

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, February 24, 1999 8:00 p.m.**

Date: **99/02/24**

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

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

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

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

Please be seated.

head: Government Motions

8. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the message of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: All members in favour of the motion, please say . . . Oh, you're going to speak on this one; are you? Okay. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, thanks very much. I thought maybe the debate rules had changed.

Actually it's very exciting to be able to participate in debate on the first of a series of government motions, because we're celebrating a very special event this evening, and it's one of which all members of the Assembly may not be aware. It's not somebody's birthday; it's not a golden wedding anniversary. We are anointing this evening in this province the new king of supplementary supply.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for further supplementary estimates, I want to remind all members that we will remember Dick Johnston, then Provincial Treasurer, the gentleman who went to the Glen Clark school of fiscal accounting. What we had was the then Provincial Treasurer who brought in supplementary supply, during his best years, of \$507 million. Now, at the time that was staggering. Then we had Mr. Dinning, who succeeded him then as Provincial Treasurer, who in four years as Provincial Treasurer brought in six supplementary supply bills encompassing \$611 million in supplementary supply.

What we now have is the undisputed champion, displacing former Treasurer Jim Dinning, moving up quickly on former Treasurer Mr. Dick Johnston. Our current Provincial Treasurer has brought in \$1.376 billion in supplementary supply. In how many years? Five years? Ten years? No. Two years. We've already seen four supplementary supply bills.

Mr. Speaker, I know it would not be in order to ask for a moment of silence, but I wish there were some appropriate way to recognize the new king of supplementary supply. All members of this Assembly should be looking forward, replacing the batteries in your calculators, getting out your pads, because we're in to go for new goals and higher targets. So we're looking forward to this.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DAY: To conclude debate on the motion, Mr. Speaker, and referencing that if I indeed am the king, then surely we have just heard from the court jester.

Mr. Speaker, he referenced two historical and important eras, one in which a previous Treasurer -- and that would be in the late '80s, when the province was going through, indeed, a period of significant recession. Then he referenced another era, one of which we are all proud, approximately '93-97, when the mandate of the government and the promise to the people of Alberta was to reduce the size of government by 20 percent, a promise which we made in '93, an accomplishment of which we are proud. We went home to our friends and our families and our respective spouses before the '97 election, and we said: honey, we shrunk the government. We really did, and we were proud of it. In the subsequent years we have seen the most explosive growth probably in the history of the province.

In the last year in population alone we have seen the equivalent of a medium-sized city move into this province. In the span of approximately one year, a medium-sized city moved into this province, a city of people looking for and needing health care and education. Mr. Speaker, it should be known that my newly appointed and self-anointed court jester . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order. Order.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If we had someone like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek that could direct a choir, then we would have a number of voices that seem to be anxious. Unfortunately, the hon. Treasurer is there concluding it, but there are quite a few voices that seem to want too. I regret having jumped too quickly and almost forestalling the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo from speaking, but we now are in the concluding stages, and we only have one speaker that's recognized at this moment. I wonder if we could all sort of accept that and hear him out.

Debate Continued

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be noted for the record that the court jester from Calgary-Buffalo is trying to buffalo people into thinking that there has been inordinate spending. I want it seen on the record. Consider increases just in this last year of spending, the main areas of increase. To health, a \$243 million increase. Everyday for the last -- what? -- six years the members across have stood up in question period and wept, whined, moaned, put on black bands, put on band-aids, and said: please, please, increase health care spending. They did it again today and yesterday. With a population increase the size of a medium-sized city hitting this province in the last year -- do you know what? On a \$4.4 billion budget we increased health spending \$243 million, and we're proud of it. That's one thing he laughed at.

Last year forest fires raged through this province in an unprecedented way, and I daresay that if it had been Ontario, they would've probably called in the army and declared a national emergency. Forest fires unlike what we have ever seen raged through the province, and the minister of environment said: I need \$198 million more; this surpasses anything we've seen. Among the areas of increase this year to our budget, yes, \$198 million to fight forest fires. Yes, indeed, we did that. [interjections]

When we met last fall with members of the municipalities from across this province -- the mayors, the Reeves -- they said: this

medium-sized city has moved into our cities, has impacted our province; they come with cars and with trucks and with exciting new business. They said: can we please get something to address the infrastructure needs. Everyday when we're hearing the cries of infrastructure increase . . . [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, it's too bad that I have to raise my voice, because I sat quietly, as did all my colleagues, and listened to the member who was buffaloeing us. We sat respectfully, but the members here who keep looking over the shoulders because, yes, indeed, there are people in the gallery watching this, are terrified that the news of what they're opposing is going to get out. They're shrieking and screaming and barking like trained seals, and I have to raise my voice.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on to say that when we said we are going to deal with . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert on a point of order. Citation?

**Point of Order
Parliamentary Language**

MRS. SOETAERT: *Beauchesne* 485. You know, Mr. Speaker, we're so careful about that over here, about unparliamentary language. When the Treasurer goes on about barking like seals, we think he may be referring to himself, so we were a little worried. We wanted him not to speak ill like that.

I just really think that he's putting on a fine performance for our guests in the gallery. I'm going to send a piece of paper up and get their names and introduce them unless somebody over there has got that already. I really think that for their benefit and ours, he should watch his unparliamentary language, because this should be a place of decorum.

Thank you.

8:10

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, it is difficult even to bring words to deal with a point of order from the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert talking about decorum in the House. I'm not sure I need say more. The phrase that she spoke of is not listed in *Beauchesne's* that I can see. It's an apt description of what was going on, and it's not a point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If barking is not a word that's referenced -- as hon. members know it's the context in which a word is uttered; it's not the word itself that is important. I would think that one could say language that is tending to inflame others might be included in that. In any event, I think the hon. Provincial Treasurer is able to choose his words and the delivery thereof in such a way that he won't offend the proprieties of good decorum in the House. The chair is most gratified that this was drawn to our attention by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, who I'm sure for the rest of the evening will abide by that.

Hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'll go on, and I'll acknowledge that. I think it was the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti not too long ago who in the profession of accounting actually catalogued one day in question period the number of interjections from the member who just spoke about decorum. I think it was 83 different interjections, and the Speaker had to rule. In that case, the Speaker referred to it as chirping, so I'll switch from bark to chirp.

Debate Continued

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo also

referenced -- I believe he said the last two years, so he's not even speaking just about these but he's also opposed to, then, and he's ridiculing the fact that \$2,324,000 is . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood rising on a point of order.

**Point of Order
Parliamentary Language**

MS OLSEN: Yes, I am. Mr. Speaker, one of the things we've just talked about here is parliamentary language, and although chirping and court jester are not necessarily defined in *Beauchesne* nor were the expressions ruled unparliamentary by Speakers in the past, I would suggest to you when we have words like coward, garbage, gerbils, minister of gobbledegook, half-wit -- all of those particular words are rather offensive, and I would suggest that those words do offend the proprieties of good decorum in the House.

While we like to engage in debate and have some fun doing it, I think the offensive nature of the words that are coming out of the Treasurer right now is something that needs to be addressed. He seems to get up on a soapbox when he has the opportunity to do that.

So I would suggest that that is a point of order and that maybe we should be adding some more words to the list.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader on the point of order.

MR. HANCOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think the point that should be made is that we are dealing with supplementary estimates, which is very serious business. We reconvened at 8 o'clock. We've had our bit of fun. Let's get on with the job of the House. There's no real point of order there. Let's get on with the business of the House with proper decorum.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair would observe that very often when a speaker speaks in a flamboyant manner, it does tend to incite other people to respond in similar fashion, and to that extent, although we're not getting into the specific words, it's the manner of address that sometimes becomes too exciting for hon. members to restrain themselves in replying and therefore forgetting the courtesy of taking their turn in speaking.

While we're up here and while we could have a moment to reflect, I wonder if hon. members would give unanimous consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly the guests in the members' gallery with us this evening who are no strangers to all of us. Seated to my left is Jack Hayden, president of the AMD and C, and he is from zone 2, and Stettler is his home. Next to him is Sid Hinton from zone 5, representing Minburn; Ben Boettcher from zone 4, Birch Hills; Pat James, zone 2, from Mountain View; Bart Guyon, the vice-president and also from zone 3, Brazeau; and last but not least Eugene Wauters from Lethbridge, zone 1. I wonder, gentlemen, if you'd be so kind to rise and we could afford you the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Government Motions

(continued)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DAY: Again, Mr. Speaker, your prudent ruling related to certain language. The bottom line is still the same. The member opposite did his fairly humourous, I thought -- and I joined with them in laughing -- caricature and yet could be deemed by some as insulting. It was not meant in a praiseworthy fashion. We sat; we listened; we were quiet. We even chuckled along with him. When I stood to respond, the response was -- you pick the parliamentary acceptable word. They went ballistic. I think it's all right to say that.

What else are they opposing? Well, they're opposing the fact that we've had imposed on us \$2,324,000 in terms of salaries to judges. They want to publicly oppose and ridicule that. Certain legal claims, Mr. Speaker, which we assumed voluntarily as a government related to the settlement of blood and blood-related products. I guess that's a hilarious thing. Let's have a good laugh at that. That's very funny that we did that, and they stand there and ridicule it.

There was something that went on in this province in a legally constituted way for a number of decades related to sterilization, and there are certain court costs that have now come out of that and the government's payment of those settlements, and I guess they found that hilarious, and that was at the time, of course, Mr. Speaker, a policy supported by the five women who won the Persons Case and everything else. It was legally constituted at the time, yet we as a government have assumed and are assuming the legal costs of that, this year alone for Family and Social Services some \$12,900,000. I guess they think that's pretty funny because they ridiculed that.

I guess that all of these Edmonton MLAs thought it was humourous that after a lot of hard work and good representation by our Premier we were able to secure the 2001 world championships right here in Edmonton. They don't want the money that's associated with that, I guess. So it's all fine and wonderful just to stand and laugh. We all had a good laugh together, but let's let it be on the record what they're laughing at, Mr. Speaker: the proper, humanitarian, in many cases, disposal of these funds along with the other areas, which I mentioned in other times past.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to move this motion.

[Motion carried]

9. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: This hon. member having jumped up before out of tune -- this time I'm in tune. This is not a debatable motion, Standing Order 18(1)(a).

[Motion carried]

8:20

10. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the message of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the lottery fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

11. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the lottery fund shall be one day.

[Motion carried]

12. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund shall be one day.

[Motion carried]

13. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

Bill 5
Surveys Amendment Act, 1999

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 5, the Surveys Amendment Act, 1999.

Mr. Speaker, this act will amend the current Surveys Act, which is the primary piece of legislation governing the way land is surveyed here in Alberta. Under the current Surveys Act the Minister of Environmental Protection has the authority to create and maintain a mapping system that shows land surveys in the province.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is the final step in the process of taking the maintenance of the mapping system from being publicly funded to being funded by those who make changes to the system. The current Surveys Act uses a system of townships and ranges and lots and blocks to lay out an orderly way to track property location and ownership as well as land use. Because of this orderly system Alberta has been relatively free from conflicts arising out of boundary disagreements.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years five Alberta utility companies have provided funding to complete a mapping system for the entire province. The system now just needs to be maintained as updated survey information comes in. The five companies -- Telus, Northwestern Utilities Limited, Alberta Power, TransAlta Utilities, and Canadian Western Natural Gas -- working with Environmental Protection recognized the need to have a common cadastral mapping infrastructure provincially. The funding they provided to complete the system and maintain it for the first few years has given all Albertans an excellent resource for planning and development across the province. Maintaining that information source is one of the things the Surveys Amendment Act will help to do.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to removing some regulations from within the act, in accordance with the regulatory reform initiative, the Surveys Amendment Act would allow an update or maintenance fee to be collected by Alberta Registries for all plans of survey registered in the land titles office. The fees will be deposited into a dedicated fund and administered by Environmental Protection.

Using this fund, a board of directors made up of members from the five utility companies that helped bring the system up to date and one member from government will ensure the survey system is being maintained for the benefit of all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, a not-for-profit company called Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd. has been established that, under the direction of a manager and a board of directors, will have the responsibility to manage, update, and distribute the related mapping information.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Surveys Amendment Act would also rescind the survey regulation and move the survey standards to the land surveying profession. This amendment act would remove all reference to a regulation from the Surveys Act. The Alberta Land Surveyors' Association members fully support taking over this responsibility, as they currently administer other similar survey standards.

In addition, other amendments before this Assembly will allow for digital plans of survey to be submitted at land titles. Use of this new technology will significantly reduce the costs of maintaining the mapping system. Currently a paper copy has to be submitted and kept on record, a process that, compared to digital storage, requires a tremendous amount of space and maintenance. Mr. Speaker, the move to digital plans will increase the efficiency of the system and improve the turnaround time for updating mapping information. Because of the change to allow for digital plans, a change will also be made to allow a signature authenticating the plan to be submitted on a separate page.

Mr. Speaker, the fee being proposed in the amendment is based on the cost to update the mapping system when someone presents a plan of survey to the land titles office. Because the cost to update the system is close to the same whether you are adding one lot or creating a large multiple lot development, the fee will be a flat rate of \$100 for each plan submitted for registration.

Affected stakeholders include the following: Alberta Transportation and Utilities, Alberta Energy, Alberta Registries, Geomatics Canada, urban and rural municipalities and their associations, land developers, utility companies, oil and gas companies, the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association and their members, and Alberta Environmental Protection. All identified stakeholders have been consulted, and there is general support for all these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, not all areas of the province will be administered by Spatial Data Warehouse. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary will be exempt because their mapping systems are already in place and are compatible with the provincial system. The fee still applies for plans being registered within these cities, and the funds will be worked back to benefit and maintain their own mapping systems.

Mr. Speaker, a description of how the fee would be collected and administered might clarify how the system would work, and this is the way it works. When a plan is submitted for registration at any land titles office, a \$100 fee would be collected. The fee would be deposited into a dedicated fund administered by Environmental Protection.

The director of surveys on behalf of the Minister of Environmental Protection will still co-ordinate the maintenance of the mapping system, but a not-for-profit company called Spatial Data Warehouse has been licensed to manage, update, and distribute the mapping infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, land titles will track the number of plans submitted for registration from Calgary, Edmonton, and the rest of the province, so the two cities and Spatial Data Warehouse can be reimbursed based on the number of updates they process from their respective areas. By having Environmental Protection co-ordinate the mapping system and land titles collect the update fee, as soon as the plan of survey is registered, the new system will ensure that

Alberta's mapping system continues to provide an orderly system of surveying in a timely matter across Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and listen to what others have to say regarding Bill 5, the Surveys Amendment Act, 1999.

8:30

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to split my time into two portions. One is about the politics of this particular bill and then the bill itself. First, the politics of it.

It's generally accepted -- quite a few members of the front bench and Executive Council call members of the opposition and say: look, let's have a little briefing on this particular bill or some action. In this case it did not happen, and it could have happened so easily. This is a good-news bill, basically. There are some dangers in it, but we'll get into those in a minute.

I learned and was able to garner more tonight -- other than having to go to stakeholders and third parties -- in a deliverance of a speech that was read to us, that could have been mailed to me quite some time ago. I'd have agreed with it and said, "Yes, this is as we believe." It could have been and should have been in an omnibus bill or -- I was going to say malicious, but it certainly isn't -- in a miscellaneous statute at the end of the session.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sometimes they're malicious.

MR. WHITE: Perhaps malicious is more to the point than this is.

The point is that this is a House where we can actually get along and do a lot of things together if it's simply asked. It doesn't occur. If you ever do ask for co-operation and it's not given, then I could see that maybe you would have a point and say, "Well, don't even talk to these people over there; they're just obstructionists anyway." That's the case, and some members know that well. Actually the minister of public works -- and it's a shame he can't hear this; I'll have to tell him later. He does that oftentimes. He briefs those of us that are interested in the bills, and it works rather well. There are two parts of bills that don't require any more of this caucus' consideration because we've had a chat about it and it's done, and it'll flow through without difficulty.

Now, I don't have difficulty with telling the member opposite that most everything I have heard in this bill sounds delightful. In fact, it's something that's been worked at for a long time in the two major cities in this province. As well, the land surveyors wanted it for a long time. They have been the leaders in the world in electronic data processing, and their survey techniques are second to none with GBIS in this city being sold the world over. Actually, they privatized part of it and market it worldwide. I suspect this same system, although I don't know -- well, I could have found out -- had some early warnings. I suspect it will be able to be marketed worldwide also, but this member certainly doesn't know that.

It's interesting to note that if it was allowed by the government to speak to a member of the administration without that member of the administration saying, "Oh, no, no, no; you're opposition; I can't talk to you; you have to talk to the minister," then I could have found out something of the nature of this bill that way, but that way was also cut off. Consequently, I have to talk to the stakeholders, and they're of course only second into the business of reviewing the bill, and they only look at the bill from their point of view.

The one point of view that I haven't been able to establish that it's on the up and up as far as the stakeholders go is that of those that convey land, those in society that belong to a legal profession. They seem to think that, yes, it seems to be all right, although they don't

know until it's tested, and of course that will be at some point in the future.

This province, in particular, is known -- and I believe it's either Sweden or Norway; I can't recall offhand -- as being world leaders in this particular area. It should be a feather in their cap, and it could have been had the member opposite consulted this side. It could have been something that we could have jointly gone to the media and said: yes, this is a great thing for Alberta, and it should be put forward. We could have, if they'd wanted, stood on the same podium and said: yes, this is something that the government has done right. But the politics of it make it exceedingly difficult to do that. Quite frankly, I can't assure myself that there's nothing in the bill that doesn't meet the high standards of a complete approval.

However, we will speak in favour of the bill; there isn't any other way of testing the bill other than going to court. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the provisions of this bill are administrative in nature and that they divest a minister of the power to set regulations in order to enact the much more private-sector approach, which is reasonable so long as there is the power to retract some of those provisions should they prove in a court of law to be detrimental to our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this caucus we believe that it is a reasonable piece of legislation and will therefore be supporting the legislation. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, while undoubtedly this isn't a reason to vote against it, I've got a question for the sponsor of the bill, and the question is this. The provision for ministerial orders under the new section 46: are those orders going to be subject to the Alberta Regulations Act? I would be the first man to stand up and rejoice whenever I see elimination of the regulation lawmaking power. This is a dream come true to see this bill. What we've seen in a number of statutes is that when the regulation power shrinks, what happens is that subordinate lawmaking then shifts into a thing called ministerial orders. Often in statutes it expressly provides whether the ministerial orders are going to be subject to the Alberta Regulations Act, which means reviewed unsatisfactorily by a committee and there's a publication requirement under the Regulations Act and so on. I don't know if that's the case now. I've looked through the existing Surveys Act, and I don't see provision for that.

So I'm happy to vote in support of the bill at second reading because I understand it's remedial, but I'd certainly like the sponsor of the bill to address that issue in terms of whether in section 8 of the bill, the proposed section 46, those orders -- two things I'd like to know. Firstly, the frequency of the orders. Is this one order, a set of orders that's there for two or three years or a decade? Or are there 20 of these a year? The second question is whether it's the position of the government of the province of Alberta that these ministerial orders are going to be subject or not subject to the provisions of the Alberta Regulations Act. So that's the concern, or at least the query. It's probably putting it too strongly to say it's a concern, but it's a query.

Then the other question. In section 10 there's an amendment to the Land Titles Act, and section 78 of the existing Land Titles Act deals with illustration of plan of survey. At least, that's the marginal note. I see that the form is no longer going to be the form prescribed in the regulations under the Surveys Act. So the simple question to the sponsor of the bill is: who prescribes the form then? If a form was formerly prescribed by regulation, now who's going to prescribe it? Is it the deputy minister? Is it some third party? I'm interested in knowing that. I haven't had the time to go through the whole

Land Titles Act, and I can't remember what the regulation-making power is, but I'd sure be interested in what the authority then will be for the prescribed form and how Albertans can access that prescribed form.

Those are my queries, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

8:40

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one quick concern that I'd like to bring up, and I think it's very important. The notion that there are going to be fees collected here brings me to recall that under the principles which the Supreme Court of Canada articulated in the Eurig decision, the fee must bear a relationship to the cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged.

I recently noted that the oil and gas industry just had their fines in fact reduced from \$1,000 to \$100, those fines related to noncompliance. The government's response was that they never intended to generate revenue from those particular fines. So I'm hoping that the hon. member and the minister have had some discussion in relation to that issue and that the fees that in fact will be collected will not exceed the cost of providing the service. I just wanted to bring that to the sponsor's attention, and maybe when we get into the bill later, he can assure us at some point that he has in fact dealt with that specific Supreme Court of Canada decision.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader, with my apology.

MR. HANCOCK: Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to speak to the bill. [interjection] I'm sorry; I thought you said point of order.

I just wanted to respond briefly to comments made this evening by the Member for Edmonton-Calder with respect to the form in which the bill is brought forward. I appreciated the comments that he made about how we might deal with the opposition in terms of bringing forward bills in an efficient manner and with consultation. He referred to the fact that we might have brought this bill forward as part of an omnibus bill. I would just point out to the House that we've taken great pains over the last year, taking the advice that we got from the opposition in a previous session, at some great length, I might add, to refer to the fact that we had matters that we had considered to be associated in one bill. There was considerable debate, as I recall, about the necessity of dealing with different acts and different bills and not bringing forward omnibus bills. So we've taken great pains to bring forward bills in a relatively simple form, without complicating by putting two bills together in an omnibus bill. If the opposition believes we should deal with more items in one bill, in an omnibus manner, as he suggested tonight, I'd be happy to look at that.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a unique opportunity to speak to a bill that actually reduces the regulation-making powers of this government. Certainly in my experience it seems to be a growing practice for more and more issues to be dealt with through regulation. This particular bill, the Surveys Amendment Act, Bill 5, predominantly relates to the reduction of regulation-making powers both for the minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as I read the sections.

I guess the questions that I have relate to two areas. One is that the hon. member who introduced the debate this evening talked about the future application of digital technology in this area. We are all now familiar with how that technology and accompanying computer technology changes in a very rapid way. In fact, months after some systems come on the market they're being replaced and upgraded with new systems. So how is the government proposing that those kinds of advances in technology will be incorporated into the practices and processes of the survey sector if they don't have the regulation-making power? Will the land titles regulations address that? Will there be sufficient latitude within those to deal with issues that might arise? Those are questions that I have for the hon. member.

The other area of questions is with respect to the sections that are repealed in this act, section 45 and section 47. Section 45 currently talks about "a survey in unsurveyed territory" and "a survey for location of a well." Section 47 speaks about the regulation-making power of the Lieutenant Governor and speaks about survey methods, "defining well for the purposes of this Act," and also about records, reports, "standards and specifications for the construction, installation . . . of monuments." Now, those two sections are completely repealed. I guess to pull out one aspect of that, "respecting records and reports to be made, kept and filed under this Act," well, how is that going to be addressed under the Land Titles Act? Will it be?

I shared the difficulty that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has. It's very difficult. We don't get the background. This is not unique to this particular member or this particular bill. We are offered no assistance on the opposition side of the House by being provided with any rationale or briefer by the government, and some of these questions would be easily answered. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the business of this House, the efficiency of this House, and the speed with which we move through debate on these issues would increase dramatically if that type of collaborative sharing of the information and the rationale for the purposes of these bills was equally shared.

So with those thoughts, respectfully, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to further debate on the bill and hope that the member will find them of use to him as he prepares for the debate.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member to close debate.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I want to thank Edmonton-Calder, Calgary-Buffalo, Edmonton-Norwood, and Edmonton-Riverview for their comments and their questions, and I will have answers to those questions in Committee of the Whole.

I now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

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 23: Mrs. Soetaert]

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know everybody was rather brokenhearted last night when my speech got interrupted. But anyway, that being said, I am very pleased to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I think I started to say -- and I am going to repeat that part - that I think we all should feel honoured and I think we're very fortunate to have the jobs we do. When you think that there are only 83 people in this province who get to come here and speak on behalf of their constituents, that's quite a remarkable job, and I do feel very fortunate to have it. I'm very proud of my constituency. I enjoy working with the five school boards, the four municipal councils, the three health authorities, Alexander First Nation, the Hutterite colony, and all the fine people in my constituency.

When I looked at the Speech from the Throne, I looked at the first line that said "fiscally responsible," and on the side in little notes I put "ha, ha," because it's a joke. A promise from this government, a promise of no loan guarantees, was absolutely broken, because there was a loan guarantee to West Edmonton Mall. I remember in '93 running against some of the members in here: loan guarantees are going to end; we're going to get our fiscal house in order. We all said the same things at the door that election, a lot of the same things. Suddenly here we are in 1999, and we find out that there's been a loan guarantee. So that to me is a broken promise, and it certainly wasn't indicated in this Speech from the Throne. It was made public by us last year, and if not for good opposition members that brought it to light, that it got some coverage in the press, people out there would think, "These guys haven't given out any loan guarantees," and they have.

You know what? There is one good thing about that loan guarantee. It'll be on my brochure next time, and I'm sure it'll help my election. So I ought to thank them for that one, hey?

8:50

I want to speak for a moment about the concerns in education in my constituency, briefly, briefly mentioned in this Speech from the Throne. You know what I find remarkable? The third line is: "math teachers in junior and senior high schools will receive training to help students with the new math curriculum." Now, a little while ago -- and I'll bet you that many people in here were called by the math teachers at their senior high schools, because I was -- I went over there and met with them, and you know what they said? They said: "We're looking at a math pure and a math applied. Both are very academic math courses in grade 10, and both have good qualities, but what we're missing is a replacement for math 13." Now, math 13 is for those kids that can achieve between 50 and 65 percent, and with math 13, 23, 33 a student can go on to NAIT and to college and get opportunities at all kinds of things.

But with math pure and math applied there is no place for that math 13 type student, and I am sure MLAs around here have heard that from their math teachers. They must have. If they haven't, it's about time they do some homework. Part of me is worried that this is a Roger Palmer plan that is not going to budge, because it's somebody's vision and he's not going to see anything else, no matter what anybody tells him: not MLAs, not the minister, and not math teachers, who know better than anybody. They're delivering; they know the kids.

I really resent that money is going to be spent training the teachers so they get it right. They missed the boat there. The issue is we need a program for kids in math 13. Maybe beef it up with some

applied, but make it for the kids. I really, really resent that line in there, and I'm hoping it's not some bureaucrat pushing something down our kids' throats and forgetting about a whole block of kids. So I leave that in my Speech from the Throne, hoping it will get back to the minister and to his bureaucrats and hopefully to some insightful MLAs here who happen to know a bit about high school curriculum.

I make no bones about saying that I'm biased about education and my passion for it. I used to teach. I am married to a teacher who has 34 kids in his room, as you well know. They were in here. I have four children; two are still in the public school system. So I think I should be mother of the year some days if I just get through the day. Of course I'm passionate about education. Of course I am, because I love it and I care about it. And you know what? I come from a background that understands it. I'm not saying it out of arrogance. I'm saying it out of a real love for education and a real belief that if we properly educate our kids, we win. When you crowd them into a classroom, you don't win. My daughter is in one math class where one kid has to sit on the floor because they can't physically fit in another desk. There are 30-something in that class. That's appalling for a math 10 pure. They're piloting math 10 pure.

MR. DAY: What school is that?

MRS. SOETAERT: Sturgeon composite in Redwater. Grade 10 in Redwater. Have a look at all the grade 10 classes in there, Mr. Treasurer, and you come back and report it.

MR. DAY: Redwater, grade 10.

MRS. SOETAERT: You bet. Mr. Kilarski is the name of the teacher. I think the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs well knows that school. Anyway, it's in the Redwater constituency. It's in the village of Namao. If you people knew some geography or something about my constituency, you wouldn't have had to ask. Not that they should be speaking to me; we're going through the chair, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I want to speak for a minute about the role of the Parent Advisory Council. In fact my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar says that the parents in his constituency have called themselves PAC, parents after cash, because all they do is fund-raise. They sell M&Ms. They work at bingos. They work at casinos. And you know what? I don't mind doing the odd bit of fund-raising for my kids who are in sports and doing extra things like that, but here we are fund-raising for computer dollars. Some parents say to me: we're raising money for computers, and we don't even have chalk in our school. It's ridiculous what is happening out there. If the king of supplements would bring in some money for education, I'd actually cheer for him in here. I would actually cheer for him in here. But that would take a bit of vision, and it hasn't happened from the other side, certainly not in the Speech from the Throne.

I want to speak for a moment about the busing situation in parts of my riding. I have two opposite situations; it's kind of interesting. In Parkland school division they are going to lose money because of the new busing formula, and that's going to be a very difficult adjustment for them. In Sturgeon they're going to get more. They've been underfunded for a while. So they wait for three years for the change and are underfunded; Parkland is trying to figure out how they're going to do without it in three years. There's a real problem out there. Something tells me that the balance isn't happening. Busing our kids is a reality of rural life. You have to be bused to get to school, and if we believe that that's public education, that every child has a fair chance, then I think we have to address

that issue of transportation in rural Alberta. I'm sure other people are facing that same situation.

I worry about the closure of schools in some small rural areas and even in some parts of the city, but my real concern about rural closures is because sometimes when you close a school, you close the community. That would be very, very difficult.

I want to speak for a moment about health care. That was mentioned in here as well. You know, I got a call just tonight from the same woman who contacted me about her grandfather. Her grandfather cannot stay in the lodge. They phoned her tonight and said: the needs he has are not within our mandate, and you have between one and two days to try to place him. There are no beds for him. She has a choice of taking him to the Westlock emergency, where he would get an acute care bed, or to Sturgeon, where he would wait in emergency for a while before he got an acute care bed, or to take him home.

She can't care for her grandfather at home; they are both working. I think when somebody reaches the point in their life, as some of our AISH people and some of our elderly people, where they need a lot of care, they become more than somebody's grandfather. I think they become all of our grandfathers, the collective grandfather. We all have a responsibility to care for someone when they just cannot do it anymore. As a government that's failed miserably. We've got a waiting list of 500 in Capital alone; 200 of those are from out of region, who may never, ever get on a real list. They may be on an imaginary list, but because they're out of the region, they're on an imaginary list.

So I'm going to call her tonight and listen. I can't offer advice on that; that's her call. But it's a pretty sad statement about where we're at: how we treat those who built this country. Mr. Bergevin was a pioneer here, had a large family in St. Albert, and this is how we treat him. To think you have to phone your MLA to get a bed is really a sad statement of where we're at.

AN HON. MEMBER: Or home care.

MRS. SOETAERT: Or home care.

Red alerts in emergency. You know, I was talking to one emergency nurse the other day, and she said: we had a senior brought in from a home who is dying. She said, "You know, we didn't have a bed for him." So there was his family in part of the emergency ward with a curtain around him, he's on a stretcher, and that's where he died. Is that dignity in death? I don't think so.

9:00

So when nurses phone me and say, "Do you know what's happening?" I say, "Well, thanks for telling me because it's my job to know." But it's also my job to speak out for those people who die without dignity and their families are there with bells and whistles and red alerts going on around them.

I want to speak a minute about the reality that municipalities have and their concerns about infrastructure dollars. In Sturgeon alone, part of highway 794 is going to be fixed -- that should bring rounds of cheers around here -- but only part of it, so the story's not over. The municipality has finally committed to doing something. The government has finally committed to doing something. They've done a destination survey and found that 794, as I said years ago, more than qualifies as a primary highway: four times over. It's too bad I didn't bring the stats here. I'll save it for transportation estimates. Four times over as far as trucks and twice as many cars that would be the stats for qualifying for a primary highway are on 794. So they're going to do a few miles of it in hopes that the government will take it over as a primary highway, and well they should.

It's about time that pavement in this province was laid because it was needed, because of the use of it, not because of who your MLA is or where you live in the province or who happens to be able to spread pavement. I am sick of that. I've had friends die on that highway, get hurt on that highway. It's about time that it got entirely fixed, but at least four miles of it will be done this year.

Speaking to the council in Spruce Grove, they're very concerned about the downloading there and the lack of services that the government was providing that they now have to provide. A concern that an overpass on Campsite Road was canceled in favour of one in the Stony Plain constituency: that has me very concerned. The minister of transportation is well aware of that, and I'm waiting for a decent reply on that.

The city of St. Albert I know just sent a letter, I believe to the Minister of Health or maybe to the Premier, expressing their concerns about the Youville home and the fact that because it's a nursing home, it doesn't get dollars for the actual construction of it, for the building itself. It just gets money for the programs but not for the building itself because it is one of the nonprofit religious nursing homes. I'm hoping, if this long-term care review is ever brought forward and ever discussed and ever shared, that that issue is dealt with. It's not just the Youville home in St. Albert; it is right across this province where nonprofit religious nursing homes are doing an excellent job and certainly deserve some capital dollars.

I wish there had been something in here about parliamentary reform. If we bring it up, it's almost like it's a joke on the other side, and to me that's a sign of -- is "arrogant" a bad word now? Well, I'm not calling anyone arrogant. It's a sign of an arrogant government when you think it's just as good as it can be. What difference does it make? Why should opposition members be on standing policy committees, and why should we open up forums to all MLAs that want to go to something to observe? Why don't we double book estimates?

We double book estimates in this House. You know, I was speaking to a member across the way, and I said: "Why are we double booking estimates? Do you guys really like that?" And he said: oh, no, we don't really like that. So why are we doing that? Maybe it's time that our House leaders get together. I know ours has suggested it. I don't think we should double book estimates for a couple of reasons. You've heard me tonight. I care about health care. I care about education. I care about transportation. I even care about intergovernmental affairs and especially aboriginal affairs, because I have a reserve in my constituency. I think I have a right, as I represent 33,000-plus people, to at least be there, if I don't get to speak in that debate, to listen to what is being said, and I can't. I can read it all a week or so later in *Hansard*, but my issues are not brought forward unless I pass a note to my colleague to please bring up these issues for me, because we have two estimates at the same time. Furthermore, we are in a room that is small and far too close for comfort.

I believe if we really want to talk parliamentary reform -- I have hopes for the new Government House Leader. They're slim, but they're there. I really do think that we can make the system better, but I know when you have a large majority you think, oh, it's so cumbersome to have to listen to the opposition. It's a shame that that thought is there, and if we really do believe in being as good as we can be in here, then let's be more open about timing in here. Let's make it possible to be amicable about bills. My colleagues and I have, with the department of transportation and the department of agriculture, been briefed on bills. In Public Works, Supply and Services we've talked about bills that are coming up and our role within them, and they'll pass through this Legislature much more quickly.

I have several more things to say, but I have a feeling -- I won't even ask for unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. But I do appreciate this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne. I want to talk about the contents of the speech and to weave into it parts that particularly apply to the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview constituency that I am so privileged to represent. This is something that we should never forget, that being an MLA is not a job but a privilege bestowed on us by voters who put their trust in us to represent their concerns in the Legislature.

[Mr. Herard in the chair]

The Speech from the Throne as delivered on Tuesday, February 16, 1999, by His Honour the Honourable "Bud" Olson, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, begins by stating that "on the eve of the year 2000 Alberta is strong." Now, this statement begs a question: why is Alberta strong? No doubt there are a number of reasons why Alberta is strong, but I think the greatest reason is because of a visionary Premier who, after his election in 1993, said: folks, this deficit spending can't go on any longer. And then he set out to do something about it. He prescribed some harsh medicine to get Alberta's house back in order without raising taxes, in fact maintaining Alberta's status as the province with the lowest taxes. Add to this a well-trained workforce, readily available sources of energy, and we have what is termed the Alberta advantage.

The Alberta advantage has been a great marketing tool to interest companies worldwide to look at Alberta as a good place to invest and to do business, and it's working. Just look at the list of new or expansion business and industry announced in 1998 alone. This list includes dozens and dozens of companies and billions, not millions, of dollars of investment.

So what benefit is there in this for my constituents? Well, it's jobs. I don't know the situation in each of your particular constituencies, but in my constituency I have certainly noticed a difference. That difference is that less people are citing lack of jobs as an issue with them, not like back in 1995-1996 when I knocked on constituents' doors. Yes, some cited health care and education as an issue for them, but surprise, surprise: jobs were the major issue, along with youth crime. Now I'm hearing little about jobs. Yes, I do have inquiries from time to time asking if I know of any jobs that are available, but jobs in general are not a major issue anymore.

9:10

Mr. Speaker, I am also proud to say that the constituency I am privileged to represent is experiencing a business boom, especially in the north Clareview area. This boom had its beginning in 1993, and I remember it well. It began one day when a developer, whose land I had election signs on, asked if maybe I could move them over just a bit so he could bring in construction equipment, the bulldozers and the shovels, to begin construction. That's when it all began.

Now we have a host of major box stores like Costco, Home Depot, Superstore, Office Depot, two major stereo stores, a Petsmart store, and a Movies 12 theatre with 12 screens as well as a state-of-the-art Cineplex Odeon theatre with 10 screens. The theatres, of course, draw huge numbers of people who also get hungry. This has spawned a host of restaurants to be built. I think we have every make and model of hamburger and chicken restaurant as well the

Earl's, Applebee's, and Red Robin eateries. I invite you to come and see what I speak of by packing up your family and journeying to northeast Edmonton to enjoy a movie and savour some excellent food. What all this business boom means is, of course, jobs for my constituents and people from surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, another focal point is the new Beverly business revitalization zone that was organized in the mid-1990s. Myself, along with municipal councillors and a former provincial MLA, were delighted to offer our assistance to kick start this project, and now it is the pride of the community. This redevelopment area stretches along 118th Avenue between 34th and 50th streets. The focal point right now is between 38th and 42nd streets, where streetscaping has been completed highlighting the history of the old town of Beverly. A gate, murals, and signboards help to tell the story of the coal mining days of Beverly.

Mr. Speaker, community facility enhancement program grants have also been a great motivator for communities to build and rebuild playgrounds, sports fields, and facilities in Beverly-Clareview. Some other major projects that have received community facility enhancement program grants are also either under construction or completed. There is the Rio Lima Portuguese cultural centre, which gave the constituency a much needed banquet hall seating around 600 people. An indoor soccer field is also under construction and will be a nice complement to our twin arenas.

Yes, northeast Edmonton is coming alive businesswise and as a good place to live, with two LRT stations allowing quick access to downtown. Can all this activity be attributed to the Alberta advantage? I can't say for sure, but I probably wouldn't be too far wrong in saying that faith in our Alberta economy has had some part to play in making all these good things happen. Yes, Alberta is strong indeed.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech goes on to talk about fiscal responsibility, with some cautions because of declining provincial revenues and an uncertain global economy. Having just returned from the Far East, I can say that the Asian flu is still raging, with repercussions worldwide.

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, our government must make careful choices, and that's good. Mr. Speaker, those constituents of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that have spoken to me regarding what this government has accomplished thus far and what is planned to deal with new challenges in the future are generally supportive of what is being done. As we continue to pay down the debt, they are getting more and more confident that all will be well.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech ends with a section headed striking the right balance. What a fitting note to end on, because this is really what governing is all about: striking the real balance between revenues and expenditures as well as the right balance in other matters. It's no different than your family budget. Striking the right balance on program delivery certainly requires much thought and planning. As a member of this government, I can say that this is indeed happening and will continue to happen for the benefit of all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to again thank you for this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne and talk about the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, that I am so privileged to represent.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real privilege to get up this evening and speak on behalf of my constituents in response to the Speech from the Throne. What I want to do is just kind of look at the issues that are addressed in the context of what they expect to

happen this term of the 24th Legislature. They're looking at how the government sets its priorities, how the government reacts to the concerns that they've expressed over the past year in terms of what they see as the role of government, what they see as the relationship between government and the wants and needs that they have within the context of their life, their expectations. It's also a means to express on their behalf some of the things they see the government taking the right direction on and also the ones they see where the government needs to have a different priority, needs to have a shift or a change in focus to provide programs that more readily reflect the kinds of issues and the kind of Alberta they want.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne began with fiscal responsibility as the first subject area that they're talking about, and we saw that reflected in the Premier's Bill 1. Yet when I communicate with my constituents now, when I attend meetings in the constituency, when I receive phone calls that are expressing concerns, very few of the constituents are talking about fiscal responsibility. They are beginning to accept that as kind of the *modus operandi* for governments now. We have to be fiscally responsible. But what they want now is to see how that fiscal responsibility can be built into the provision of the kind of service that they want, the kind of Alberta that they want, and the relationship that they want between them and their government.

I guess if it would've been me writing this Speech from the Throne in response to my constituents, I would have started off with the issues of health care, education, and the environment as the priorities rather than fiscal responsibility. This is what they talk about. This is what their anxieties are about. This is the direction that they see government lacking when it comes to providing them with their vision of Alberta.

When we talk about health care, there's an awful lot of discussion about: what is the right level of funding? What is the correct number of dollars to put into health care? In your discussions with constituents when they come and say, "Well, I want this from my health care system," you start then talking about how they can get that, how we can change the health care system to provide that for them. You ask them to balance that off against the revenue that would be required to give them that health care system, and they all say: well, you know, this is a debate we've never really had; this is a debate that never has been brought out to Alberta. It's always just dollars or it's service. There's never a debate that goes on in terms of: how do we tie a relationship between the dollars that are going into health care to a service outcome? I would like to see and I think my constituents would really like to see that this become more of the debate and more of the way we look at how we're dealing with these kinds of issues.

9:20

I hope that this is the output that comes from the health summit on the coming weekend. I think the constituents in Lethbridge-East would appreciate seeing that, some degree of discussion about, you know, the balance that has to be there between dollars in the health care system and the kind of service level they expect. I'm sure that if this was presented to them, they would be better able to make the judgments and make the decisions about: should they be asking for this service from their public health care system, or should they be looking at an alternative method of getting that kind of service or another alternative method to deal with their kind of need?

This really is quite evident in the Chinook health region. I've had meetings with some of the deliverers, some of the members of the regional authority, some of the staff that work there, and they tell me that the acute care system in southern Alberta seems always to be in crisis, yet in many cases that crisis is not because of a lack of

services for the acute care part of it. It's because of the backup that has occurred because we don't have enough long-term care in the community to let the 20, 30, 40, as high as 60 patients at some times get out of the acute care system and get into the long-term care facilities.

The Chinook region has put together a real proposal, which is quite innovative, for an intermediate level of care facility, where we're going to deal with individuals on the transition from their home to their lodge. When the lodge life can no longer provide them the care they need, they don't necessarily have to go into long-term care, where they're supervised on a regular basis. What they need is some kind of intermediate care facility. The Chinook health region is now proposing this kind of facility in Lethbridge and in the Pincher Creek area, where they're going to deal with these transition facilities. They've shown me data that will indicate that these can be run for a lower cost than long-term care facilities and a significantly lower cost than having long-term care patients in an acute care bed with backing up causing problems as far away as our emergency wards. So I think they would ask the government to very seriously look at these proposals that are being put forward for this intermediate care to be provided as an option within our health care system.

Basically they're also concerned, as they deal with the health care system, that there's a little more transparency to it. They want to see how the decisions are being made. They want to be able to see the issues that are coming up in terms of changes in plans. What are our expectations? What expectation can we have in the context of citizens dealing with our health care system? Are we going to see continual shrinking of the services provided, or will we see expansion? The big trade-off that a lot of them see is the increasing cost of these new, innovative, frontier-type treatments, and they want to know how that's going to affect them. Will they be able to get quick access to the drugs that are being provided now as some of these new treatments come on for diseases and for conditions that they didn't have before? So they're asking that kind of question.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

When we look at the relationship of the health care system to the youth in our community, to the children, to the individuals that are under the supervision or control of the mental health authorities, they're looking there at what kind of support, what access. How are we going to relate to those individuals in the context of giving them a lifestyle and a life opportunity that gives them a chance to fulfill their potential?

It was interesting. The minister of social services announced an initiative that he was undertaking on fetal alcohol and its impact on our health care system and its impact on the development of young children in the province. This is, I think, an initiative where most of my constituents would say: yes, that's the right thing to be doing. They're now going to be saying: let's see a little more detail on the mandate; let's see a little bit more detail on what you expect out of this project. Because it is getting to be more and more of an issue when we see children that are falling through the cracks, whether it be in the community system, where they can't get along with their peers on the playground or where they can't function well in a school. Not only do they disadvantage themselves in that school; they disadvantage all the other children because the teacher cannot provide the kind of service and the kind of guidance to the other students when they have to deal with a child who is overly active or has attention deficit because of things like fetal alcohol syndrome situations.

I would just like to encourage the minister to keep the public informed on that, to keep them participating. The one thing that I

was a little bit disappointed in in his announcement was that he was just going to do this consultation with professionals. At least that's the way I understood the announcement today in the Legislature. I think he should be going out, potentially using that also and taking that same kind of consultative process, to parents who have children who have fetal alcohol syndrome. I've had some very heart-wrenching cases come to my office where parents have come in and said: "What can I do? What help is out there for me? I just can no longer handle this child." Some of those children getting into teens now are really in a position where they're becoming a threat to that family and a threat to the peers they deal with.

I guess the next thing that I find in my constituency is a lot of discussion about education. We have very good schools in the city of Lethbridge. We have very progressive boards that are providing opportunities for their children. We have the college, and we have the university. I think to talk about education in that whole context -- if we want to deal with funding for education and funding for the future of our economy, the future of our society, it seems interesting that a government that talks about business and the Alberta advantage and tries to develop a model of government that is potentially a business model of government doesn't look at education as an investment.

It was interesting, the meeting that was held here in Edmonton the other night with the Capitalizing on Change group. They had the head of the futures group and the European Community over giving a lecture, and he was talking about how we have to deal with education as an investment. If we put the dollars into good education, into providing an opportunity for every person in our society to reach their potential, the rewards back to us as a society will be more than compensated.

Now, I'm not suggesting in that, Mr. Speaker, that we should be just throwing money away. What we've got to do is take a business approach in this and make sure the dollars are there so that each person can reach their potential, each child can reach their potential, and each adult can maintain their potential. This means that we have to start looking at how we deal with a lot of our systems in this province. We have to start dealing with: is it right that under workers' compensation we just say, "Okay; you do this and this and this," rather than trying to get that individual back into a productive mode as quickly as possible? Having them wait six or eight months before they can get treatment means they're unemployed or underemployed for that period. Their family suffers from it. If we can get them treated, get them back into the workforce so that they are productive, everybody is better off for it.

9:30

This is the same when we go into the health care system. If we take six or eight months to have a -- Mr. Speaker, I've lost the word right now. When you have to restructure a bone or rebuild a knee, this kind of operation, the longer it takes to get that person back so they can function, the longer it is that they are not a productive contributor to our society. [interjection] Yes. The member adjacent said: rehabilitation therapy and surgery. That's what I was looking for. Thank you. We've got to start looking at that in the context of the dollars that we are spending on behalf of the public being used in a productive way to support each of us reaching our potential.

This then brings us to the issue that we talk about in terms of how we relate between the individuals and our economic system. I was really pleased to see the emphasis that's coming out now in the new budget in terms of trying to get our positions in universities, positions in colleges, and emphasis in the public school system on technology, technology training, the new knowledge-based employment opportunities. This is the kind of thing that we have to be looking at.

We also have to look at the issue of how this is applied. You know, the government is talking about this new Campus Alberta, the possibility of having programs transferred around between the universities so that people can get access to any university program in their own community. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to caution them on that. I've had some conversations with some people in Florida, where the government decided that they were going to have this kind of statewide university system, where a course outline with a course number was going to be common between all of their institutions.

What you found was that, yes, at each one of their institutions you could go look at their calendar, and there it was, course XYZ, with exactly the same course description, but when you went and talked to the students, what the professor or the instructor or the teacher was teaching in that class was different from one area to the other. When they graduated or when they got their transcript, yes, this was the course description, but when you started asking them questions about that course, they had learned something totally different.

We have to maintain the ability for institutions to develop their niche, to develop their expertise, and to put their stamp on their students. This is the way we get the qualified students, the most competent students to excel in their area of choice. We don't want to have to force them into a blanket area where everybody comes out with a program that has a set of courses in it, where the employer has no idea what those courses mean. That's a caution that I'd like to raise relative to this idea of transferrable programs. I support the idea of transferrable programs, but it has to be done with that caution. Openness, transparency, and the course outline, the readings assigned, the types of assignments given, the relationship between class work and out-of-class work all have to be put into that course description rather than that little 50-word description that usually shows up in a course calendar.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just end kind of with comments on agriculture and the relationship that we have to some of the issues of development in our rural parts of the province. It's important that we start looking at this.

I'd like to comment that the government has finally released their suggestions on the intensive livestock operations, and the new codes of practice for agriculture are coming out. This is the kind of public activity that's necessary. We've been debating a bill in the Legislature already this session on the right to farm. This is the kind of environment we need to create to strengthen our rural communities. We have to create a set of public guidelines, public processes, and regulations that can be enforced. So this is a move that is coming off in the right way.

The other thing that we have to also do is deal with the environment and the process of creating that rural community. Mr. Speaker, more and more we're seeing businesses talk about wanting to settle where there's a good environment, where there's a lifestyle, where there's a community that they feel good about. That doesn't necessarily mean that they have to have the very biggest skyscraper, the fastest mass transit system. A lot of people now in knowledge-based employment are looking for quality of life as a major criterion to establishing their business. We're seeing more and more people moving away from the major cities out into the country, and we have to start developing policies and processes in this province that encourage people to do that.

It was nice to see the Speech from the Throne talk about the initiative to make sure that all communities will be able to connect into the worldwide web. This is a good initiative, but we also have to go into those communities and provide the potential resident with the kind of environment that they look at and they can say: yes, I like living here. That means a clean environment. It means some good regulations on water quality. It means the kind of life that they

can look at the beautiful mountains that we've got and they can say: yes, this is the Alberta I want to live in. Mr. Speaker, I hope we can give it to them, at least give them a start on that, in this session.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

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

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake how proud and honoured I am to represent them in this Assembly. I wish to thank them once again for their confidence and endorsement, and I renew my pledge to do my very best on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, I would begin by saying that I'm grateful for the opportunity to live in a province such as Alberta. We have a strong economy, an expanding workforce, and a beautiful and vast landscape. Since this government has taken office, it has charted a successful course; that is, striking the right balance for Albertans, the right balance between responsibilities to and the needs of the people of this province. We have been successful in terms of fiscal responsibility by taking our direction from Albertans not to run deficits, not to raise taxes, and to continue paying down the debt. We have listened and we continue to listen to the voices of Albertans for direction in how to lead this province into the next millennium.

We know that our health care system is critical to us both individually and collectively as a province. This year's review of the governance and management of the Lakeland regional health authority has served to unite the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In a recent meeting in Cold Lake 600 people were in attendance and over 1,400 at the Bonnyville meeting. In well-prepared presentations these Albertans voiced their demands for quality health services in well-equipped and properly staffed health facilities in their communities. They envision further enhanced, specialized services and increased long-term care spaces.

Mr. Speaker, these are the very issues that were addressed in this Speech from the Throne. As a government we have stated that there will be a predictable funding base for the regional health authorities and an emphasis on preventing illness and injury. In addition, we will see the completion of the long-term care review, which will directly address many of the concerns voiced by my constituents.

This year is a very special year. It is the International Year of Older Persons. This is a great opportunity to recognize the contributions our seniors have made to our communities and to work together to help them to continue with healthy lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, there was one area that every single person in this province would agree needs to be a priority. That is the education of our children. It is up to us to provide the children of this province with an education system that prepares them for the future.

In terms of advanced education I would like to commend the mayors of Cold Lake and Bonnyville and the reeve of the municipal district of Bonnyville for accepting my challenge of improving adult education services in the constituency. The future partnerships formed with Alberta universities, technical and vocational colleges, and private adult education providers will provide a network of adult learning opportunities within our very own constituency.

9:40

This includes more opportunities for students to obtain further education within their communities. Many students will no longer

have to make the difficult decision of moving away from their families. Thanks to the dedicated leaders and residents of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency the concept of Campus Alberta shall become a reality. It is with their support and vision that we will benefit from a trained workforce that will continue to play a role in the Alberta advantage for years to come. Mr. Speaker, it is the government that has created and maintained that Alberta advantage.

Thanks to the leadership of the Métis Nation of Alberta, zone 2 Métis leadership and staff, and the council of the Elizabeth Métis settlement for their education initiatives scheduled for this fall at the former Lakeland College satellite at the Fort Kent school. We have accepted the responsibility of meeting the needs of Albertans and proven ourselves capable of doing so while at the same time ensuring that we are living in a province that has its fiscal house in order.

We have identified priorities and set goals including recognizing the importance of Alberta's infrastructure. In my constituency the paving of secondary highway 897 was completed in 1997, and the final paving of secondary 897 south was completed in 1998. Final grading of secondary highway 881 was done in 1998, and the paving is to be completed this spring. Also scheduled is the pavement overlay of highway 28 from Ardmore to Cold Lake. These projects have and will improve the infrastructure for my constituents and others who travel these roads. Other primary and secondary road projects are at the discussion stages and will hopefully proceed in the near future.

There have also been street improvement programs that have been awarded or completed in the towns of Bonnyville and Cold Lake, the village of Glendon, and the summer village of Pelican Narrows. The construction of the Primrose Lake Road in 1998 was a much-needed improvement and has served to enhance services for 4 Wing, Cold Lake as they prepare for the NATO fighter pilot training program.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is one of the strengths of this province, and I was happy to see the commitment this government is making to that industry. Alberta has only 9 percent of the population in Canada, but it accounts for about 25 percent of the value of natural agriculture production. This is obviously an honoured accomplishment but also a challenge to Albertans to respect and understand the importance of agriculture to this province.

I would like to touch on another industry that is important to this province, and that is the tourism industry. Our government is committed to developing initiatives to promote tourism in northern Alberta. Locally, snowmobile trail development in Bonnyville and the surrounding area has been extensive, and in fact the provincial jamboree in January attracted over 600 snowmobile enthusiasts. The volunteer club raised nearly \$30,000 by hosting this jamboree, and this will assist them in further trail development and facility development. I would like to offer my compliments to the

Bonnyville Snowdusters Snowmobile Club for their role in enhancing tourism destinations and bringing economic revenue to the constituency and ultimately to the province.

In July of this year 4 Wing, Cold Lake will celebrate its 45th birthday and the 75th anniversary of the Canadian air force. A world-class air show will attract an estimated 30,000 visitors to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. Hats off to all the residents involved in showcasing one of Alberta's hidden secrets.

When we look at this government's commitment to the environment, we have the review of the province's environmental regulations taking place to ensure that they are the most stringent standards in North America. This is a tremendous accomplishment. In terms of dealing with water quality within my constituency, there is a government review taking place by Alberta Health, Environmental Protection, scientists from the U of A, along with the community advisory council which will attempt to answer concerns dealing with increasing arsenic levels in the water. I feel very strongly that the quality of water for these affected constituents must be addressed, and I am committed to seeking an immediate solution to this problem. It will be unsatisfactory for me and my constituents to simply debate the cause and science with no immediate solution in sight. I am confident that together we can and will meet with a satisfactory solution to this problem.

Having said all of this, Mr. Speaker, I stand before this Assembly in support of the Speech from the Throne and the message it has delivered to Albertans. I look forward to this next year with the challenges it will present as well as the success we will achieve in making this the best province in Canada in which to live. Together with all the residents we will continue to ensure that the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency continues to be one of the best places to live, work, and raise and educate our children in the province of Alberta.

Thank you. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I wish to adjourn the debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake has moved that the debate on the Speech from the Throne adjourn. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

[At 9:46 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]