaded on? It seems as if the thanks was very shallow. As I travel this wonderful province and visit elected counselors, I'm a good listener, and believe me, I don't need to probe to get their complaints. So will this government please start treating Albertans with respect.

When is the government going to cease having summits -- oh, I just forgot that the Premier is now calling them focus groups or roundtable groups -- and act on the consultation? The throne speech is just another strikeout by the Klein government rather than offering any new, original ideas. The government offers more summits or focus groups or roundtables. The inconsistencies of the words and actions are very troubling. The only mention of the infrastructure in the Speech from the Throne was the focus that seems to come from the transportation department on the north/south corridor. There is more to transportation than only considering the north/south corridor always.

The representatives of the AUMA and the AAMD and C organizations and those who they represent have been wanting to address the need for revenue sharing in this province. Between 1992 and 1997 general and specific purpose transfers from the government of Alberta to Alberta municipalities fell by \$390 million, which actually works out to 46 percent, the second highest of any other province in the country.

I put out a paper last fall that was handed out to members at the AUMA and the AAMD and C annual conference. It read: taking the heat for tax increases. The main item in this is: is there only one taxpayer? Why are the municipal pockets always flat broke while the province's pockets are always flush with cash? Why? Because the provincial government has been off-loading and downloading on municipalities, creating what is called a hidden deficit within our local municipalities. The creation of a hidden deficit actually is derived from the last four or five years of downloading: 79 percent cuts to the municipal assistance grants between '92-93 and up to '98-99; 64 percent less in municipal debentures interest rebate programs between '92-93 and '98-99; 40 percent decrease in municipal wastewater grants between '92-93 and 1998-99; 49 percent in reductions to ancillary infrastructure between '92-93, '98-99.

4:50

It's not easy to say and bring out all these items on what downloading is without coming back and telling them what I would do if we were government. One would be that the provincial government

should create a binding three-year rolling grant framework so the municipalities can plan responsibilities as they determine infrastructure and other funding needs. Two, reinvestments should be targeted at physical infrastructure, as this is the foundation of Alberta's future. Three, there should be a fair dollar return to municipalities on road usage, enough to provide necessary funds for roads, bridges, and bridge upkeep.

I recognize that an environment for sustained growth and promotion of the Alberta advantage means the development of policies that balance economic and human growth. Appropriate strategies must be developed by government to deal with a widening deficit within the human development sector, a deficit which has resulted from five years of slash-and-burn budgeting, lack of planning, and failure to meet a performance target. Establishing priorities and implementing reinvestment within our education, health care, and social services systems should not be based on feast-or-famine budgeting, on boom-and-bust cycles.

I refer to the copycat budgeting downloading that I referred to earlier on. To the lowest level of government this is what's been happening: passing it down to this lower level. Good government is always about making appropriate choices and ensuring that these choices can be sustained into the future.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that I'd really like to stress on this one is that the government has the opportunity to answer some of the basic questions on Albertans' minds. When will Albertans be able to count on their health care system again? Why is this government in the business of promoting private health care? Why are teachers and parents spending more time fund-raising than teaching our children? Why is there no help for seniors who face increasing rents and user fees? It's time for the Premier and his government to show some leadership on these issues rather than resorting to more summits, focus groups, and roundtables with a handpicked group of Albertans.

My thoughts around debt retirement are that of a cautious response, a medium-term debt retirement plan that sustains health care and education, not a plan that starves health care and education in order to satisfy some ideological crusade for repayment of the debt at the expense of our family, neighbours, and fellow Albertans at the rate which has happened over the last four years; that is, from the '94-95 season to the '97-98 season. This government exceeded the debt retirement target set out in its own plan by over \$4.3 billion. It should be noted that the ratio of debt pay-down versus priority spending was 9 to 1.

I'm surmising that Bill 1, which was introduced by the Premier on the day of the Speech from the Throne, is a repeat of what has been deceiving Albertans: that the government knows what they're doing in the future.

My thought around tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, is that the only way taxes have gone in Alberta under this present government is up, up, up: \$276 million from 400 new or increased user fees in premiums, \$359 million in VLT taxes, and \$260 million from tax bracket creeps in our personal income tax. That is \$895 million in new taxes, or \$309 for each and every Albertan over the past six years. According to Statistics Canada, Albertans now pay \$389 per person in user fees, the third highest of any Canadian province, behind only Quebec and Ontario. Tax cuts must be comprehensive and sustainable, not ideological and political. Tax cuts must fit into the context of a balanced budget. Tax cuts should not be a means to buy votes or gain one-upmanship on the Mike Harris government in Ontario. The government can't say that we cut taxes one year and then take it back the next year through spending cuts in health care and education, through more slot machines and increasing user fees.

The Premier has failed to answer fundamental questions on tax policies. Who pays for the tax cuts? Who benefits from the tax

cuts? What is the impact of cuts on job creation and economic growth? Despite claims of the lowest overall tax regime in Canada, the only way taxes have gone in Alberta during this government's regime over the last few years is up: \$260 million from the tax bracket creep in personal income tax between '92 to 1998.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing as we think about health is that health is the one major item that seems to be the media blitz of the province. Every few months we get a media frontline item in the paper, and it says that we're giving \$63 million. As I sit and talk to Albertans, those that can read beyond the actual headings of the paper, I say to them that eight times that money has been infused into the health system over the last few months. Then at the end of the year we don't add those total dollars into the next year, and it just goes on and on. The next year we use another set of headlines, and it makes it look as if there's lots of money going into our health system.

There was a report produced by a very honourable member from the government side. I wish that maybe that would be taken off the shelf and be introduced and the money be all put into the system right now.

Mr. Speaker, I take leave at this time. Thank you.

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to be able to speak to this House today in support of the Speech from the Throne and to represent the views and priorities of my constituents. The constituency I serve, Calgary-West, is a wonderfully diverse area of Calgary both in geography and demographics. It is home to proud Calgarians of many different ages, ethnic ancestries, religions, and economic backgrounds. There are many families in my constituency in which husband and wife are professionals in the workforce and others in which one parent has chosen to stay at home to raise the children. These parents are well educated and hold high standards and expectations for themselves, their children, and the officials they elect to represent them well.

The geographic areas which make up Calgary-West are varied as well, Mr. Speaker, and constantly changing as new development continues in many locales. East of Sarcee Trail are the constituency's older communities, which are home to both seniors who have lived in the area for many years and also to young families raising their children. West of Sarcee Trail or on the hill are newer housing developments and communities, some of them not yet fully built. This area is also home to many seniors and near seniors who reside in newer 50-plus apartment and condo complexes or lodges, but it is also home to many young families and professionals without children. Finally, Calgary-West contains the scenic area of east Springbank, which is home to both new and longtime residents of all ages, and they enjoy the clean air and spectacular views of the Rockies to the west in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane.

Indeed, I think Calgary-West is a true reflection of the diversity, spirit, and energy that exists in this province. Mr. Speaker, the people of Calgary-West represent the high standards and the sensible choices that are typical of the people of Alberta. We live in the best province of Canada and will not settle for anything less.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at the outset to express my full support for the themes and principles espoused by the Speech from the Throne. It is important that we work to strike the right balance. This emphasis on balance shows a responsible approach on the part of our government to properly manage and support all of our resources: economic, natural, and human.

5:00

In planning for the next year and further into the future, we must

ensure that we do not lose sight of either our fiscal responsibilities or the importance of Albertans' quality of life. I believe this government has kept both these fundamentals in mind by emphasizing careful reinvestment alongside low taxes as we maintain a balanced budget.

Of the areas discussed in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch on those which have been of the greatest importance for my constituents: education, social services, health care, and services for seniors. The throne speech emphasized the importance of our responsibility as a society to our children. Part of this fundamental goal is a continuing focus on providing the best education possible for children and youth. The focus on literacy, computer literacy, and math skills, all essential in our information-based society, will help to ensure that our children leave school with the education and competencies they need to succeed in the real world of life.

Mr. Speaker, the school systems represented in Alberta and also in Calgary-West -- public, Catholic, and private -- reflect the diversity of Alberta's population as well as this government's commitment to providing parents with choices. Our schools also provide numerous opportunities for committed parents to play an active role in supporting their children and in promoting the high educational standards they value.

We also need to support the schools who form innovative partnerships with businesses, for example, for the benefit of our students, such as those that I have experienced at Ernest Manning high school in Calgary-West. Their partnerships are with the *Calgary Herald*, Shane Homes, and the Hard Rock Café.

Another element of striking the right balance, Mr. Speaker, is through ensuring that the disabled, the vulnerable, and very young people are cared for and provided with a decent quality of life. We must do what we can to ensure that all Albertans have opportunities to participate more fully in society.

I am very proud of the commitments of residents that I know in Calgary-West, one in particular being Bert Sparrow, the chair of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board. Another great example found in my constituency is the citywide adolescent parenting program at Ernest Manning high school. This wonderful program provides teenage mothers the opportunity to continue their high school education in an appropriately supportive environment where their babies are well cared for during class time. The adolescent parenting program provides an excellent example of the philosophy toward our children as outlined in the throne speech. The focus on early intervention in child welfare, education, and health care ensures that by looking after our children when they are young, the future of this province remains bright.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most pressing issue today for myself, for most of my constituents, and for Albertans is the aging nature of our population. The projected dramatic increase of seniors makes apparent the need for us to plan for the short term and especially long-term future of Albertans both young and old. The throne speech states clearly that this government has already chosen to lead the way in Canada by addressing the challenges of the aging population at both the provincial and federal levels. At the federal level dialogue between Alberta and Ottawa on social union policy and the Canada pension plan is very relevant to the daily lives of Albertans both living in and planning for retirement. At the provincial level our government is working to address these challenges to create opportunities in many areas, especially health care and housing.

I wholeheartedly agree with the support given by our government to meet the needs of our growing aging population by working to ensure access to quality health care for all Albertans who need it. Our government is also taking a proactive approach to health with

its focus on prevention of illness and promotion of active and healthy lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to contribute to addressing many of the issues which seniors today and in the future will face through my involvement as vice-chair on the Long-term Care Review Committee, as chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and more recently as chair of a cross-departmental study of the aging population which will complete its mandate with the final report to the Minister of Community Development in March of the year 2000.

This governmentwide study on the impact of the aging population on government programs and services for seniors involves the participation of a committee of seniors and representatives from the health, housing, active living, and community support sectors. The study will also project outward 20 to 30 years through public consultations across the province, followed by a seniors summit in November of 1999, the International Year of Older Persons.

Our government is also working with Albertans to establish innovative housing models and models of care for seniors. Some of these projects involve government funding, such as the Carewest Alzheimer's centre in Calgary-West basically funded by the Calgary regional health authority. Presently much of the housing targeted for seniors, including many models of assisted and retirement living, is being built by private developers. There are many unique models of seniors housing in Calgary-West, such as Statesman Life Centers, all committed to providing a high quality of life for the residents who call them home.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to emphasize the importance of adequate home care and other community supports for seniors, particularly for those whose homes are houses; that is, individual residences. It is also important that we as a government continue to provide support and opportunities for community associations and clubs through the community facility enhancement program, the community lottery board program, the Wild Rose Foundation grant, and the educational grant program available through the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. These programs have indeed been instrumental, from my viewpoint, in building active, strong community associations. As Karla Eagles, my constituency office assistant, said just this morning: they're such a busy bunch; we can't get a hall rental when we need it. These strategies and programs will keep Alberta's seniors in a position to remain active and important participants in their communities, building on the intergenerational concept.

Mr. Speaker, in services for seniors as much as in all sectors of government activity, striking the right balance is essential for both the present and the future. Our government has continued to maintain these services and carefully reinvest while remaining on a fiscally responsible course of action. We must stay the course of balanced budgets and low taxes while we strive to meet our responsibilities to Albertans.

For these reasons I am very pleased to express my support for the Speech from the Throne and to be a part of this government's responsible approach to meeting the needs of all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to have an opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne. I'll start, I guess, by talking about one of the first statements that is made in the speech and that's: "In responding to the challenges . . . and to the needs of the people it serves, my government strives to strike the right balance." Well, this is an instance where we have to ask ourselves: does the government in fact walk the talk? The message

sounds wonderful, but do his actions in the past or even more recently, this week, since the beginning of this latest session, do they walk the talk? In fact I would have to say that in almost every instance, they do not.

How do we know this? We've had a good example of it this week, and that was with the AISH demonstrators in front of the Legislature. Imagine people on fixed incomes and on fixed incomes because they have some sort of a disability that impairs their ability to work. Many of them have never worked in their lives, many of them are in wheelchairs, many of them have severe disabilities, and they come here to enter this public building, the building of the people of this province, and they are denied access. They are denied access even to the stairs. Extra security is put out in front of the Legislature. Eight feet away from the steps is what they were told was the closest access they could get to this building, this building that the people of this province really own, not us. Not any direction from this government.

They're told they can't go into the pedway because for some strange reason they're a fire hazard. It's cold outside, Mr. Speaker, and the wind is blowing, and those poor people have no place to go if they want to speak to anyone in government but to stand out there in the cold. Now, you tell me how the government walks the talk of responding to the needs of the people it serves by doing that. I do not think that is responsive, and it's appalling to see that in this province that's what we would do.

5:10

Over the years that I've been here, I've also seen an increase in the number of people who are restricted access to this building for a variety of reasons, some of them for serious and significant security reasons, Mr. Speaker. But let's face it, lots of those people who are on those lists who are now denied access to this building are nothing more than a nuisance or irritation to government. So the very people who pay our salaries, the very people who want to talk to us are the people that the government is denying access to this building in many instances, because they don't want to be bothered with them.

MR. DUNFORD: The Speaker runs the building. You're talking to the guy who runs the building.

MS CARLSON: The direction comes from your Premier, so let's be clear about that.

Speaker's Ruling Clarification

THE SPEAKER: Oh, sit down here.

I'll make this clear. The only jurisdiction the Speaker has in this building is this room, the Confederation Room, and the lounge. Let's not go into anything we shouldn't be going into.

Debate Continued

MS CARLSON: So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is once again an example of where this government does not walk the talk. They are in fact not meeting the needs of the people they serve. They're meeting the needs of the people whom they choose to serve, and there is quite a difference in that. It does not lead people in the right direction when they see words in a speech like this, to think that in fact their government is doing anything else but that.

I had someone in my office just recently who was very worried that they were suddenly on a list in this Legislature. This is a disenfranchised widow, Mr. Speaker. This is a woman who is a strong, contributing member of her community, who has worked

very hard raising her children and who has a particular issue that she as well as many other people in this province wants the government to resolve. Because in a period of stress she walked into this building and raised her voice, she is now banned from coming here. She is not a security risk to anyone. She does not impair anybody's ability to do their job in this building, yet she is no longer allowed to come in here to address a minister or the Premier, to sit in the galleries, to bring visitors from out of town through this building.

That, Mr. Speaker, is more than a shame. It's a government that is out of touch with the people whom it's supposed to be serving, and I do not think that the throne speech adequately addresses those kinds of concerns.

MR. DUNFORD: Do you have anything nice to say about us at all?

MS CARLSON: Do I have anything nice to say at all? Yes, I said a couple of nice things this afternoon, earlier. I'm sure that you were listening when I said those things.

Now when we're talking about the throne speech and we're talking about a government that says it meets the needs of its people, let's talk about the parts where it does not meet those needs. That is the job of the Official Opposition, to bring those kinds of issues to the floor of this Legislature for full and open debate, because this is still supposed to be a democracy and that's the forum for us to do this in. While we do applaud the government when it makes moves in the right direction, certainly it is our job to criticize them and to oppose what they are doing when it is wrong, and denying people access to this building for nothing more than being a nuisance or an irritant to the government is wrong.

I'll move on now to the fiscal responsibility points that have been made in this throne speech, where the government has talked about making careful choices within the constraints of its budget.

DR. WEST: In my speech.

MS CARLSON: It's in your speech. There were some parts that I actually agreed with in your speech. See? Yes, there's some applauding of that. Not many, I have to tell you, and nothing that had to do with ideology, but some parts were parts that I agreed with.

Here in this throne speech, where the government is talking about making careful choices within the constraints of a budget, is where the government is establishing the leadership-style choice that they're going to pursue in the coming year. Making careful choices within the constraints of a budget is really not leadership. It is reactivity on behalf of the government. It's shortsighted. It means that this is a government that does not have any long-term strategic planning or strategic direction in mind. They're just reacting to current pressures that they're feeling. That isn't what we need for a sustainable province. We need a government that, while not afraid to make tough choices when necessary, shows some long-term vision in terms of where this government is going and how it's getting there.

We don't have that, and we have evidence of that all over this province. We have evidence of it in health care, where we see fewer hospital beds, fewer full-time permanent staff positions being filled in this province. Yet we're spending the same number of dollars. Government reacted by making choices within the constraints of its budget that weren't long-term or strategic in nature, and as a result we're spending more money per capita now than we ever have in the past. What can be right about that? It certainly isn't visionary, it certainly isn't leadership, and it certainly isn't where the people of this province expected the government to go.

We can see the same thing happening in education. We see the same thing happening in environment. We see the same thing happening in every ministry over there. The government has taken the leadership style to just live within the constraints of the budget and not taken any long-term vision.

What's happening now in education is really appalling. We have kids in this system who are certainly not going to be competitive in the global marketplace. Why? Because this government has been playing Russian roulette with their education. They cut funds, placing far too many strains throughout the system on the school boards, who are now showing deficits in all regions, who then put pressure on the individual schools. The individual schools react by cutting staff. The staff react by trying to do the job to the best of their abilities, by spending more time preparing for classes, their own time, by dealing with class sizes that are larger, which puts more stress on them. We're starting to see some of the results of that, and the results are not pretty, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing an increasing number of teachers who are on stress leave. We're seeing increasing numbers of teachers unable to handle the demands of the job moving back to .8 or .7 or .6 positions. That does not mean that they are spending less hours on their job. It means that they are getting paid for less hours, and they're getting paid for less hours because they cannot stand the stresses that they are meeting within the classrooms and the stresses on their time to prepare for classes.

I'll give an example of something that I just experienced this last week which is really too bad, I'm thinking, as it occurred. On reflection I think the responsibility for this particular action really lies directly at the Minister of Education's doors, and it's too bad because we are losing a very good teacher as a result of it.

As Mr. Speaker knows, I'm sure, the teachers in this province who coach sports teams within the school system do this on a voluntary basis. They do this in addition to their regular teaching schedule. They do this out of the goodness of their hearts and because they want students to have the competitive team experience that a school environment can provide for them. This is beneficial in the overall education of children in this province, I believe, and it has made them globally competitive in many areas in the past.

We have a teacher in Mill Woods who in her spare time, of which she has not much, has been coaching a team and bringing it along and working with it extensively. This weekend they were in a tournament, and the second game they played, they lost, and they lost that game quite badly. Well, some of the parents got mad. I coach basketball. I understand this very well. Often parents don't like the direction that the coach has taken, and they will take it out on the coaches unfortunately.

5:20

This teacher, because of the workload that she's been carrying since the beginning of the year and all the extracurricular activities she's been contributing to this school, got very upset and quit Friday night as the coach of this team. A parent picked up the ball for the rest of the weekend during the tournament, but the teacher now has quit coaching, so this school no longer has a teacher-sponsor, no longer has a coach, and cannot compete for the rest of the year. This teacher has subsequently gone on stress leave. She will not be teaching for the rest of the year, so the children have lost the continuity of that teacher. They have lost an excellent coach. In fact, that team went on to win the tournament that they were in, and four of the members of that particular team are being courted by high school teams to go and play for next year.

So what have we lost in this situation, in a situation where because of the direction from the Minister of Education this school has fewer funding dollars and this teacher has had to pick up slack within the

classroom and slack within the school in addition to her coaching duties? We've lost a good teacher, we've lost a good coach, and now it looks like we've lost that sports program for the coming year in that school.

In discussions with the principal this week he said that he will not jeopardize the health of any of his teachers by asking them to do any more than what they have been doing in the past. In fact, he's asking them to do less, to do only what they're paid to do, to not take on any extracurricular activities within the school or within the community, and to just try and stay mentally and physically healthy so that they can provide continuity in the classroom for the students that they're teaching.

The community at large loses a great deal by this, Mr. Speaker, but mostly those children lose. That school will no longer have sports teams. Children who would have the advantage of applying for sports scholarships may not be able to go on to further education as a result of this. Students in that school will not have access to team activities, which build many qualities in our young people, leadership skills among them. So they lose. They lose because of the direction of a government who is not prepared to adequately fund education, who thinks that if you can just send out a direction where you can cut services, cut funding, people will figure it out and it'll all work out well in the end.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it isn't working like that. We've had five years of these cuts now, and we're starting to see these consequences happen not once, not twice, but over and over again throughout the province. There is too much stress in the system. There is too much stress on the teachers, and they're not able to continue to do their jobs in a sustainable fashion.

So we're hurting those individuals. We're really hurting the students of this province, and that means that in the long run we hurt the economy of the province too, because if we are not presenting people at the end of the day who are well educated and globally competitive on all fronts, not just academically, then we get left in the dust. That's a shame, because Alberta was at one point in time in the history of the province in a very enviable position. We had excellent education programs. [interjection] That's why lots of people came here; there's no doubt about that. We are losing that advantage, Mr. Speaker, and it's because of shortsightedness on the part of this government. It is a choice that they've made again to follow in this particular throne speech.

I have a number of other issues that I would like to address, Mr. Speaker, but given the time, I would like to now adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion put forward by the hon. Member from Edmonton-Ellerslie to adjourn debate, does the Assembly agree with the motion? Those in favour, say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, say no. The motion is carried.

[At 5:25 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

