

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, February 25, 1999** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 99/02/25

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

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

We thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province.

Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, before we go to the Routine, I thought you may be interested to know that on February 26, tomorrow, 83 years ago, in 1916, MLA Charles Wilson Cross, who represented the constituency of Edson, introduced Bill 48 to amend the Alberta Election Act to confer the franchise on women. This bill was assented to on April 19, 1916.

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 from the SOS group signed by a number of Edmontonians, which says in part:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to increase support 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: Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees

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

MR. WHITE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I hereby file five copies of the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the Second Session of the 24th Legislature, January to December 1998.

head: Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 12

Domestic Relations Amendment Act, 1999

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I request leave to introduce a bill being the Domestic Relations Amendment Act, 1999.

This amending legislation responds to an Alberta Court of Appeal decision which struck down parts 2 and 3 of the Domestic Relations Act. This decision would otherwise be effective June 19, 1999. In the main, Mr. Speaker, what this legislation does is extend to the spouses in common-law relationships the right to claim spousal support from one another upon the breakdown of the relationship.

[Leave granted; Bill 12 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 12 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

Bill 14

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1999

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 14, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1999.

This act will fold the Border Areas Act into the Municipal Government Act and provide other revisions for clarification.

[Leave granted; Bill 14 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 14 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

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

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to table a letter from my constituent regarding the high cost of obtaining transcripts from a court case in which she was a participant.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table five copies of the responses to questions raised by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo regarding the 1998-99 Supplementary Estimates.

Thank you.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board's 1997-98 annual report and five copies of the Students Finance Board annual report for 1998. By the way, the Students Finance Board report also includes a report of the Alberta heritage scholarships fund.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period on February 18 the Premier was kind enough to take two questions from the Leader of the Opposition under notice, and I am tabling the response to those questions today.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February 22, a question was raised in this House that the Premier took under notice until my return. The question was about the superintendents of schools regulation as it applies to the hiring and firing of superintendents and especially as it relates to school board autonomy. I am pleased to table this information for all members.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table today the required number of copies of a memo received by my office this week in response to a query to the Minister of Family and Social Services for the attached rationale and briefer for Bill 6. The memo of response contained a cheeky reply and a copy of an article from the *Calgary Herald*.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to table the appropriate number of copies of the pine shake wood preservative treatment memo of September 24 from Environmental Protection. This indicates that like the untreated pine shake, PQ-57 has not had adequate product testing.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of correspondence between a constituent of mine who is a member of the Disenfranchised Widows Action Group and myself in which she is seeking compensation and fairness from the Workers' Compensation Board.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like table this afternoon copies of a letter from a Mrs. Shirley Armstrong regarding her concerns on the changes being made to the statute of limitations act, specifically the 10-year cap that is being put on victims of abuse.

Thank you.

head: Introduction of Guests

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a father/son duo. I'll introduce the son first. His name is Brett Cormier – among the many things he does, he's also a member of the Huntington Hills high school School Reach team – and his father, John Cormier. Amongst his achievements he's noted for having swum the English Channel. I'd ask both of those gentlemen to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a delegation from the Alberta Girls' Parliament who are seated in the members' gallery. There are 49 delegates including three from British Columbia, three from Saskatchewan, two from Alberta 4-H, and two Alberta CGIT members. This is the 28th session of the Girls' Parliament, and the theme is youth rights for 2000. They are accompanied by their group leaders Sue Schroder, Kathi DesChene, Sam Maupin, Rosalyn Schmidt, Alison Schmidt, and Mary Waugh. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a young man named Tony Buchanan. Tony is in grade 6 at Malmo school, and he has a keen interest in both federal and provincial politics. Actually he's been practicing. The last two Halloweens he's gone out as a politician, complete with flyers and

signs. Tony's accompanied today by his mother, and I'd like to ask them to both please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly 26 visitors from the Mallaig school. They are accompanied by two teachers, Mr. Edward Jobs and Mrs. Aline Martin. I'd like to ask our wonderful visitors to please rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take pleasure again in rising to introduce three constituents of mine who are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like to introduce them to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. They are Lorne Howell, Myrna Howell and Barbara Howell, and they are seated in the gallery today with two overseas guests of theirs, Michiko Tabuchi and Noriko Yamawaki. I would ask them all to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Health Summit

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that the government's list of speakers to the health summit beginning tonight in Calgary did not include nurses, community health workers, and counselors in addition to physicians and did not ask concerned Albertans like seniors and families to give an address in addition to economists. This is the 17th mechanism that this government has orchestrated in an attempt to shore up its image in health. My questions are to the Premier. Since the steering committee for the health summit is made up of the Minister of Health and two government MLAs, the top two government PR people, and the government's own Deputy Minister of Health, how can Albertans be sure that this summit will not be staged to give government the messages it wants to hear?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, this, as you pointed out, sir, yesterday, when the whole issue of contempt was being discussed, is a government initiative, and the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition can rest assured that the Minister of Health has tried to pick as best a cross section of Albertans as possible to represent the views of Albertans relative to health care.

Relative to the fundamental question – and no one can stage this question, because it's a very, very broad question. The question that needs to be asked – and we don't have the answer, and I would like something to come out of the summit relative to this answer – is: how much is enough, and what are we going to get for the dollars we spend? That's the fundamental question. That's not a politically driven question.

MR. JONSON: If I might supplement, Mr. Speaker, certainly one of the objectives was to make sure that there was neutrality in the selection of the delegates. Mr. Speaker, the steering committee recommended and the chair followed through on getting an independent agency to do a random selection of the public delegates. I don't know who those individuals are. I look forward to meeting them when I get to Calgary, but no member of government knows who those people are at this point in time.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to emphasize that when we made the invitation to various stakeholder groups, we did not dictate who of their number was to be selected. They were completely free to choose the people that they felt would best represent them. So I think the delegate selection process is as fair as it could possibly be.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, since most of the MLAs have been precluded from participating in the summit, will the Premier commit that the recommendations coming from this summit will be brought to the floor of the Legislative Assembly for open debate?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, if any of those – and this is an if. It's all hypothetical at this point because we don't know what's going to come out of the summit. I would hope what would come out of the summit is the answer to the question that I just posed generally and generically to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, if there are legislative changes or amendments or new legislation that needs to be passed as a result of those recommendations, of course it'll be brought to the House.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, if one of the recommendations of the health summit is to ban private, for-profit hospitals in Alberta, what will the Premier do?

MR. KLEIN: Well, that's very, very interesting. I wonder what the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition did when The Rainbow Report – I don't have the recommendation, but it certainly talked about alternative forms of medicine and alternatives to the publicly funded health care system. I know what the minister of the day did at that particular time, Mr. Speaker. She did absolutely nothing.

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

MRS. MacBETH: It grew to 31 percent under his watch, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my second question involves the health summit as well. The issues left out of the health summit workbook include a dispirited health workforce, long-term care access problems, and forgotten mental health services in our province. Yet this government insists that the health summit only talk about the bottom line. My question is: when the Premier asks what's essential and what changes should be made, is he really asking how much his government can hand off to the private sector?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker.

Relative to the comments in the preamble, I'll have the hon. minister reply.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish she would read the rest of the book, because the book outlines the billions of dollars that we are spending currently on health care in this province. More importantly it outlines the comprehensive range of services that we have in this province, which go far beyond the requirements of the Canada Health Act, which they frequently refer to.

Mr. Speaker, the whole goal that we have in this discussion at the summit is to make sure that we have the best possible publicly funded health care in this province that we can sustain and maintain, and we want to have the good advice coming from these people to know how to do that, to target our money to the proper places, to provide the best possible working environment, et cetera.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, when the Premier asks, "What's your responsibility?" is he really asking what Albertans can be blamed for when they use their health care services?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no one – no one – not the government and I would hope not the Liberal or ND opposition would say anyone is to blame. There is a problem related to health care in Alberta. There is a problem across the nation. That's why all Premiers, including the Premier of Quebec, went to Ottawa and said: there is a problem. We need to fix the problem immediately. There are pressure points occurring in all provinces, in all jurisdictions. Those have to be addressed, but over the long term we need to find some solutions that will achieve sustainability in the system. No one is to blame, but all of us collectively are responsible and hopefully can find solutions to the problem.

1:50

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Finally, when the Premier asks how much money is enough, is he really asking how little commitment to public health care government can get away with?

MR. KLEIN: Well, you know, an interesting question. I asked the question; perhaps the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition would like to provide the answer. How much is enough?

Mr. Speaker, I'm going back to December 15, 1990, when Mrs. Betkowski at that time said that she doesn't believe Albertans have been put at risk by bed closures or layoffs; it may well be that elective surgery – instead of waiting five weeks, you might have to wait eight. You know, I think the same question was being asked at that particular time: how much is enough? To which she replied: it's not a matter of money; it's how the money is used. So maybe today the hon. member of the Liberal opposition, the former Minister of Health, can answer the question, Mr. Speaker: how much is enough? [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, shh.

Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MR. SAPERS: Today when the Alberta Treasury Branch announced their third quarter earnings, they at the same time confirmed the \$45 million potential loss hanging over the heads of taxpayers as a result of this government's unsuccessful involvement in the West Edmonton Mall refinancing. Now, the \$45 million is just a sliver of the total loss that will hit Alberta taxpayers if the privatization clause in the loan guarantee agreement between the Treasury Branch and the Toronto-Dominion Bank is triggered. My questions are to the Premier. What legal opinion has the government sought as to whether privatizing the Treasury Branch will trigger the loan guarantee payment, costing taxpayers over \$300 million?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we're not that far along in terms of the privatization. We're going through the discussion now philosophically as to whether we should divest ourselves of the bank.

Certainly there are a lot of examinations going on right now, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is also looking at scenarios that he may wish to bring up in this House. We're interested in receiving ideas from all sectors as to what we do with the ATB in the future.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the Premier's

interest in receiving input, will the government commit to establishing a special committee of the Legislative Assembly to consult with Albertans before any change of the status of the Treasury Branch is undertaken? An all-party committee, Mr. Premier, just like you did with the heritage savings trust fund.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I won't commit to doing that, but I will commend the hon. member for bringing forward a good thought, worthy of consideration. Thank you. [interjections]

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
Mr. Speaker, maybe the . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: Now go for the public inquiry.

MR. SAPERS: Yeah. That took the words out of my mouth.
Mr. Premier, can you tell us who is going to pick up the \$45 million tab on the West Edmonton Mall loan losses when the ATB is privatized? Will it be the taxpayers, will it be the ATB, or will it be part of the negotiation for the new shareholders?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is purely hypothetical. Any prudent banker would write down, not write off but write down, potential losses on any loan. Without getting involved in the business of the ATB, I would suspect and expect that this would be a prudent business practice.

Definition of Common-law Spouse

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago the Justice minister was responding to reporters' questions about the Supreme Court ruling today which overturned Alberta Justice McClung's decision in the Ewanchuck rape case. The Justice minister said that he agreed with that decision, but then he said that he still continues to disagree with the Supreme Court decision on the Delwin Vriend case. He said then to reporters that he distinguishes between the two because one sets social policy and one upholds criminal justice, my point being that both issues are established by Legislatures and Parliaments, both the Criminal Code and social issues. My question is to the Premier. How can the Premier justify ushering in new legislation today which violates the previous Supreme Court decision on same-sex couples' rights with the introduction of the Domestic Relations Amendment Act, 1999?

MR. KLEIN: Oh, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's nice to have the hon. member back, but that was sort of a sneaky way of bringing in a reference to a piece of legislation that has the opportunity to be debated. The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed introduced the Domestic Relations Amendment Act today. I would point out that the Court of Appeal dealt only with common-law heterosexual spouses. That's all this new legislation deals with, and that's all the court directed us to deal with.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify. I'm surprised at the hon. member getting absolutely and totally wrong what I said to the media, because she was standing about this far from me when I was asked a question regarding Supreme Court decisions and whether I agreed or disagreed with some of them. I made it clear that on some social policy issues we tend to disagree. I did not mention the Vriend decision at all. In fact, shortly after caucus had debated the decision, I was asked by the media what my position was, and I publicly stated that I supported the Supreme Court decision with respect to Vriend. So if the hon. member's going to stand there and listen, then perhaps she should get it right.

MS BARRETT: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. Clearly I misunderstood the question that was being put to the minister. I apologize.

Mr. Speaker, the government did say after the Vriend decision that it would engage in public consultation prior to building legislative fences against same-sex couples. I know of no public meetings that occurred to discuss the legislation, which expressly excludes the legal rights of same-sex couples as embodied in Bill 12, introduced a few minutes ago. Can the Premier tell me otherwise?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I can't tell her otherwise because the report hasn't been received, Mr. Speaker, but I understand that there has been widespread public consultation through mail-outs and the 1-800 number and other mechanisms.

I'll have the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General respond as to the steps that have been taken relative to the public consultation.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Premier. The committee's been working on this issue for quite some time. In fact shortly after the Vriend decision came down, the Premier appointed a committee. We have done some work in soliciting the views of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Certainly when the report is reviewed by caucus, I know we will be receiving further input. I also need to point out very clearly that when this issue and the decision first came down, we received a lot of input from Albertans right across this province. In fact, I think the Premier's office received something like a couple of thousand calls per day. I know my office was receiving in excess of 1,000 calls per day. We continue to receive input from Albertans on this issue.

2:00

What I'd like to make clear, Mr. Speaker, is that the bill which was tabled by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed today deals with a very limited court decision, as the Premier explained. It has nothing to do with the issue of same-sex benefits. In fact, we've gone to great pains to explain, and I've chatted with some members of the gay community: lookit; wait for the committee to come forward with its report. This act has nothing to do with that particular issue, and hopefully the hon. member will understand that.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I said of the original McClung decision that I thought it represented the finest male minds of the 19th century. I stand by that, and I challenge the government to abandon its 19th century orientation and agree to drop this bill until it is in the form that allows for fairness in the court, fairness in domestic relations for same-sex couples.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously does not understand how this bill came into being. Thank God this was not the court reading into our legislation as they did in the Vriend decision. That's not to say that we wouldn't have had the debate, and the decision might have been the same. But this was the court, a decision in the Rossu/Taylor case, which stated that current legislation discriminates against common-law spouses according the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave Alberta until June 16, 1999, to amend the law. Again, I refer to the decision. The Court of Appeal dealt only with common-law heterosexual spouses, and that's all this new legislation deals with.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Farm Income Disaster Program

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nineteen ninety-eight

was a disastrous year for many farmers in Alberta, particularly those in the hog industry and the grain sector. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development yesterday announced that he had reached an agreement with the federal government and other provinces with respect to a new 60-40 federal/provincial agriculture disaster assistance program that would apply to all provinces. This new national program seems to mirror the Alberta farm income disaster program. Could the minister please explain for the benefit of my constituents and Alberta farmers: what is the correlation between this new program and Alberta's existing farm income disaster program, and how exactly will this assist Alberta farmers?

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has agreed to contribute 60 percent of the costs of the Alberta farm income disaster program. At the close of the year, once all the applications have been processed and we know what that dollar amount is, we will bill the federal government for 60 percent of that portion. It is difficult to predict in advance what 59,000 to 60,000 farmers will suffer perhaps in terms of weather conditions, the kinds of commodities they'll produce, where the world price fluctuations will be, and some of the other issues, but once we make those calculations, we'll be taking those dollars and looking at how we can spend them best, reinvesting in the industry of agriculture and food.

MRS. GORDON: Was there any consideration given to changing our program to match the national program so that all producers would be on par?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, the national program and the Alberta farm income disaster program are very similar. Although there are some differences with respect to how we deduct NISA, as a province we will be covering those costs. The reason I say that is that we had one area of disagreement. We said we're not going to sign on to the agreement unless we reach a resolution. The federal government said: in the year of the disaster we want to deem a payment into NISA. Well, during that year when that particular family has no money to buy milk, how are they going to lose another 3 percent off their sales to go into a program that's supposed to reward them and support them during the year of the disaster. So for that, we will be covering the cost, and our new agreement will allow that to happen.

MRS. GORDON: Will this federal money flow to the Alberta government, or will it go directly to producers?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, the money, of course, will all flow to the hon. Treasurer. However, then we will access those dollars from the very kind, visionary Provincial Treasurer, under a few conditions. One of those conditions is that all dollars going into the agricultural and food sector must be green. You're probably thinking: well, all dollars are green. But this is to make sure that what dollars go in do not invoke any countervail. They have to be green under the WTO trade rules. The other is that they must benefit all of the agricultural and food sector.

Mr. Speaker, we had, I believe, a very important summit about a year, a year and a half ago, and that was the Growth Summit. That Growth Summit identified seven or eight key factors that will limit growth in agriculture if we don't address some of them, and those will be some of the guidelines that we will be following.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, before we make any decisions as a government, we will be consulting with all of the industry to ensure that we hear from them how they best want to see this money reinvested.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Section 7 of annex 2 to the World Trade agreement on agriculture states – no, Mr. Premier, I won't ask you again.

Eligibility for such payments shall be determined by an income loss, taking into account only income derived from agriculture, which exceeds 30 per cent of average gross income or the equivalent in net income terms . . . in the preceding three-year period or a three-year average based on the preceding five-year period, excluding the highest and the lowest entry.

My questions are to the minister of agriculture. If we were to use the gross income calculation as provided for in that section of the World Trade agreement, would we not be doing the same as paying on a negative margin under FIDP?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the contents of the annex in front of me, but when the Premier took the question a few days ago in this House from the same hon. member, I did agree to provide all of the relevant subsections of the annex plus a number of opinions that we have received on that particular annex in terms of the interpretation.

This is a very important area of debate, and one of the things that was unanimous in the agreement in Victoria was that the federal government and the provinces do not get involved in paying farmers on negative margins, because the best information they received was that that will invoke countervail. What is the sense of invoking countervail so the farmer loses the income of the products he or she produces and then having the taxpayer subsidize it the following year? It doesn't make any sense.

We already have enough problems with our closest traders to the south, the Americans, in terms of the countervail, the petitions now on NISA and some of the other programs that provinces have independently from Alberta. Our court costs, we assume, in the next petition to argue that issue in the World Trade Court is going to cost in excess of \$5 million. Five million.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister also commit that as he changes FIDP in the future, he will adopt the three of five-year process that was described in that clause so that when farmers do experience a disaster, that will not bring down their average margin?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, an excellent question. In fact, we did run all those models earlier, and we shared that information with the federal government and with the federal department of agriculture. Earlier, what the hon. member had said – well, it's called the olympic average. You take your best year off, and you take your worst year off the five years. Well, if that were the case and we followed that – last year, the year 1997, was obviously the best for the pork industry. So you'd be taking what was definitely the best year out, pulling it out, and then dividing the margin of those three years, and you would have a much lower average. I think that all the models that we ran clearly showed that the preceding three-year average is the best way to go.

2:10

However, again I know that the hon. member across the way has the best interest in agriculture and will share that information. He does have a degree in farm economics. He'll impart his wisdom to us, and we'll reach some agreement on it.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, again to

the minister of agriculture: were all of those options that are provided by the World Trade Organization's annex 2, section 7 provided to the farmers when the consultation on the development of the farm income disaster program was undertaken?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, to the best of my information I believe they were. In fact, some of the spokesmen for the farm commodity groups have working for them some of the best economists and trade lawyers as well. When you get about 40, 50 different representatives from various commodity groups around the table, they all will have some degree of difference of opinion. However, we share all that information with the farming community, so through a process of consultation we will get the best advice for them that they can advance to this minister and to this government.

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

Training of Medical Doctors

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Airdrie is, according to our most recent statistics, the fastest growing city in North America. We are having difficulty attracting new family practice practitioners to our city, especially with the rapid growth in our population. Combine with that the Provincial Health Council's fall report indicating that there would be a serious shortage in the future of doctors and health care professionals as our workforce ages along with the baby boom generation. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. Why is he not ensuring that our colleges and our universities are training enough doctors and health care workers to meet today's as well as tomorrow's needs?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the member's concerns in terms of supplying the demand, and of course we're going to have to simply find a way to respond to it. Let's give, perhaps, some statistics here just to position where we are currently. In the year that I have statistics for in front of me today, '97 and '98, there were 1,500 students that were taking medicine at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. As well there were approximately 2,100 positions for nursing programs throughout our system.

How we in Advanced Education and Career Development try to respond to the concerns that the member is raising: we basically have two funding mechanisms we can use. First of course is the operating grant, by which we fund the institutions on perhaps an historical way to fund the programs that they've had ongoing. Our second innovation is what we call the access fund. I'd like to make the member aware and perhaps other members here in the House aware as well that for the upcoming year '99-2000 - this was tied in with an announcement we made a week or so ago on information and communications technology. We did announce at that time \$300,000 which will open up 46 new spaces for nursing diploma programs both at Medicine Hat College and at Grant MacEwan.

The reason that we're doing this is that we understand that given the current market forces that appear both in the Medicine Hat area and of course in North America, those normal programs could not meet that demand, so we've kicked in some access money. I would want to indicate to the member, again sharing her concern, that it will be the access fund as we move forward through the years that will have to respond, then, to the actual situation that we will face here in Alberta in terms of the demand for health practitioners, especially medical doctors.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question would be to the Minister of Health. It's my understanding that several years ago provincial ministers of health across Canada agreed to put a cap on the quota of the number of medical students attending provincial medical schools across the country. I wonder if he could explain why that was done.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that in 1992 the ministers of health of the day were presented with statistics. I believe there was a dialogue with the royal college of physicians. They accepted a position that indicated that in that particular year and in the years following there would not be the anticipated population growth that had been predicted. In fact, the case was evidently made to them that at that point in time we were training more physicians in this country than would be absorbed by the need for health care.

Fortunately for the country we've had a vibrant economy; we've had a growing population. But unfortunately that decision has not been to this point in time formally revisited. I have brought forward at the health ministers' table that particular issue and our need to revisit and evaluate the situation. I hope that at our upcoming health ministers' meeting we'll be able to make further progress in reviewing and I hope changing that.

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

Pine Shake Roofing

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Labour has released 1,969 documents on the pine shake issue so far. The scandal is widening. There are documents for every year with the exception of 1995. My first question is to the Minister of Labour. Why are there no documents for 1995?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea why there are no documents from 1995 or if in fact they exist.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in the three-year period before 1995 724 documents were released and in the three-year period following 1995 801 documents were released, why was nothing done in 1995 to protect Alberta consumers?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I was not the minister of the day at the time. As to why things occur in a particular chronological sequence, I don't have the answer.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, my third question this afternoon is to the Acting Premier. Is it not government policy for ministers to be informed of what's going on in their departments?

MR. DAY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

Cross-Canada Trail System

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question today is directed to the Minister of Community Development. Madam Minister, in view of the fact that Canadian Pacific railway has recently gifted Canada Trailnet, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation in fact, with nearly a thousand miles of abandoned rail line, has your department had any consultation with the CPR and Trailnet on this process?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, no we have not. The CPR is a private company, and they did not see fit to discuss this with my department. I've had a letter from the president of Alberta Trailnet saying that they're going to work closely with adjacent landowners along these routes to make sure that if there is an impact on any that they might use – I should clarify that 404 kilometres of that gifting are in Alberta. The gifting is the overall gifting in Canada. Certainly it is a significant gifting by CPR to Canada trails.

2:20

I would also tell the hon. member that Alberta Trailnet certainly has been very proactive in working with government on the development of trails, and they have expressed and demonstrated a willingness to work with landowners, with leaseholders, with municipalities, and I would expect that they will continue to uphold that process as they've indicated to us that they would.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Again to the same minister: does your department provide any funds to Alberta Trailnet in furthering their goal towards this network of trails for hikers, skiers, skidoers, and horseback riders.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we do not provide funding directly to them for the building of trails. However, Alberta Trailnet does receive a grant from the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation each fiscal year, and this is the same grant – it's for their general operations. We provide a similar type of grant to 107, I believe it is, sports and recreation associations such as Alberta minor hockey or baseball or swimming or many of the other organizations. So they do receive that administrative assistance.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Madam Minister.

My final question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Given that neither the CPR nor Trailnet consulted with adjacent landowners, those being farmers and ranchers with maybe livestock on both sides of these abandoned rail lines, is there anything that your department can do to protect the further erosion of agriculture from this influx of traffic and disturbances to their agriculture operations?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member puts forward a situation which is quite sensitive in a number of communities, especially with the agricultural production and pursuits that are occurring in those areas. When it comes to cattle, we obviously have some concerns with respect to who's responsible for the fencing and for the liability if cattle are getting onto the trails.

The fact that these trails will not only be used for snowmobiles in the winter but all-terrain vehicles during the summer and the effect of somebody ripping and roaring down the path in between herds of cattle on either side, what effect that has – we're certainly going to put our best efforts forward to try and work with the railways and all of the community organizations so that everybody has a clear understanding of what's happening here and, as well, the farmers on either side of those railway abandonments know how their livelihood is going to be affected as well.

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

Limitation of Actions

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday this province has a new limitations act. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. What effort has the government made to publicize to

Albertans the fact that effective Monday their right to sue will be sharply restricted or eliminated?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, first let's make it clear that we haven't sharply restricted or eliminated it. What we've done is made the limitation period for actions consistent, and that is a two-year period.

This act has been discussed and before the House for a good couple of years. It's been distributed and widely discussed with the legal community, and of course anyone who is contemplating suing typically will seek out the services of a lawyer. We've issued news releases on it. We can continue to advise the public. We in fact can come up with a strategy to ensure that they are aware of it, and I'll take that into consideration. But in the past couple of years I think we've gone to great lengths to make sure that the general public and the legal community are aware of it. This is also something that was generated by the law review institute. They took a look at it and came forward with some recommendations. So it's had very wide discussion for a good couple of years.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of Albertans would disagree with this.

Is this not just a way for the government to avoid paying for things like the pine shakes scandal, sterilization victims, and natives abused in residential schools?

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely and totally false, inaccurate, misleading, whatever you want to call it. I'm sure I've said some things that are probably unparliamentary, and I apologize in advance if I've done that.

However, again the limitations act was subject to a lot of consultation with again the legal community. Certainly if the general public wished to participate, they could've. It's taken us quite some time to come up with the act in its present form. There is no intention at all to limit anyone's rights, and that's one of the reasons why we've worked quite carefully over the past couple of years to ensure that there was enough lead time in place for people to try and resolve any outstanding issues that they had.

MS OLSEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, is this not just an obvious alternative to invoking the notwithstanding clause?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I guess it's obvious only to one person in the House, Mr. Speaker, and that's the hon. member who has asked the question. I mean, that doesn't even dignify a response.

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

Cost of Court Transcripts

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, I have a constituent who is being charged \$3,000 to be paid in advance for transcripts from a court case regarding access to her grandchildren. She has been told that these transcripts are the sole property of the court reporter, and she must purchase the transcripts from the court reporter. Mr. Minister, my first question is this: why is it necessary for Albertans to pay such exorbitant costs to obtain court transcripts?

AN HON. MEMBER: Good question.

MR. HAVELOCK: It is a good question, Mr. Speaker. I can advise

the House that the fee is legislated and set out in the tariff of fees in the *Alberta Rules of Court*. It's negotiated between the court reporters and the government.

The last fee increase, I'd like to advise the hon. member, was in 1986. Court reporters charge only what is allowed under the existing legislation. In fact, we've had legislation governing the fees charged for court transcripts since 1905. We as a government have made every effort to ensure that those fees haven't increased, and again that's why we haven't seen an increase since 1986. The fee pays court reporters for the time they spend preparing transcripts, because that's done on their own time and it's not covered by their base salary.

MRS. LAING: Thank you. My first supplemental, again to the same minister: Mr. Minister, how do the charges that Albertans pay compare to charges paid in other provinces and territories in Canada?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, at this time, Mr. Speaker, my best information is that there is no centre that compiles these statistics. However, we did a quick review of what some of the other jurisdictions charge. I can advise the House that while Alberta charges \$2.60 a page for a double-spaced copy, in Ontario the fee is \$3.20, Manitoba charges \$3.00 a page, and Saskatchewan charges approximately \$2.20 a page. So it would appear that we're around average when you compare this jurisdiction to the rest of the country.

MRS. LAING: My final question, again to the Justice minister: in light of modern technology what action will Alberta Justice take to change this archaic and unnecessary practice of charging Albertans for transcripts?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, this relates to an issue which was actually just addressed at the justice summit, and that's access to the courts, access to the system, trying to understand the system. As most members of the House know, approximately 485 recommendations came out of the Summit on Justice. While court transcripts were not a specific issue discussed at the summit, again it does relate to the access aspect, which was reviewed during the summit, and I can assure the hon. member that the department and myself will look at the existing system to see if it can be improved.

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

Provincial Archives

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to Public Works, Supply and Services records, only one site, the Westerra campus in Stony Plain, has been the object of a feasibility study for the relocation of the Provincial Archives. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Why is only one site being considered for the Provincial Archives? Does this mean that the decision has already been made?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the decision has not been made. I've been on record as saying that I don't anticipate this decision being made for some time. Our primary interest is in making sure that the archival records of this province are housed in the safest, most accessible place possible.

I don't know where – I guess I do know where. The hon. member stated that she got her information from Public Works, Supply and Services' records. However, I can assure the hon. member that a

number of options are being reviewed. I met with the Provincial Archives committee when they had their volunteer recognition just a few short weeks ago. I explained the process to them, and they seemed very comfortable with it.

2:30

Mr. Speaker, there has been a choice by some people to zero in on one site. That's their choice, and I wouldn't presume to guess their reasons for doing that. I can tell you that we are looking at a number of sites, and we will choose a site that will best house the archival records of this province, not just for this year or next year but long into the future.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Has the minister commissioned studies on the accessibility of the site in Stony Plain for seniors and others with transportation barriers?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, as I just indicated, for some reason the only site that anyone wants to talk about is Westerra. Nobody wants to accept the minister's comments being repeatedly made that we're looking at a number of areas. One of the things that this minister is most concerned about is that people understand that these are the provincial archives. These are the archives of the people of Alberta. They are not Edmonton archives; they are not Calgary archives; they are not High Level archives. So I want to make sure that accessibility to those archival records is number one.

If the hon. member wanted to take a positive tack in this thing, that would be the area you would look at. You would talk about access. You would talk about electronic access, because, believe it or not, the whole population of this province who utilize archival records do not live here. We have universities and colleges and technical institutes who use these records on a regular basis spread across this province.

So I'm going to deal with this in the best location, the best accessibility – and that may be electronic access – and the safest housing for those records.

MS BLAKEMAN: I'd like to thank the minister for bringing up the idea of electronic access, because my question is: what are the budget projections and the start-up date for the virtual reference room, or the electronic reference room, that the minister says are the keys to ensuring access?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, this may come as a big surprise to the member opposite, but there's a lot of work and detail and planning and a lot of people that have to be involved in these decisions. One, we are looking for appropriate housing. Two, we are looking for the best way to access those records. You do not put these records on microfilm or whatever you're going to use – and I might add that the way technology is changing today, there are many ways that we might use technology to access them.

Mr. Speaker, the decision has not been made. There are many sites being looked at. It may be a present building; it may be a new building. It may be any number of locations, but it will be the best place when it's chosen.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, 30 seconds from now I'll call on the hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. During that 30 seconds all members might like to be reminded that the geographic centre of the province of Alberta is located in the constituency of Barrhead-Westlock.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

St. Albert City Plan

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In St. Albert we have a process that is under way in our community called CityPlan. Our city council put this process in place in order that our citizens could become engaged and indeed are well engaged in a journey of discovery of how we wish our community to develop in the future.

This concept is perhaps not a new one in the experience of other communities across this province and indeed across the country and of course the continent. However, this look at the future development of our community is unique because it proposes and in fact does address a broader scope of key development components than the traditional transportation and land development components.

The members of CityPlan represent a variety of citizen associations and interests and are engaged, as I said earlier, in receiving presentations and evaluating dialogue from any citizens who wish to voice their perspectives and their ideas. Obviously the CityPlan members will report in full their findings and their directions to our mayor and council and our city's planning and development committee.

What is most significant about this process is what the scope of interest this city plan includes. As an example, the board of our Youville nursing home has brought to CityPlan's attention the community's interest in planning for an increase in nursing home beds for inclusion in our city's scope of care and community profile. Similarly, the youth of our community are involved in the process of what they would define as their desired city in the future.

As the Member of the Legislative Assembly for St. Albert I wish to commend our citizens, young and old, leaders and presenters, who are involved in this very important process. Our community is looking to the future and doing so in a reasoned and informed manner.

Thank you.

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

Long-term Care

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The other day I asked the Minister of Health about long-term care beds and the plight of Mr. Raoul Bergevin from St. Albert, who is unable to access a bed at the Youville home. Yesterday his granddaughter phoned me and said that Mr. Bergevin was unable to stay in the lodge because of deteriorating health.

The family now has three options. They could take him to the Westlock emergency and get an acute care bed. They could go to Sturgeon hospital emergency and wait in the emergency room for maybe a day or two and get another acute care bed. Or they could take him home to live with his granddaughter, but she and her family are unable to care for him.

Mr. Speaker, how often do we have to bring up the issue of lack of planning, lack of beds, and lack of vision when it comes to health care for long-term care patients? When someone in our society needs more care than a family can give, does not that person become the responsibility of all of us? Doesn't Mr. Bergevin become our collective grandfather?

This government will be judged harshly in history books as they are described as a government that balanced the books but forgot about its people.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, during the question period the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo rose on a point of order. I take it that the hon. opposition whip will be raising that point of order? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Point of Order

Brevity in Question Period

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague I reference *Beauchesne* 417: "Answers to questions should be . . . brief."

Happy to have the minister of advanced education with us. Doesn't need to make up for lost time, Mr. Speaker. That was a lesson, I think, in abuse of section 417 of *Beauchesne*, and I would ask for your direction in terms of getting members of Executive Council to pay attention to the necessity for brevity in answers.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The only point of order that should be made here is the inappropriate reference to a member's absence from the House, and I would suggest that members should be admonished not to do indirectly what they shouldn't be doing directly. While we encourage members of Executive Council to provide brief and concise answers to questions where appropriate, sometimes the nature of the question itself calls for an articulate answer, which is what the member was delivering.

2:40

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, what the chair does is attempt to make sure that there's a maximum ebb and flow throughout the question period. One's not always sure in a set of the original question plus the two supplementaries whether in fact an hon. member will be raising a first supplementary or a second supplementary, so the chair tends to guide himself by listening attentively to what the answers are.

The reality today is that we had 12 sets of questions. The first one was five minutes, the second one five minutes, the third one four minutes, the fourth one six minutes. Then we went four and a half, five, five, two, four and a half, three, three, and four. In the case of the set that was initiated between the Member for Airdrie-Rocky View and the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development, the total time for that set of questions was five minutes. Although the response to the first question tended to be a little long, the fact of the matter is that certainly the whole set of questions was within the time frame that the chair was dealing with. One has to be guided by that.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo rose, I think, after the first response. Perhaps if hon. members in the future want to raise these things, let's wait until all three have been dealt with and maybe find that they're compressed within the time frame in which we basically deal.

head: Projected Government Business

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Orders would the Government House Leader reply and indicate government business for next week?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to provide a general overview of next week's business. On Monday afternoon, March 1, under Government Bills and Orders for second reading we expect to be dealing with Bill 7, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1999; Bill 9, the Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 1999; and Bill 10, the Land Titles Amendment Act, 1999.

We'll also be in Committee of Supply on supplementary supply, lottery fund, day 1, and we'll hopefully have the opportunity to revert to Introduction of Bills to deal with Bill 13, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1999. Time permitting, we'll go to consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech; otherwise, as per the Order Paper. At 8 p.m. under second reading, again, Bill 7, Bill 9, and Bill 10; consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech; Committee of Supply if necessary; Bill 13 if necessary; and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. under second reading Bill 13, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1999, consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech, and as per the Order Paper. At 8 p.m. under second reading Bill 6, the Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1999; Bill 8, Provincial Court Judges Amendment Act, 1999; Bill 11, Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 1999; Bill 13, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1999; Bill 14, Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1999; and Bill 15, Natural Heritage Act. Time permitting, we would have consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech and second reading of Bill 13, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1999, and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday under Government Bills and Orders at 8 p.m. consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech and Committee of the Whole on bills 13, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, March 4, in the afternoon under second reading Bill 12, Domestic Relations Amendment Act; Bill 15, Natural Heritage Act; third reading of Bill 13, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1999; consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech; and as per the Order Paper.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order. Again, when in committee we'll have the same rule: only one member standing and speaking at a time. If we can do that.

head: Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund, No. 2

THE CHAIRMAN: It's been suggested that we proceed through the different estimates and then vote at the end, if that's agreeable. That's agreeable?

The order isn't from page 1 through. We'll begin this afternoon with the Department of Health and call upon the Minister of Health for his comments on his estimates.

Health

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This afternoon in addressing the supplementary estimates related to Health, we are looking at a total of \$18.1 million in new appropriations, bringing the total Health estimate for 1998-99 to \$4.426 billion. The \$18.1 million increase is made up of three items: \$10.5 million for physician services, \$6.5 million for blood and blood-related products, and \$1.1 million to provide for settlement of legal claims related to unlawful sterilization. The increase in spending for physician services is a result of population growth in the province and increased physician supply in Alberta and the resulting increase in the utilization of physicians' services.

Mr. Chairman, it's very important to emphasize that both these areas flow from a new contract signed last year between the government and the Alberta Medical Association. In that contract there is a provision to adjust the amount in the medical services budget for physician fee-for-service claims to account for actual population growth. Since Alberta's population has grown faster than the rate projected in the contract, the medical services budget is now being increased. The population growth originally projected was 1.7 percent, while current information puts the actual rate at 2.3 percent.

At the same time, the contract with the AMA also provided for increases to the medical services budget based on increased physician supply. The total number of physicians working in our public system has increased by 3.3 percent in the current year, an increase, according to our statistics, of 188 physicians, which I would like to emphasize is contrary to what sometimes certain individuals give as an impression, that we are not able to attract any physicians to this province. Both of these were negotiated into the contract with doctors to ensure that physicians are fairly compensated for the work they do and that Alberta remains attractive to physicians.

The increase of \$6.5 million for blood services is primarily the result of increased use of fractionated blood products and reflects the requirement of our health system to meet the increasing needs of Albertans.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the \$1.1 million for legal claims reflects Alberta Health's share of the estimated increase in costs of government efforts to provide fair compensation to victims of inappropriate sterilization several decades ago.

Mr. Chairman, these supplementary estimates reflect, I believe, the government's commitment to ensuring that Albertans have the health services they need when they need them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2:50

MR. SAPERS: Thanks for those remarks, Mr. Minister, and the information which adds to the few lines that are in the supplementary supply estimates book. I do have some questions for you but first a couple of general comments.

Much has been made of the increased spending in health. I've heard the minister and the Premier and the Treasurer and others from time to time talk about the commitment to health care expressed in terms of dollars, and I've always wanted to hear in the next sentence some truly comparative figure in terms of how much money is being spent, then adjusted for population and adjusted for inflation. I never hear that when I hear government members talking. So a casual listener would only hear the large numbers.

I can't remember who it was, but it was one of the heads of the U.S. Treasury who at one time made the observation: you know, you talk about a billion over here and a billion over there, and pretty soon you're talking about real money. When I hear the Minister of Health and the Premier talking about the \$4.4 billion, et cetera, spent on health care and the reinvestment and the new commitment to health care and the leveraging of the federal dollars, I'm reminded of that quote, because it's easy to roll off the tongue that it's \$4.4 billion. But without putting that into context of population growth and inflation as well as the cost of technology, drug therapy, replacement of capital, et cetera, it really isn't a very meaningful number. I was actually pleased to hear this time the Minister of Health talk about the population growth in Alberta as being one of the primary drivers behind the request for the supplementary supply before the Assembly today for the Department of Health.

I do wonder how the negotiating could have led to a conclusion between Alberta Health and the AMA that was about 32 percent out on population growth. Population growth projections don't just

affect the Department of Health, and I don't remember them being nearly a third wrong in the population growth estimates for Education or in some of the other departments. I'm just curious: is there not one sort of standard that government departments use when they're looking at population growth? If not, why not? You know, it seems to me that somebody should sit down and say: this is what we're going to peg it at.

The increase in supply going to physician services is one of those tricky questions that's before this Assembly. The minister indicated that part of it is because of an increased supply of physicians. So there are more doctors coming to the province, and I guess that's good because there have certainly been many communities that have been going without both general practitioners and specialists. I know the minister has been working hard and has had some success through the regional health authorities in attracting some subspecialists to the province. I think we can be proud of the physicians in Alberta who have had to cope with unprecedented uncertainty in their practice of medicine over the last couple of years and, in spite of that, their willingness to invite their colleagues to come and join them in practice. It's a risk that they undertake to provide service to us all, and to the degree that the ministry has been involved with that, I congratulate them.

But that's not the whole story. The increase in supply is one part of the puzzle. The increase in the number of services provided is another part of the puzzle, and I guess this is the part of the puzzle that's probably the hardest to describe. The missing piece is: you've got more doctors, which means you have more fee-for-service procedures. Perhaps. You could also have more doctors, with each one of them doing less. The thing that's not measured and what I didn't hear the minister talk about is the impact of other policies on the number of times people have to go to their doctor outside of hospital to receive a service.

There have been studies which have shown, for example, that earlier discharge from hospital requires more physician visits outside of hospital. I'm not saying that that's because of postoperative complications or postsurgical infections, although that could be an element of it as well, but just the fact that if you have to have stitches removed and you're no longer sitting in a hospital bed, you go to the doctor's office, and they pull out the stitches for you. So there's just more follow-up that's required.

This is an interesting cost shifting. If people stayed longer in hospital, the cost of that would be borne by the regional health authority. If they're discharged and they're cared for at home by a family member, then the convalescent cost, the bed-and-breakfast cost, as it's sometimes referred to, is borne by the family. Then the province turns around and through the AMA agreement pays for the cost of the subsequent medical care. It could be one, two, three, four, or more visits to a doctor's office that may not have happened had the person stayed longer in hospital or had more supervised care in a different way. I'm hoping that the Minister of Health will be able to provide us with that missing piece of the puzzle. What part of this supplementary request for physician services are we being asked for because there have been more physician services provided to patients who otherwise would have had those medical needs dealt with in hospital or perhaps at a day surgery site?

I have a couple of other questions for the minister as well. It has to do with the increased spending for blood products. The minister mentioned – I think it was all of one sentence, and I don't think it was a particularly long one either – that it was just an increased demand for fractionated blood products, and there you go. Okay; but some more detail, please. Are we purchasing more blood products today than we ever were before, on a proportionate basis?

Maybe in an absolute dollar sense: okay; the volume may be up.

But proportionately are we purchasing more? Are we bringing in these products from out of province? Has the cost of the product gone up as a result of what's happened with the Canadian blood supply system? Is there a cost to be borne as a result of partnering with the new Canadian blood supply service? Is part of this cost in fact an administrative and/or an insurance fee? In other words, is there a new cost built into the supply of these products that are going into pooled funds for liability protection, et cetera? Or is this just simply the fact that there are more procedures in Alberta requiring fractionated blood products?

Another question I have, which I suppose only tenuously relates to the supplementary supply, is: what is the status of blood donation in Alberta? Are we getting a lot of in-province donations? What are the minister's projections for the future of the domestic, if I can call it that, or in-province, blood supply? How will those projections or predictions bear on future budget cycles for the ministry? Or will we be looking at supplementary supply? Let me put the question as precisely as I can. Are we so uncertain about the cost of blood supply that the best we can do is rely on supplementary estimates? Will we have to be coming back to supplementary supply because there's that much variability or uncertainty in terms of the cost and the availability of blood products in Alberta?

3:00

Mr. Minister, the last question that I have for you, at least at this point, has to do with the million dollars plus for legal claims. You mentioned that it was Alberta Health's portion of the predicted cost of settling with the sterilization claimants. I was told – and I can't verify this, but maybe the minister knows – that there were 23 civil suits pending in Calgary Court of Queen's Bench seeking damages against the Crown and the Department of Health, just in Calgary alone. I don't know whether that's true or not, and I haven't gone to Calgary Court of Queen's Bench to pull the statements of claim and to count them up and to add up the damages being sought. Of course I would have no way of evaluating the merits of the claims. I'm assuming that that is the minister's business and that Alberta Health must be aware of the number of civil actions that name the government of Alberta, the minister or the Department of Health, and/or the Premier in legal actions regarding the provision of health services.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us what amount of money has been set aside for the potential settlement of some of those actions. I guess I would have expected that if the ministry is putting aside \$1.1 million for sterilization claims, a prudent practice would be to set aside some dollars for some of these other claims, because they can't all be without merit.

Those are my initial questions for the minister. Mr. Chairman, as I understand the process this afternoon, we're going to have some opportunity for some dialogue, and then we're going to vote on all at the end. I would hope that the minister would take this opportunity perhaps to answer some of the questions before colleagues provide him with even more issues to worry about.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, if it would be acceptable to you and to the Assembly, I would like to respond to the hon. member. Specifically, could I request that the Minister of Justice supplement on the last issue being raised? He's in a position to be more broadly informed than I am.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. I'll be brief. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At this point in time we've settled in excess of 575 claims. I believe there are approximately 250 claims in the court process regarding the sterilization issue and approximately 40 more which are in the negotiation settlement process.

I don't have the number in front of me, but I can assure the member that the \$1.1 million that's referred to in the Health budget, if I'm not mistaken, is actually not the total amount that was set aside with respect to the sterilization. I'm trying to recall, and the number of around \$60 million or \$70 million is what pops into my head. What I can do by answering this question as vaguely as this is put my department on notice that they will have to get the hon. member the specific number that he's requested. I do know that there was some accommodation made. Certainly as the settlements come along, if we exceed whatever has been set aside, then of course you look at the supplementary process for that also. I do know that there were significant dollars set aside.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the factor in the physician population, which is leading to part of these supplementary estimates, and the questions that were raised there. There are primarily two reasons for that particular allowance, or clause, being in the AMA agreement and our agreeing to it. First of all, as you know – and we've improved it considerably fortunately; we've recruited about 82 of our 188 doctors to rural positions – you had areas of the province where you had physicians, perhaps two and they needed three, that sort of thing, where the physicians were working flat out. Their complaints were: overworked, no ability to have reasonable vacations, weekends off, and help with on-call. By adding a physician to, say, Valleyview, they are splitting the work that is there.

The other factor, though, which is relevant to these estimates, is that quite frankly those areas are under serviced when they're short of physicians. We're able to deliver out of, say, Valleyview a reasonable amount of medical service to the population, and if you're delivering additional service, there are additional billings, additional cost. So that's one sector of this.

The other part is the area of specialties. Again, there's an additional service being provided when we recruit some of these specialists. One of the most-known, most-publicized examples is right here in Edmonton. I believe it would be a year and a half, two years ago. It would be about only a year ago that this became fully operational. The Capital health authority recruited to Edmonton Dr. Rebecca, a service which was not provided before, a needed, cutting edge – I wouldn't use that term in medicine – a leading, additional service to the population of this province, and of course that service is not insignificant in its cost. So it's those kinds of things that led us to quite frankly be convinced and come to a mutual agreement with the AMA to provide for physician increase in terms of funding for additional service, additional specialized service. That's the reasoning there.

Secondly, with respect to the issue of blood services. I think quite frankly that the member across the way could be answered in this manner: all of those to some degree. The major one, though, is that we are doing more surgeries than ever before in this province. A whole range of services are being provided which are requiring more blood, quite frankly, more plasma, more serum, more blood, and that's the primary driver of this particular amount of money. Connected of course to providing that, since provinces pay their proportionate sum to the Canadian Blood Services, there'll be an element of administrative costs to deliver that blood. There'll be an element, you know, of all the things that you need, transportation costs and so forth, to get it here if we have to bring in from outside

the province. So the amount of money there is because of increased demand.

Thirdly, Mr. Chairman, the question was raised, which is indirectly, I guess, or directly related to the estimates, depending on you look at it, as to how we're doing in terms of the, quote, blood supply in this province. I think that we are holding our own there, and we hope this remains the case. Despite a large number of high-demand cases, traffic accidents and that sort of thing, plus the regular draw, as I said, for increased surgery in this province, we have been holding our own in this province in terms of maintaining blood donations.

I think that every Minister of Health in this country would say that we very much want to get the transition from the Red Cross to the new Canadian Blood Services completed. We want to build up the identity and the credibility of the Canadian Blood Services because this time of uncertainty that we've gone through during the past two to three years has not been positive overall for both having the population confident in the blood system and for attracting blood donors to an identifiable service that is there, that they know is going to provide good service to the health care system and therefore to the members of the population who need blood and plasma.

So those are my comments, Mr. Chairman, at this point.

3:10

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

DR. MASSEY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just a few comments, first of all, about supplementary supply. We agree that supplementary supply is a necessary device that the government has to use. They can't predict the kinds of changes that can occur in a province such as ours, so it is a mechanism that is useful and necessary.

I guess in terms of health care, the question that arises is: how do you choose what you're going to respond to? The items that appear before us seem to be certainly arguable and defensible, but you wonder: what about some of the other issues like long-term care and the pressures on hospitals for acute beds at the present time? Is there an order of priorities? Would some of those concerns, particularly long-term care and acute beds, not rank higher on any kind of priority list than some of the items that we see here?

I have to admit that I'm having trouble tracing back the item that's listed: human tissue and blood services. If I look back at the 1998-1999 estimates, the item there is about a \$42 million item. This seems to be a considerable increase over that original amount. I wonder whether that's true or whether I'm just not reading the figures correctly between the two documents. Maybe the minister can take us back to the history of this particular line item and clarify just what kind of a percentage increase it is over the original amount that had been budgeted.

One of the other questions I'm curious about is the comment about population having its effect on this particular department. I'm wondering why, if that's true – and I have no reason to believe it's not true – other departments that would be sensitive to population increases, like Education and Advanced Education, are not appearing before the Assembly with requests for money? In advanced education it's not money that would be directed towards the educational system. The supplementary supply is directed towards personnel for the entire government operation. Maybe the minister isn't the most appropriate one to answer that, but my question is: why is that not reflected in those two areas where you'd think population increases would make a considerable difference?

The other question I had – again, it's more than just the minister involved – is on the settling of legal claims and how those are apportioned. Now, it's in the Health budget, and maybe that's

appropriately where it belongs, but it does seem to place an unnecessary burden on that budget. I wondered if other ways of budgeting for those claims, whether they be in Health or any other department, had been considered by the government?

So with those few questions, Mr. Chairman, I await the minister's answers.

MR. JONSON: Briefly, if I could reply, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the hon. member's last question or comment. The Minister of Justice has undertaken to provide more detailed information, but I would want to point out that the approach that's been taken with respect to this case or this claim and others is to apportion the costs proportionate to the department which provided, unfortunately, the treatment at the time. That was the rationale for this.

The other thing I'd just like to mention, Mr. Chairman. It is a positive thing as far as the province is concerned, but when you have people moving into this province on a rapid basis, it just is a fact of life that when you've got a population-based funding formula, you have to respond to that and cannot always be perfectly accurate when you're projecting ahead.

Perhaps I should not admit past history, Mr. Chairman, but having been involved somewhat in the Department of Education awhile back, I can recall that occasionally we were out in our projection of enrollment in the schools. The one advantage, however, in education is that you have a set date when the system provides to you, and everybody I think publicly understands that students have to show up at school and you can actually count them. The task is, well, not quite as exact when we're dealing with the total population, particularly workforces at places such as Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and the city of Calgary, where there is just a very dynamic population growth, one that's hard to track.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise today and add my little bit to the conversation around the supplementary estimates for health funding. I have to admit it's a quick study. Today was the first day that I actually saw the information, and here we all are debating it a few hours later.

I think many of the uses, just even generally speaking, to which the money asked for in the supplementary estimates is being put is needed and justified and all of that. But I do have to admit that I do question the incredible use of supplementary estimates that I see this government make. There's a great deal of crowing about balanced budgets, but there always seems to be all of these additional supplementary estimates that are sort of slipped in at the end of the year to actually reflect what they spent, and I do find that odd. It's an interesting clerical trick. But as I said, a number of the things where the money is asked for here are perfectly justified, perfectly understandable. You couldn't possibly have foreseen the amount of forest fires and all of that sort of thing where you end up needing money. I think you should be budgeting for some.

We're looking at Health at the moment, and the supplementary estimate of \$18 million and change that is being asked for is for the higher physician billings, the increased use of blood and blood-related products, and the settlement of legal claims. Now, I have done my best to listen to the minister in his responses to the questions that have already been asked. I think I've got an understanding of two of the three items here. The 6 and a half million dollars for the increased use of blood and blood products is due to the inflow of people into the province and the accompanying amount of additional blood they would be needing. I think that's correct. I'll try it again; I'm sure I'll get a nod. The additional blood money is just to cover the additional population? He's tried to answer this

before. I'm sorry if you've already answered this question and I didn't catch it. I was trying.

Certainly I think the money that is here for the settlement with the sterilization victims – I find it odd that it's under Health, unless that's because these people were originally under the Health department. That's okay. As long as it's happening, that's a perfectly reasonable expenditure.

Higher physician billing. That's interesting, because I've heard different theories about whether we have too many doctors in Alberta or whether we're using the right kind or most efficient kind of physician billing practices. I've also heard people complain – this is sort of general coffee shop stuff; there's nothing particular I'm quoting here – that there are too many specialists and that cycle that people get into: they go to their GP and the GP says, "Fine; I'm now going to refer you to a specialist," one specialist for this and one specialist for that and another specialist for another.

3:20

So I am interested in the higher physician billings. I guess it might be part of having more people in the province, but I'm wondering about the whole physician payment system that's being used and whether there's anything in the three different things I've suggested here that could be looked at as far as higher physician billing. Do we have the right system in place? Do we have too many specialists, or is that system of referring to specialists resulting in this? I mean, this is 10 and a half million dollars. This is a lot of money. Is that partly why that's happening? Is this due to an aging population? We're certainly aware that we can expect our seniors population to double in the next 20 years and then even continue to get larger as the real baby boom bulge moves into their senior years. So perhaps this is more people. Perhaps this is more costs associated with senior citizens.

But I'm also wondering whether this is partly affected by what we know about poverty. We know that poor people have less ability to buy good-quality food, nutritious food. They're more likely to have health problems, longer lasting health problems, and they may well be more expensive to treat. Maybe that's part of what's in there. So I'm looking for more wellness models in health essentially.

I don't want to take up a lot of the Chamber's time in asking these questions. I'm just going to quickly check my notes. As I say, two of them I think have been explained already, and I'm perfectly satisfied with that. I do apologize to the minister if he has in fact explained this and I'm about to make him do it again. I was trying to listen. I appreciate the time to bring these issues forward.

MR. JONSON: Briefly, Mr. Chairman, first of all the answer to the hon. member's last comment is yes, and that is that we are exploring new models of providing physician care in co-operation with other health care professionals. I imagine the member is aware that just this week we visited the Northeast health centre in the Clareview area of Edmonton, where one aspect of that particular centre is the development of a primary care model, a different formula for payment for physicians being part of it.

The other thing is that I appreciate the concern that was expressed with respect to supplementary estimates coming in. Ideally it would be good to be perfectly down to the penny exact on a \$4.2 billion budget and not have any overruns in that regard, but the \$18 million being dealt with this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, if my mathematics is correct, represents .003 percent of the health care budget. So it's significant dollars. It's millions of dollars. It's important to these particular sectors of the health care system. Ideally we would like to be balancing perfectly, but this is a calculation, for instance with respect to population, that was made with the best evidence that we

had at the time. We have to depend to some degree upon various sources to provide that population information. There's a good side to the population growth, but in this particular case it does put additional demands upon the health care system.

THE CHAIRMAN: If there are no further comments on the supplementary estimates for Health, we'll move on to the next, the supplementary estimates for someone who's not in his seat.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: I have a couple more questions for the Minister of Health while that other minister might just be coming. I don't want to say anything that would offend anybody.

MR. SMITH: Do you know how to do that?

MR. SAPERS: We're trying to keep everybody happy here, Murray.

Chairman's Ruling Committee of Supply Procedure

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora and those members of the committee, we have a set of supplementary estimates of the general revenue fund and the lottery fund, and the order of the book is not the order that has been given to the chair. The chair is following what presumably is the Government House Leader's wishes by following in the following order so that we all know. First of all, we'll deal with the estimates for Health, then the estimates for Family and Social Services, then the estimates for Justice and Attorney General, then the estimates for Advanced Education and Career Development, then Agriculture, then Community Development, then Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, then Municipal Affairs, Public Works, Supply and Services, Transportation and Utilities, the Legislative Assembly. And we'll do that all, of course, well before the end of the afternoon.

So we currently have the Ministry of Health, although we thought for the moment that we didn't have anybody.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: All right. I thank you for the clarification, Mr. Chairman. My information coming from the House leaders was that the department of agriculture was going to be next. If it's going to be Family and Social Services next, we can carry on with that business as I think members are anxious.

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

Family and Social Services

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Today I'm here to rise and give the explanation for the estimates of the Department of Family and Social Services. The estimates are a total of \$17.6 million in new dollars and \$7.3 million as a transfer from capital investment – I'll try and go through and explain those quickly – for a total of \$24.9 million.

Mr. Chairman, the \$7.3 million is quite simply transferred from our capital fund to our operating fund. This is to deal with the year 2000 issue, and we will be dealing with it under operational.

Mr. Chairman, the rest of the dollars. Of the next \$4.7 million, \$3.3 million is for child benefits from the national child benefit. This is money that has been transferred to the Treasurer from the federal government. Because it was transferred to be used for children's services, we are now recouping that money in this supplementary estimate.

Mr. Chairman, the next \$1.4 million is money that we have

recouped from the federal government for early intervention programs that are being performed on reserve. This is money that we have paid out for programs on reserve, and we are now recouping the money from the federal government.

The fourth issue in our supplements is \$12.9 million that will provide for settlement of sterilization and wrongful confinement claims. As the hon. members across the way know, these are very specific costs as to what is occurring, and it is something that has been outside of our budget. Our department has been the line department for paying for this, but it is coming out of the Treasury Department. The wrongful confinement claims are \$8.9 million, and the legal fees associated with this, Mr. Chairman – I hate to say this, but unfortunately it's true – are \$4 million. So it's \$8.9 million for the wrongful confinement claims and \$4 million for the legal fees.

Mr. Chairman, I'd be more than happy to take any questions on any of that.

3:30

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Mr. Minister. I do have some questions for you.

One thing that has caught my attention in all of the supplementary estimates, Mr. Minister – and I'll use you as the example, if you don't mind – is that one of the reasons why we do supplementary supply is to fill in some detail, fill in the gaps, or meet some unexpected expenses. In fact the only justification for doing supplementary supply should be things that were truly and clearly unanticipated.

There's a decidedly political aspect to this. When the government puts forward a budget, particularly the way budgets are constructed in the province of Alberta, where there is a cushion amount, a revenue cushion built into the overall budget estimate and then a law that demands that the excess revenue not needed to meet budgeted, approved expense go to debt retirement, it becomes very easy to conclude that a government may lowball expenses to ensure that as much or all of that revenue cushion gets booked for no other reason than debt retirement. That means that the money isn't available at the beginning of a fiscal period for program spending.

Now, we could argue ideology about what is the best way to handle debt retirement and what's the best way to budget for it, but I really want to avoid that. I just want to point out that when it comes to something like the nearly \$13 million in legal liability costs, this was clearly anticipated. The government clearly knew there were going to be costs associated with settlements, knew and appreciated the magnitude of the costs of those settlements. This is following the Muir settlement.

Remember that this is at about the time the budget was being put together. We had just dealt with Bill 26, I think it was, where the government clearly had done some thinking – and, I would say, some wrongheaded thinking – about how as a government you were going to deal with sterilization victims. Bill 26 luckily didn't have a long life, but all of that, I think, is evidence that there was some government thinking about liability costs in the sterilization cases. I would have expected, Mr. Minister, that this could have been budgeted for. Maybe it wouldn't have been 100 percent accurate, but it wouldn't have been 100 percent absent.

So of the \$12.9 million, you also indicated that you break out that about a third of it is for legal fees. I have a very, very significant concern surrounding the contingency agreements that have been signed between sterilization claimants and their legal representatives. This isn't because I think that lawyers should do that kind of work for free, and it isn't because I can stand here and give you any

expert opinion as to the value of services received given the dollar amount involved. My concern is simply this. I'm not convinced that all of the claimants are fully aware of the nature of those contingency agreements.

I would further add, Mr. Minister, that if you're committing in this request some \$4 million to be paid out in legal fees on contingency settlements, I would wonder what the contingent risk was for the lawyers. My understanding of a contingency fee agreement is that the lawyer will enter into a contingency fee agreement with a client when there is some risk that there won't be a settlement, when the lawyer is accepting some degree of risk. Given all of the facts that we know about the government's involvement and willingness to settle with the sexual sterilization victims, I'm wondering whether it was fair to enter into a contingency fee agreement for these claimants. It seems to me that perhaps some other kind of negotiated form of payment could have been entered into which would have been fair to the professionals involved, fair to the claimants involved, and may have reduced the amount paid in legal fees.

So I'd be very interested in knowing whether it was the department of the Minister of Family and Social Services that was involved in negotiating those fee agreements or whether it was the Minister of Justice who was involved in negotiating those fee agreements or who it was and if they perhaps could shed some light. And correct me if my understanding of the basis of a contingency fee agreement is wrong.

Mr. Minister, another question I have for you specifically has to do with vote 1.0.9, the \$7.3 million that we're being asked to support for resource management services. Your department is one of the mission critical departments, as I understand the jargon, for Y2K, making sure that payments are made to recipients: AISH, social supports. Can you give us some indication of how much of this \$7.3 million is being used to address the year 2000 issue? I see that the minister is indicating: all of it. So this \$7.3 million for Y2K remediation: is this consulting money, or is it new software, new programs? Is it new hardware? Mr. Chairman, I think the minister is anxious to answer that question now. I have some other questions for him.

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

DR. OBERG: Thanks. Very quickly, Mr. Chairman. The \$7.3 million is spent on software costs, on labour costs, and it's all costs associated with the Y2K problem. It is not any hardware costs. That's why we had to transfer it from capital to operating.

MR. SAPERS: All right. Thanks for that explanation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. The last part of the question that I had about the \$7.3 million and Y2K. I don't know whether the minister knows this or not, because I haven't been able to find a proper answer for this question yet. There are a number of redundant – probably “redundant” is not the best expression. There are a number of services that are governmentwide that are also Y2K sensitive. Is the \$7.3 million all internal departmental costs, or is any of it cost that's being shared across government for the portion of the interdepartmental services? Okay. *Hansard* can't record the negative head shake, but I can say that I've seen it. The answer is: no; it's all in-department costs. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I understand that there are some other specific questions that colleagues have for you, so I will yield the floor to them.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try to be brief. Vote 1.0.9 and the \$7,300,000. There was a question about the Y2K compliance plan, and I wondered how much of that plan is co-ordinated with what other departments are doing and how that has been orchestrated.

Just a comment, I guess. The information that the minister gives about the settlements and what victims get and what fees are being charged by lawyers. I can't help but think that Albertans would be really disturbed to see that \$12,900,000 distributed in that way, because I think the sympathy is with those victims, and it seems to me they're being twice victimized with those resources not being made available to them.

Maybe with those brief comments, Mr. Chairman, so that we can expedite business, I'll await the minister's answers.

3:40

THE CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Family and Social Services.

DR. OBERG: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very, very quick.

The Y2K issue I believe I answered with the other member's questions.

With regards to the legal fees, the \$8.9 million and the \$4 million, hon. member, I couldn't agree with you more. But in all fairness that's one of the unexpected costs that were associated with this. We budgeted in supplementary estimates actually back in December for \$58.74 million. This is on top of that. We ran into unexpected costs in settlements. One of them is the legal costs.

As well, the settlements are not being determined by my department. My department is purely the line department that pays. The settlements are being handled by Justice, and what I'll do is ask the Minister of Justice to relay to you any information that he has on the contingency fees, because quite frankly I'm not involved in that.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. You just have to write the cheque, huh? All right.

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

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Chairman, thanks. My remaining questions have to do with section 3, services for children and families. I'm interested in both early intervention program funding and day care program funding. I'm very happy to see the increase in early intervention program funding, but I'm confused. The early intervention program underwent a review. There were program cuts, there was money left on the table out of other budgets, and there was money taken back. There's been a lot of, I guess, discussion about early intervention programs and what really defines an early intervention program in terms of measurable outcomes that the department would like to see delivered.

Could the minister be specific as to this \$1.4 million? Is it being spent on new programs? Is it being spent on increased capacity in existing programs? Is it being spent on allowing existing programs to hire additional staff or top up salaries? Is it a result of new partnerships with Health or with another government department? The bottom line is: what is the projected impact, I suppose, on the waiting times to get into some of the early intervention programs? Right now children in the city of Edmonton, in one case in an early intervention program that I'm most familiar with in my constituency, are at risk of aging out of the optimum window for entry into the early intervention program just because of the length of the waiting list. So they'll be too old to enter the program by the time a spot opens up for them. Could you comment on that?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very simply, this is \$1.4 million that we as a department spent on early intervention programs on reserve. So this is purely on-reserve funding. Prior to this year we actually were not recouping any money from the federal government. Because it's the federal government's fiduciary responsibility to fund programs on reserve, we negotiated with the federal government and received \$1.4 million for what we were spending on reserve. This is purely a recouping of the money that was spent on reserve from the federal government.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks. So just to be clear, there is no program growth or expansion. We're coming back in budget estimates after March 11 to talk about that one, I take it. Okay.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Chairman, just in the interim, there is no place for a question of the Auditor General, but I'd like it just on the record so that someone may answer it at some point or other in the interim, because I gather that Agriculture is up next.

If I might just ask this and put it on the record. There seems to be in the estimates, on page 12 I note, \$256,000 set aside for a strategy for awarding bonuses. Those bonuses happen to be on the basis of the target net debt. Well, as I understand the operation of the Auditor General, it is to make comment on the generally accepted accounting principles as it relates to the entire budget and the reporting of the budget and expenditures of the province. I just ask the question as to whether in fact a bonus that is tied to a method of reporting accounting could vary from time to time and whether in fact the Auditor General may appear to be in a position of being able to affect the increases in salary and the bonuses for his own staff, noting that he always wants – and rightly so – to be independent.

So I'm just asking the question on the record because there's nowhere else to ask it here. It is page 12, sir. That's all. I have nothing further to add on that matter.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We are in fact on pages 43, 44, 45, 46, 47. Anyway, you've asked your question, and it's out in cyberspace.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

MR. STELMACH: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. For 1998-99 we are projecting a receipt of some \$60 million in federal funds, which would be their contribution of 60 percent of the newly developed farm income disaster program. They are as yet not received, and we are likely not going to actually receive them for some months, until all of the fine legal agreements have been signed.

Some federal moneys previously expected are not likely to be received now until '99-2000, and that's about \$20 million. Thus the net increase in federal revenues for the current fiscal year will be about \$40 million. That's the 60 minus the 40. Of that net increase of \$40 million in the current fiscal year, Treasury Board has allocated \$16.6 million for reinvestment in this fiscal year. Because we were previously forecasting a surplus for '98-99 of about \$2.5 million, we're going to subtract the \$2.5 million from the \$16.6 million, and that will give us the \$14.1 million for supplementary estimates.

It has not been completely decided exactly how this money will be spent, but it is anticipated that we will not be able to spend more than what we were asking for prior to the end of this year without

extensive consultation. There are areas we are looking at. We will be covering the difference between some of the principles of FIDP and the national farm disaster program, and that's going to be about \$1.3 million. There are some deficits in the pasture insurance. We're also looking at the forage insurance, looking at attempting to lower some of the premiums in that particular area. So that's about four.

Where it says \$8.8 million for development funding, those are industry development funds. We have two that will be expiring soon. One is with the beef industry, and the second is with the hog industry. Both these industry development funds are GATT green, and they're used for research and market development. That is the kind of support the industry is looking for from government, not direct subsidy of product but helping them develop and prepare for the new millennium in new product development and also in getting that product to market.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I will attempt to answer any questions that may come forward.

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

3:50

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the minister for his explanation of the expenditures. Maybe it's not quite appropriate to call them expenditures yet. He said that they're dollars being allocated, but he has not yet decided how to spend them. That caught me by surprise. I was under the impression that supplementary supplies were to cover costs of programs which had an overrun or which were new and had to be implemented, you know, subsequent to the approval of the budget last spring.

To find out now that a lot of these dollars are kind of being handed over without having had a dedicated purpose to them raises the question as to: why are we not waiting until the 1st of April, which is only about a month and four days away, to be looking at this in next year's budget? Then we can have a proper legislative debate on how to spend these dollars and target these dollars or put them into the development fund program for next year so that they can be adequately debated in the Legislature, put through the process that's normal, and then we can kind of review them, look at them from that perspective.

You know, the \$8.8 million that's needed to renew the beef and pork development funds is probably something that should have been planned in the last budget. If we knew they were expiring, if we knew we were going to make a commitment, I guess the question that has to come up is: is this kind of the beginning of the movement of the dollars around that we're getting from the federal government in connection with the farm income disaster cost sharing that's going on? Is this now one way that we're coming up with in trying to put them into the agriculture community, into the agriculture sector?

The allocation of the \$4 million to the forage component of the crop insurance program. This would be to, as I take it, remove a deficit for the program. I guess the questions now are: are we going to be looking at that kind of a subsidization on an ongoing basis, or will there be a readjustment of premium? Is this in essence a one-year type of relief to those farmers to cover what was really a severe drought last year in a lot of the grazing areas, a lot of the forage areas, and this was over and above what was normally expected for that? That's what I would have assumed supplementary estimates are for, to kind of cover these unexpecteds that come up after the fact. So to hear that we've got a lot of this money that has not yet been identified for a project kind of raises questions about: why don't we just wait until we can debate it properly in the Legislature in the next budgeting process, which starts after the 11th of March?

The question that I have on 6.0.3, the crop insurance, the \$4 million going there: is this a combination of both provincial/federal dollars – because I know the federal government gets involved in cost sharing with the crop insurance – or will there be additional federal dollars that come in on top of that? To get the total value of additional payments that are being made, this needs to be explained a little bit for us, if the minister would.

The other, the farm income disaster, the \$1.3 million. The minister basically just said that this was for the federal/provincial program that's being developed. Is that what it cost Alberta to negotiate this with the federal government? If we're getting all that money from the federal government, which is going to free up provincial money, why is it we have to put more money into the program? If we're going to end up releasing something in the neighbourhood of \$60 million this year and another \$40 million next year out of the farm income disaster program because of the matching dollars that are coming from the federal government, why do we need \$1.3 million more in a supplementary budget for this year?

Mr. Chairman, given that we've got the three different categories here, three different functional uses, line items that they're going into, I guess those are the questions I would ask the minister to address. He can either do it now or he can do it later in writing for us with respect to why these dollars are being allocated, why the department is asking for another \$14.1 million when, given his explanation, I don't see that it was necessarily really critical that he ask for it at this point in time. Or is this just one of those situations where they're getting to the end of the year and they've got the dollars and they've got to find a place to put them?

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I think that raises the issues of clarification. I was really wondering what those dollars are going for, and I find out we don't really know yet, so how can we ask questions about whether they're useful, other than just: should it be done this way?

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

MR. STELMACH: Sure. The hon. member raises a good question in terms of: why all of a sudden these dollars? Well, the federal government indicated that they will be sending that money to us for the 1998-99 year, so we have to allow for those dollars in our budgeting now. We have to approve those dollars. They won't be spent by the end of the next year but certainly will be allocated to certain particular projects.

There was a question on forage. There is a deficit in the pasture insurance that was accumulated over a number of years, and I believe that was – I'm just trying to recall it. It might have been about \$35 million, and every year farmers, through their premiums, contribute a bit towards paying that off, and we thought this would be a way of using some of the dollars that we receive to pay that deficit and potential matching with the feds. So if we put, you know, \$4 million in, we get \$4 million from the feds, and that will help us lower the deficit there substantially.

Now, the \$1.3 million is to comply with the changes. Our program is going to be a little different than the federal program, mostly around the NISA, and there are those areas of differences in caps, et cetera. I'll get a list of where those differences are and also the changes to the agreement that we've agreed to with the federal government. I'll get those out to the hon. member by way of letter, because I'm quite sure that you will be receiving some questions on where the national disaster program and the Alberta farm income disaster program vary.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to follow up on that. What the minister was saying there is that these dollars are allocated now. They'll be transferred then, as I understand it, into the Ag Financial Services funding system, which allows it to carry into the next year so that it can be paid to the farmers for last year's claims on the farm income disaster program. But is it not true that we're going to be getting a lot of dollars from the federal government also for last year which effectively will allow these dollars all to be freed up for expenditure in the next fiscal year? Because they're in that carryover fund that's available to Ag Financial Services, which is not available through Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

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

MR. STELMACH: We have to keep in mind that we're always working a year behind. We're working off the 1998 tax year. We will not know fully what the total cost of that program is until all of the claims are settled by the end of 1999, but there are differences between our program and the federal program, especially those that I said about deeming the NISA payment in the year of the disaster, and that is where the Alberta portion is going to come from. We're going to cover those costs because the federal government has agreed not to: we want to deem the NISA payable in that year, and we said no. So then what we'll do is we will cover those differences. The reason it's \$1.3 million is that that's what we assume the difference in the two agreements is going to cost, given a projection of about a hundred million going out to farmers in Alberta.

4:00

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. If there are no further questions, we're ready for the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

Advanced Education and Career Development

MR. DUNFORD: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm rising today to seek approval for a new appropriation under supplementary estimates for \$27,400,000.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

The purpose, Madam Chairman, is to fund the employee achievement bonuses. What will actually happen is the funds will be placed temporarily in the budget of the personnel administration office until they are distributed to the ministries. Members might be interested to learn that this is the second year that government employees are being rewarded for their contributions to achieving our business plan and debt reduction targets. Employees have contributed greatly to our ability to achieve our business plan and the budget targets, and they should be rewarded for that. Bonuses are subject to government achieving our debt reduction targets for the year. The size of each ministry's award depends on how well they achieved their performance targets, which are based on the business plans. Deputy ministers' performance contracts also have targets which will determine their awards, and they decide on how the awards for their management staff are distributed, depending on the contributions that these people have made during the year. Awards for unionized staff are negotiated with the Alberta union of public employees.

Now, Madam Chairman, Alberta has led the way in wage restraint since 1992, and now we are a leader in Canada in developing and implementing a variable pay system which links performance to pay

in the public sector. It is a key innovation for us and one which supports and reinforces our approach to business planning. It also follows the Growth Summit recommendation that said that we should introduce incentives and awards for employees.

These bonuses are not new money. They are paid from the overall savings achieved by the ministries this year through efficiencies in their spending. Bonuses will actually be paid to employees, as applicable, in June once all of the financial and performance information is available.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. A few questions to the minister about the supplementary estimates. I guess the question was: why was there no item in the 1998-99 estimates for these bonuses? I believe that's true. I went back to look and couldn't find allocated amounts there. I'd like to know how the number \$27,400,000 was arrived at. Is it a result of contract settlements? Is it a number that appears in contracts with particular groups, or is it an estimate of what those bonuses are going to be? How does it relate to the other money for bonuses that appears in the Auditor General's part of this budget? There's another \$256,000 there. Is there any relation to that? Are the bonuses equal if you're in the Auditor General's department or if you're in a government department? How that amount was arrived at is, I think, of some interest. How many public servants will actually benefit from this? If I could, is this bonus plan at the cost of paying people adequately? That is, are people underpaid to make room for the allocations of amounts like this for bonuses?

One of the other questions I would have is: how does a scheme like this really affect the delivery of services, particularly in a department like Family and Social Services? If the incentive for the employee is to keep costs down, then how does that work with the social service recipients or people who are trying to receive aid from the social services department? Is there not going to be the motivation on the part of employees to try to cut down to as few a number as they possibly can the people receiving those benefits in order to receive a bonus at the end of the year? So I'd like to know how the bonus system works in those departments that are providing help and service to vulnerable Albertans.

The minister mentioned the Growth Summit, and I looked back at the Growth Summit myself in preparation for this afternoon's questions. One of the recommendations from that was that they reverse a recent trend to micromanagement of the system. Several ministries commented that the focus should be on goals and outcomes and then give the public servants the flexibility they need. Does this bonus system work in that direction? I had a call from an employee of Advanced Education who says that it's not micromanagement; it's microcontrol. How does this system work towards doing what that particular recommendation from the Growth Summit expected?

One more recommendation out of the Growth Summit – and I was pleased to hear the minister in his opening comments talk about the positive achievements of the public service – also indicated that there was a clear message needed from all of government, not just the minister who happens to be in charge of the budget, starting with the Premier. I haven't heard that message thus far.

I'd like to know who makes the decision about who can receive a bonus. Is it the deputy minister that makes those judgments or other departmental officials? Where does the decision-making rest for those?

Can we get an idea of the size of the bonuses? What's the maximum bonus allowed, and what's the minimum bonus that would be granted?

Another question would be for a breakdown from across departments. Is the money allocated on some sort of a formula basis across departments? How do you determine how much Health gets? What are the criteria?

I guess one final question, and then I'll let someone else ask some questions. How is this bonus system going to be evaluated to make sure that it's doing what needs to be done?

Thanks, Madam Chairman.

4:10

MR. DUNFORD: With your indulgence, Madam Chairman, I would answer these questions, and then that might create the opportunity for other speakers to perhaps move on to other things.

The first question, as I understood it, was: why was this not an item in a forecast? I think it's been prudent this year, as previously, that we put together in our budget as good a presentation as we possibly can about what we think the revenue is going to be and what the expenditure is going to be. We ought to then start working from that basis, and it's only later, when you have an idea that goals are going to be met, that we then have to start making some accommodation. If after a first or second quarter forecast it's clear that we're not going to meet our goals, I think you can see the problem one might have just in terms of dealing with the human dynamics within an organization with all of a sudden a line item being moved away. I think it's better to have a carrot in the sense that when we see that we are having some success, we use this tool that we have here in the Legislature to come forward and then to talk about the fact that an achievement bonus is likely and do that in this manner.

How the \$27.4 million was reached is simple math. It's 2 percent of our payroll.

You asked a question about Auditor General bonuses, and I have to admit that you have me on that one at the present time. I'm going to have to get an answer for you on that particular area.

MR. RENNER: It was approved by an all-party committee of the Legislature.

MR. DUNFORD: I'm getting advice from my colleague that says that was approved by an all-party committee already. That wasn't his question. His question was: how do the two relate to each other? I can't answer that, and I want to be able to get an answer for the hon. member and get back to him. So thanks for the help from my colleagues.

The next question is: how many will benefit? Again at this precise moment in time we don't have that knowledge, because until March 31 midnight arrives and we close the books, we of course don't know whether or not achievement bonuses are going to be applicable. We'll know whether they're going to be applicable on a departmental basis or which departments are going to be eligible, and in a minute I'll get into who will make those decisions. So at this precise point in time we do not have knowledge of how many would benefit.

In any wage payment system it is imperative that we have a system of determining competitive rates so that our people are paid appropriately. It is my belief and certainly I'm charged with the responsibility of trying to ensure that our public service is being paid at the proper salary rates, the proper wage rates as they would apply to whatever particular region they are in within Alberta. You cannot have a variable pay system based on performance that is intended to compensate for your lack of ability, your lack of willingness to pay

proper base rates, because to do that is a corruption of a performance-based system. Also, I guess in an indirect way that might answer the original question of why this isn't an item in the overall budget. We have our wages and our salaries payable forecast, and this is meant to be and shall always be an add-on.

I thought it was a very good question that the hon. member had as to how this variable pay system might work in an area such as Family and Social Services. This is why we don't base the performance simply on the department's ability to live within its budget. One of the primary objectives in the performance rating that would apply in the specific case we're talking about is that Family and Social Services would have to meet their performance objectives in the sense of providing a service to the public or to their clients, and of course they'll do their survey and their polling in terms of client satisfaction. If they meet the client satisfaction goals and also live within their budget, although I don't have the specific criteria for Family and Social Services in front of me at this particular point in time, you certainly get the drift that there might be some eligibility toward an achievement award.

I thought the reference to the Growth Summit was of particular value because the question came up about flexibility. One of the things we know is that, generally speaking, if the executive area of a government sort of gets the heck out of the way and lets people do their jobs, we're likely to start meeting our goals and the particular objectives that have been set out. I just have to believe that with the manner in which we bring forward the performance criteria, what we're focusing on and concentrating on is actually results. Although it can't be totally flexible, I'm not so sure – and certainly I can say this within the department that I represent – that we care much how they go about meeting their objectives in terms of providing service to the public. If they can find a satisfactory way that's effective and efficient for them, they feel better about doing it, because they don't feel like they're controlled; they don't feel like they're operating by some sort of strict operator's manual. I don't have a problem with that. I think that's basically the way you provide for not only flexibility on a job but also provide for growth.

We like to think we hire people that certainly are qualified for the job. We like to think we provide opportunities within the Alberta public service for people to grow in their particular positions. So clearly that would be done by providing, then, this flexibility and not micromanaging or microcontrolling. I know that in the past especially the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development has been accused of being control freaks. I don't know about the past. I look at the future, and I believe that criticism such as has been forwarded today certainly will become less in the future.

I guess I need to now get to the issue of: how is it decided which people will be eligible for the achievement bonuses? In that sense there are I guess two main systems. The first system I'll talk about is as it applies to deputy ministers and what we call senior officials. In that sense the Deputy Minister of Executive Council determines a minimum of four performance criteria that will be measured, and that has to be then approved by cabinet. Once we have that approval, we wait until the year is completed. We assess that year against the overall goals. In order for an achievement bonus to click in, a significant number of those performance criteria have to be met. If they are met, then again the Deputy Minister of Executive Council will make recommendations that are brought forward to cabinet, and we either approve, alter, or whatever those particular recommendations.

4:20

What he is doing in that sense, though, is setting up for the next

stage, and that is: what departments are eligible for achievement bonuses and for how much? There's a range that can be from zero to 8 percent. Again, we want to live with the overall estimate we're making here today of that 2 percent, so obviously I would think it would be clear that not everyone is going to receive an achievement bonus, and I'm here to say nor should they.

We are here to recognize performance, and we're not recognizing average performance in this particular case. Achievement means just that. We're looking for superior performance. We're looking for a way to identify some of the heroes that we have in our public service, and I don't care whether they're union members, whether they're part of management, or whether they're a deputy minister. We will have varying levels of performance on the job, varying levels of results that have been achieved on the job, and we want to be able to recognize that.

In terms of a formula across the province, the answer to that would be no. Public servants either as part of a team or as individuals, as part of a union or as part of the opted out and exempt or as part of management: there's nothing to say where they are based as to whether they're exceeding their job expectations or not. That can happen anywhere. Wherever it does happen, then we want to recognize it. So there's no mechanism to sit down and say: well, we're going to send a big part of the achievement bonus to the city of Lethbridge so that we'll make the Member for Lethbridge-West look better than he already does. [interjections] I just had to get that one in there. Okay.

The final question is: how is it to be evaluated? Of course that is critical. What we will be doing, like you do with any variable pay system, is determining whether or not you're continuing to achieve, first of all, the results. If you're not doing that, then you have to look at what is creating that. But even if you are achieving the results, you still have to look inside each of those performance criteria and ask yourself and find a way to indicate whether or not those performance criteria are still viable and, secondly, whether they are still able to do the job. There's not sort of a mechanism that I could lay out in front of you on a piece of paper. With the experience that the personnel administration office has, we believe, anyway, in the capability of being able to make the assessments, and of course you get the feedback from the people. If you start giving achievement awards to people that don't deserve them, you hear in a heck of a hurry.

So those would be my answers, I believe, to the hon. member's questions.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just learning how to pop up a little sooner; right?

My questions today are on the performance bonuses. My first set of questions is on the process of how those bonuses made it here into supplementary supply. I heard the minister say that they were an add-on, so that was the way they would always be treated and therefore we could expect to see them in supplementary supply, I'm assuming is where he was going, in the future.

Traditionally that isn't how you account for bonuses. You would anticipate that your organization would be achieving the bonuses and you would build them into your cost forecast. I'm wondering the process that the minister went through to arrive at the criteria he's got for putting them into his budget in this manner and why we don't see them in the other departments. Did they go through a different process or some other reason?

The other set of questions I have with regard to the bonus is also

a process question. That is, what criteria did you use to base the establishing of bonuses in the first place? Did somebody just think it was a good idea, that this would be a good motivator? Or did you take a look at some organizational studies and decide that of all the choices you had to motivate employees from within, this was the best choice? If so, I would like to see the background you have with regard to that, if you could table the background information in the House at some point in terms of how you decided to get to a bonus phase.

It would be my experience that when we take a look at organizational behaviour in any kind of organization, be it for profit or government related, bonuses are not necessarily the best kind of motivator to use for people. Bonuses drive you toward a single specific goal. In this case it appears to be meeting dollar target figures. Government services are services provided to people in a variety of different kinds of circumstances. Perhaps there's a broader scope of kinds of bonuses or incentives that you should be looking at to motivate employees rather than just dollars tied to dollar figures. Those are my questions there.

I have some questions, too, on the bonuses for the Auditor General. I don't know where in this afternoon's agenda I would ask those, so I'll ask them now and hope that if I don't get a response from this minister, it'll be forthcoming from somebody. I read here that the Auditor General bonuses are tied to the government meeting its performance targets. Well, I find that quite strange. The Auditor General's function as I understand it – and perhaps I'm wrong – is to audit the performance of the government. They are not directly tied to achieving that performance, so it seems to be completely the wrong motivator. But if they say that they did, then they get a bonus. I don't know; I don't understand that logic at all. I am sure there's some excellent rationale for why you would tie an audit function that's supposed to be, in my opinion, arm's length from the government to the government actually achieving its performance objectives. I would love to have that explanation because it doesn't seem to be very rational to me.

I know you said that the all-party committee voted for this. Once again, could we have the rationale for how they came to tying a function that is supposed to be performed after the fact with one that is a current funding objective. I'd like to see that. I do know that we are outnumbered on that committee, so I'm sure that any concerns we had . . .

MR. SAPERS: Were squashed.

MS CARLSON: Yes, squashed is a good term for it. Yes, having sat on those committees, I know the process. There's no doubt about it.

So if somebody could answer those questions at some point in the future, if not today. And if the minister could table any background information he's got on that, that would certainly satisfy my questions.

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks, Madam Chairman. I just had a few questions, and I've listened carefully to make sure that the question hasn't already been asked and answered. The whole idea of performance bonuses is an interesting one, because essentially government is public administration. There's an assumption that somehow everyone that works for government in public service just wants to do this out of the goodness of our hearts, and that may not be the best way to get the most efficient productivity out of people.

Plus you're dealing with that old saying that some people live to work and others work to live. I think we have a lot of people that work to live, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. But you do get the sort of: okay; I'll go in 8 to 4 Monday to Friday, and thanks, I'll just do exactly my job description and nothing more. If you're trying to get more from people like that, well, an incentive bonus is one way to go. I think I heard the minister respond to having the carrot of enticement there.

4:30

I listened carefully to see if it was likely that someone that was in a lower management or even a clerical position would be likely to achieve one of these performance bonuses. I heard him talk about the deputy minister and senior management level. I heard him say that this is not specific to any geographic area in the province. I heard him talk about criteria, but I didn't get a good sense of whether, for instance, a clerk 1 who was doing an exceptional job would actually be in line for one of these bonuses.

Now, I'm assuming that this is the first year of this program. [interjection] Second year? Okay; good. Then it would be interesting to know how many people below the senior management level qualified for and received an incentive bonus as a result of last year's program. I guess I'm less enthusiastic if this is: let's play Monopoly money with our friends in high positions; they're the only ones that get to be qualifying for this. I want to see that this is really across government. I'm sure the minister will be happy to supply me with indication of who was eligible in that and who received these in the first year of this program.

The minister mentioned the four performance criteria. I'm also wondering: what are the performance criteria? He didn't give them. He talked about it, but he didn't give them. So I'm wondering if he'd be willing to share that with us or perhaps follow up with a written answer to it. The way he was talking about it, I started to believe that the performance criteria might change every year. He was quite specific in saying that the deputy minister and the senior level would develop the criteria. Is it the same criteria year to year, or are there new criteria developed, and if so, what are they?

You know, I really admire the people that work in the Auditor General's department. Sitting on the Public Accounts Committee, I've had an opportunity to see their work and see them at work and have great admiration for them, so the comments to come are no reflection whatsoever on them. But I do share the puzzlement of my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie as to why their performance bonus is tied to the government achieving its fiscal objectives when it's supposed to be an arm's-length agency. I thought it was supposed to be auditing and checking that records are indeed kept and that there is a paper trail to follow. It's after the fact sorts of functions, if I can describe it that way. So what exactly is in the criteria that are being used to determine these performance bonuses for the staff in the Auditor General's department? What is it that they're doing that would qualify them for this bonus? What's the activity that they're involved in?

Overall I think the incentive program is a good idea. I look forward to the response from the minister or the written response, whatever he's comfortable with doing, and thank you for the opportunity to ask the questions.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I want to thank the minister for answering in some detail the questions that were put to him by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. It gives us some idea of the complexity and the nature of the program for which the minister is asking for the supplementary allocation of \$27.4 million.

I have several questions. The first one is fairly simple. The program is in its second year, and I wonder why the minister had to come back to the Legislature with this amount at this time. Why didn't he use some of the experience of the first year to have built into the budget for this year at least part of what he's asking for here?

Secondly, I wonder if \$27.4 million is the maximum amount that's available for use if necessary. Or is it the money that will necessarily be spent regardless of whether or not people merit bonus payments? That's not clear from what he was saying here. If the latter is the case, then the question arises: should the Legislature really give you all \$27.4 million when you don't in fact know how much you would need?

Having asked this more general question, there are some other questions that still remain. On the basis of last year's experience, can the minister tell us: how expensive is it to administer this bonus program? Clearly it requires all kinds of evaluations of performance of people working in 20 different departments in the government public service. How expensive is it? What percentage of the \$27.4 million being asked for will in fact be used not in giving bonuses but in administering the program itself? It seems to me from what he said about 10 minutes ago in this House that it will be a rather expensive program to administer. I need some answers from the minister on that.

The minister tried to assure us, I guess, when the question was raised about the potential conflict of interest the system will engender when public servants address the issue of, on the one hand, making sure that the department lives within the budget and, secondly, that in fact it lives under budget – because that will be seen, I suppose, as one of the performance indicators – and on the other hand then delivering services of high quality to citizens who need them without having to disqualify a certain number in order to meet the objectives of keeping expenditures under budget or within budget. So there is a conflict of interest there. The minister I think responded to that concern by saying that clearly one of the criteria that will be used for evaluation of performance for the purposes of bonus allocations is client satisfaction. Citizens' satisfaction in receiving services I presume is what the minister is saying.

Now, this raises questions. If client satisfaction is going to be one of the elements to be used in the evaluation process, then who should be doing the evaluation? Clearly if people respond primarily to monetary incentives, as is presumed under this model, then public servants will be motivated to use evaluation criteria, if they have the freedom, to assess client satisfaction in a way that will give them the right results. I don't think it's outrageous to assume, if material incentives, monetary incentives are that important, that then there is at least a chance that client satisfaction itself will be subject to manipulation, if such public servants had that opportunity. So is there in fact a process which has been used or which will be used to ensure that assessment of client satisfaction is done independently of the branch or department or public servants who are directly involved in program delivery? That's my question.

The question that has been raised – and I want to reiterate this. It has been iterated in various ways, but let me see if I can define it a bit more. On the basis of last year's experience, can the minister tell us what percentage of the total bonus-related moneys went to management personnel and what percentage did indeed go to frontline program deliverers? Because there is a concern here I think – and it's a legitimate concern – that much of this money could be used or appropriated to reward management personnel to the possible exclusion of people who in fact do most of the dirty work, the hard work, the difficult work in many circumstances. They're frontline workers, nonmanagement workers. Or the management could be tempted to use up most of it for their own purposes,

because there's a certain camaraderie among those who see themselves as managers as opposed to those over whom they do the managing. I hope I have refined the question that was asked before for the minister to be able to respond to it more precisely.

4:40

Oh, yes. My second last question to the minister. Since the minister has said that certainly not everyone will qualify to receive this – he's looking for exceptional service or certainly above average quality of service and performance – I presume some departments as departments could lose out on this. I need to know some answers on this. Is it also a competition among departments, where some departments could simply flunk out because of the criteria the minister would use to judge departmental performance? Or is that out of the question, and will all departments have some of their members who'll be recipients of this bonus? It's not clear from what he has said whether he's going to go department by department and use the rule of competitiveness in order to exclude – competition necessarily excludes some people and some units. Would the minister's formula in fact lead to such exclusion of departments as departments in this race for competitive performance? That's one of the problems with exclusively relying on competition to achieve goals, because it can lead to possibilities of exclusion, and that then leads to some deformations in the way people behave.

Secondly, within departments would it be teams that would be rewarded and judged? Clearly if you started looking at each one of the persons, I don't know if that's really possible to do effectively. People work in teams. Would it be teams within departments or branches that'll be awarded this bonus, or is it individual public servants? That's the other question I have. The minister did say that it's individuals he's going to judge, but I wasn't sure whether by individuals he meant units, which would include more than one person in them, or indeed if every person would have to be judged separately.

I think I will stop at this. I've raised some questions that I think the minister thinks are useful for us to hear.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: May I ask for unanimous consent of the committee to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: Introduction of Guests
(reversion)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. It's a pleasure for me to introduce two very special people this afternoon. One is my son Jeff. He's in the Athabasca-Wabasca constituency now. The other is a person that many of you have heard about on TV and so on, Dominik Hasek, with the Buffalo Sabres. He's of course in town to play hockey tonight against the Oilers. Dominik is a very special goaltender in that he's received the Hart award the last two years as the most valuable player in the NHL. I'd like them to rise and receive a warm welcome.

head: Supplementary Estimates 1998-99
General Revenue Fund, No. 2

Advanced Education and Career Development (continued)

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Madam Chairman. I want to make some comments for the minister, but I also want to make the following observation. It is about 14 minutes to 5. The Standing Orders require that a vote will be put on this entire supplementary package by 5:15. We are not even halfway through the departments that want to make presentations, and we're being asked to approve spending of \$100 million. I think the process is deeply flawed.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So what's your point?

MR. SAPERS: The minister of public works is asking me what my point is. Well, maybe the minister of public works is comfortable in buying a pig in a poke or spending \$100 million of taxpayers' money blindly, but this member isn't.

Madam Chairman, I would say that what we have, unfortunately, is a situation that has led Infortmetrica, in their latest budget forecasting study, to find that Alberta is the third least accurate province when it comes to forecast on expenditures, and it's the least accurate forecaster over the last 10 or 12 years when it comes to revenues. We're being asked, again after the fact, to support this supplementary supply process, and we don't have enough time to ask the legitimate questions that have to be asked so that we can all be accountable for the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars.

Now, specifically to the minister of advanced education. He was talking about the performance bonus process. I'm not going to get into an argument about whether it's a good process or a bad process, but I find it to be very interesting in terms of the justification for bringing it into supplementary supply. Mr. Minister, this is your second year of this program. You have said that the \$24 million is based on a 2 percent calculation for payroll. Now, what do they say? I'm not no rocket scientist? But given that neither of us are rocket scientists, if you're going to base the expenditure on 2 percent of budgeted payroll, then your whole explanation about why it wouldn't be a good idea to bring it into a line item before for the department for the budget sort of falls apart. I would suggest that if we are not going to be allocating it based on any formula but are going to be truly allocating it based on performance, then you could have done your government a service. You could have maybe affected that Infortmetrica study. You could have made the estimates a little tighter if it had been brought into the process at the beginning, if it had been properly budgeted for at the beginning instead of \$24 million at the hind end of the process.

So I would just ask once again that when departments are bringing forward supplementary estimates, they truly be for unanticipated costs, that it not be something the Legislature feels they've been bushwacked into through a process I've already identified as deeply flawed.

I will end my comments by making the following observation. The whole management theory of the wage bonus carrot maybe needs to be tempered with recognizing that when we are rewarding effort in our public service, it should be based on maximizing value instead of emphasizing the lowest cost solution, because those two things aren't always interchangeable. So many members of the public service that I talk to almost feel terrorized, almost feel intimidated that they can't do anything and simply won't take an initiative if it's going to cost an additional nickel. They feel daily, hourly pressure to only do those things and to only find innovation when it comes to saving money as opposed to adding value.

Mr. Minister, I know that when you get into those cabinet meetings, you pound on the table to hammer home that exact same point. I wish you luck in making that point, and if you ever need my help, just ask, because I noticed when you sought advice from your colleagues that it wasn't worth a damn. So thanks.

4:50

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Perhaps what I'll do is the last shall be first. Maybe I'll comment on the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I think he makes a valid point – that is, that supplementary estimates should be for truly unanticipated costs – and I think maybe we should look at it.

Perhaps I'm simply too naive. I thought that by bringing forward supplementary estimates for the achievement bonus, it would then allow the opportunity for the opposition once again to have questions about what it is that we're doing. If we are in the future to simply add 2 percent to our budget estimates and come in here and go through all those committee levels, that'll be fine. Here in my own naive way I thought: hey, by doing this, it gives them an opportunity to take this, examine it, and perhaps bring forward some suggestions.

All I've heard is the fact that I'm almost wasting the time of the Legislature by bringing this forward. We're worried, whatever the time of day is, that we might possibly not get to some other minister's estimates. Well, I'm sorry. This is extremely important, and it needs to have some time, I thought. However, in light of the questions and the suggestions that have been raised by the opposition, perhaps we should look at it. Perhaps in the future we'll bury this sucker in amongst – what? – \$16 billion of expenditures. If that's what they want, I'll be glad to give it to them. Hey, I've got lots of places I should be this afternoon instead of trying to answer, in some cases, some rather inane and banal questions. Having said all of that, we'll now try to deal with some of the matters at hand. I feel better now. Madam Chairman, I feel better now anyway. I got that off my chest.

What is entirely clear this afternoon to anybody that's listening to this debate is that it just depends which end of the tunnel you go in. If you go in the Conservative end of the tunnel, if you go in the side where you believe in responsibility and you believe in individual performance, then you could see and you could understand the particular process that we're going through. If, however, you go in from a socialist's side and viewpoint, where all men and women are to be treated equal, then achievement bonus – these are bad words that we're speaking here. We don't want this kind of stuff. There might just be somebody who has worked a little harder and worked a little smarter that might get a little bit more.

DR. PANNU: Don't give us a lecture.

MR. DUNFORD: Good point. All right. He doesn't want a lecture. All right. I'll answer the question.

AN HON. MEMBER: Give him one anyway.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I don't want to deny other ministers having this extremely pleasurable experience that we're going through this afternoon.

Edmonton-Ellerslie started off with questioning the process. Fair enough. There are other ways in which to do it. The reason that I'm standing in front of you today by the way, ladies and gentlemen, is for the supplementary estimates viewpoint, so that you would have the opportunity once again in a very reasonable manner to be so articulate that you could send your speeches to your constituents. I have given you this opportunity. You can show the people that you are interested in every nickel and dime that is being spent in this province, especially as it would relate to our valuable public service. What we have here today is simply that we are parking the money

in the personnel administration office until such time as we distribute it to those ministries that are eligible for an achievement bonus and can pay it out.

She asked: what is the process for bringing in this system? Well, what you do when you need advice is you go where the experience in variable pay systems is. That is in the private sector. We had – dare I say it? – a blue-ribbon committee put together that advised the minister on this system, and then of course I took it through the process.

I talked about entering tunnels. Absolutely, bonus is a good way in which to reward effort. Whether it's individual effort or whether it's team effort, this again has to be determined by the situation. There's nothing in our program to say that teams could not benefit. Having said that, I guess there is one caveat to it. The Alberta union of public employees is very reluctant to see any one of their individual members receive some addition to pay, so at times there's a process, then, that has to be worked out so that a team member could receive an achievement bonus. What we did last year was we took the achievement bonus and at the bargaining table just simply put it on the table. We didn't ask for anything in return. We just said that our hourly employees, the unionized employees, have participated in the goals that were achieved by this government, so here is the 2 percent. That was paid out on that basis.

The question about the Auditor General. I do need to get a better explanation than what I tried to initially give, and of course I will do that. But I want to inform all of the members here in the House that when we put this achievement bonus system together, we did allow other agencies to participate if they wished. Now, in terms of the Auditor General they're going to have to set up their own criteria, but clearly one tie-in there would have to be that it is absolutely essential that this government not run a deficit in order for the achievement bonus to even be considered, along with some other things.

Edmonton-Centre made some references to public administration and to whether or not a clerk I was eligible. Yes, clerk I's are eligible. I assume that somewhere we have the statistics you require, and if they are available, I will table them. However, if they aren't available for last year, I'll be frank with you: I don't know that I'm going to ask them to go through the expense of trying to determine that. That would be something that we'd want to watch for next year.

The last question that was asked from this member, if my notes are correct, was about the criteria for senior officials and whether they change every year. Yes, they can and likely will change every year. For example, it is very important to this government that we move the children's services initiative forward. So one of the overall, overarching criteria that will be used for this year on that children's services initiative is: have we moved it forward or not?

Another one that we currently have, of course, is the government objective in terms of having development plans in place for our own employees. We see what is happening within the demographics of our current public service, and we need to be spending time and money in developing the younger members, in terms of seniority at least, of our public service.

I think I can move to Edmonton-Strathcona. Again we can argue about process. Again I say that I gave you an opportunity to debate it. Will the \$27.4 million be spent? Not necessarily.

5:00

If we don't have the achievement of the goals, then it needn't necessarily be spent. There will be no dollars spent of the \$27.4 million in administering the program. I know that there's a heavy concentration of remarks this afternoon about whether or not we

lived within the department's budget. I guess I'm guilty, Madam Chairman, of overstressing that particular point. I didn't mean to, because that's only one of the criteria. It is possible under our system to have a department spend out their budget but still receive a reward. We wanted to make sure that that was clearly articulated to deputy ministers.

One of the things that we'll be watching very, very closely is to make sure that we haven't had reduced service to the public or in fact layoffs of public service staff, that we haven't had it, in order for them to come in under target. We would not allow that to take place in order to meet just one criteria of budgets.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

In terms of your question about the evaluation of how independent they are, we have not hired outside consultants. Outside consultants might get the evidence or the data for us, but as we have a role and responsibility as management of this operation, thus far we've retained the authority to evaluate those results. I think that one could see, though, that it would be very inopportune or misguided or certainly short-term thinking to try to skew results inappropriately.

Last year we had a couple of departments who didn't get an achievement bonus. They overspent their budgets. They didn't meet some other targets, so we did not allow an achievement bonus to be paid out for those particular departments. You're right in a sense about competition amongst departments. There is that tension there. Once you have the philosophy about a variable pay system, then you are accepting the responsibilities and the risks that go with the competition that then gets set up.

What we want it to be, though, is a positive competition, not a negative or a destructive competition. This is where we have to be very, very careful in working with our employees. If you are dead set against variable pay systems, there is maybe nothing I could say that would, you know, change your particular mind. But if you are for variable pay systems, as I am, we also then are aware of some of the inherent dangers that opponents to the system would be, and we have to try to deal with them.

I think I tried to answer your question about whether teams would be rewarded or not. Yes, they would be within, again, a constraint of a collective agreement that might be in place.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: If there are no further comments or questions, then we'll move to the next department, which I understand is the Department of Community Development.

Community Development

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will try to be very brief as I keep looking at the time, and realizing that we've now accomplished four, I'll be as quick as I can, so the others can get in.

My supplementary estimates are pretty straightforward, and I think that the members of this Assembly support the projects which they are funding. In fact, I'm sure they are, because I've had a lot of input from both sides of the House on these.

The first that I'll talk about is the \$1 million for the World Track and Field Championships or, as I think they're properly called, the IAAF World Championships in Athletics. As you know, we were all very proud when Edmonton was awarded this very prestigious championship. We made a commitment at the time of their bid to provide \$40 million in support from the province if they met the conditions of support from the federal government, the municipal government, and so on. What they have asked is that we provide \$1

million this year, and that is to help the host society offset some start-up costs including office setup, staff costs, and feasibility studies for their capital projects. I think all members understand that it's important for them to get this under way, so they have just asked us to give them \$1 million this year to help them get going.

We know that this is going to attract visitors from around the world to our province and this city. It'll leave permanent legacies of upgraded or perhaps new facilities in the province which will be used for years after the games, and it is expected that the games will bring in about \$386 million in spin-off benefits.

The second request is one that I know all members supported, because they spoke to me often about that. That was the need for some administrative help for our community lottery boards. The \$800,000 that we're talking about here is that support. I do want to tell you, though, that although we were able to save a lot of money by centralizing a lot of the work in my department, even with the additional \$800,000 the administrative side of this program is 3.6 percent. I think that is commendable. I think we should commend the community lottery boards.

I should also tell you that all the community lottery boards did not have to use these dollars in administration. They were free to use those dollars for extra grants for their communities if they chose to completely volunteer their services and get help from the community. In some cases, certainly, that has happened. As I say, 3.6 percent in administration should be commended, and we should all thank those people who volunteered in our communities to take on this task. That is really what we are talking about in the \$1.8 million supplementary estimates for Community Development.

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased to rise and briefly comment on the supplementary estimates for Community Development. Indeed the minister is correct. It's a happy day. We agree. We should try for that more often.

I think that it was a great thing for Alberta and for the host city to be successful in winning the World Track and Field Championships. We are experienced in that in Alberta, having done the Universiade in Edmonton and the Winter Olympics in Calgary. There's been a number of other large sporting events held in different centres throughout Alberta. We know how to bring that volunteer core together. One of them was in Fort McMurray, and I was up there for that. They did an excellent job in organizing that.

Obviously you don't do this stuff with buttons out of a closet. You've got to get an office and get a centralized location, a phone line happening, maybe even a 1-800 line for people to get information. It does take a long time to line up all the processes, recruiting the staff and the volunteers, deciding on the different visual images that are going to be used, the signage and the markings at the different locations. Plus in some cases, obviously, we're going to be building some new locations. So I'm not at all surprised to see this.

I would note my colleague's comment from Edmonton-Glenora that these supplementary estimates should be for unanticipated costs, and indeed this is very much an unanticipated cost, a much-hoped-for cost but unanticipated. I think this is a perfectly justified expenditure, and I'm happy to support it.

I'm also happy to support the \$800,000 for the administrative volunteer side of the community lottery boards. I was one of the people who felt very strongly that that support should be there for the volunteers.

5:10

Having volunteers to perform various functions for you doesn't mean that it's totally free, that there is no cost involved at all,

particularly like the various committees we had for the community lottery boards. I think most communities would want to have their very best representatives on this board to make decisions on behalf of the community. In a lot of cases those are busy people. They may well have jobs. They may not be available to meet at 10 o'clock in the morning. Maybe they had to meet over lunch or dinner, in which case you're going to have to supply them with something to eat. You're not going to be able to hang on to these people very long if you expect them to spend their dinnertime in a meeting and to starve their way through it.

So I think the costs that were asked for by the lottery boards were entirely reasonable. This isn't just all hosting that it went to either. I think in some cases groups were looking for a meeting room that was suitable for them to be in, and that may not have been readily available for free. They would have had to pay for it.

As well, one of the points, based on my experience in being on panels or juries of people who are deciding on grants being given out to groups of people, is that you do need secretarial support and sometimes a financial number cruncher person depending on the decision-making process that the group is using. As is often the case – and I'm sure it was the case here – the applications add up to more money than the groups have to give away. Often the jury or the group of people may decide: okay; well, let's see how much these ones that we've identified as priority items add up to and what's left. It's helpful if you get hold of someone who's good with running those numbers or has them in a program on the computer and can assist you with different scenarios there.

There was one fellow in Edmonton who spoke to me. I don't know if I can mention names or not. Frank Glenfield, I'm sure, made his wishes known. I know for sure that he spoke with the Member for Lacombe-Stettler, because he was still angry when he spoke to me. I think he felt very strongly that it had not been a positive volunteer experience for him. I value his contribution to the Edmonton volunteer community very highly. The man has more than 60 years of volunteering experience, a lot of administrative ability, a lot of wisdom, and a lot of negotiation and mediation techniques that are invaluable on committees like that. I would hate to see him refusing to participate because he felt that he had not been appreciated as a volunteer.

I think that the money that's in there to support these community lottery boards is money well spent frankly. It doesn't surprise me that the cost is very low.

With those few comments I'll take my seat and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this.

Vote on Supplementary Estimates 1998-99 General Revenue Fund, No. 2

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, we have about one second left before I say that I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, but pursuant to Standing Order 59(3) and Government Motion 12, agreed to February 24, 1999, I must now put the following question.

Those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Chairman, I move that we do rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows.

All resolutions relating to the 1998-99 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund have been approved.

I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

[At 5:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

