

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, March 16, 1999

8:00 p.m.

Date: 99/03/16

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order, please. I would ask those that are on subcommittee B if they would like to make their way to room 512 to go over the estimates of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

[The committee met as subcommittees A and B from 8 p.m. to 10:10 p.m.]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Subcommittee A of the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Executive Council, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

Madam Chairman, I would also like to table copies of the documents tabled during the subcommittee of supply meeting this day for the official records of the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the committee concur in the report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried.

MR. TANNAS: Madam Chairman, subcommittee B of the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Does the committee concur in the report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried. The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

MR. TANNAS: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the departments of

Community Development, Executive Council, and Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: It's carried.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 19

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1999

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's with pleasure that I move on belief of the hon. Provincial Treasurer second reading of Bill 19, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1999.

As we undergo our deliberations over the course of the next month with respect to reviewing the estimates of supply for the year 1999-2000, it's absolutely necessary that the government have the wherewithal to pay the bills and to keep our staff employed. Interim supply provides that opportunity, and it really needs no further discussion than that. We're currently involved in the process of reviewing the estimates. All of the money that's involved in the interim supply bill is clearly the money that's also currently before Committee of Supply as we speak.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Madam Speaker. I must say that I find it amusing. We're being asked to spend \$3.5 billion, and I heard the Government House Leader say that it doesn't need any more discussion than this. Boy, I tell you. If that's not indicative of the problem.

MR. HANCOCK: It's the same money we talk about in the committee.

MR. SAPERS: I hear the Government House Leader saying that it's the same money we're talking about in committee. That's precisely the problem, you know. Cart before the horse I think is the old expression.

What we have is the government, for whatever reason that's only known to them, deciding not to recall the Legislative Assembly in good time, knowing full well that we have to deal with the budget, knowing full well that the budget process takes somewhere between 25 and 30 days to wind its way through all of the necessary stages of debate, even though the government would like to truncate that debate and bring out every time allocation guillotine that they can find to stop that debate and threaten closure on motions to do with the debate. Knowing all of that, they still have to allocate these 25, 26, 27 days of debate.

So you'd think that they would look at a calendar and count backwards. And I know the government can count backwards. I mean, this is one thing I know this government can do. I'm confi-

dent that they can count backwards. They could count backwards from the end of the fiscal year to a point in time where we would have adequate debate time so that we could deal with all of the estimates together, not pick out 3 and a half billion dollars worth of estimates and put them over into, you know, somebody else's pocket and then say: "Well, we're from the government; trust us. Write us a cheque for three and a half billion now." If you say it fast enough – three and a half billion – it doesn't sound like very much money. "Write us a cheque for three and a half billion now, and just trust us. We're going to spend it; we're going to do the right things with it."

The disdain that the government has for legitimate debate on estimates is palpable I guess I'm just getting really fed up with it. There is no question that the three and a half billion dollars will be spent in the first part of the fiscal period on maintaining programs and services. I mean, we know that we're dealing with a \$15 billion budget, so we can assume that at least three and a half billion of it will be well spent. We may have some questions about the remaining twelve and a half billion, but we suspect that three and a half billion will be well spent.

The point is that if we had a government that was committed to the process, we'd have a spring session dealing with the budget, called in plenty of time so that we didn't have to go through supplementary supply, and we'd have a fall session to deal with the legislation. That would be a reasonable approach, and then you wouldn't be having the government having this embarrassing thing of standing up with their hands in their pockets and sort of saying, ah, well, trust us, we promise to do the right thing.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who's embarrassed?

MR. SAPERS: Well, I'm assuming that the government is at least sensitive enough to be embarrassed by this repeated action.

Now, Bill 19, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, asks us to spend \$12.9 million in operating and capital investment for the Legislative Assembly, \$3.4 billion in operating expense and capital investment for government ministries, 50 and one-half million dollars in what are called nonbudgetary disbursements – try running that past your accountant – and \$187,826,000 in payments to be made through the lottery fund. All together, as I say, it's almost \$3.6 billion. I would just hope that in the future the government won't be doing this again, putting the Legislative Assembly into this kind of position.

10:20

The government is also changing the process quite a bit, Madam Speaker, this time around. What we have is a presentation of expenses for operating expense, capital investment, nonbudgetary disbursements, and lottery fund that has now been rendered almost meaningless, because now government departments, government ministers, already have the ability to transfer money between programs and within ministries at will. To add insult to injury, the government is proposing to combine operating expense and capital investment under a single vote so they can avoid getting the approval of the Legislative Assembly in supplementary estimates when they transfer money between operating and capital. This reduces transparency, accountability, it's not in keeping with the government's stated goal of fiscal accountability, and it does not meet the test that Albertans would impose on their government for being responsible stewards of their money.

I'm confused as to why the government would want to do this. The only reason the government would want to do this is because

they don't want the scrutiny. They certainly don't want to do this because they want to make the process more transparent, and they certainly don't want to collapse these votes into a single vote because they think that it adds to efficiency. So we now have any minister being given the opportunity to mismanage any way they want to and then cover their tracks by sliding money from one pocket to another or from one line item to another.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'm very disappointed in the government and very concerned that the Provincial Treasurer probably would have lost this particular argument, because I believe the Provincial Treasurer is probably in those secret cabinet meetings pounding the table, demanding that the government stick to its plan of being fiscally accountable, and it was the influence of some of his colleagues who, for reasons only known to them, wanted to hide this kind of detail from Alberta taxpayers. So I would have to join with the Provincial Treasurer in admonishing his colleagues, because I'm sure the Provincial Treasurer would have done that.

The government request of \$3.575 billion represents in fact more than a quarter, more than 25 percent, on a prorated basis of the total expenses projected over the fiscal period. The 3 point nearly 6 billion dollars could keep this government afloat for over three months. Now, a government that talks about having systems in place to promote cost-efficiency and effectiveness should not require three months of expense slack unless it's not confident in its own financial management and performance measurement systems.

Now, I'm wondering why this government believes they need to have this big of an interim supply slush fund. We're going to be able to vote on the budget by – I don't know – let's say the first week of May, roughly speaking. You know, if I can do my math properly – this is the forward counting – I think we could probably vote on the budget by the first week of May, so why does the government feel that it needs to have interim supply that would take us through to the end of June? I'm curious, and I haven't heard an explanation, and certainly the few words offered by the Deputy Government House Leader when he said that we don't need to talk about this anymore didn't provide much insight into why they need this extra nearly eight weeks.

MR. HAVELOCK I didn't say that.

MR. SAPERS: Did I say Deputy Government House Leader? I forgot he got a promotion. I withdraw. I withdraw the attribution of that comment to the Minister of Justice because he's the Deputy Government House Leader. It's the minister of intergovernmental affairs who's now the House leader. It was an easy mistake for me to make, and I want to make sure that I give credit where credit is due. It was the Government House Leader who said that we don't need to talk about this anymore, not the Deputy Government House Leader.

The business plans of the government are put in place on the theory that business plans that cover multiple years and that include performance measures and outcome goals will enhance and promote effectiveness. Now, a government which is committed to measuring performance should be taking business plans seriously rather than having them simply be an exercise to keep managers busy. Unfortunately, it appears as though many of the elements of the business plans gather dust. I will note that this government which talks the talk of accountability has stumbled in its walk of accountability and has failed to meet 122 of its own performance measures in the last 24 months.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. SAPERS: One hundred and twenty-two, hon. members, in the last 24 months.

The Official Opposition, Alberta Liberals, have long been advocates of tying inputs to outcomes. Now, what that means is that if you're going to spend money on something, you should know what it is that you're buying. Okay? Inputs to outcomes. So if we're being asked to spend tonight nearly \$3.6 billion, we should be told exactly what it is that Alberta taxpayers are going to get as a result of that expense.

MR. HANCOCK: It's in the budget in the business plans.

MR. SAPERS: The Government House Leader – I got it right that time – is saying, Mr. Speaker, that it's in the business plans. Now, it's interesting that he heard part of my comment but obviously not the first part of my remarks, where I remind the government that they've missed 122 of their performance measures in those business plans. So is the Government House Leader saying that we're being asked to spend \$3.6 billion tonight on performance measures that the government plans on missing? Is that what he's confirming tonight? If it is, he should stand up and get it on the record, because I know my constituents would like to know that's what the government has in mind. Now, instead of asking us to buy a pig in a poke, we should be holding the government accountable.

MRS. SOETAERT: That's rural. Pig in a poke and cart before the horse. Very good.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you.

We should be insisting that the government make these performance measures realistic, attainable, and the measurements should be clearly stated. Only then will we have more faith that those business plans are taken seriously by government and that they're not just an exercise.

It was the 1993 election which I think clearly established that Albertans have a healthy appetite for accountability and fiscal management. This government, blessed as they have been by living in fortunate economic times, has managed to balance the budget. I am happy that this government has figured out how to balance the budget. Now, the way.

MR. HAVELOCK: We cut spending by 20 per cent.

MR. SAPERS: The Deputy Government House Leader says that they cut spending by 20 percent. I was going to say that it's unfortunate that the way they decided to do that was by learning how to write just smaller cheques without worrying about how to enhance quality and value of services.

But I will give credit, Mr. Speaker, where credit is due and acknowledge that in spite of their shortcomings they've managed to balance the budget. I just wish that they would now turn their collective energy towards, making good on all the promises about accountability and ensuring value.

In that '93 election I remember going door to door and talking to people about value-for-money auditing. Now, if you want to know what a tough sell is at the doors, Mr. Speaker, you go knocking on doors and talking to strangers about value-for-money audits. But, you know, once you manage to break the ice, certainly constituents in Edmonton-Glenora were intrigued. They wanted to know about how a government was going to . . . [interjection] Well, it was a winter campaign.

They wanted to know how the government was going to guarantee value. The fact is that we haven't gotten very far. We haven't been able to make much of a dent in this government's rather impenetrable wall of obfuscation when it comes to these performance measures. They still want to trot them out and put them in the books, put them in the business plans, and then still fail to meet them. Now, they have met some of them, but certainly there's much, much work to do in this area.

10:30

There are other jurisdictions that have gone much further. The state of Texas is one example that includes an outcome measurement to every expense, and I would like to see this government work just a little bit harder in going down that road. Stating a goal or an objective is relatively meaningless unless you measure along the way getting there and unless you're prepared to re-evaluate and reassess as you go. Unfortunately this government doesn't seem to want to do that either.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly is once again handed a dilemma wrapped up in an enigma by this government. The dilemma is: how can we vote against continuing the services of government that Albertans depend on? The enigma is why would the government continue to put the Assembly into this kind of a position? We've got some time left to get some explanation from members of government as to why they've foisted this upon the people of Alberta again and are asking the Members of the Legislative Assembly to be complicit with them. I would hope that we will get some responses so we can make an informed and reasonable judgment on this request and translate that into a vote on second reading on Bill 19.

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

MR. WHITE: And other points north, sir. Thank you kindly.

I rise today to assist all my learned colleagues to understand my position on Bill 19 and the inappropriateness of the dimension of this bill. I mean, how can one truly believe that this government are good fiscal managers when 23 percent of the budget, 23.5 to be precise, must be paid for by, at best, a slipshod way of budgeting. This is sort of after the fact, saying that, well, we need some for this and that and being able to rob from this little piggy bank to pay for something over here. This is about as ad hoc as you can possibly get in any government administration.

I happen to have had the honour of serving the citizens of Edmonton in another position in my lifetime, in municipal government. Municipal government by law, by law set by this Legislature, cannot budget in this manner, cannot spend money in this manner at all. It is against the law to do so, and why is that? Because it's reasonable to expect a legislative body, be it municipal or provincial or federal, to be able to expend moneys on something they predict it will be expended upon. Yes, there are adjustments, and the adjustments come in the way of a bill on the floor of that assembly. It happens to be a council assembly. It's done right there before the people. They say, "Move money from here because we don't need to expend it over here," or "The income from this source is too little, so we can't afford to do that," so it is adjusted there.

What happens here? This is all spent. This is come and gone. This is after the fact. This is not budgeting or figuring out. This is just sort of a rough lump rationalization of expenditures after the fact on someone's decision. Now, it is not reasonable to ask the citizens of Alberta to make judgment on a document that supplies an accounting, even a ballpark accounting, of what has occurred. Tell me, from this book, where one can find the list of construction and

operation of highway maintenance? Where can you find it? This particular minister is better than most, generally, in supplying that which is needed, but it's after the fact. He says that that's where we spent the money, not where we plan to spend the money. He does that at another time, a little better than most do, but. . .

MR. HANCOCK: He sent you a detailed list.

MR. WHITE: Send a detailed list? The Government House Leader from opposite is asking me to send a detailed list.

MR. HANCOCK: No. I said that he sent you a detailed list.

MR. WHITE: He sends a detailed list of my own constituents. Yes, he does. Oh, excuse me, sir.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Government House Leader, unfortunately you're not able to speak until you're able to close debate. However, you've availed yourself of many opportunities, and one would hope that we could remain with the convention that only one person speaks at a time. Right now it is Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. I will do my best to stick on topic and not listen to the members opposite, as entertaining as they do get at many times, and that particular member has been entertaining for a number of years that I know of.

Debate Continued

MR. WHITE: In any event, the rationale for spending these funds seems to be that, oh, the government suddenly found some money. They put more slot machines into various locations throughout the province. They added a little bit more on booze taxes, and then user fees sort of balanced things out. Then of course we had a big increase, an unexpected increase in the supply of funds to this government through natural gas sales. Mind you, natural gas sales royalties. I should correct that for Hansard. They have a difficult enough time following what I'm saying, let alone messing them up with that one.

They went and lost a bunch of money elsewhere. So instead of just this sort of ad hockery and saying that we've found a little money here and we've found a little money there, to use the analogy that's often used by this government, can you imagine Old Mother Hubbard trying to feed the kids on a little here and little there and trying to keep a household in shape in this manner? Absolutely ludicrous. Nobody could possibly, possibly manage a budget in that manner, nor should a government be expected to.

This side has proposed not once but a number of times a manner in which to even those out, a manner in which to take the income so that instead of at the very last of the year saying that we have to clean up our act from what we've already spent, instead of doing that, saying: well, let's plan what we need to spend and only expend that which we actually planned. And let the population know that that which you are going to spend is actually in a document so they can find where you're spending it.

MR. DICKSON: But that requires discipline.

MR. WHITE: Yes. My learned friend says that that requires discipline, which seems to be lacking. As a matter of fact, this government is so lacking in discipline that they have to pass laws to

tell themselves that they will not expend in this other area, even though it's completely in their power at any time to say: no, we won't expend on that.

Virtually every other legislative authority that I know of would never have this kind of law that promises to do something and puts it in statute that this is how we're going to manage our affairs because we don't trust ourselves well enough next year not to go off and expend these moneys in a different manner. Maybe this document is proof of that. Maybe they can't make up their minds as to how to expend it, so they have to catch up after the fact to do the budgeting.

I remember well a number of budgets that prior to my time on city council were brought in in that exact same way. They were done for capital work. You remember the underground work for the LRT.

MR. DICKSON: I don't remember it, but I'll take your word for it.

MR. WHITE: Well, Edmontonians will remember that they were always on time and on budget. Strange how that happened.

MRS. SOETAERT: Who was on city council at that time? Were you on city council then?

MR. WHITE: No, I wasn't. That was before my time.

Do you know why they were on time and on budget? Certainly because. . .

Speaker's Ruling Addressing the Chair

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you're reminded that you're addressing the chair and not all of your colleagues that are immediately around you and interacting with them. You're speaking to the appropriation bill.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand admonished once again. You're quite right. I was doing far too much listening and not enough talking on topic. Yes, sir. I should speak to you. Terrible habit, this speaking in the Legislature.

Debate Continued

MR. WHITE: But there I was, in the middle of the budget plight. The city of Edmonton's plan, the part for capital works, was always on time and on budget. When you review why, it was because they always set the budget after they had already spent the money, and they always set the time lines after they'd completed the work. Well, that's the same thing as here. Of course we're on time and on budget here. All we have to do is account for it after we've spent it. Not a problem at all, balancing the budget and balancing the capital works budget on that basis.

10:40

Mr. Speaker, there's another theme that should be spoken of in this particular bill too. The government wishes to merge and meld willy-nilly capital work with operating expense. Well, I'm sorry, but governments before have done a great deal to separate those two expenditure areas, because one is and should be retired overtime, if it's capital work. Of course, the operating expense has to be expensed at the time, which is reasonable. If this government intends to take an operating company model and apply it there, then this is diametrically opposed to the direction one would normally take, and I chastise the government for even considering that.

The second theme, of course, that which I was speaking about

earlier, is the expenditure of a quarter of the budgeted funds without a real budget just sort of after-the-fact slack management of expenditures.

The third theme is the business plans and the need to promote some effectiveness in program delivery. It seems to be lost on this government that writes all these wonderful business plans and then misses about I think, two-thirds of the targets. Those are the real targets. There are some others that can be fudged easily. If you check some of the business plans from the inception to now, they go from a target, and the target stays and moves up as the attainment moves up. Then you get close to almost unattainable, and they change the whole method of calculating. They change the measurement tool. Well how can one manage to change the tool just because it appears they're getting too close to the target? That means you couldn't possibly have subsequent years with an increase in your attainment level. My wife would call it silly. She certainly wouldn't put up with any business plan that she had to design and work to around the house, nor would I expect her to have to work under such ridiculous conditions.

We turn now to the lack of disclosure. If you take this document and wring it out, you'll find that there are painfully few numbers here. Just because the Minister of Transportation and Utilities happens to be here – I don't want to pick on him, because his is no different than any others. As a matter of fact, his reporting is generally much better than most. But there are six numbers. That's it. Six numbers. And his is typical of the departments. That's it. And what do they describe? "Other provincial roads and infrastructure." "North/south trade corridor." That's fairly descriptive. I must compliment the minister.

MRS. SOETAERT: That's transportation. That's good. That's why.

MR. WHITE: Yes, that's good, because that's at least twice or maybe three times as descriptive as any other descriptor in the book. At random here we'll pull another one out. "Ministry support services." No. Well, this one's fairly descriptive: "Income support to individuals and families."

MRS. SOETAERT: What does that mean?

MR. WHITE: It is not me. Even though I happen to be an individual and a family, it's certainly not support for me. That's in Family and Social Services, but it isn't defined and how it's targeted.

We're talking about this government that calls itself open transparent and accountable. Yeah it's open. It produces a book that you can open to any page and find very little to ask and answer about. It's transparent, yeah. Well, it's not very hard to look through painfully few numbers. And it's accountable? Now, wait a minute. That's stretching it a little far. This is spending after the fact. That's accountable? I mean sending someone out to buy a quart of milk, you'd be more accountable than this any day even if you didn't know the price of it.

This is ludicrous to expect citizens of this great province to put up with this kind of budgeting when the departments at the beck and call of the government could certainly and do put out very, very good and comprehensive documents internally. But what do we get here? We get a wad of paper with painfully little information in it.

Go off to Mayerthorpe or to Taber and open their books that are published annually before the end of the calendar year they must produce a budget for the next year, and those are produced before the end of the year – and look at the expenditure levels and the detail of the expenditure levels. You can find exactly where the capital works are going. The minister of transportation would be most

pleased pulling open a book and finding that the money he had sent to that municipality was spent precisely where they said it was. It's laid bare. A citizen can find it. Can you find that same sort of detail in any kind of budget, even less so than the supplementary estimates, version 2? Just can't find it in there.

Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day when a member receives documents in this House and does the best one can with the help of some outside accounting and with the senior level bureaucrats and former bureaucrats that deal with these things all the time, and they collectively say well, we can roughly tell where the money is spent but we have no way of tracking it publicly. There are not public accounts to track it precisely and recognize that this happens to be a member that spends a fair bit of time dealing with public accounts I challenge virtually anyone to say that's precisely where the money went how it was spent.

We do get some answers in this Chamber on that, but it's a year or two after the fact. Why would they not put that same effort – and it's very little effort after you've gone to the difficulty of budgeting properly, as the administration of this government surely would – into a good, solid document that has explanation in it, not one that has by design a lot of creative white space? This is a more detailed version of it. You look at this one and my little hen scratching burnt more ink into this paper than is here now.

I mean, there is so little in the document that it begs the question of what the government wants the people of this province to know. Do they not want people to know where the expenditures are? No, they'd never want that. Everyone would want to know that, and I would expect every member opposite, every member in this House would want to know that every member of the population of this great province that would want to know where the numbers are would be able to find them with no difficulty whatever, would be able to call any member of staff and say gee whiz, how much is that department spending on this, that, and so? But do you think that's possible out of that which we have before us? Not a chance. Not a chance. I haven't seen Cuba's books lately, but I think they're about the same quality, except they'd be in Spanish, I'm sure. The volume of numbers would be probably about the same, sir.

I know there are so many more people here that want to speak. We have another five speakers on this side, and if I take all my time, sir, it will not leave time for others I'll do that now and retake my seat.

Thank you, sir.

10:50

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have some questions about the expenditures included in Bill 19. They're in two areas. They're in the areas of Advanced Education and Career Development, where the expenditure is \$343,700,000 and in Education, where the expenditure is \$488,512,000. Those are rather substantial figures, and they raise questions in terms of how this money has been spent and in particular, how it's been spent in terms of the criticisms that the Auditor General put forward in the last report about these two departments.

A major concern of the Auditor General was the kinds of plans that are submitted by institutions to the government to secure their grants. The concern, as I've visited some of those institutions, has to be with the kinds of regulations and the kinds of demands and the kinds of systems that the government has put in place for those institutions to gain their grants. At the advanced education level those institutions have been using a system called key performance

indicators, or KPIs as they're known. It's a system that was imposed on the institutions a number of years ago and have, for some of those institutions been a continual source of irritation. As you talk to institutions, they're not at all convinced, many of them, that the time and the effort and the blood and sweat that's put into generating the KPIs is worth what the KPIs were designed to do. The whole internal management system, based on the key performance indicators, is one that I think the department of advanced education has an obligation to address.

The Auditor General in his comments seems to point criticism at the institutions in terms of some of the inconsistencies in the reporting procedures, but I wonder if it's that simple – it may be from an office in Edmonton – to make those kinds of judgments but when you're on the ground in those institutions the clumsiness of the reporting system presents real problems. So I would have been interested for the expenditures being asked for in this bill by Advanced Education to have some information on how these particular resources of the department are being used to address the problems of that particular system.

A major concern – and it's a major concern not just in Advanced Education but in Education and in Municipal Affairs – is a concern with the institutional infrastructure. The Auditor General indicates that the facilities in the advanced education sector are really deteriorating, that 260 buildings “are over 25 years old, 76% will be over 25 years old in ten years.” His comment was that “long-term capital asset replacement strategies remain ambiguous.” So I would be interested in knowing if some of this money is going to make those plans for capital replacement, asset replacement, less ambiguous and what work is being done with the institutions to accommodate the projected 20 percent increase in students over the next 10 years, given the kinds of facilities we have.

The Auditor General also talked about how critical it was for a long-range capital budgeting system to be put in place. My question would be are the funds in Bill 19 going to be used to put in place that long-term capital budgeting system? Again, are institutions being given some help with the financing and the planning and the replacement and renovations that they require to meet the student demand over the next number of years?

The Auditor General also suggested that the department introduce some incentive plans to encourage institutions to manage their capital assets. Again it would be interesting to know, and the detail isn't here is part of this money being used to encourage those institutions to put in place such a plan? So the whole notion of capital budgeting is really a major concern across the province, and it's a concern that in the past has not been addressed as we've gone through in Advanced Education and Career Development some rather draconian cuts. It would be interesting to know how far this particular expenditure bill goes to addressing those problems as they've been identified.

The Auditor General has been very specific about the backlog and has made some rather negative comments about the state of buildings. He also indicates that there's great risk in allowing the infrastructure to deteriorate and not doing anything and how important it is that plans for maintenance, that now are unfunded – unless some of this money has gone to those concerns – how really the trust that the public has in government to protect those assets may be badly misplaced.

So with those comments about advanced education, I'd like to move to the Education budget and to raise some questions in terms of that budget, because again we're being asked to approve a rather substantial expenditure, \$488,512,000. Some of these speakers that have preceded me have indicated there is no detail at all in terms of how that money has been and is being spent.

There are two areas at least that the Auditor General raised and that one would hope this money is being used to address. One of those areas is the whole notion of school-generated funds. We've had some questions in the past few weeks about school-generated funds, and the minister has made some responses but unless there have been some drastic changes following the Auditor General's report, there still are some serious concerns that need to be addressed. The Auditor General recommended that school boards put in place a system for monitoring school-generated funds. That's probably easier said than done I would be interested to know what kind of efforts have been made to put in such a system.

I know that in terms of parent fund-raising there are some parents who refuse to have the money that they generate from fund-raising activities included in school budgets. Their attitude is: “We raised the money. We'll determine where it's going to be used, and we resent any effort to include it as part of the school budget.” I think those parent groups are probably in the minority. Nevertheless, they are there, and I think it points out the difficulty of trying to get a good handle on exactly how much parent and citizen money is going into supporting schools, because of the difficulty of reporting.

11:00

The Auditor General indicated that almost three-quarters of the school board auditors indicated some difficulty in this area and that there was inadequate reporting and inadequate control over the completeness of those revenues. They indicated that was a weakness of the financial statements that they submitted and had been subject to audit.

I guess one of the underlying problems we've tried to point out in question period is that without that information and given the kind of spotty information we have – and I think the Auditor General put it more succinctly. He said that the total student education costs can't be determined because we don't know how much parents are putting in. We have an idea, and we have some figures, but we really don't know what it costs to educate students in this province because of the incompleteness of the information, and the Auditor General called on the department to take some action. My question would be: has Bill 19 provided the funds, and has some action taken place in that area?

One of the other things the Auditor General indicated – and it's related to that, but it's much broader – is the kind of information that the Department of Education gathers from school districts, the question of gathering the information and the use that's made of it. I would be interested in knowing what has been done to assure school boards that the time and the energy they take to fill forms and to report to Alberta Education – what assurance have they that that information is being well used and is influencing policy? According to the Auditor General there was some question, at least at the time of his analysis of the department that that information was not being used for management purposes to any great extent. The Auditor General mentioned a couple of areas in particular where that was a problem again an area where the department gathered information and then seemingly did nothing with it. So it would be interesting to see if that problem has been addressed.

The last area that I'd like to comment upon is the area of charter schools. There have been a number of issues raised about charter schools, and it extends everywhere from their business plans through to the operations of their boards it's an area where there has been criticism, where there has been failure, and there have been some attempts by Alberta Education, the ministry to address the problems. One of the quotes from the Auditor General's report was that until August 31, 2000, “the Department will be unable to assess the performance of charter schools in terms of their mandate-related

goal." That's rather telling – isn't it? – that we've had those schools for as long as we have, and they were supposed to have three-year business plans. They were supposed to have business plans that would be influential in determining whether or not their charter was renewed, yet it's not going to be until mid-2000 that the department will have the information that they need to make those kinds of judgments.

I would be very interested in how much of the money from Bill 19 has gone to addressing the problems that charter schools are experiencing and the kinds of programs that have been put in place. One of the concerns, of course, has been the operation of the boards and the reporting of boards that were in difficulty, the reporting of boards where some of the members were not qualified to carry out the mandate of the charter, and the plea by the Auditor for the government to do something in terms of providing some kind of an education program for those board members that would apprise them of their duties and apprise them of how a board should operate and their responsibilities to the government and under the act. It would be interesting to note if any of this money has been directed to solving those charter school problems.

I guess the last one – and it would be interesting to know – would be whether the suggestions from the Auditor General about alternative school programs and the need to identify some of them and to make them more widely available across the province, whether those recommendations, too, have been acted upon.

Those are but two areas of Bill 19, rather substantial areas in terms of expenditures. I know we could go through each of the line items and raise an equal number of questions. It really just scratches the surface, and again it raises the question, given the amount of money we're being asked to approve, of the appropriateness of this process and the government trying to finance and keep its operations running.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 19, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1999. We're being asked to vote the government sufficient operating dollars to run the government until June, I think, or the end of June. I can understand a forward-planning cash flow or forward planning and planning for a cash flow, but in that is an expectation that there are reasonable time lines put in place. So one of the questions that has occurred to me is: why did the government not start this process early enough to be completed by March 31, which is the end of the current fiscal year, which would have the budget passed in time to begin the next fiscal year? Calling the Legislature into session is at the discretion of the government, so they certainly have it within their means to be organizing that. That would strike me as reasonable planning.

[Dr. Massey in the chair]

Given that we have now started on this process, I gather, given the timing – and I'd like to talk a bit more about that a little later on – that we should have completed this process and, one presumes, passed the budget in early May, but I notice that Bill 19 is voting us operating funds sufficient to run until the end of June. So I'm wondering and I guess I'm inviting the government to explain to us what unforeseen circumstances they might be anticipating that we would not be completing the budget debate by the beginning of May and would therefore need to hedge our bets sufficiently to run us to the end of June.

MRS. SOETAERT: She hedges lots of bets. She's a hedge bettor.

MS BLAKEMAN: I don't ever hedge a bet.

One of the things I find really interesting is we are being asked to agree with, I guess, the government's budgeting process. This government talks about process and planning and key performance measurements and goals and strategies and outcomes and inputs. But essentially what we have here is a lack of budget management, and that, I think, is being illustrated by the amount of unbudgeted spending that's been brought in through supplementary supply over the past two years. This current Provincial Treasurer has brought in five supplementary supply bills in 19 months as a Provincial Treasurer.

11:10

MR. MacDONALD: How many did you say?

MS BLAKEMAN: Five. That now seems to have become part of the process.

So from my rookie's eye view – and rapidly becoming jaded – we seem to start this process with the supplementary supply request, which is essentially to authorize the money that has already been spent in the departments. But having done so, this now gives us a balanced budget across the books. So in fact it wasn't a balanced budget. Money was overspent, and in some cases, I will admit, it was totally unforeseen and absolutely appropriate that the money was expended and that the government took the responsibility and the leadership to expend those funds when needed. But there's also a number of times when I've had to question and say: well, they obviously knew that one was coming; why did they have to wait until the end of the fiscal year and then bring this forward as a supplementary supply to sort of make sure that money is in there by the end of the year and everything comes out jake for them?

So we do the supplementary supply process. Then we have our budget estimates introduced. In the meantime, not having introduced the budget estimates in sufficient time to have the budget passed by the end of the fiscal year and prior to the year in which the money is to be expended, we then have to have an interim supply bill in which more than enough money is voted through to carry us well into the summer.

You know, I'm not that long in government. I still think like the person on the street: why would this be happening? This is not a logical way to go about doing something when we have a government that is saying, "Process, process, and performance indicators," and "We will do this all right." Then when you actually start to look at it, there's all kinds of ways that in fact this is not a straightforward process.

Frankly, for any organizations that are receiving funds from the government, if an organization that receives operating funding or grant funding or any kind of assistance came to the government and said, "Well, we haven't quite finished our process yet, but if you wouldn't mind advancing us a quarter or a half a year of our operating funding now, that'd be just tickety-boo," I think they'd be laughed right out of the building and probably have their funding cut off by this government for not having a three-year plan in place. Yet the government feels perfectly comfortable in going ahead and doing that: supplementary supply, budget estimates, interim supply. It's the same sequence I've seen three times now, but that would never be acceptable for any other organization to do. Much higher standards are set for other organizations but not so for the government.

Another issue that I have noticed in this particular budget process is that Bill 19 is asking us to vote \$187.8 million through the lottery

fund and again I'm finding this a very interesting process and not as transparent and open and accountable and accessible and all of those words that I hear the government use I've now been through every department in this book, and unfortunately there's not a line breakdown. We're just asked for a lump sum payment of \$187.8 million from the lottery fund. I don't really know where exactly the money from that is supposed to be going.

If I look at the total budget plan, which I have to do in order to consider what's being asked in Bill 19, I notice that 12 departments, two-thirds of the government departments, now have programs that are being paid for out of lottery funds. I have never heard, have never seen an announcement – there's been no infomercial, there's been no cooking show on Access television there's been no information whatsoever – to say: "You know folks, we've changed the way we're operating again. We would now like you all to know in our attempt to be open and transparent and accountable and accessible and all those things, that we have decided we have some sort of criteria that we are going to use to move programs out of general revenue and into the lottery fund."

Now I suspect this has come about because the government's had a fairly hard time – and I certainly saw this at the gambling summit – from Albertans going: "Whoa, whoa, whoa. The lottery fund money was originally for quality of life, and now it appears to be going into general revenue. We don't like that. We want it to be accountable. We don't want you paying for stuff out of the lottery fund that we expect to be paid out of general revenue."

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

So very quietly, because I haven't seen an infomercial or seen a cooking show on Access television that is elucidating all of this for us, these programs are being slid over. Well there's been no fanfare about it; let me put it that way. But if you look carefully, 12 departments out of 18 now have programs run out of the lottery fund.

MRS. SOETAERT: How many?

MS BLAKEMAN: Twelve departments.

So there are only six departments that are not run out of the lottery fund. I believe I'm correct in this that Energy, Executive Council, Justice, Labour, Transportation and Utilities, and Treasury are the only departments that . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: I think Transportation got some lottery dollars too, though.

MS BLAKEMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. Perhaps I'm wrong. [interjection] And the Justice minister would like to be able to run some programs out of lottery funds. That may well happen.

I am so sorry, Mr. Speaker. You have my full and undivided attention, and through you will I direct every remark. Thank you for reminding me.

I find that very interesting. I thought well maybe I just didn't notice this before. But then as I looked through this; no, indeed. When you get comparable figures – there are no comparable figures. So these are programs that have newly been moved into the lottery fund. How many of them? Well, I've marked them in my book, and my goodness there's a lot of little stars for new programs that have been moved into and are now being paid out of the lottery fund. Now, the two major exceptions to that are the Department of Community Development, which has funded for some years a number of its foundations and Economic Development, which also appears to have the tracking backwards comparable to '98-99 and

back to 97-98, and that's as far back as this budget estimate book goes.

But all of these other departments. Under Economic Development, the Gaming Research Institute; that's new. Under Environmental Protection, the water management and erosion control program is new in the lottery fund or out of the lottery fund. Natural resources services are now being funded \$15 million out of the lottery fund. Métis settlements governance is now being funded under the lottery fund. Under Municipal Affairs there's a new program, municipal 2000 sponsorship. Under Public Works, upgrading of seniors' lodges. Under Agriculture Food and Rural Development there's an Agricultural Research Institute, rural development services, irrigation rehabilitation, municipal waste water: all programs that have never been funded out of the lottery fund before. Yet no explanation.

I have only done – what? – three or four departments here out of 12. So many, many, many more programs or services are now being funded out of the lottery funds and not a word. Not a word in 35 minutes of an infomercial. Not a word in an Access television commercial cooking show to answer all your questions about the budget. Has any of this been discussed? Most interesting. I am looking forward to the transparency. I'm looking forward to the accessibility, to the elucidation that I know that the government . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: You're so hopeful.

11:20

MS BLAKEMAN: I am a hopeful person, and I'm hoping I'm always hopeful. But I'll tell you this is a very interesting fact that I don't think many people are aware of.

Just a few more points. We've had no discussion on all of these new programs now being funded directly out of the lottery program. So a few questions I would like the government to answer in their transparency, accessibility, and all those other things that they claim the budget is. Where in the growth summit were these instructions given to the government that they are following to transfer all of these programs into lottery dollars? Where were the questions in the survey that the Provincial Treasurer sent out? I know I'll get corrected if I'm wrong; was it Talk It Up; Talk It Out? Okay. It's the recent one, and there were 80,000 people that responded. That's what the Treasurer keeps saying. There was no question in there that said: please tell us if you'd like us to transfer dozens of programs that have been funded for a long period of time out of general revenue please tell us to transfer dozens of programs to be paid out of the lottery fund.

Is there a commitment on behalf of government – and I know this is an idea inconceivable to this government, but I'm a pessimistic optimist, so I have to ask the question. Has the government given a commitment, does the government have a commitment for all of these programs now? These are important programs to the people concerned with those areas, I'm sure. Does the government have a commitment to fund these programs back out of general revenue if for some reason the lottery funds dry up?

I can't imagine what would happen, but let's say there was a general uprising and the people of Alberta said, "Not one more sweat-soaked loonie into lottery money, no more slots no more VLTs, no more tickets, no more casinos and bingos; not a penny," and it dried up. Where are all these programs supposed to be funded from? Is there any commitment on behalf of the government to fund again athletic scholarships, infrastructure support, and learning television under Advanced Ed? Or under Health; advanced medical equipment, health authority year 2000 compliance, Alberta Wellnet, Alberta authorities innovation fund. All of those are now under

Health. Is there any commitment to keep funding these if the lottery dollar dried up? It's just a question.

So back to transparency on this. I am trying to grapple with whether I support Bill 19, an interim supply. As I said, the bill itself is five pages long, but no line item says that this is what all this is paying for, just the department and a figure. So we don't know what's being paid for here. I note, as I go through them, that there are differing amounts. I think that some departments have requested a third, some a quarter of their year's operating money. Why the inconsistency there? If we were just taking a chunk out and going, "Okay; the government requests money to run, and we'll take a quarter of our entire budget and ask for that," then it would be a quarter of the budget. But it's not. Every department is a little bit different.

So can I support this bill on behalf of the residents of Edmonton-Centre? Well, the residents of Edmonton-Centre were treated to the infomercials and the speeches and the coaching classes and something on Access television that included the Treasurer cooking something. But that's giving the government's point of view. Some would call it a spin, if they wanted to be cynical, but not me. I wouldn't be cynical, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely not. But the public doesn't get to scrutinize. I've already had one phone call, very irate from a member of my constituency saying: "When do I get to see these numbers? You're already talking about this stuff, Laurie." I said, "Well, you know, I have the big book. I'm sorry; I don't think you really want me to fax it to you. You're welcome to come in and look at it." She's saying, "I want to talk to you about this. There are questions I want you to bring forward on my behalf. Why was this budget introduced on Thursday, and you're debating it on Monday? Where's my public input?" "Well, Katherine, I don't know. I'll ask the government that." So I'm doing that as we debate Bill 19.

So the public gets information directed to them in a one-way street, but their ability to talk to their MLA, to raise issues, to have this brought forward and debated is very limited. So how is this accessible?

Yeah, that's interesting. The House leaders' agreement allows for the designated committees, which is an excellent idea, and it gives a thorough four hours, lots of questions and answers, very intense, but that's a fairly narrow focus to a limited number of committees. So the rest of these departments and all of the scrutiny line by line happens in these committees that meet two at a time. So our 20 days of debate – and I'm trying to explain all of this to Katherine in a 10-minute phone conversation. So there's supposed to be 20 days of debate on the budget, but two committees meet at the same time, so that's really 10 days of debate on the budget.

I can remember a conversation that I had with a visiting school group last year, again trying to explain this to them, and it was a tough one. They said: "Oh, a day of debate? Well, is that a 24-hour period?" "No," I said, "No, no." "I think to be reasonable it would be an eight-hour period of time." So eight hours would be a day. Yes, the students felt eight hours would be a reasonable amount of time to call a day. Well, in our budget it's calling for 20 days. Oops, except we said: "No, no. Two meet at once." We do two departments at once, so we're down to 10 days. So is it eight hours? No, I had to say. Is it four hours? No, I had to say. In fact, it's two hours. We meet for two hours to debate a departmental budget, and that's minus travel time for the committee that has to go upstairs and come back down again. So there are even less than two hours to do this. And this is where the students . . . I can't read my writing. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your time has run out. The 20 minutes is up.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased this evening also to rise to debate Bill 19, the appropriation bill. There have been some very thoughtful comments made by my colleagues in the Official Opposition. I hope that I'll be able to contribute to those in a fresh sense this evening.

I guess the introduction to debating this is that we have – the process is legitimate. However, it seems as though the government is attempting to misuse it to a degree in terms of the amounts of expenditures that they're bringing forward and the period of time they're proposing the expenditures cover, Mr. Speaker. Granted, their argument is that they want to cover off a period of time and address the expenditures that will arise. However, it has been calculated and said before that this would take us basically to June of this year. We all know that if the hon. Premier had thought to recall the Legislature at an earlier date, perhaps there would have been sufficient time to have debated the estimates and not have had to submit so much money in the form of the interim supply act.

I will find it somewhat humorous this evening to go home and tell my husband that I have debated and approved the spending of \$3 billion in the wee hours of the debate this evening. It can indicate . . . [interjection] The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is indicating: wouldn't it be great to have that type of ability in your personal or perhaps in your business life? It would never happen in our household, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not so certain that this is the way it should happen in the Legislative Assembly.

11:30

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has indicated, it's very difficult as a member of the opposition who is completely excluded from the budget process and all of the preparation and the circulation of drafts, to receive notification of these expenditures and within, really, 72 hours to be standing on our feet and debating them. It doesn't provide much opportunity for consultation with our constituents. Nonetheless, it's a substantive amount of money, and it deserves to be scrutinized and to be debated thoroughly.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is that the bill itself does not provide a lot of detail as to what will be the operating expenses and the capital expenses that these various offices and government departments will require. As we go through, Health is an obvious one: over a billion dollars in interim supply expenditures and absolutely no indication of what that amount of money is going to be spent on. So not very transparent, unfortunately. I think Albertans deserve better from their government, and it's regrettable that that provision doesn't exist in the form of this bill.

One of the other themes that I think it's appropriate to raise in the context of this bill is that there is really very little substance as to what outcomes the government will attempt to achieve through this bill. We know that there's a variety of crises happening across sectors in health care, obviously in many facets of health care: long-term care, mental health, home care, et cetera. We also know there are similar issues of concern in Education, in Environment, in Family and Social Services. Really, there's no indication, for the amount of money being proposed, as to what will be achieved in the process.

One of the other aspects of interest is that in a fiscal context we have accumulated in this province approximately \$7 billion in cumulative surpluses in the past four years and are roughly, Mr. Speaker, 10 years ahead of debt targets under the Balanced Budget and Debt Retirement Act. In my opinion, in the context of the crises that are occurring across multiple sectors in this province, it seems almost to be a symptom of denial that we're allowing the mountain of money in the surplus account to accrue, and meanwhile the walls of our public service are crumbling before our eyes, but we're not interested in acknowledging that that reality exists.

MR. DICKSON: Well, we should be.

MRS. SLOAN: We definitely should be.

There are some interesting, I guess, disparities with respect to what government departments have asked for in the interim supply bill. I noted as one example that basically Family and Social Services is seeking 30 percent of their budget. In contrast intergovernmental affairs is looking for 60 percent. Well, why that disparity? Really, if we're talking about covering a period of operations until June of '99, why would we be looking for roughly a third of our budget? Or in intergovernmental affairs, why would we be seeking 60 percent? Is the minister intending to have a large soiree that he hasn't announced, or what's the rationale behind that? It's extremely puzzling to me, very puzzling to me.

I thought it was very astute, and I appreciated the remarks made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre with respect to the number of departments funded out of lottery. This is in my opinion one of the best kept secrets of this government. The average Albertan really doesn't recognize how the funding of public services in this province has shifted from a predominantly tax-and-resource-based revenue to a now sort of over 50 percent lottery-and-gaming-based revenue. Certainly we have the ability to predict them to a degree, but I don't believe this government has really thought about the complete impact of that long term. They are recognizing the increased addiction rates with VLTs, the whole complexity surrounding the court judgment, and the model in which the revenues from lotteries are managed is another headache that they didn't quite factor in. Perhaps it's a dose of well-needed medicine, and perhaps it's actually a signal to this government that they should be reexamining and re-evaluating the wisdom of financing that much of our public service through a gambling-based revenue stream.

MR. DICKSON: Remember what Lady Violet Bonham Carter said.

MRS. SLOAN: Lady Violet Bonham Carter said that Tories are not always wrong, but they are always wrong at the right moment. Thank you. I certainly do think it's an appropriate quote for the subject at hand. [interjection] We have strong disagreement from the opposition side with respect to that area and with respect to what is appropriate revenue for our core services within government, within the public service.

Just to go back a bit to mention two other department comparisons. It's interesting also that we have Energy needing only 38 percent of its budget. Meanwhile Executive Council is only requesting 17 percent. So definitely intergovernmental affairs is the big spender in this bill, Mr. Speaker, at 61 percent of the budget, but that disparity is not sufficiently addressed.

We would think, given the government's rhetorical recitation of how they are solidly committed to benchmarks, targets, strategic planning, performance-based budgeting, and business plans . . .

MR. DICKSON: They talk the language.

11:40

MRS. SLOAN: They definitely talk the language, but when it comes to, as I said, over a \$3 billion expenditure, we don't see evidence of

those things. I perhaps incited the Premier a little bit earlier this evening in talking about how we have, you know, a government that chooses to go out and attack a publicly funded research institute when they have no comparable research to show that the reality is anything but the reality that's being proposed. There are words to describe it, Mr. Speaker, but I would expect that they would be unparliamentary, so I won't use them this evening. But in the same vein I found it interesting that the one department I couldn't find in this bill was children's services. We have a minister responsible for children's services, we have a children's initiative, and the hon. member is, I'm sure, very much alive to the responsibilities that she's assuming in that portfolio, but there is no appropriation for that area, and isn't that odd?

We've listened to the government. We heard it in the announcement of the children's initiative. We heard it in the Premier's televised address. We heard it in the budget miniseries. We heard it in Stock's cooking show. We heard it in Talk It Up; Talk It Out. We heard it in the throne speech. And I'm trying to find my little pamphlet. Oh, here it is. The Right Balance booklet cited numerous times – well why would there not be an appropriation if there's a commitment to children, if there's a commitment to the children's initiative, if there's a commitment to children's services in a macro sense . . .

MR. DICKSON: Those are very big assumptions.

MRS. SLOAN: Those are very big assumptions. They are. Why is there no allocation in the appropriation bill for children's services? That really, in my mind, further questions, to use the government's own phrase whether or not we have any reality of the balance we're trying to achieve in this province. I don't know if any of the hon. members on the opposite side would be willing to answer that question for me this evening, about why there isn't an allocation for children's services or the children's initiative. But, Mr. Speaker, how will the children's authorities, which are supposed to be operating April 1 – technically where would their money come from?

To a degree perhaps Family and Social Services is calculating that into their operating expense, but we know that initiative and those authorities are going to be assuming certain functions under the children's initiative, and I would have thought that they would have been accounted for separately, but obviously that is not the case I don't know why this is, and again if someone could tell me.

One of the other things that I thought was interesting is we don't particularly – or maybe I have already. Oh, no, it is here Freedom of information and protection of privacy is also mentioned as an appropriation, so that has in fact been included.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, but in accordance with Standing Order 61(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

[At 11:46 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]