

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 23, 1999** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 99/03/23

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

Though we as legislators of this great province and its people are taken from the common people and selected by You to be architects of our history, give us wisdom and understanding to do Your will in all we do.

Amen.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present another SOS petition urging

the Government to increase funding of children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

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

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to hand in a petition by the Alberta Historical Preservation Re-building Society, 1,565 Albertans, to designate the Grand Theatre/Lougheed Building in Calgary as an historical site.

head: Notices of Motions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 25, 28, 47, 49, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, and 67.

I'm also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 9, 10, 14, 16, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 60, 64, 65, 66, 76, 107, 108, 109, and 111.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to table five copies of two documents that examine homelessness in Calgary. The first is the community action plan to reduce homelessness in Calgary. The second is the count of homeless people in downtown Calgary, 1998, prepared by the city of Calgary.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to table copies of a report just recently released, as a matter of fact, today, I believe, which ranks all provinces and 46 states. It ranks according to fiscal performance. It takes into consideration a variety of measures, and for the third consecutive time this particular report of all provinces and 46 states put out by the Fraser Institute ranks Alberta as number one in fiscal performance for 1999.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. My first is a letter from Rod Dempster of Weyerhaeuser Canada affirming their support for the Natural Heritage Act. They describe the act as "tough but fair" and are pleased to see that no commercial harvesting will be permitted in Alberta's protected areas.

My second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter from Bill Hunter of Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries affirming their support for the Natural Heritage Act and special places program. They applaud the proper balance being sought "between preservation and human activity within protected areas" and the exclusion of commercial harvesting in all protected areas.

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

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the report of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the U.S. Department of Education, which shows Alberta ranking 58 out of 63 in schools for states and provinces.

I have another one. My second tabling is a news release of August 1992, to remind the Premier that it was he who closed the Holy Cross hospital and not me. In fact, what he said at that time was that the renovation project which had been proposed by the then Minister of Health "will allow the Holy Cross Hospital to continue to meet the increasing health care needs of the residents of the Calgary area." Three years later it was shut.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, on February 23, 1999, the Premier accepted a question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition in my absence. I am pleased to table in the Assembly today copies of my reply to the hon. member's question.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table with the Assembly the annual reports of the following regional health authorities for the year ended March 31, 1998: Aspen, Lakeland, Mistahia, Peace, Keeweenaw Lakes, Northern Lights, Northwestern, Capital, Crossroads, David Thompson, WestView, East Central, Calgary, Headwaters, Palliser, Chinook, and health authority number 5.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of a letter from Uncles at Large to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission expressing concern on the bingo regulation changes, and given the opportunity this evening to elaborate during the time-constrained budget process, I'll do so.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today responses to questions raised during main estimates on Tuesday, March 16, 1999. It is my understanding that the members received the copies in their offices this morning.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I would table 83 copies, one for each MLA, of a blank petition entitled Petition Supporting Speech-Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy Services. These petitions are from parent advocate Sheila Imlay, who asks that MLAs across the province make the petition available in their offices for interested parents.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table four copies of my letter to the president of Canada Lands Company following our recent meeting in Ottawa. The letter highlights the complexities of the planning process in the redevelopment of Canadian Forces Base Calgary with specific reference to the need to recognize future planning for Mount Royal College.

My second tabling is a copy of the letter dated March 18 from our Premier to the Prime Minister of Canada. In recognizing the tremendous growth of Mount Royal College, the Premier asked the federal government for a direct transfer of 10 percent of the property as fair and reasonable compensation for the closure of the base. Such an arrangement would "meet the needs of the community by providing a natural extension of educational services."

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the Prime Minister's response to postsecondary students in Calgary.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the required copies of a letter sent to the Premier from Mrs. Gunn Kureluk in my riding. She expresses her concerns about the critical issue of funding in our education system and about the inability of her son to now be in a learning lab. Because of funding cuts it's had to be canceled.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In following up to estimates given last week where I said that the business plans and annual reports of delegated administrative organizations are in the Legislature Library free for viewing and scrutiny, I am pleased to table today five copies of the Safety Codes Council's three-year business plan, 1999-2001, and five copies of the authorized accredited agencies annual report, 1997-1998.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise with the required number of copies of two letters from two constituents and parents stating their concerns surrounding the underfunding of our public education system and their concerns with respect to the education of our children given that underfunding.

The third letter is a letter that I received addressed to the hon. Minister of Education and also CCed to the Premier. It was written by Kathie and Michael Brett, constituents of Edmonton-Riverview. They provided some very insightful suggestions with respect to what should be our minimal standards in public education if this government is interested in considering that.

Thank you.

1:40

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings. Firstly, a letter from the United Church of Canada, Alberta and Northwest Conference expressing concern with Bill 12 as it currently stands unamended, and also copies of correspondence from a number of individuals all with concerns about Bill 12. That includes Ms Beaulieu, Ms Lothammer, Mr. Ostrowerka, Ms LaFlèche, Mr. Remington, Ms Mulligan, Ms Loewen, Ms Busaan, Mr. Emes, Ms Butler.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from St. Clement

Catholic elementary/junior high school principal, Danny Kinal, expressing concern with a statement made in the Legislature recently, contrary to the human rights posturing taken by the provincial government.

Finally and perhaps most significantly, for the benefit of the Premier and all members a copy of a *Calgary Herald* editorial which ran February 15, 1999, identifying the one provincial politician who "has spoken eloquently and vigorously against woeful underfunding of Calgary's infrastructure needs" as none other than the Leader of the Opposition.

Thanks very much.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 81 enthusiastic students from St. Matthew Catholic elementary school. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Ms Rena Hanchuk, Ms Lilea Wolanska, Mr. Luigi Cuglietta, and Mrs. Beth Payne, and parents Mrs. Kozak and Mrs. Mercier. They are seated in both the public and the members' galleries. With your permission I would ask them to now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly three key members of the Alberta forest industry, which is our third largest employer in Alberta: Tim Boston of Weyerhaeuser Canada, Kirk Andries and Brent Rabik from Alberta-Pacific, and there may be other members. They are here today to show their company's support for the Natural Heritage Act. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

### Municipal Infrastructure

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. "Sustainable, affordable and, to the extent possible, secure funding is needed for long term planning and investment in urban and rural transportation systems": not my words but the words of the Premier's own infrastructure task force report. This government has spent the last six years downloading, off-loading, and shortchanging municipalities like Edmonton and Calgary, who have had to make difficult decisions on how to deal with the pressures of growth. Not once in the past six years has this government stood up for the real interest of municipalities across this province. My questions are to the Premier. How can the Premier say to municipalities that he listens and he cares when his own task force says that funding has not kept pace with growth pressures, with changing development patterns, or with aging infrastructure?

MR. KLEIN: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the task force has not reported on a program for long-term sustainable funding. I do know that they are considering getting rid of the so-called cookie-cutter approach and looking at areas that are experiencing high degrees of

growth, and we're trying to come to grips with a formula for sustainable funding.

In the interim, Mr. Speaker, last year we designated some \$140 million to municipalities for infrastructure. Another \$150 million has been committed this year to municipalities for infrastructure, primarily transportation; the same amount next year, another \$150 million; and for the fourth year in the four-year program another \$150 million. That is to address some of the emergency needs relative to growth in many of the municipalities, growth, by the way, that is attributable to the good solid fiscal policies of this government.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I noticed that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo -- and it pertains to this particular question -- alluded and, as a matter of fact, tabled an editorial that praised the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition for sticking up for Calgary. Well, I don't have a tabling today, but I read with interest another column which is an editorial comment. It was in the *Sun*, and it said that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition has all but abandoned Edmonton.

MRS. MacBETH: Yeah, it was a good by-election too.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier ignore the recommendations of his own task force to establish a special-needs pool of funds that municipalities can draw on?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, I have received no formal recommendations from the task force. Certainly there are officials from the city of Calgary, from the city of Edmonton, from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, from the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, from a number of provincial departments including the Department of Municipal Affairs, the department of transportation, Treasury: all of these officials are now working, so any document that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition refers to is, in fact, a working document.

When those recommendations are ready, when they have been completed, they will then be brought to the Premier's task force. The Premier's task force involves the elected people from those organizations, save for the executive director of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, who is appointed, but he represents an elected body. Then the elected people will make the decision relative to the policy.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier and former mayor of Calgary claim that he's building Alberta together when his own task force says that "cities lack sufficient flexibility and funds" to address their own needs. They "lack sufficient flexibility." How can he stand reading those words?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely right. I'll concede that. Yes, we want to give them the flexibility. That's why the officials are working now on a proposal that does not involve the cookie-cutter approach and really gives municipalities and the government the flexibility to deal with the pressures of growth.

Relative to my commitment to Calgary, it's the same as it is to Edmonton and indeed all of Alberta. And, yes, I'm very, very proud of that city. I'm proud that we were able to participate just the other day with the Calgary Airport Authority and the mayor, who had nothing but praise for this government, in a \$6.7 million contribution toward a \$22 million partnership program to provide an interchange on Deerfoot Trail leading into the airport at approximately 96th Avenue.

1:50

I was pleased to participate with members of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede and again the mayor, who had nothing but praise,

in the sod turning for the expansion of the Calgary Roundup Centre, a substantial provincial contribution to a \$30 million project. The list goes on and on and on, not only in Calgary but in Edmonton and indeed throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't see any Liberals there.

MR. DICKSON: I was there.

MR. KLEIN: Oh, I'm sorry. You must have been lost in the crowd, because if the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was there, he wasn't acknowledged, and I can understand why.

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

### Lottery Funds

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta gaming summit recommended that all of the government's gaming profits be used to support charitable or nonprofit community initiatives. The summit also expressed concern that gambling profits were being used in part to supplement operating costs of essential public services, a direct contravention of one of the Lotteries Review Committee guiding principles because it "creates a dependence on an unstable source of funds." My questions are to the Premier. In using the unstable gambling profits for public health and education operations, is the Premier saying that building schools and equipping hospitals are now nonessential services of his government?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, how soon they forget. It was the Liberal opposition that produced this huge document at taxpayers' expense relative to the distribution of lottery dollars, and what they did is they tried to leave people with the impression that those dollars that went into general revenues were just going into this big, black bureaucratic hole, and nobody knew where the money was going.

It was the result, in part, of Liberal criticism, and what they were doing out there in the public, they said: okay, if you don't like it that way, what we will do is show exactly where those dollars are going. Now we're doing that, and now they're complaining, Mr. Speaker. As I said, it's that old song *What a Difference a Day Makes*. In this case it's about six months or eight months, you know, but the words to the song still are the same.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, what guarantee can the Premier give Albertans that current education and health care operations will be maintained when lottery profits drop?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, they aren't operational dollars. Is the hon. member now saying that she would like those dollars to go back into the general revenue funds and be distributed the same way as they were before? Is that what she is now saying? Or is she saying, as her party said some months ago, that they want those dollars to be clearly identified? Which way is it?

MRS. MacBETH: No, Mr. Speaker, the real question is: will the Premier admit that his agenda is to force Albertans to either accept the government's gambling machines in their communities or run the risk of having funding for their local schools and hospitals cut?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, is this hon. member prepared now to go down to Calgary and tell the majority of people there that they were wrong? Are you prepared to tell the people of Edmonton that they were wrong? Does she not believe in the democratic process? No.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Education Funding

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Announcing the same grants three, four, or five times and leaving the impression that a projected three-year, \$600-million budget is available for the coming school term misleads the public and hurts schools. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Given that the basic grant increase is \$70 million for the next school term, not enough to cover school board deficits, how are school boards across the province to avoid laying off teachers and increasing classroom sizes?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Education supplement, but I can't let it go without commenting because it pertains to the question just asked by the hon. member but alluded to by the leader of the Liberal opposition where she's tabled these, you know, cockamamy statements that we're 58th out of 63. I think that when the hon. minister supplements, he will tell you that we're nearly at the top of the heap when it comes to putting dollars into the classroom, where the dollars count.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I've looked at some of the figures that the Leader of the Opposition has tabled with respect to per capita funding in education. It's important to note that different jurisdictions have different ways of accounting for money. So, for example, in some of the U.S. jurisdictions they spend a great deal of money on sports stadiums. They include that in their education spending, and accordingly their per capita amount goes up. So I caution the hon. member to look at those carefully, because it's important to note that there's a difference between what you spend in education and what actually has an impact in the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, three-quarters of our budget or more is spent on classroom resources, and I think that's an important thing. The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows because she has said herself: it's not as important how much money you spend as how well you spend it.

You know, with respect to funding issues, the way that we report, of course we are on a three-year reporting process, a three-year business plan process, and we do announce things from time to time. But the fact of the matter is that this year to the year 2000-2001 the budget will go from \$3.14 billion to \$3.74 billion. Mr. Speaker, that's \$600 million. So the instructional grant rate goes up; there are, of course, increases for the increased number of students, for administration, for transportation, for special needs. This is a significant amount of money.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. How does perpetuating the myth of a \$600 million increase help school boards like Edmonton public, who are going to be forced due to underfunding to lay off 200 teachers this fall?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the original figures that were put out by the Edmonton public school board. They indicated that their increase would amount to \$8.5 million. Well, in fact, it turns out to be \$18 million. There is an increase for basic instructional grants which equal \$8.4 million. Their enrollment growth will equal an additional \$4.6 million; other dollars including operations and maintenance, ESL, special needs, transportation, administration, another \$5 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we read these things in the paper, we have to be cautious about the things that are said, because the board's

calculations were in fact incorrect, and as I indicated in my response yesterday, school boards themselves have not yet set their budgets. Neither have schools, because they have not fully digested all of the information pursuant to the release of budget documents.

2:00

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister then saying that there will be no layoffs in Edmonton given his government's funding? [interjection]

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker . . . [interjection]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, one of the purposes of question period is not to provoke debate, and if some of these questions are going to provoke debate, we're just going to start moving on.

The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the hon. member is the former chair of the Edmonton public school system. Accordingly, he ought to know better. He knows. The hon. member and I think all members of this Assembly understand the role of school boards. It is school boards who are charged with the responsibility of hiring teachers, of negotiating with locals of the Alberta Teachers' Association, of determining the number of teachers that are hired in accordance with the number of students that are available, so the hon. member ought to know better than to ask this question.

THE SPEAKER: The leader of the NDP opposition. [interjections]

### Health Care Premiums

MS BARRETT: Well, not necessarily, because it's tax time; isn't it, Mr. Speaker.

The average middle-income Alberta family whose employer pays half of their Alberta health care premiums pays an extra \$263 a year in income taxes to the federal and provincial governments because the portion of the health care premium paid by the employer is deemed a taxable benefit and is considered an add-on to the employee's income. [interjection] So my question to the Treasurer - I thought you were going to be happy about this, Mr. Minister -- is how can he justify adding on \$263 a year to the tax bill of average Albertans due to this government's wrong-headed policy of continuing to levy health care premiums?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it should be plain, and the NDP leader is usually more clear in her statements. This isn't some increase that's been added on. This is the present-day situation of taxation whereby governments view it as a benefit if the employer pays that. Now, that might be an item that could be added to the list of future considerations in terms of reduction of taxes, if there is a way that that could be mitigated. We could look at that. That would be one of a number of a very long list of ways in which we continue to look to lighten the load for all taxpayers, but to suggest that this is an increase, now, that's not telling the truth.

MS BARRETT: Oh, yes, it is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, will the Provincial Treasurer now commit, then, to doing what he just implied, and that is, for example, unlike private health and dental plans, which are tax deductible, work with the federal government to make sure that health care premiums are tax deductible or simply agree to eliminate them.

MR. DAY: I work with, as we all do, the federal government fairly closely in terms of tax law and also in terms of looking at how the

federal government and the provincial government both can look to alleviating the tax loads. As a matter of fact, the federal government followed our advice, which I gave them credit for and the Premier also gave them credit for, by slightly reducing income taxes this year. As a matter of fact this year we will flow through the provincial portion of that reduction along with the federal reduction. So we already do work closely with the federal government, as closely as we can, and we'll continue to do so.

MS BARRETT: To the disadvantage of the middle class, I might say.

Then, Mr. Speaker, how about this: instead of bringing in this flat tax that'll give \$600 million mostly to Albertans earning over \$100,000 a year, why doesn't the Treasurer just give up a similar amount of money and agree to scrap the unfair health care premiums? You want to give a \$600 million break? That's the way to do it.

MR. DAY: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Most people I talk to say that they want a tax reduction of some kind, and they say it in the context, at least in Alberta, of: make sure there is no deficit; make sure the debt is being paid down; make sure health and education spending are receiving the very needed increase. Within that context Albertans continue to say: reduce my taxes.

We've made it very clear that when this tax plan is complete, a tax plan that's been hailed all across the country and which other governments are now looking at, including the federal government -- so we've got taxpayers, we've got citizens, we've got people right across the country, everybody saying that this is a good idea and that we could even possibly accelerate it. There is one party, the ND Party, that doesn't like tax reductions at all. The Liberals don't like it very much, but they know they're going to be hit by the freight train of public opinion if they stand in front of it, so they try and kind of zero in on it from the sidetracks.

The plan is moving ahead. Everybody will benefit, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Science and Research Fund

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next year's budget, tabled on March 11, has a lot of good news in it and is very positive for Albertans and our future economic growth. Initiatives like the single rate flat tax, for example, sends the right message to the rest of Canada. Another one of the items that is of particular importance and sends the right message to the rest of Canada is the doubling of the science and research fund over this year's budget. Given that this is a substantial increase in spending, I wonder about the accountability of this particular program. My question to the minister responsible for science, research, and information technology is: what kind of leverage has the existing fund achieved this year?

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to say that the fund has had a very positive effect on Alberta in the area of science and technology this year. So far we've invested \$12.7 million, and we've leveraged another \$58 million from other sources. That's a total of \$70 million. For every \$1 the province has invested, we've got \$4.55 from other sources. This government has stepped to the plate, strategically funded projects to make Alberta a real centre for high technology in the country.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary: what types of projects have been funded in Calgary, and what kind of leverage has there been on these specific projects?

DR. TAYLOR: There have been a number of projects funded in Calgary, Mr. Speaker. I'll just give you a couple of examples of them. The Calgary Research and Development Authority we funded for \$1.5 million of a \$7 million project. That's cash dollars. These are not dollars in kind. These are actually dollars that have been committed. Another one, for instance, is -- I'll just mention one more -- the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences, which we funded to the tune of \$800,000. The total project cost was \$7.92 million. There are several other projects in Calgary as well.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplementary to the minister: what has the fund done to enhance an area that I'm particularly interested in, the information technology and telecommunications area?

DR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the areas that we want to centre on in the province. In fact, the Premier mentioned this area in his speech, and it's also mentioned in the throne speech. We have funded several projects there. Perhaps one of the most significant ones is the Nortel global communications project at SAIT, in which we've committed \$3.5 million. A private-sector company has committed over \$4 million, and SAIT has committed the rest. This is \$4 million cash, as pointed out by the member, and this is the first building block of a hundred million dollar project that's going to exist at SAIT.

As well we funded \$2 million of a \$12 million project in the electrical and computer engineering research facility in terms of cash again. In terms of the ICT, information communications technology industry, we are going to be recognized across Canada and across the world as one of the centres for information communications technology because of the foresight of this government.

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

### Teachers' Board of Reference

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Teachers and school boards have successfully resolved differences through the Board of Reference for 73 years now. As recently as 1995 the Alberta government worked with teachers in adjusting fees and making the Board of Reference work better. In moving to abolish the Board of Reference, without notice, without consultation, this government is once again pulling out the rug from underneath its alleged partners in education and ignoring the time-tested principle: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Exactly what problem is the government trying to fix by getting rid of the Board of Reference?

2:10

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, this is an area that we've looked at very carefully with respect to the types of procedures that teachers have for grievances across Canada. It is true that the Board of Reference has been in existence, I believe, since 1926. In reviewing the procedures for grievances for teachers across Canada, the only other province that has a Board of Reference is the province of Saskatchewan. In all other cases, in all of the other provinces and the territories of this country the process by which teachers grieve is pursuant to their Labour Relations Code and through their collective bargaining process. So the Board of Reference procedure, while it

may have had an important place in history, is in my strong opinion a matter of historical reference only.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Minister of Education. Given that many teachers and school boards across the province have just signed two-year collective agreements, are they now to reopen these agreements to include mechanisms that will replace the Board of Reference?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, our expectation is that there will be a transitional period, of course. Those situations that are currently before boards of reference will continue to go pursuant to that route. However, I'd point out that the number of cases that go before a Board of Reference is a fairly limited number in the province of Alberta. I expect that other processes for grievances will be established.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll try again. Will the minister admit that eliminating the Board of Reference and putting teachers under the labour code is simply the next step to his government's agenda, which is to strip teachers of their status as a profession?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member will try again, I'll try again as well. The hon. member knows that there are many professions that work within the process of the Labour Relations Code. It is not a deprofessionalization of the teaching profession. We have a great deal of respect for them. However, the manner in which teachers bargain with their local school boards is pursuant to a process that is established in our labour code. It makes sense that it be treated accordingly.

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

### **Hepatitis B**

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hepatitis B is a virulent virus which is spread through blood and body fluids. It is a hundred times more infectious than HIV, and I understand that 30 percent of the infections are caused through sexual contact. Now, hepatitis B is also the only sexually transmitted disease that can be prevented by a vaccine. I understand that Alberta Health has been asked by the Canadian Liver Foundation to undertake a hepatitis B immunization and education program for all grade 12 students over a three-year period. So my questions today are for the Minister of Health. Does the Department of Health have a method of tracking the increase in incidences of hep B in the 15- to 19-year-old age group?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, hepatitis B is a notifiable disease or health condition under our legislation. Therefore, where the existence of the disease with respect to a particular individual is identified, the statistics are carefully compiled. This includes not just individuals in the high school age range but all the people in the province. That information is tracked very carefully. The numbers, as I recall, on an annual basis are somewhere in the 1,500-plus range.

I would also like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of ways in which hepatitis B can be contracted, and unless it reaches the stage where it is an actual obvious illness or negative health condition, it would not come to the attention of the system. We estimate that there are possibly in the province 25,000-plus individuals who are carriers of the hepatitis B virus, but in a very specific

way we can only track the cases that we know about. We do that very carefully, including of course the 15 to 19 year age group.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why were the students in grades 9 to 12 not included in the original hep B immunization program?

MR. JONSON: As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, in 1995, when the program was begun, it was a new initiative on the part of government. It was regarded as being the best starting point with respect to an immunization program or vaccination program. Therefore, we did move ahead as a government, as a Department of Health in terms of that immunization at that particular point in time. Ideally that program could have been more comprehensive. Nevertheless it was, I believe, something of an indication of leadership on the part of Alberta at that time. We have continued the program and now are of course looking at expanding it and picking up the whole core of individuals that were in school at that time but were missed because of the age that was chosen for this program to go into effect.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental is to the minister as well. Given that Merck Frosst will provide funding for all staffing costs in co-ordination with the regional health authorities to administer the vaccine, will the minister make a commitment to provide funds over a three-year period for a hep B vaccine to all grade 12 students?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we have certainly recognized this particular need in terms of immunization. We are of course aware of the overall program proposed by the Liver Foundation and the involvement of Merck Frosst and will be very carefully considering that particular proposal. It does have some features which are advantageous to government, and possibly we'll be moving ahead in partnership with them in this particular area.

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

### **Health Legislation Review**

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the blue-ribbon panel on Bill 37 provided its report to the Minister of Health, so my questions are to the Minister of Health. Will the minister be releasing that report today?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. I did receive the report yesterday. After a reasonable but thorough review of the contents of the report, yes, I certainly expect to release it.

MS LEIBOVICI: My question is to the Minister of Health. Why would not Albertans be the ones to review that report at the same time that the minister and his department are reviewing that report?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is generally accepted and I think the public of the province would accept the fact that it was a report commissioned by the Minister of Health on behalf of government. We will be expected of course to have a response to the report, and it's reasonable to have a time to consider the report. Even Liberal governments in the country seem to take some time to carefully consider reports that are received. This is not unusual, and I don't think it's regarded as such by the public.

MS LEIBOVICI: When will Albertans, then, see this final report?

2:20

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize that this deals with a topic which is of great interest to Albertans, and as I've said, after giving it careful consideration so we can provide an overall approach or response to the report, it'll be released.

### Grain Transportation and Marketing

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday a question was raised in question period regarding agricultural producers having difficulty in fulfilling contracts and delivering their grain to the west coast in light of the strike that's there. My constituents have also raised the same concerns with me but on a different tone, with the transportation. So my questions today are to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Can the minister advise what action he is taking to ensure that our producers have an effective and efficient transportation system to deliver their products?

AN HON. MEMBER: Good question.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, it is a good question. It's a very timely question for the grains industry of this province.

Back in '96 we had the difficulties with transportation. Today we have a strike that has indeed shut the grains industry down. Together with the strike we have low grain prices. We have lost markets as a result of this strike, I understand. There are markets that are already lost. We have a backlog in our transportation system. Railcars are backing up across the country. Indeed we do have some very, very critical problems as far as the industry is concerned.

It was a process similar to this back in '96 that prompted the federal government at the urging of the provincial governments to charge Judge Willard Estey with coming forward with some recommendations as to how to deal with the issues of transportation, with the issues of grain handling, and with all of the issues that come forward in a situation such as what we are experiencing here today. The judge has made his recommendations to the federal Transport minister.

The western transportation ministers have met with the federal Transport minister and indicated that we support the findings of the judge and that we would urge the federal minister to move the process along as quickly as possible. Further to that, the federal minister has indicated that, yes, he agrees that the fundamental recommendations, of which there were 15 by Judge Estey, were the ones that really dealt with the heart of the issue and the needs of the issue and that he would be prepared to move the process along immediately after Easter.

I can't stress enough the critical nature of this process, and I can't stress enough the importance of moving the recommendations of the judge, because it deals with the issues of transportation; it deals with the issues of handling. It deals with all of the issues in one package. Ultimately, in order to make this process work, it has to be done in a holistic form; it has to be done as a package.

MR. COUTTS: My first supplemental is to the same minister then. What part of that Estey report will help our producers?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: As I mentioned, there are 15 parts to the Estey report, and there isn't one single part that will make this work. If we tried doing this piecemeal, we'd simply be moving the problems from one area to another. Ultimately at the end of the day what we

have to do is deal with all of the 15 recommendations as a unit and as a parcel.

MR. COUTTS: My final supplemental, then, Mr. Speaker, is: what steps, Mr. Minister, are you and your department going to take to ensure that the Estey report is implemented and does not just become another report that the federal government will put on the shelf?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Together with my colleague the minister of agriculture, whom by the way we're working very closely with in this entire process, as well as my colleagues from the other western provinces, we are going to be working very, very hard and urging very hard to see that the implementation of this report takes place. My understanding from the federal minister is that his desire is to have the report implemented by crop year 2000.

The three critical areas from the report are enhanced competitiveness, transparency so that indeed we know what is happening and everyone is available for that information, and indeed maximizing the return at the farm gate for the producer. This is really what it's all about. At the end of the day we have to be able to find a way of getting some of the efficiencies that have developed through the report back into the farmers' pockets.

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

### Electric Transmission Council

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Energy. Will the minister confirm that the Electric Transmission Council will be disbanded within three months?

DR. WEST: Was the question: is the transmission council being disbanded in three months?

MR. WHITE: That's correct.

DR. WEST: Absolutely. Yes.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, then just who will be responsible for monitoring the activities of the privately contracted transmission administrator in the future?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we have probably still four or five bodies that are looking at that. We have appointed a market surveillance co-ordinator. We have a committee still working with the municipalities that relate to energy-related activities. We have a transmission administrator and a whole body that works there. We also have the EUB, which is working and hiring people to look at the new structure and their role as it relates to protecting the public interest. Significantly enough, one of the recommendations to disband the transmission council came from the AUMA.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, in spite of not having a plan here, will the minister at least agree to meet with those bodies that are most interested in this council before he makes that final decision?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of members write us letters. I'm just responding to the independent power producers, to the AUMA, and to members, including EPCOR -- he should check with the city he's representing -- who said that they congratulated us on disbanding this one because it was \$600,000, they said, that we had put in place while we were preparing the Electric Utilities Act

and looking at deregulation, but now that it wasn't needed, we didn't need duplication in deregulation.

I'll repeat again: we have letters on file and I'll get more likely in the future from the AUMA, that passed a resolution to this effect, from the independent power producers. As I say, would you please check with EPCOR, the city-owned power company that is in your jurisdiction?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the budget presented, 30 percent of the budget goes to health care, which has been increased about 8.7 percent. Twenty-one percent of the budget goes to education, which has been increased about 7.1 percent. Ten percent of the budget is advanced education, and it has been increased about 7.7 percent. This means about 60 percent of the total budget has increased about 7.5 percent. The total increase in program spending is about 4.4 percent, but the total increase in government expenditures is only 2.2 percent. My first question to the Treasurer: how can this be done?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, there's a number of factors that have materialized to be able to allow for the increase in spending on the program side. I think it's quite significant to note that with all the other growth pressures that we face, which are at a record level, we're seeing the overall increase in spending being held to 2.2 percent, which I think is part of the reason our government continues to be acknowledged for not only dealing with priority areas of spending but maintaining restraint.

There are some gains that will be made through '99, one notably in the area of our debt servicing costs, where we will have a gain of about \$300 million. That's related to a change in the foreign exchange component and also the fact that because we're aggressive about paying debt down, that releases more dollars in terms of interest savings. There were also extraordinary onetime costs last year which we don't think will materialize in this '99-2000 budget; for instance, about \$170 million alone in health care just related to the Y2K problem. Of course next year we'll be past that, and time will tell how we get through it. Certainly those onetime costs will not be part of the pressures that we face. We had a record year last year in terms of forest fires, \$198 million beyond what was anticipated. There were also corporate tax refunds that had to be paid out of the prior year.

So significant costs on a onetime basis that we were faced with last year we will not have to contemplate this year, and the savings on the debt costs will also help us through that.

2:30

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, could the Treasurer please clarify how those interest savings came about, whether it was decreased payments or decreased interest rates?

MR. DAY: Well, I just touched on that briefly, and I won't go into a lot more detail, but members will realize that with the change now in the dollar, we will be in a better position on the foreign exchange side. We won't be as heavily impacted by that.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, because Albertans do support the aggressive approach that we have taken to debt pay-down, that there is a payoff in that pay-down. Since 1993-94, because we have stayed aggressive on paying down the debt, we have approximately overall about \$650 million more to spend as a result of the interest

savings. But the \$300 million comes right from those lower costs that we'll realize for '99-2000. As a matter of fact, we project that over the next two years, on top of that amount there will be approximately another \$130 million saving because of our reducing our debt servicing costs.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the increase in expenditures is 2.2 percent and the revenue increases are 1.6 percent, the question for the Provincial Treasurer: what risk is there for future deficit budgets if this pattern persists?

MR. DAY: It's always there, Mr. Speaker. We don't hide the fact that we exist in one of the most volatile economies actually in North America. So it's a credit to every MLA who brings to the table ideas on both restraint and increasing.

The specific things that we have in place which other governments are beginning to follow is both short-term and long-term planning. On the short-term side on a quarterly basis we have to report to the people of Alberta how the budget is proceeding through the year, so we monitor very closely, and on a quarter-by-quarter basis we can see if we're going to have difficulty. Then on the long-term side, going with legislated three-year business plans, we also put in restraint in terms of our long-term spending.

To conclude, if you add to that, Mr. Speaker, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, which puts real teeth into the planning process and only allows a certain amount of those dollars that have been set aside, \$617 million set aside right at the start of the budget year to protect against unforeseen pressures - only a certain amount of that can be used to deal with those unforeseen pressures. It puts the bite into the planning process, and it will make sure that we don't have a deficit.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Livestock Feeding Operations

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the minister of agriculture. The new proposals that are coming out under the regulatory framework for livestock feeding operations in Alberta are suggesting a categorization of size in operation where they'll need a provincial permit. We've seen that a lot of applications for livestock operations on a reasonable to a large scale are being challenged in the community, and there's a lot of questions as to whether or not this proposed regulatory framework will actually improve the process. People are calling my office, and one of the main questions that they're asking is: what were the criteria, the data that allowed the minister to put the threshold levels into his report? I'd like to ask the minister if he would be willing to table or make public the data that he used to base those threshold sizes of operations on before they need to have a provincial permit?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, I'm willing to table any and all of the information that we've used to work with the livestock council, the Alberta Association of MDs and Counties, the AUMA, and also the Environmental Law Centre in trying to build these threshold levels. The bottom line is that that document that went back out for further consultation and review is the result of consultation from all stakeholders, and those threshold levels were arrived at by various stakeholder input. That's what we put into the document and sent back out for further review.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another one of the concerns that gets raised an awful lot is the effect of operations on a cumula-

tive basis. The requirement for a provincial permit is based on an individual operator. If there's a neighbour that's just under the threshold also in the area, it doesn't take into account that fact. Would the minister build into his final report suggestions that look at a cumulative impact in a region as opposed to a single unit that might exceed the threshold?

MR. STELMACH: The hon. member raises a good point. This is another area of research that we have to further, and that is to see how a number of larger operations just below the threshold level affect the quality of our water, soil, and air.

One of the things that we'll be looking at is, of course, phosphorus levels. We have some pretty good basic research done centred around nitrogen. Another issue that comes up quite frequently is one centred around air quality as well.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, again to the minister. A lot of these cases end up being either challenged in the courts or there's a lot of public debate. As you finalize this report, would the minister consider building into these proposed regulations a process for appeal or a tribunal, some kind of group that would sit there and negotiate between them rather than always having to go to court with all the associated expenses?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that we constantly heard about from the livestock sector and also some of the municipal councils is that this whole system of approving projects was very strenuous. It created divisions within the community, and we had to find some way of streamlining that process to encourage the development that we feel can take place in this province.

There are a number of scenarios that we are looking at presently, not written down as yet but in the consultation stage. One that has been supported, I think, quite widely by all groups at the table is to have a sector of our department designated only for reviewing all of these applications so that they do meet the kinds of environmental guidelines that are necessary, that proper evaluation of the site has been done. A group of what I would, I guess, call experts, people that have experience in the field would then sign off that application, approving it as meeting all of the technical requirements. That then would be forwarded to the local municipality. The local municipality will still make the decision in the end as to whether they want to see that development occur in their municipality, but at the end of the day we would like to have some consistency across the province in terms of threshold levels, the kind of decision-making process that municipalities will use.

One of the things that I noticed when I was privileged to serve as reeve of the county of Lamont is that the development appeal board process was one where there was sometimes a lack of good hard evidence coming to the board. It was a lot of emotion, and as a result, I think appeal boards tended to make decisions based more on the emotional presence rather than good technical, scientific evidence. One of the things that we want to write into this is that the evidence has to be based on good science so that we can withstand any challenge further down the road if the environment has been impacted in some way.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: In 30 seconds, hon. members, the chair will recognize three hon. members for Members' Statements, beginning with the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

2:40

### CFB Calgary

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The partisan position

chosen by the Prime Minister of Canada with respect to CFB Calgary is both unfair and shortsighted. The Premier's letter and my own correspondence with Canada Lands Company tabled earlier today speaks to the discrimination towards Mount Royal College and the citizens of Calgary as a consequence of the Prime Minister's intransigent partisan position.

As the Premier's appointee to the intergovernmental liaison committee I would like to share with the Assembly more examples of where the federal government has ignored fair treatment for Albertans. Through the negotiations with Canada Lands, taxpayers will be forced to pay full market value for base lands in order to develop a new veterans' care facility. In short, the taxpayers of Alberta must buy back what they already own.

Secondly, the significant historic precinct of the base, while protected by this government, will not receive any compensation to provide for our military legacy. The Prime Minister doesn't recognize Calgary's history as worthy of federal consideration. In addition, the donation of federal lands, formerly CFB Downsview, to provide parkland for Toronto at no cost is a further example in a long list of special deals to protect Liberal votes.

Failure by the government of Canada to support their federal responsibilities of postsecondary education, veterans affairs, and historic sites is an abdication of national responsibilities.

The federal Liberal government recently announced that they will be studying the causes of their own unpopularity in western Canada. I am confident that when the task force visits Calgary, the message will be that it's the discrimination. Perhaps the Prime Minister should notice that there are thousands of Canadians moving to Calgary, and that means that his intransigent position discriminates against Canadian students, Canadian veterans, and all Canadians, period. I urge the Prime Minister to provide a fair and balanced leadership. I invite him to come to Calgary and set aside his partisanship and accept his national responsibilities just as Calgaryans accepted his political decision to close CFB Calgary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Labour Relations

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no stability in the Alberta workplace. Health care workers, furniture production workers, drywallers, and now mill workers in Hinton know firsthand the difficulties of what happens when collective bargaining goes awry. When a legal work stoppage does occur, the government must do everything in its power to ensure that bargaining continues and collective agreements are quickly reached.

Long strikes divide communities. The strike at Dynamic Furniture in Calgary quickly comes to mind. Since last October 6 over 350 workers have been engaged in a legal strike, while here in Edmonton drywall workers at Georgia-Pacific have legally been walking the picket line since the third week in December.

The quick, unexpected departure of Robert Blair, the chair of the Labour Relations Board, and the appointment to the board of Stephen Kushner, whose reputation as holding anti-union views has added to the instability of provincial labour management relations -- these actions further reduce people's confidence in the ability of this government to conduct fair and productive labour relations.

Hostile actions and negative comments about unions and the collective bargaining process by this Minister of Labour on behalf of the government must stop immediately. We need to remind the minister that he is responsible for the integrity and the legitimacy of the Labour Relations Board. The responsibility for interpreting and

enforcing our labour laws cannot, as the minister so often states, be settled in the fullness of time. The business enterprises and workers in Hinton need the minister's attention now.

Let's not forget the experiences of Dynamic Furniture, Georgia-Pacific, Canada Safeway, Maple Leaf Foods, and Michener Centre, to name just a few. We need to reflect on past mistakes and to commit to doing our best as legislators to ensure that long, divisive strikes never happen again.

In order to promote harmonious labour relations, Alberta Liberals are committed to a comprehensive review of Alberta labour legislation. In Alberta it is the Labour minister who works to rule, not the workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Camrose Leaders of Tomorrow

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge a group of young volunteers from my constituency today. The Camrose and district support services has recognized the hard work and volunteer efforts of young people in our community through the leaders of tomorrow program. Last Wednesday evening at Augustana University College four young people from the Camrose area were presented with leaders of tomorrow awards.

These awards are given to young volunteers in four age categories, between six and 21 years of age, who have demonstrated outstanding dedication and excellence in their volunteer work. The program is open to those students in the city of Camrose and surrounding area, and this year 20 young volunteers were nominated to receive leaders of tomorrow awards. Each nominee is given a certificate and an invitation to the reception in their honour.

The 1999 award recipients from my constituency are Bryce Brodie, Alana Prevost, Kara Deringer, and Ann Marie Tomaszewski. The winners were given an engraved plaque to recognize their efforts and a \$100 cheque that they will contribute to a nonprofit organization of their choice. Congratulations to all award nominees and recipients for this contribution to your community and for the important work you do as volunteers. Your service and generosity today will make you leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon during question period the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods in a preamble to a question used the term "misleads the public." He used that term in reference to the Education budget and specifically with reference to the information which has been made public relating to the increase to the Education budget, in excess of an additional \$600 million over the next three years, \$600 million additional to that which was projected in last year's three-year business plan. He used the term: misleading the public.

*Beauchesne* 489 clearly sets out that "misleading the public" is an unparliamentary expression. Standing Order 23(1): introducing "any matter in debate which offends the practices or precedents of the Assembly" is not appropriate. Under section 410(8) in *Beauchesne*, "Preambles . . . should be brief." I would suggest that he was not only not brief but added unparliamentary language to his extensive preamble. In section 409(7) the members are to "adhere to the

proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives."

Mr. Speaker, simply put, inferring in the preamble to a question that the government was misleading the public is not only wrong, but it's an unparliamentary expression.

THE SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader might also have referred to the memo that you circulated at the commencement of the spring session, on page 8, where indeed you listed 13 citations where the word "mislead" or a derivative of that has been found unparliamentary. But clearly the question did not accuse any specific member of this Assembly of doing anything. He was clearly referring to the corporate nature of government. In fact, I refer you to article 486 of *Beauchesne*. It says -- and I'll emphasize the part that's the operative words. "It is impossible to lay down any specific rules in regard to injurious reflections uttered" -- and this is the key part -- "in debate against particular Members."

What we have in the citations, as you go through the list, is where somebody has said to another member: you have misled the House; you have misled the public. What we had here was the Government House Leader by his own admission defending a government that is accused of having misleading information. In fact, the question that was put is even more innocuous than that. The preamble was:

Announcing the same [school] grants three, four, or five times and leaving the impression that a projected three-year, \$600 million budget is available for the coming school term misleads the public and hurts schools.

Not that something any individual member said misled the public or anyone else.

Further, in the alternative, if you don't accept that argument, if you look at *Beauchesne* 486(2), there's a provision that "an expression which is deemed to be unparliamentary today does not necessarily have to be deemed unparliamentary next week." Even if you weren't persuaded by the initial argument, which I think is the more compelling one, clearly when one looks at the context of the question asked, there's no breach of our Standing Orders, there's no breach of *Beauchesne*, there's no breach of parliamentary process, and there is absolutely no breach of the expressions ruled unparliamentary in your published list, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

2:50

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. members. With respect to this particular matter, quite clearly the traditional rules and the traditional rulings of the past are that there may very well be situations where in one context a phrase or phrases are ruled parliamentary and in another context the very same phrase may be ruled unparliamentary. With respect to the listing, there are certainly many examples given in terms of the context in which this could be ruled unparliamentary and other occasions where it could be ruled parliamentary.

We have a situation with respect to the word "mislead," and that is the word. It is not "misleading." I'm looking at the Blues right now, and in essence what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods said was:

Announcing the same grants three, four, or five times and leaving the impression that a projected three-year, \$600 million budget is available for the coming school [year] misleads the public and hurts schools.

The key thing, I think, with respect to this is that in the past -- and we've dealt with this and ruled on this on many occasions. When "mislead" is accompanied by other words such as "deliberately" or "intentionally," then that clearly would be viewed as

unparliamentary. However, at the same time, even if those words are not there, if the statement imputes false motives, the words in that case might also be considered offside.

In having listened to the question period today and looking at the Blues again, one would view this -- it would be considered unparliamentary if it's directed at a particular individual, whereas my reading of the Blues basically indicates that the particular member in question was referring to the budget figures. So, accordingly, we shall move on.

head: Statement by the Speaker

head: Introduction of Guests

#### Timing of Question Period

THE SPEAKER: Two members in particular had advised me of their desire to want to introduce a group at the conclusion of the question period. Normally we deal with the matters on our Routine, including all of the matters on Routine. In the past I have on occasion interjected during that 30-second time break to basically call on hon. members and give them an opportunity to introduce guests. However, the response and the feedback that has come to me and my office is: well, what happens to the whole Assembly when you recognize one particular member to introduce a group and a number of people decide to leave? So they felt a little uncomfortable with that and a little embarrassed that in essence a particular member was introducing somebody during that 30-second time frame.

The purpose of the 30-second time frame was to allow hon. members who have to go to scheduled events to leave, which is certainly their right, and to then afford an opportunity for an hon. member during Routine to rise either in Recognitions or Members' Statements and to not have a movement of people within the Assembly. So to both the Member for Red Deer-South and the Member for Redwater, I'm sorry it didn't work out today. Sometimes on some occasions it may very well work out.

Now, I want to raise one other item as well. The chair has noticed in recent days as we have come to the conclusion of question period that there have been certain sounds emanating from various parts of the House. Might the chair just bring all hon. members' attention to two Standing Orders. Number one, Standing Order 7(1), which is the daily routine, and it says, "Oral Question Period, not exceeding 50 minutes." So one could presumably interpret that to say that if we've arrived at the 50th minute, then even if somebody is raising a question or responding to a question, we simply terminate at that point. That has not been the interpretation taken by this Speaker and this chairman. The interpretation has been that if a question is under way, then ample time will be afforded to provide for the continuance of those questions or the conclusion of those questions.

Now, Standing Order 2 also is very good one. It basically says:

In all contingencies unprovided for, the question shall be decided by the Speaker and, in making a ruling, the Speaker shall base any decision on the usages and precedents of the Assembly and on parliamentary tradition.

I daresay that perhaps at one time in the history of parliaments watches did not exist. Watches not having been invented, hon. members could not attend to the House wearing a watch. Well, in recent years technology has provided watches with all kinds of interesting scenarios, including setting off alarms, setting off bells, setting off buzzers. The chair has noticed that it appears that certain members, not knowing when the Clerk will start the clock running, will start guessing and attempt to outguess the Clerk.

Now, the Clerk and the Speaker have an interesting relationship with respect to this case. The Speaker basically views himself as a referee in a soccer game and under Standing Order 2 has some

opportunity to add time to the match, which is unknown to all members, as a result of activities on the field of play. This Speaker certainly does not want to ban the utilization of watches in this particular Assembly but would advise hon. members that this is a game that has now been caught on to.

By the same token, from time to time when hon. members of the government are responding to the questions, they attempt to determine in their head how much time there is left in the question period, and the skill, of course, has been to run out the clock. This particular Speaker would also like to advise all members that he caught on to this game many, many years ago, before he was given this particular position, and in fact has been found guilty of that on one, two, three, or four occasions.

So he will attempt to in fact ask all hon. members to deal with the greatest degree of integrity that we can all find within ourselves, and let's not try and second-guess the Clerk with respect to the clock. Those hon. members who are giving an answer do not have to add 30 or 40 seconds onto their answer simply to try and beat the clock.

Now, this noise factor is important. We allow in this Assembly computers and other machines. A lot of Assemblies do not. We've done that, and we've done that also with a request that at certain times those machines be absolutely silenced and not interfere with the debates that are going on. I think we've basically dealt with the machines. We've provided programs for them to not allow certain interferences to occur. That's been honoured, and it's very, very much appreciated. We've asked that only on two or three occasions during the whole time. When His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is in the chair, when speeches, state of the union addresses are given by the leader of the government, major responses given by the Leader of the Opposition, we ask that these machines not be on at that time. Most hon. members have basically not even put them on during the question period.

I hate to think, after giving this little caution with respect to the little gizmos on our hands, that next week somebody will come and put their computer on and have it programmed to have, you know, something kick in at the 48th minute or something like that, because we'll have just an ongoing movement quite akin to a kindergarten teacher who is dealing with her little charges and everybody is trying to find where the border is and putting their little toesies just one inch across to see whether or not somebody will step on them. We're certainly above all of that. I know we are all above that, and I know that everybody will understand this overture with the greatest degree of respect.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Introduction of Guests

*(reversion)*

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Redwater, I'll certainly recognize you.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your indulgence. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly an exchange delegation between Donnacona, Quebec, and Morinville, Alberta, sponsored by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. The delegation from Donnacona, Quebec, is Mayor Denis Denis, Michel Allard, Solange Durocher, Armand Caron, Leo Sauvageau, Fernand Morel, and Bernard Naud. The group leaders are Mayor Ted Code of Morinville, Morinville council and administration, and businessmen from the community. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: My apologies to the hon. Member for Redwater. I had assumed that it was a school group earlier in the day, and there was a group up in the public gallery.

Are there any other introductions anybody wants to deal with?

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

**Bill 202**  
**Farming Practices Protection Statutes**  
**Amendment Act, 1999**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I will just move the third reading of Bill 202, the Farming Practices Protection Statutes Amendment Act, 1999, and I look forward to the comments by other members.

3:00

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've had reasonable debate on this. It's going to provide us with an option in Alberta now to hopefully clarify the farmer's right to continue their operation as other Albertans wish to and have a right to move out into the community. I think this is a good bill, and we can see how it helps to improve the relationship between the producers of our food and the consumers when they come out to live with the farmers. So I hope everybody does support it in third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a third time]

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

**Bill 204**  
**Medicare Protection Act**

Mr. Stevens moved that the question for second reading be amended to read that Bill 204, Medicare Protection Act, be not now read a second time because the Legislative Assembly believes that the report that is pending from the health summit should be reviewed before proceeding with this bill.

[Debate adjourned March 9: Mr. Dickson speaking]

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Gosh, it seems like only yesterday we were dealing with Bill 204 and the reasoned amendment. I think it was two weeks ago. I think when I left off, I'd been making some observations about the health summit. The reasoned amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore would delay further treatment and consideration of Bill 204 until there has been a review of the report from the health summit.

Now, as one of the MLAs that managed to squeeze through the doors of the health summit . . .

MR. HANCOCK: Wide-open doors.

MR. DICKSON: Well, the doors weren't as wide open as the minister of intergovernmental affairs thinks.

The point is this, Mr. Speaker. Let's put this health summit in context. This was something conceived of by the Premier because he was taking an enormous amount of heat from concern with what was going on or not going on with health care. It was something announced by the Premier, presumably a seat-of-the-pants kind of announcement. The Health minister didn't even know about it.

When the health summit happened, you assembled a number of people from outside the health sector who had really no background in the health care area. You had a bunch of health care professionals. You brought these people together for essentially a day and a half. The reality is that this is probably the most complex service delivery area of the provincial government. There is nothing, in my respectful view, that this government does, no system that is more complex than the health care sector, with the acute care element and the long-term care element and ambulance services and health promotion and disease prevention and public health, all of these kinds of issues. To bring these people together and expect that in a day and a half they were going to be able to do the kind of in-depth analysis of all the challenges posing the health system and to come up with a normative sketch of where the province ought to be moving was a preposterous assumption to make before the thing started.

This isn't simply my opinion. This is something that was reinforced from talking to at least two dozen of the participants of the health summit who felt frustrated, frustrated with the disparity in terms of the knowledge people brought, frustrated that when Paul Boothe came in to address people on the Saturday morning, people then felt they were stampeded into trying to answer the Premier's question -- how much is enough? -- when the real question was the question posed by Dr. Tom Noseworthy on the Thursday night. His question was not how much is enough but was: what do Albertans want their health care system to do?

The reality is that the health summit was not structured in a way and certainly there was not nearly adequate time to allow those people to be able to develop that understanding of this very complex system and then move to the next stage and come up with this normative picture in terms of what our health care system ought to look like or ought to be.

So what am I saying? I'm saying to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore through the Speaker that we're not going to be significantly wiser when we see the report from the health summit. Lots of suggestions. Lots of questions. But there's nothing that came out of that health summit that wasn't available to this government before it commenced. Having been there, having reviewed the papers that were on the table outside the room and what all the speakers had to say, and having talked to a number of people who in good faith participated and worked hard to try and do what the Premier asked them to do, it's clear to me that this delay is not a helpful delay.

I also want to raise the other concern. There's been an exchange of correspondence tabled in this Assembly between this Member for Calgary-Buffalo and the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. I had asked him to withdraw his amendment. Why? My concern is -- and I don't impute any motives to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. He said that he put forward his amendment for purposes other than strategic ones, and I'm prepared to accept his word. But there are people in this Assembly who would love to see this bill moved off the legislative agenda.

Why? Because there's a long-standing rule of parliamentary procedure that once the Legislature in the spring session has made a determination on the merits of a bill -- if Bill 204 were accepted, it would bolster and protect the public health system. If there were a vote on the merits of this bill, it may well preclude -- I can't say absolutely -- any further debate on the daughter of Bill 37 when

that further iteration of that nasty bill comes back into this Assembly, as it's expected to do in a matter of weeks.

To all of those government members who said, "We support the public health system; we support the Canada Health Act; we're not going to go around sanctioning private hospitals," why would you not embrace the opportunity afforded by Bill 204 to say no to private hospitals? If you vote for the reasoned amendment, Mr. Speaker, we may not have that opportunity. Instead, what we're going to have to deal with then is another iteration of Bill 37, that big blue ugly pig, as it was described in last year's Legislative Assembly. It's the old notion -- despite whatever the Minister of Health said and despite the amendments he brought in in the fall of 1998, that bill was very ugly, and it was made no more attractive nor any more palatable to Albertans with the bow that was tied around the pig's neck and the fact that it was presented as being something much more attractive.

Mr. Speaker, the concern around Bill 37 in fact has been amplified throughout 1998. My constituency office continues to get a flurry of e-mails and faxes and letters and phone calls from people concerned with this government's effort to pave the way for private health care. It is fascinating to me, despite all of the money spent on the public relations advisors for the Minister of Health and his government to try and sell private health care, that they have run smack into substantial and widespread resistance on the part of Albertans who want no part of it. But this government has never been one to be deterred by popular opinion, never one to be deterred by the will of Albertans. They continue to try to find a way to repackage it to make it more palatable.

I say to those members: if you have problems with the bill that's in front of us, then let's vote down this reasoned amendment; let's debate the bill on its merits. If you support public health care, as government member after government member has said to their constituents in their newsletters and through their constituency offices, then let's demonstrate that by disposing of the reasoned amendment and passing the bill. I'm going to be so audacious as to suggest that support for this reasoned amendment actually translates into support for private health care. I think in the context and given the history of what we've seen, that's the way Albertans are going to read that action. I think they'd have just cause for reading that into any decision to accept this reasoned amendment.

So let's have the debate around private/public health care. Let's send a clear message to Albertans, the message that they want to hear from this Assembly, and the best way of doing that is killing this reasoned amendment and then voting in favour of the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon as well to speak to the amendment that's on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, which reads that the

Medicare Protection Act, be not now read a second time because the Legislative Assembly believes that the report that is pending from the health summit should be reviewed before proceeding with this bill.

I find the wording of this particular motion very interesting in that there is no indication within that wording as to at what point Bill 204 would come back to the Legislative Assembly.

Now, we had an example here this afternoon where Bill 37 is in the hands of the minister. The minister is holding on to that report even though there are many Albertans who are waiting anxiously to see what that report is. The only reason for holding on to that report supposedly is so that the minister and the department can look at it. Well, unless there is going to be some manipulation within that

report, there is no reason that the public cannot look at it at the same time as the department can look at it. [interjection] Well, how long does it take to read a report? The minister of intergovernmental affairs has indicated that the minister has to read the report in order to provide answers.

Quite honestly, hon. members, on the opposition side we are given legislation, we are given pieces of information and expected to turn that around within hours, if not minutes, and be able to understand what that is. Are the members of the government saying that with all the resources at their hands they cannot look at a report and turn it around within at least 24 hours? I find that very hard to believe. The reality is that the spin needs to be put onto the report, and that is why that report is being held. And the legislation, if there is any legislation that will be forthcoming, needs to have that spin put on it as well.

Unless I'm mistaken, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore is a lawyer by background who is well aware of the meaning of each and every individual word. I find it hard to believe that this amendment to Bill 204 has not been put forward in such a way so that it allows for time to pass. It allows for the session to pass before Bill 204 can be brought in so that in fact the tone of Bill 37 is on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

In fact, I look at the letter that was sent from the Member for Calgary-Glenmore to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. He indicates in it:

I believe the majority of the members in the Legislature would prefer to address the issue of protecting publicly funded health care directly sometime this session under a successor bill to Bill 37 rather than avoid the debate entirely by procedural manipulation as you suggest. That is not the reality. The reality is that Members of the Legislative Assembly, at least on this side of the House, would like to see that issue addressed through Bill 204 and at least have a vote on Bill 204 as it stands so that we have on the record the individuals who are not for publicly funded health care, and that's what we want to know.

This is again a neat little device that is being used by the government members to hold off the debate. We saw a similar neat little trick that was used with regard to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands with regard to a bill protecting the rights of victims of abuse, domestic violence. The government was not prepared to address the issue at the time; it was a private member's bill. There was a whole whoop-de-do about the fact that it had passed certain stages and was very close to being passed. Then all of a sudden the procedural trick came out of the hat, and in fact what ended up happening was that the bill was delayed and victims of domestic violence had to wait at least two years before there were any protections built for them in legislation.

So what we have here is very much a similar situation, where the government has managed to find a way to not be put on the record as opposing this particular bill, which in fact is a bill that would protect our publicly funded health care system, that would ensure that it is on the record, that there are health care guarantees for individuals and residents within this province, that finally puts on the record that this government is endorsing the five principles of the Canada Health Act, that does look at various systems for protecting medicare within this province and ensuring that health care facilities and its operations are maintained in accordance with the wishes of Albertans. That is what this bill attempts to address. But by not discussing the merits of the bill, by not indicating where the government members stand on the bill, they're conveniently trying to avoid being put on the record and trying to hide behind the bill that will be put forward by the government as a successor to Bill 37.

I had hoped, Mr. Speaker, that the government members would have had more courage, courage to stand on their own two feet and

indicate whether they are for or against medicare and public health care in this particular province, that they would have had more courage than to hide behind a motion that will ensure that this bill will never be voted on. And unless the Member for Calgary-Glenmore is willing to amend his motion to state that upon receipt of the health care summit report the bill will immediately come back to the Legislative Assembly, that Bill 204 will come back to the Legislative Assembly prior to the government introducing any successor to Bill 37, we know that the intention of that member and of the government is to ensure that this bill does not get voted on. So to say otherwise is, I think, to negate the reality of what is occurring within this Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

We have had some suggestions made that Bill 204 reduces health care options within this province, that Bill 204 is a bill that does not consider the financial resources that are available and that in fact are limited within health care, and that it will limit the ability of the province to manage resources in an effective and efficient manner. That is not what this bill says. That is not what the intent of the bill is.

The intent of the bill is to enshrine forever in this province our system of publicly funded, high quality, and accessible health care. When we see and hear the words of the minister with regards to the public health care system and see how difficult it is for that minister to say those words often, to say those words consistently to ensure and assure Albertans that there is no intent by this government to undermine public health care within this province so the opening is there for private, for-profit health care to creep into our system, which is happening on an almost daily basis -- that is what needs to occur and that is what unfortunately does not occur on a regular basis or on a convincing basis from the minister, from the Premier, and from the government members as a whole.

3:20

When we look at this particular amendment, Mr. Speaker, I have to say very clearly that I am not in support of this amendment. If in fact there is no intention other than to wait for the report of the growth summit, which we know will come sometime at the end of April, if that is what the true intention of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore is, then he has to add into that motion and make that amendment -- well, we will not be finished with the bill today, so he can bring that amendment to his amendment tomorrow in this Legislative Assembly.

There is time. There's more than adequate time to craft those words as I know he is able to do, to make the copies as I know they can be done, and to put it through Parliamentary Counsel, which is what needs to be done, to ensure that this bill is foremost on the government's agenda prior to Bill 37 being reintroduced and that this bill comes in immediately after the release of the report of the health summit. That would be indeed the honourable thing to do, Mr. Speaker. That would be the thing that is required to ensure that there is in fact no misunderstanding with regards to the intent of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, because if that amendment is not forthcoming, then the door is wide open to speculation as to what the true intent of that member and the government caucus is in order to ensure that this bill does not come to a vote.

Other than that rationale, there is no reason that this bill should not come to a vote. There's absolutely no reason that this bill should not come to a vote unless the government wants to ensure that they can bring in the clone of Bill 37, that they are not put on the record with regards to protecting our publicly funded health care system.

In the past when the Official Opposition has put forward bills, for instance Bill 201, that protect health care rights in this province, when we have put forward motions such as the Leader of the

Official Opposition did just a few days ago, a motion to have a public debate on private and public health care within this province, the government members have voted it down. They have, Mr. Speaker. So what is the public to think with regards to the government's intention on maintaining, on sustaining, on ensuring that our public health care system remains, not only remains but is strong and is strengthened, when in the past we have had examples and when currently we have an example of a motion that's on the floor whose intent is solely to ensure that there is no vote on this bill in this legislative session?

While I'm letting those thoughts sink in, because they do need to sink in, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Member for Calgary-Glenmore -- and I'd love to be surprised -- will come in tomorrow with the amendment, as suggested, that ensures that this bill does have precedence over the bill the government and the panel are working on in response to Bill 37, ensures that when the summit report is received, we will not have the delay we're seeing now on Bill 37, and ensures that in fact we will have this in front of us in the Legislative Assembly so that the honourable thing can be done to ensure that the bill reaches its conclusion, either favourable or not.

That is what is supposed to happen, I thought, with private members' bills, Mr. Speaker. I thought there was supposed to be a process where individuals could bring those forward, where individuals could talk within this Legislative Assembly independent of government whips or opposition whips, independent of strategies that are concocted within the caucuses, to ensure that individuals could make a decision as a free vote within this Legislative Assembly. Hopefully that is still the case. Unfortunately, I find it difficult to see or to understand the reasoning for this reasoned amendment to Bill 204 at this point in time.

If there are objections to the bill, then Committee of the Whole would be the stage where those objections and changes could be proposed. I know that in looking at Bill 204, while I agree with the principle of the bill, there are some things that I would have suggested as amendments to the bill. Those amendments I believe would have strengthened the bill and ensured that our public health care system was in fact assured of being sustained and maintained and being of ongoing consideration within this province.

Unfortunately, with this amendment now in front of us we are in a situation where that will probably not come to pass. We are in a situation where it will probably not see second reading. I think that is a move that is without foundation, without reason, because without a time limit on when this particular bill can be brought back, it is in fact so broad, Mr. Speaker, that we know that it will not come back.

In fact, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore in the letter he sent indicates that public debate should occur around Bill 37. Yes, there should be a public debate on the report that the minister has received on Bill 37. There should be a commitment from that minister that no legislation will come forth in this Legislative Assembly in this session to deal with Bill 37 until the public has had a chance to look at it and review it to ensure that in fact the public agrees or disagrees with the recommendations that have been put forward on the former Bill 37 by a select, small group of individuals. In fact, any proposed changes to that bill should be discussed in public for a prolonged period of time. But I fear, Mr. Speaker, that that is not the intention of this government. I fear that there is another agenda at work that ensures that this will not occur, that ensures that there will be a fast-tracking of Bill 37 or whatever number it will be called when it's reintroduced in this Legislative Assembly.

This is a disservice to Albertans. This is a disservice to the history that we have had over many years in regards to the development of health care in this province. It is a disservice to the health care

professionals who work so hard to maintain our system. I fear that they will not have the chance for input as well. If the government were truly interested in ensuring that there's an open and public debate on this particular issue -- and there are very few other issues that have the attention, that have the ability of this to grab the imagination of Albertans as the issue around health care. For the government to consistently deny that fact is in fact a disservice that needs to be addressed. So I look forward to the amendment from Calgary-Glenmore that hopefully he will be bringing forward tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, but the time limit for consideration of this matter has now expired.

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

### Family Law Court Structure

505. Ms Graham moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to examine the establishment of a unified family court or other similar family law court structure to handle all cases related to family law in an effort to provide a more efficient and accessible way to deal with problems arising from family breakdown and disputes.

[Debate adjourned March 16: Ms Olsen speaking]

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I closed debate on March 16, I was wanting to discuss the experiences in other provinces in relation to the unified family court model. The Ontario government was the first to experiment with the unified family court concept by establishing a unified family court in the city of Hamilton and the surrounding area. It has more recently been expanded to London, Barrie, Kingston, Napanee, Newmarket. These are all heavily populated suburbs of the city of Toronto. It will shortly be implemented in other locations in Ontario in fact: Ottawa, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Perth, Durham, Cobourg, Lindsay, Bracebridge, Cornwall, Brockville. All of these areas will now fall under a unified family court structure.

3:30

It's interesting to note, as I did in the previous debate, that these particular courts will be under what we know as the Court of Queen's Bench, or it could be a superior court in another environment. That would mean that the provincial government of Ontario has given up the responsibility for those courts, but they've also given up the responsibility for having to pay those particular judges. So I think there's a trade-off here, and I've discussed that before. We also have to note that unified family courts exist in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

In November 1998 the federal government gave Royal Assent to amendments which created and expanded the unified family courts across Canada. At that time, in fact, I had asked the Justice minister in question period why we weren't at the table and why we were not part of that pilot process. It seems to be that there's a jurisdictional issue in this province, and I don't think that should be the barrier between the different levels of court. I think we should in fact move

forward. In doing that, we also need to include the courts in that process. What kind of system would they like to see? Are the models that are out there acceptable to Albertans and to the Alberta family court system?

I think we cannot proceed at the exclusion of the judges and the exclusion of those that practise in the field of family law, because that's where the experience comes from. Those are the folks that will know better and be able to guide the Legislature. We in here can talk about it. It looks good on paper. The theory is there and the model is there. Other jurisdictions have used it. It looks good. But we need to be sure that we include all of those people in that process in order to move forward and be successful.

In giving Royal Assent, Mr. Speaker, the federal government provided 24 new federally appointed judges in four provinces. These amendments introduced a new court model that offers a single-window concept where family members, including children, can resolve their problems in a timely, more amicable, and less stressful way.

The establishment of the unified family court is the result of extensive consultations -- and those words need to be repeated, extensive consultations -- and partnerships with provinces who expressed an interest in implementing the concept. Again Alberta was not at the table. Justice Minister McLellan stated at the time that she's confident that providing these new positions and in turn allowing the provinces to invest additional resources towards a range of supportive services will reduce the costs and the conflict of family law disputes and will promote long-term durable outcomes for children and their families.

Mr. Speaker, we hear constantly the issues around family law, access to the courts, one party feeling that they've been taken advantage of through the process. Nobody feels satisfied. The only losers in the system that exists now are the children. What has to be dealt with and the needs that have to be met are not the parents' needs but the children's needs. Having judges who can deal in a holistic manner with family court issues is absolutely essential to the health and well-being and what's in the best interests of those children. I think that if we're to move along, that's what we have to have as the key mark. If we were to want to measure the success of unified family courts down the road, what we would be looking at is how the children fared. From the process that exists now, weigh that against how children may fare in a new unified family court model. I think that's what we have to keep in mind.

Mr. Speaker, there are some advantages to this model. It does become one-stop shopping. As I've said before several times in this Assembly, we have over 20 pieces of legislation at the provincial level that in fact deal with family issues. So to put all of those particular pieces of legislation under one umbrella would be a very wise thing to do. It would also prevent bringing in legislation piecemeal. Bringing in legislation in a piecemeal sense doesn't necessarily fix the problem in the long term. That's a band-aid solution. I think we need to look at that as being a good thing.

We need to reduce the likelihood of inconsistent court orders and judgments. A Court of Queen's Bench judge may not know what's happened in a Provincial Court family environment, as the Provincial Court family judge has no idea what may have happened at the Court of Queen's Bench level. What happens is that a divorcing couple may in fact have two separate agreements, one from the lower court and one from the superior court. All that does is add confusion to the entire process.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I think is essential is that we would have greater expertise among the judges who become specialized in family law. I'd hope they would be judges who would be interested in pursuing the course of family law and presiding over

those specific issues, not having the family court viewed as a disciplinary move as somebody is shuffled from a criminal court to a family court. I think there's a real need for real expertise on the bench. What happens now is that a Court of Queen's Bench justice could be sitting in a criminal trial, presiding over a homicide trial one day and the next day walk into a court presiding over a custody matter. There's a huge leap there. Not that the judges can't manage that, but I think the process would be much better and the focus and the area of expertise would be much better if we were able to have our criminal court judges and our family court judges separated so the task at hand is being dealt with and they're not all over the map in terms of what's going on. I think that would help out a great deal.

We need to recognize that this particular concept has been studied to death, Mr. Speaker. We don't need to study this anymore. There has been consensus across the provinces, through the legal community for the most part, that a unified family court would be very beneficial to residents and citizens of this country and of this province.

This would also help us to understand some of the real issues and be able, with some of the processes that are out there in terms of the alternative dispute resolutions and minitrials and in fact a full-blown trial, to engage in some different levels of dispute resolution before we get to the actual trial stage in a custody and access dispute. Although that exists now, it's sporadic and it's dependent on a particular judge case-managing a specific file. So I think there would be a greater sense of responsibility accepted by all of the parties involved with a divorcing couple or a couple where there's a custody or access dispute or where there's a property settlement. In fact, I think that having the judiciary act in a more cohesive manner, having all the . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Apparently the sands of time have run out on your opportunity to speak today.

3:40

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, if I could ask your indulgence to let me know how much time I have left on the motion. Thank you very much. I do have some comments to share on this motion, and I want to make sure I get to the salient points. I don't think I have enough time to read all of my notes here, so I will try to be brief.

The motion before us is of course Motion 505, which urges the government to look at a unified family court. Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that that motion is consistent with some recommendations that the MLA review of the maintenance enforcement program and child access made when we published our report earlier in 1998. I just refer to that because recommendation 9 in that report viewed "a single family law forum with province-wide access, which is accessible to unrepresented persons" as the system which "would best meet the needs of Albertans." We also recommended that all parties in the justice system consider the feasibility of making changes which would increase access to and decrease the complexity of the court system relating to family law.

So quite clearly one of the recommendations from this report -- and maybe I didn't say that, but of course I was a member of this particular committee. The bill is consistent with that report that we made.

While I don't agree with all the recommendations the Alberta Law Reform Institute comes up with, they do note a certain amount of fragmentation and overlap and inconsistency when it comes to matters of family law.

Mr. Speaker, the whole background to this notion of family law of course revolves around kids, because children are very much the victims of the breakdown of the family unit. As we sit in this

Legislature, it's crucial for us to ensure that their best interests are the first consideration and that their best interests are being served to their full potential, not only in the administration through the court process but also in the law itself.

Certainly what we heard when we were out in our committee hearings and what I think we've also heard in the debate on this particular motion already is that the family law system we have in this province right now is not all that user friendly. That's something that is very important that we try to resolve, because access to the courts is very important to people.

Just on a little aside on this motion, Mr. Speaker, is also the whole notion of family law itself. Another one of the recommendations that we made and talked about in our review was looking at the possibility of consolidating a number of different acts into one act. In that way we thought we could help to resolve some of the jurisdictional problems between Court of Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court and the resulting barriers that that now presents to access. We thought that "a single family law forum with province-wide access, which is accessible to unrepresented persons, would best meet the needs of Albertans."

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, I'm just running through my notes to make sure that I say the things that are the most important.

Most people in the province do not really come into contact with the criminal justice system except perhaps for a traffic violation of some sort. But when they come into contact with family law or find themselves in the courts on a family law matter, they will realize that this is one of the most complicated areas of law to understand, not to mention the difficulty to access. It involves two levels of government, two levels of courts, and the overlap of many family law statutes.

As I thought, Mr. Speaker, I can't get to the end of my notes, but I would stand and ask for the members to support this motion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I regret to interrupt the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, but under Standing Order 8(4) I must put all questions to conclude debate on the motion under consideration. On Motion 505 as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried, let it be shown unanimously.

### Health Care Accountability

506. Mrs. Forsyth moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to examine the creation of a system of accountability for Alberta's health care system which would outline performance measures in an attempt to monitor system efficiency and identify a standard of care for patients.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to begin debate on Motion 506. As a government we have made tremendous strides in moving towards being more open and accountable. In fact, I would remind members that we have made it our mission to be an open and accountable government that leads the province in achieving its vision and ensuring that Albertans have access to quality programs and services at an affordable cost.

In health care the government's commitment to being open and

accountable has resulted in many positive measures. To start, the Government Accountability Act was established in 1995, legislating requirements to improve answerability in the system. Among other requirements, Mr. Speaker, this act makes it incumbent upon each department to prepare a three-year business plan available for public review. These plans set out detailed goals, strategies, and performance indicators for the upcoming three-year period. Health is one of the departments which has increased its efficiency as well as its accountability through the use of these plans.

However, we have gone further than this in health care. Alberta Health began to report on performance measures and targets related to health and the health system first in its 1994-1995 annual report. The department has also been working to develop and refine a system of accountability for the delivery of health services in the province, which resulted in the regionalization of health authorities. Alberta Health established requirements for each health authority business plan and annual reporting.

Mr. Speaker, the measures I've indicated above have made promising improvements in accountability in our system. It is now time to take things one step further. We have a system where the dollars we provide are accounted for but only to an extent. We provide funds to health authorities and physicians and a portion of health care dollars to allied care services. The authorities distribute their funding to hospitals, who in turn largely utilize the funding in the way they see fit. I can't help but wonder how we truly know these funds are being used to their greatest advantage. Even more importantly, how does the public know these funds are going to areas that will ensure they receive quality and timely health care?

The answers lie with our health care providers. It's true that taxpayers provide the funds for health care services and the government disburses these funds to provide for services. The thing is, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for a government to determine precisely how much money is needed at any given time. The day-to-day services, what treatments the patient receives, and whether or not that patient is admitted to the hospital: these things are determined by hospitals and physicians.

3:50

The public, those who are not only using the health system but who are also the ones paying for it, have no way of knowing specifically how their health dollars are being accounted for by health care providers. Which hospitals have the highest waiting lists and for what procedures? Which physicians have a long waiting time and why? Does it mean they're better than their colleagues? I think not.

Mr. Speaker, taxpayers have the right to know what standard of care they can expect to receive from the health care system. They should have an idea about what to expect from the system. They should be able to see whether or not the system meets these expectations. We as a government have to know what the public's priorities are so that we can ensure these priorities are met. Though we target health spending and checks and balances are in place, we can no longer go on without requiring our hospitals and health care providers to account for it. Haphazard, ad hoc information provided by opposition parties, interest groups subject to the sway of public opinion and media influence does little to encourage confidence in our health care system. We need to make specific information available to the public, things that mean something to them directly as patients.

For example, public confidence is spurred by talks of new money being put into the system. But what does that really mean for patients? How will it affect their health care? We need to provide more information to the public rather than relying on what comes

from government news releases or columnists in the local newspapers. What needs to be done is to provide information to the people on a regular basis so that they will be better informed and will have a better idea of what is being provided and what they should expect when they go in for their hip replacement or their heart operation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give you a case example of what another country has done. In Great Britain they detail the rights and standards of service that patients can expect to receive from their National Health Service. For example, patients have a right to switch from one general practitioner to another easily and quickly. Patients can expect their local health authority to send their medical records to the new doctor within two working days for urgent cases and six weeks for other cases. Though they are only guidelines, the British National Health Service say they meet that standard in 8 out of 10 urgent cases and over 7 out of 10 routine cases.

In addition to this, Britain also publishes hospital report cards, using 59 indicators. Since 1994 patients have been able to see for themselves how their local hospital measures up in 59 different areas related to patient care.

What does this mean in practical terms, Mr. Speaker? It means that patients have an idea of what they can expect from their health care service. Not only that but they can see for themselves which hospitals have higher waiting times, which procedures are most widely used, and which physicians have high turnovers or waiting lists. This serves to increase public confidence in the system. For health care providers it means that there's a clear indication of which hospitals in which areas are in the greatest need. Health care providers are also encouraged to reduce waiting lists and provide a high standard of care for their patients.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear. I am not advocating the British model; I'm only using it to show how one country has addressed accountability. Let me also reinforce that we know that Alberta's health care providers are extremely capable and extremely dedicated. We all know that to be truly effective, you need to have a plan which will give you direction. That plan should include performance targets and goals. More than just having a plan, you also need to be able to see the outcomes and details that determine how well you have done and where you can improve.

It's like running a business, Mr. Speaker. Every business must set out goals and targets, and they must design the system to ensure that their targets are met. If one area or another is particularly slow or in need of resources, you need to know where the exact problems are so you can best decide how to fix them. In addition, your investors have a right to expect to have the details available to them regarding how their funds have been used. They're investing their hard-earned dollars into your business, and you have the obligation to provide them with all the facts. Like a business, health care in this province needs to set out performance targets and work to ensure those targets are met. If they aren't met, we need to be able to clearly see where the problems are. In addition, our investors, the taxpayers, have a right to have access to detailed information about how this system is working. They have a right to know how well their money is being spent.

Mr. Speaker, Britain has seen positive results from their system. Since this system was introduced, waiting lists have gone down, attributed both to the publication of performance charts as health care providers work to meet specified targets and to additional money that has been put into the system. Funding and accountability must go hand in hand.

I'm proud to say that this government recently announced that total funding for health will increase by \$386 million as part of the 1999-2000 Health budget. Total health funding will increase by 21 percent over three years, Mr. Speaker. This is great news for health

care in this province. However, we must remember that we need to make sure that the system is fully accountable for those dollars and that they are spent where they are needed most, not for higher salaries but for more frontline staff, to address waiting lists, priorities of the people of Alberta. As a government we have always said that throwing more money at a problem in the system does not help. We need to invest the money intelligently, ensuring that dollars are going to key areas that really need investment and are meeting the public's priorities.

We need to expand accountability to include the very roots of the health care system. Where are these roots, Mr. Speaker? They lie with government, the regional health authorities, hospitals, health care providers, and patients. It is true that hospitals in this province and indeed in this country are the biggest spenders in the health care system. It is also true that these biggest spenders are also the least accountable for their spending. The money they receive is largely in a lump sum, available for them to disburse as they fit.

What happens if they don't feel they have enough? They turn to the province, and they ask for more. More than once, Mr. Speaker, patients have had to endure panic over media items about not enough beds or hospitals turning away ambulances. Is this the result of underfunding, or is this the result of an inefficient use of resources? It could be either; it could be both. We'll never know unless we ask our hospitals to show us precisely what is going on in their system on a day-to-day, procedure-by-procedure, physician-by-physician basis.

Mr. Speaker, it may be the government who signs the cheques, but the real power to decide the level of spending and the quality of service and health care lies with our hospitals and our doctors. It is with them that decisions are made that affect the resource distribution within the system. I realize that this is a sensitive subject, but it's one which I believe gets to the heart of inefficiency in our health care system.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

The ideas I'm bringing forth for the Assembly's consideration are not new, and they are not entirely unreasonable. Is it unreasonable to expect the system to be accountable to the people it provides service for and the people who pay for it? Is it unreasonable to expect that patients should get to choose which hospitals and programs provide the best service? Is it unreasonable to think that the hospitals and the health care providers would benefit from a system which would provide the impetus for hospitals to improve programs so that they could rate higher? No, it isn't, Madam Speaker. We set standards and performance targets within government, and no one can deny that this has been a good idea. We set out a plan for where we want to go, have designed the system to get there, and have laid it out for taxpayers to see. Why should our hospitals be any different?

Madam Speaker, the public has been bombarded by mixed messages about health care. The system is in crisis, they are told on the one hand, while the other says that there is nothing wrong. The public needs to know exactly what the issues are, and they need to know that an effort is being made to make things better. This system of accountability I'm proposing would help provide that assurance. We need to be truly accountable in health care to know where the dollars are going and to discover the truth about where the problem lies. We need to recognize that patients have a right to know exactly what is going on, just as we need to recognize the reality that there will be breakdowns in the system. The sooner we admit that, the sooner we look towards fixing these things that need repairing.

Madam Speaker, I urge all members of the Assembly to open the

door towards a better, more accountable health care system by voting in favour of Motion 506.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I listened intently to the opening remarks from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek proposing this particular motion. The motion reads that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to examine the creation of a system of accountability for Alberta's health care system which would outline performance measures in an attempt to monitor system efficiency and identify a standard of care for patients.

You know, Madam Speaker, I find that this is a startling admission by that member that the government does not have that information, that the accountability measures that the government has over the last number of years prided itself upon and has consistently informed the Official Opposition that there is no need to worry about accountability within the health care system in fact are not adequate and are not perhaps even in place, and that there is a need to look at somehow holding not only the government accountable for ensuring that our health care system is meeting the needs of Albertans but also the regional health authorities and those that are contracted with the regional health authorities.

4:00

I found it interesting that in the member's introduction she did not mention whether or not this particular motion would apply to those within the private sector who are providing health care services in Alberta at this point in time as well as those private companies that are contracted to the provincial regional health authorities to provide services that are funded through the public health care system. Reading the motion as it stands right now, it would seem to me that it does apply to those private individuals who right now have been covered and exempt from providing information. We have asked for that information a number of times to see what the cost effectiveness is of those private health care facilities, what the actual cost is to the taxpayer, and what the measurements are with regards to performance, and we have been unable to obtain that information because it is deemed to be a contract between the regional health authorities and the private companies and therefore not accessible to the public.

The other information that we have asked for as late as yesterday morning during the Health budget was the line-by-line budgets of the regional health authorities so that in fact we could see how those dollars are being spent, that they are available for public scrutiny, as well as the internal business plans, strategies, capital requirements, contracts that are made on behalf of the regional health authorities so that that could be seen as well. Over and over again in our requests -- and we have motions and written questions standing on the Order Paper at this point in time where we have asked for that information in order to determine the accountability structures within the government -- we have consistently been refused.

So by this particular motion I would gather that the member is in agreement with what we have said on this side of the Legislative Assembly for a number of years now, that there are in fact flaws within the accountability system when it comes to health care within this province.

What surprises me is that the Auditor General in '97-98 "recommended that the Department of Health and health authorities implement a plan to improve performance measurement and reporting." In fact, that plan would address some of the areas of concern that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has put forward.

In response to that recommendation -- and I would assume it was the government's own initiative, one of many, I might add, the more

recent initiatives that were put forward on June 19, 1997, in a government of Alberta news release, which stated:

Health Minister Halvar Jonson has released *Achieving Accountability in Alberta's Health System: A Draft for Discussion*. The document is the first step in developing a complete accountability framework for Alberta's health system . . . The result is that we need to lay a new foundation to improve accountability . . . Plans for an accountability framework were announced last November . . .

That would have been November of 1996.

. . . as part of the Action on Health initiatives. Anticipated longer-term results of the framework are improved accountability for health dollars and services, better information for Albertans about results in the health system, and a health system that continuously improves . . . Alberta Health will consult with RHAs, physicians and other groups on the discussion paper.

The final edition of that paper was released a mere few months ago, on March 21, 1998, with the headline: "Accountability framework will support continuous improvement of health system."

A major theme . . . deals with the shared responsibility of the Government of Alberta, health authorities and health professions to ensure quality in Alberta's health system . . . "This will require all three parties to work together to continually improve quality . . .

Other initiatives currently underway that support the goal of improved health system accountability and performance include developing health and health system expectations, such as governance expectations for health authority boards; reviewing long-term care; and developing Alberta Wellnet.

So on one hand we have a motion that is put forward by a member of the government, a motion that is put forward by an individual who I believe is the chair of the standing policy committee on health, who would, you would imagine, have a really good understanding of what the government's accountability systems are with regards to health care. This particular motion would appear to indicate that all the concerns, all the suggestions, all the requests for information, all the fears that have been voiced by the Official Opposition over the last six years have been validated, that in fact the accountability systems and structures within the government as it now stands . . .

MR. JACQUES: Point of order.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to raise a point of order with regard to the . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation.

MR. JACQUES: Well, I want to refer to the previous Speaker's rulings on this subject, if I may. It's not cited specifically.

There has been an understanding by the Speaker previously and all members of the House that when we are debating a private member's motion, indeed it is recognized that this is a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and in turn the motion itself is worded in such a way: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly."

I respect and understand the hon. member's reference to government in the sense of their actions, et cetera, but it has also been clearly understood in previous rulings that reference to a member who is proposing a bill as a Member of the Legislative Assembly is not, quote, a member of the government or this side of the House or that side of the House. There's been constant reference to that. I would ask that the hon. member please respect the tradition of the House in response to that.

Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. member, I think the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has made a good point. We have over a period of time respected the privilege, if you will, of private members' bills and motions. In keeping with what has been said and certainly your time in this Assembly, I would ask that we stick to the relevance of the motion itself and to the discussion thereto.

MS LEIBOVICI: I agree, Madam Speaker. Point well taken.

#### **Debate Continued**

MS LEIBOVICI: The intent of the motion is to create a system of accountability. My argument is that either we have a system of accountability with regards to health care within this province, if we are to believe what in fact the government says, or we don't. If we don't, of course I would wholeheartedly support the motion because I believe there needs to be a system of accountability with health care in this province. It is something we have fought for for a large number of years, yet if I am to believe what the government has indicated with response to accountability within health care, if I am even to look at the budget documents that have been most recently put forward, which indicate that there are accountability measures within Alberta Health, then I am left in a situation where there's a contradiction inherent in what is occurring within the government at this point in time.

I believe that that is the crux of what we need to determine in discussing this motion, in voting either for or against the motion. In voting for the motion, we are indicating that the accountability structures within this government are inadequate and need to be improved and that they need to in fact be strengthened. In voting against this motion, the indication then would be support for the government, would be to say that, yes, there is enough accountability within government structures at this point in time and that there is no need for this motion.

4:10

I for one will vote for the motion because I do not believe that the accountability structures within the Department of Health address the needs and concerns Albertans have with regards to the delivery of their health care system and in fact hope that the intent of that motion is to deal not only with the public part of the health care system but with the private part of the health care system as well. It would be a forward step for the government to in fact put in place systems that ensure that that is accounted for and is accountable back to Albertans.

It will be interesting, Madam Speaker, to see which way this vote goes. It will be interesting to see, if in fact the motion is passed, whether finally the Official Opposition will receive the answers to the motions, to the written questions, to the queries we made in the budget speech with regards to ensuring that there is openness and accountability, as the Member for Calgary Fish-Creek indicated, on behalf of the government to Members in this Legislative Assembly as well as the citizens of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Motion 506. This is a motion which proposes to enhance -- I repeat: enhance -- an established system of accountability for Alberta's health care system. It seems that not only is this an idea that all members of this Assembly can support; it's the type of system from which Albertans would benefit.

We know, Madam Speaker, from various surveys that there is a

large percentage of Albertans who have provided generally positive feedback based on their experience with the health care system. It's not perfect, and it's not always positive, but Albertans also have generally rated the quality of care they received as excellent or good. So we can see that there is already a solid base from which to build an even better system of health care that will raise the level of satisfaction for citizens within the province of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, the main benefits of enhancing a system of health care accountability such as is being proposed in Motion 506 are that every Albertan involved with the health care system will know what to expect from it. At the same time, the providers of health care services -- hospitals, regional health authorities, doctors, nurses, staff, and government -- will know what to expect . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### Point of Order Questioning a Member

MS LEIBOVICI: Point of order on *Beauchesne* 333. May I just ask a question to the member as a point of clarification?

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Will the hon. member entertain a question?

MR. HERARD: Madam Speaker, there's precious little time for motions as it is. I'll be happy to talk to her after I'm done with my speech. Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Okay. Go ahead, hon. member.

### Debate Continued

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the system will know what to expect of itself. Enhanced accountability provides legitimacy. It provides incentives and ways by which to measure performance. Enhancing a system of accountability in my opinion can only be seen as a positive path to follow. To have an opportunity to better measure efficiency, identify deficiencies, and examine ways to improve services can only serve to build a stronger, more productive system. By clarifying performance measures, examining system efficiencies, and identifying a standard of patient care, we will establish this province as a national leader in health care accountability, a role for which we have already received significant recognition. In fact, such a system would make Alberta almost wholly unique internationally. Currently, the United Kingdom is the only country in the world to have a similar system of accountability as the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is proposing.

Madam Speaker, what this motion does is propose to take accountability to the next level. Our government has committed to a vision of healthy Albertans living in a healthy Alberta. As I have already expressed, enhancing a system of accountability is a positive step towards ensuring that this vision is realized. Our mission statement articulated in our Agenda for Opportunity business plan also shows great support for the principles contained within Motion 506. It states the goal of this government to be an open and accountable government that leads the province in achieving its vision and ensures Albertans have access to quality programs and services at an affordable cost.

From the mission statement of this government to the annual reports and business plans to local administration and public consultations like the recent health summit, this government has strived to ensure that accountability to Albertans continues to be one

of the most important and visible objectives. A great deal already has been done to create a strong level of accountability within our health care system, and wherever possible our government is striving to find new approaches and initiatives to achieve this goal.

For example, this government released a document last November entitled *Achieving Accountability in Alberta's Health System*. The issues addressed in that document, which included roles, responsibilities, and accountability between health care's major stakeholders, mark an important step towards the objective of the sponsor of this motion in bringing this motion forward. This document defined accountability as the obligation to answer for how one party carries out their responsibilities to the parties who delegated these responsibilities to them.

The individuals who are accountable under this definition are of course the providers of health care services I mentioned a few minutes ago: doctors, nurses, frontline staff, health authorities, and government. Madam Speaker, the parties to whom we are accountable are the taxpayers and residents of Alberta, who depend on our health care system to function effectively, efficiently, and dependably so that services are there for those who need them and when they need them.

There is also a measure of responsibility and accountability on the part of taxpayers. In setting out ways to affirm our commitment to accountability, we looked at both the formal and informal relationships that exist between the different health care structures and, of course, the people of this province and how these relationships work in terms of our health care system's operation. We looked at the overall process and at specific initiatives and processes. We looked at the structure of the health care system and how accountable we are for our own lifestyles and our own risk factors that we carry with us. In short, Madam Speaker, we focused on how we can continually improve our health care so that we can afford to continue to provide for Albertans in the best manner possible both now and in the future.

The importance of a solid system of accountability will only continue to increase as our population continues to age and place demands on the health care system. We must ensure that the services are provided in the most effective and efficient manner possible so that neither the needs of Albertans for health care nor the costs of providing services are neglected. We are all responsible and accountable for wellness too.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for raising this important issue for debate. I firmly support the objectives of Motion 506 and would encourage every member of this Assembly to do the same.

Thank you.

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

4:20

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Motion 506, Health Care Accountability. I'm very pleased with the fact that I'm standing in this Assembly to talk about this important issue, Alberta health care, and the fact that this motion is being placed forward. At the same time, I'd like to point out that the motion says: create health care accountability. I'd like to point out that more accountability in the health care system can only lead to more data collection, which will put more pressure on the government to meet the needs of Albertans. With 17 regional health authorities, a universal standard of care is required to ensure that Albertans are having their health care met.

Accountability in the health care system is long overdue. The performance measures of this government disappear when they are

not providing the right results. I want to point out that there hasn't been accountability in our health system from the start of the downloading. When downloading started, the tough-love process was a direction in revising the health system. For the next three years after that the government put their head in the sand.

The fact is that this motion indicates:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to examine the creation of a system of accountability for Alberta's health care system which would outline performance measures in an attempt to monitor system efficiency and identify a standard of care.

Listening to the delivery of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek presenting this motion, bringing it forward, it was brought out: open and accountable. Well, open and accountable are things that we've been stressing for a number of years. In 1995, even three years after the process started, there was talk of a three-year plan. I'm wondering whether there has ever been a plan due to the fact that we're still here fighting for a better health system. Sure we have an aging population, and if we do not start working on the study that has been worked on by the Member for Redwater and start pushing for it, by 2012, when most of us hit the senior age, there's going to be a major, major problem. Over the last six years technology has changed. If technology changes over the next six years like it has over the past six years, we'd better start having a plan right now, and that I really stress.

Another thing that was brought forward is the British system. I know the member mentioned that that wasn't what she was pushing, but the fact is that outside of the only Albertan, Mr. Pocklington, that brought Mrs. Thatcher over here, there can't be anybody that can believe what her process produced over there.

I do want to push a few things and stress a few things. We have been calling for the government to implement better performance measures. These would include the number of individuals waiting for orthopedics or elective surgeries, length of time waiting for orthopedics or other elective surgeries, waiting lists for long-term care, length of time waiting for long-term care, length of time waiting for admissions into acute care from emergencies, and the number of ambulance diversions due to lack of available acute care beds.

Now, as we look at the system, each January we come to a point where all stress breaks loose in every hospital. Then there are diversions, and we're always hearing that people are waiting in long lineups and gurneys out in the hallways. Well, what happens from that January to the next January? Are we going to sit down and start fixing the problem? We look at the money that has been placed into the system in the last budget. Yes, the money was very well thought out, and hopefully it will bring forth something besides a three-year plan leading into the next election. Whatever it's going to take, let's sit down and put this money into a plan that's going to work.

I look at what's happening to the doctors. We read in today's paper about nurses graduating and that the only place they have to go to have a secure job, outside of being woke up at 5 o'clock in the morning for a 7 o'clock shift, is maybe heading to the States. That isn't the way we should treat our dollars. We have subsidized these people throughout their education. We should be putting them into the system and start working now. The old way, how the three-year nursing used to be: they came out, they started to work, and they had the senior staff working with them to work them into the process. Now there is no guarantee in the health care system for our young people coming out of universities. To me there's a disrespect for education in both the health system and within our educational system of teachers. The Auditor General in his report said that more "emphasis should be given to . . . the measurement of service outputs and patient outcomes." The government has never measured

outcomes in the health care system. Since waiting times often have significant effects on the outcome of health care procedures, it would be very interesting to see how our health care system is performing in terms of outcomes.

The Auditor General also indicates that the measurements of health outcomes, outputs and costs are missing or incomplete in annual reports and in the planning and control of regional operations.

How can the Department of Health gather complete data if the regions are not all supplying it? Do the regional authorities have the funding for the necessary staff to gather this information and ensure that it is accurate? Most don't have enough to provide health care service.

Now, in listening to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, it was brought out that the public shouldn't be bombarded daily by the opposition and media. Well, the fact is that we're the ones that are trying to keep a good health system in our province. I don't believe too many of us sat over here in 1993 and did not buy into the fact that health had to be looked at and that some other process of making it work had to happen. But the degree of downloading and the degree of pulling the rug out from under everybody and the degree of having no plan to do it but to just go in there and take the pyramid and slice off the bottom part -- ideally, maybe the administration should have been looked at then instead of hoping that because there was no bottom part of the triangle, they would leave after awhile. Believe me; you did pay through the nose and Albertans did pay through the nose to do something with administration after that.

That the taxpayers should know where their dollars are going or spent was another comment. Yes, I would like to know where our tax dollars are going, but there has to be some degree of input into the health boards and not into the fact of a politically appointed board. It should be an elected board. An elected board should be one of the first places where we start looking at accountability within our health system.

Madam Speaker, I would like to sit down at this particular time.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to enter the debate on Motion 506, which seeks to design a system of accountability in health care. I've noticed . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but due to Standing Orders the time limit for consideration of this particular item of business has concluded. We'll hear from you next week.

head: Committee of Supply

4:30

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee to order.

head: Main Estimates 1999-2000

### Community Development

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. Minister of Community Development to lead off the debate.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. For the benefit of the committee, I'm going to ask the four members who have responsibilities in this area -- the Member for Calgary-Currie for the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, the Member for

Calgary-Cross for the Advisory Committee on the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund, the Member for Lacombe-Stettler for the Community Lottery Program Secretariat, and the Member for Calgary-West for the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta -- to just give a very quick, very brief overview of their areas of responsibility.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you. On behalf of AADAC I'd like to present some overview information for you. You have your budgets in front of you. AADAC contributes to the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Alberta through the provision of alcohol or other drug and gambling problem prevention and treatment services. I have sitting in the gallery my CEO, Paddy Meade, and also Jim McCutcheon, our comptroller. If they'd like to rise and be recognized.

Colleagues, in the 1999-2000 budget AADAC's funding was increased by \$680,000, which is 2.1 percent. This reflects a 2.3 percent, or \$0.7 million, increase from the lottery fund to meet the price and volume increases and an additional 11.4 percent, or \$0.35 million, for problem gambling services. This also reflects other fee and contract revenue decreases of 20 percent, or about \$0.4 million, which is primarily the elimination of the UNDCP contract for the staging of that very successful 1998 United Nations youth conference in Banff.

AADAC's total operating and problem gambling grant for 1999-2000 is entirely funded from the lottery fund. The major commitments of the business plan are, number one, the increased service to problem gamblers. New materials for elementary and junior high youth are provided, two new television ads are in development, an interprovincial consultation on youth and gambling is being considered, and there are workplace and seniors materials. I would also like to note that AADAC has collaborated with the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and the Alberta Racing Corporation to respond to the gaming summit recommendation regarding increased amounts of visibility for problem gamblers' prevention programs and treatment programs.

It's a very important area that we consider when we look at our number two priority, the focus on children and youth. Co-chairing along with Alberta Family and Social Services the fetal alcohol syndrome, or FAS, initiative is a very strong element of AADAC's business plan; also, working with children's services partners in the development of addiction treatment and prevention strategies for children. Contribution to the government initiative regarding children involved in prostitution has been an area of our involvement. In addition, we're contributing to the design of the children's mental health initiative and getting the prevention message out in a new way by promoting the development of resiliency in youth through a private sector and media partnership. That particular initiative was launched in January very successfully in Calgary and Edmonton and now is going throughout the province.

Number three is our increased support to community programs by maintaining the existing network of community-based services and increasing grants to funded agencies by about 2 percent.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, overall this budget will allow AADAC to maintain its existing network of services and to increase the range of programs available to problem gamblers. Addiction services contribute to the well-being of our citizens and our workforce and help reduce the burden of addictions on our health, social services, and justice systems.

Finally, I would like to just share with you the ongoing support that we feel as the board of AADAC, and your continued support in this Assembly is appreciated.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'm pleased this afternoon as well to offer some comments about the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund in the estimates today and would thank the minister for the opportunity to do so.

As the Assembly knows, the purpose of the education fund advisory committee, which I have the honour of chairing, according to the committee terms of reference, is to provide the minister with advice on the utilization of the education fund. Madam Chairman, what we also do in our committee is provide advice regarding program funding grants and other financial assistance. We review applications for grants and make recommendations to the minister. We provide advice to the minister on issues related to the educational objectives of the act, and we undertake specific projects identified by the minister.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

I must tell the Assembly that the committee members work very hard in reviewing the applications from throughout the province of Alberta, and I really believe that in all sincerity they've made some very wise decisions. In those decisions, if you look at page 93 of the 1999-2000 estimates, the expenses were as follows: \$711,000 was allotted for support to community groups. The money for grants to community groups that wished to deliver programs and services, I believe, are in keeping with the purposes of the act that I just read to you earlier. Also, \$250,000 has been allotted for the annual commitment to the University of Calgary for the Cultural Diversity Institute, and in 1999-2000 the third of five annual payments will be made.

I'm going to take a moment to pause and thank the members of the administration -- Julian Nowicki, the deputy minister, is here today -- and also to thank the minister for the work and the effort that went into forming the Cultural Diversity Institute. Quite frankly that would not have happened, Madam Minister, without the strong support that you gave, and that diversity institute is going to be a legacy for the previous Multiculturalism Commission. So thank you very much.

Also, \$169,000 has been allotted to education programs, and this money will be spent on education programs and services developed and delivered by the department staff on behalf of the ministry and the Human Rights and Citizenship Commission. I can't tell you enough, Mr. Chairman, how hard the staff do work, as I indicated earlier, on the grant applications and the programs that we offer to the community of Alberta.

So thank you for the opportunity of letting me share this with the Assembly today.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Last year, beginning April 1, 1998, the community lottery board program took off, and 88 boards across the province assumed responsibility for the allocation of \$50 million in grant funds to eligible Albertan recipients through a local decision-making process. This worked out to approximately \$18 per capita. The nominating committee was represented by local municipal councils, and they publicly recruited board members for the 88 boards based on defined regions. This program was devised as a direct result of the 1995 review of lotteries and gaming.

This program is community based and citizen driven, and the boards making funding decisions are regional or community level and operate within a limited number of provincial guidelines. I'm very pleased as chairman of this secretariat to say that I thought for a first-year program things went very well. This year again, identified in the budget of March 11, 1999, the government will commit another \$50 million to this program. As well, we have identified dollars for administration costs for the boards. Due to an increase in the population of Alberta this year, this will equate to a little under the \$18 per capita and works out to \$17.81.

The objectives of this program are to enhance and enrich community-based initiatives, to provide for local decision-making processes, to reinvest in Alberta communities revenues generated from video lottery terminals and lotteries, and to empower local citizens, not people in Edmonton, to fund and look at community organizations to ensure that they in fact can be recipients of money that can go to worthwhile projects.

Recently, members of the committee, we held a retreat in the early part of February, and some 69 board chairs or designates were in attendance. We talked about the program and what could be improved if we were to go into it again this year, and we have agreed to many of their suggestions. We will change the application form to make it more user friendly, and a number of very small house-keeping matters we have taken care of.

4:40

One of the interesting questions that we asked the board chairs to answer was: do you feel that the community lottery board grant program is meeting its primary goal of enhancing and enriching your community region through local decision-making processes? Of the 64 people that answered this question, 63 said yes. They said that they believed it was the most responsive and responsible granting process this province has seen. They like the home-grown approach, where they were able to decide locally what should be funded in their communities. They all of course said that they would like more dollars, and over time maybe that can happen. They also felt that it was much better for the decisions to come through them and that it be taken away from people in Edmonton, because grass roots is the right people making the right decision.

I want to tell you that I believe I need to congratulate a couple of the boards, that being the Edmonton and Calgary boards. When you start disbursing \$14.8 million and \$11.2 million respectively, that is a lot of money for a group of people to disburse. But they did the job, they met the challenge, and they're willing to do it again.

The board chair from Calgary has recently sent us a full report of all of the groups and organizations they have funded, and we have made them available to all of the Calgary MLAs. If anyone else in this room would like a copy, please ask me, and I'll make sure you get it. As well, I have a full listing of all of the grant recipients from the city of Edmonton.

Again, thank you very much to the Assembly and to those people working with the community lottery boards. I would ask each of you to try to talk to your board and get some feedback from them that you can bring forward to us.

Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

MS KRYCZKA: Yes. I'm very pleased to share this afternoon information on the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. The council is a government-appointed body. It's chaired by a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and members are citizens appointed by order in council and represent seven regions of the province. We

also presently have one each from the Alberta Medical Association and universities, presently the University of Calgary. I'm happy to say that the council reports to the Hon. Shirley McClellan, Minister of Community Development and minister responsible for seniors.

Basically, very basically, the council members work closely with seniors and seniors' organizations and hold meetings throughout the province gathering suggestions and feedback. From these interactions -- and this is a continual challenge to us to get better and better -- we report concerns and also make valid recommendations to the government on legislation and policies affecting senior citizens and on the funding of programs and services relating to them. We also undertake research projects. We distribute a quarterly newsletter update, and we also support community-based workshops for seniors and frontline workers through an education grant program.

On all of these activities the council assists in providing updated, accurate information for the benefit of all seniors in Alberta. Since 1986 we have spearheaded the annual Senior Citizens' Week, which is, again, to promote a greater understanding of aging and the contributions which seniors make to the province of Alberta.

At this point in time I have to say that I'm very energized about the council because I just came back to the Legislature after two full days of meetings with this group of committed senior citizens. Well, they're not all senior citizens; most of them are. I think it's very important at this time to tell you the names of the members who are currently on the Seniors Advisory Council: Carol Blyth from the Calgary and area region; Pat Bunn from Lethbridge, south region; Holly Farnum, Calgary and area region; Margaret Heath, Grande Prairie, northwest region; Dr. Sandra Hirst, Calgary, representing Alberta's universities; Ellen Kemp, Millet, east central region; Nick Kutash, Willingdon, Edmonton and area region; Harry Long, Leduc, Edmonton and area region; Evelyn Onofryszyn, Eckville, west central region; Dr. Laurie Pereles, Calgary, representing the Alberta Medical Association; Mr. Gerry Routhier, Fort McMurray, northeast region; and Noordeen Tejpar, Calgary, Calgary and area region.

Very briefly, I want to say that we've fulfilled two major roles, one as a transmitter between seniors and the government and, second, as an initiator in studying issues and concerns raised with the council. With our two major roles, we have four strategic goals based on our philosophy. This year we have updated and continued to work on developing strategies that will more effectively complete the goals which we have set out for ourselves.

I want to tell you about a few major activities that are undertaken by the council in reaching its goals. In full council meetings, such as we had the last two days, we are determined to hold public consultations and/or tour facilities and centres in different locations across the province to learn more about seniors and gather information on issues. This morning I was very pleased to be one of the six groups that visited 12 wide-ranging seniors' facilities in the city of Edmonton. If you wanted to see an energized group, you should have been there this morning at 9 o'clock just as we were about to leave.

We will also be conducting regional tours that will be even more extensive throughout the province. As chair I'm committed to traveling on these, and we will be inviting local MLAs to come with us.

MR. COUTTS: And we very much appreciate that.

MS KRYCZKA: Yes. I'm just looking at my hon. colleague for Livingstone-Macleod, because about a month ago the southern Alberta region member, the member here, and myself went to Pincher Creek and Blairmore and met with seniors and had a great day.

We plan to attend special events and make presentations, once more ongoing, at seniors' centres, display information at workshops and conferences, participate on committees dealing with special issues identified, and that would be in the research context, such as the present shelter cost study. We publish, as I said, a newsletter. We provide funding for the annual information workers' workshop. We again plan to make presentations to standing policy committees of government, community services and health in particular, and continually work in participating with MLAs at local meetings.

Most importantly, we provide quarterly reports at the end of the day to the Hon. Shirley McClellan, Minister of Community Development, and also table a very important year-in-review report outlining the work of the councils.

I would like to take a few moments here to thank the department of seniors programs and services for their support, in particular to Dave Arsenault and to Carol Ching.

If I have a few more moments, Madam Minister, I want to comment very briefly on a study that I'm chairing, and I'm very pleased to do so. It's the governmentwide study on the impact of the aging population. I know that to date it's probably a fairly well kept secret, but that's because it's only in its infancy, having existed since November. But I'm very proud to say that we have a very qualified committee. We are wrapping up an interim report, which is like a three-dimensional photograph of seniors' programs and services, by the end of April. We have been invited to make recommendations to the minister. I'm very pleased to say that we are now also commencing planning a public consultation for the fall across the province, and that will culminate in a provincial-level seniors symposium in late November.

I know there will be pressures as our population ages and increases, but I think it's very important at this point that the government is studying the impact of this increase of population and planning for the future. I don't share any sense of alarm for the future, but I think it's very important that we start our planning now, because the progression will be gradual over the next 30 years.

Very quickly, I would like to mention the names of people on this study as they are very qualified and they represent the province. I would like to, first of all, acknowledge my vice-chair, who is the MLA for Leduc; Donna Chamberland, who is a senior representing rural Alberta and a former teacher and former president of the Northeastern Retired Teachers' Association . . .

DR. TAYLOR: Where does she live?

MS KRYCZKA: Rural Alberta.

I will table the names for this report. Thank you very much.

4:50

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Does the minister want to complete her remarks?

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'm done.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands for allowing me to get this on the record.

I'm pleased to have this additional opportunity to question the minister again on the budget for Community Development. Given the short time that we have, I am most appreciative of the minister's alacrity in responding in writing to questions. I commend her for

that and indeed recommend her example to all of the other ministers. There was a one-week turnaround on her written responses to my questions from a week ago, and I certainly appreciate that. That is to say that written responses would again be appreciated this time. And indeed thank you to the staff that are joining us in the gallery, who no doubt were influential in the speediness of those responses.

The previous questions focused mainly on seniors. Today I'd like to concentrate on arts and culture, sports and recreation, and women. I have a couple of themes that I'd like to develop: the use of lottery dollars for pre-existing government programs; cuts to arts and recreation groups; key performance indicators that do not support cultural development; how responsibility for children's art education seems to be shifting from the Department of Education to Community Development; an analysis of the effect of government programs on women; a discussion on the community lottery boards; and racism education.

Firstly, the use of lottery dollars for pre-existing government programs. I've spoken on a number of occasions as to why, given the large amounts of money that this government is adding into its coffers raised from gambling, particularly VLTs, we can't get an increase to the many worthy quality-of-life foundations that exist under Community Development. I'm thinking specifically here of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, the Wild Rose Foundation, et cetera. According to the figures that are available in the 1999-2000 estimates, it looks to me like there is now about \$625,100,000 from the lottery fund going to pre-existing programs in 13 departments. If there's that much money available for all of these other programs, why can't some of that money be put into the programs that essentially are the quality-of-life programs, that are the ones that certainly most people would think of and had intended, when the lotteries were started, that the money go into?

I note that the Premier said in an October 20, '98, government news release that all lottery profits collected by the province be directed to charitable and nonprofit initiatives that benefit all Albertans. This, of course, is echoing recommendation 5 from the gaming summit, "that all gaming and lottery profits collected by the province be directed to supporting charitable or non-profit [community] initiatives." Now, this recommendation came from the gaming summit participants who were firm in feeling that the portion returned directly to the community was too low. In addition, there was considerable concern that the lottery funds were being used in part to supplement the operational costs of essential services. Principles recommended by the '95 Judy Gordon Lotteries Review Committee said: it creates a dependence on an unstable source of funds. That's a quote from the final summit report.

Mr. Chairman, all of the foundations under Community Development certainly fit this profile. I would also venture to say that there are a few other programs like CFEP, the community facility enhancement program, which also fit this profile. The programs transferred to lottery dollars are not new. Most of them existed previously under various department budgets. I think this is a shell game, pretending that these are new programs and that somehow this is an answer to the recommendations to both the Judy Gordon committee and the gaming summit. I think it's a public relations gimmick.

[Mrs. Gordon in the Chair]

We need new dollars. I maintain that we are at the same or nearly the same funding levels as in the late '80s. It's very difficult to track this through the changes that have happened and the number of changes that have happened in the department. Given inflation and

growth in Alberta, funding in '99 real dollars appears to have dropped by \$1.5 million. So there is a real effect on this department. There definitely have been cuts, and I note that the minister says: no, it's a change in accounting policy. When I look at the line items and I speak to the groups in the community -- I look on page 73. Since '92-93 the arts and libraries divisions have been cut 42.5 percent, from \$3,100,000 to \$1,780,000. Ministry staff administering AFA grants have declined from 38 staff in 1994 to 17 in the fall of '98. How is this not a reduction?

What I'll do is give an example that lots of people understand. If we talk about festivals, almost everyone here, I'm sure, has attended or participated in a festival in this province. There are lots of them both in the urban centres and other ones I can think of: the Blueberry Blue Grass and a couple of other ones that I've gone to that are in smaller centres, the South Country fair. Festivals are a really popular and populist thing for people to participate in. For instance, the Fringe theatre has about a \$1.4 million budget. I'm not sure if that's exactly correct, but let's say it's a \$1.4 million budget. Now, they should be getting roughly \$300,000 if full eligibility was available, but it's not. The festivals have been capped at a maximum of \$40,000. To make the problem worse, the grant program is now so oversubscribed that all the festivals under that have been cut back to 64 percent of what that entitled amount would be.

The 10 largest festivals, who are at that cap, never did get their full eligibility. They were capped at the \$40,000, and they're now cut back to the 64 percent. So they're now getting \$25,800 and change. If we look back to the Fringe budget, they are getting less than 2 percent of their budget. Now, I believe the Minister of Economic Development presented a beautiful international tourism package that was distributed to the members. On the front page of that what do we have? A beautiful photograph of an Edmonton festival. These festivals are used as tourism draws, they're used as economic development, they're popular, and they're proven. Why can't we give them the support? Why do they have to be cut?

I think all the programs of arts funding are in the same shape. The AFA, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, has received an increase of 35 percent in new applications for funding between '96-97 and '97-98. Now, this follows perfectly what the Treasurer is telling us about population growth. It's certainly evidence of a growing number of Albertans trying to create artistic activity and of the needs of the growing population base. Why no new funding? Not only are there many new groups, but there are now less staff to help them.

I also note cuts to sports and recreation. I have a question here that I was not able to get answered from the minister's written response. Are these cuts tied to the world track and field games? I know that a few years ago -- and I mentioned this in a previous debate -- the groups that fell under that, the recreation groups and the amateur sports groups, were I believe told they were taking a cut to allow money for the games staff. I'm wondering if the minister is contemplating the same thing. If not, why are there cuts to this area? No matter how I look at this, whether it's through Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife or through vote 2.1.4, there is less money between last year, the year before, and this year.

5:00

I also have a question about whether it's appropriate to cut recreation activities that are not high-performance sport oriented to make dollars available for games.

On to a slightly different topic. I note that this is the first year of a three-year plan. Now, I'm aware that Alberta Foundation for the Arts has been undergoing a change in policy regarding the relationship with arts groups and arts funding. So my question is: how can the government do a new three-year plan when it does not have the

new policy changes from AFA? Or has the government already decided what the policy changes are and that's why they're able to do the three-year plan? If the government already knows these changes or new policies, would they now share these with the groups affected?

I'd like to go on to the key performance indicators. I note that in the government of Alberta fiscal plan, a special extra book, that support for the performing arts is measured by a graph that shows private-sector support, and I find this odd, that in evaluating the government's support of the arts, it is measured by private-sector support. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to be comparing the government's support to the arts rather than the private-sector support?

I'll also note that this ranking of quality of life, which examines private support for the performing arts, is only for companies over \$100,000 budget and also includes donations and fund-raising activities, which of course includes bingo and casinos. So this is not private dollars donated by corporations in entirety. All other fund-raising is included in that.

When I look at page 82 of the estimates book, there's the connection. The key performance indicator for the arts is now "percentage of funding to arts and cultural groups provided by the private sector." So indeed that is how this government is judging the success of the arts component. So was the same graph used for both? In which case this 70 percent is not taking into consideration the groups in Alberta with budgets under \$100,000. I know that the minister is aware that that's an awful lot of groups.

The second performance indicator is the "economic impact of arts and cultural industries." In examining the key performance indicators I note that criteria like development of culture or government support of culture or number of people attending cultural events or number of national or international recognitions or volunteers supporting cultural activities or anything at all which attempts to actually measure our cultural success is not there. The only measurement on culture is economic. There is nothing to do with culture in the performance indicator, and I find that very odd.

I also note that the budget speech mentioned judging the film industry on its arts component -- and I'll underline that -- and economic impact, but we don't do the same for arts and culture. It's very strange.

Could the minister confirm that the policy changes -- and I think it's called the arts support blueprint -- that the Alberta Foundation for the Arts is discussing self-sufficiency for arts groups. I'm wondering if this is an indicator that the government is planning on withdrawing support. Has any analysis been done by the government on the quality and accessibility of self-sufficient, which I'm assuming means private sector, arts companies? The example that springs to mind instantly and the one that was always touted as the best example was in fact -- was it Livent? -- Mr. Drabinsky's firm for which there were \$80 and \$90 tickets.

#### **Chairman's Ruling Decorum**

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me a moment, hon. member. It is getting very, very noisy in here. I'd like to call the committee to order. It's getting very noisy in here. If we have side conversations, could we maybe take them out to the patio?

Go ahead, Edmonton-Centre.

#### **Debate Continued**

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. So the example of Mr. Drabinsky and his private-sector theatre company,

which I'm afraid has gone down in flames, is not a great example for us to look at, how successful this venture is.

I note that three-year business plans are encouraged or required by the government for all agencies receiving funds under this department, and I'm wondering if there is a corresponding open and transparent commitment to multiyear funding for these same agencies, with the amounts attached.

I'm noting increasingly that children are being included in the discussion of a number of different sectors under Community Development. I know that that has also been brought into the discussion with the proposed changes in policy for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Now, this funding and these programs used to be under the Department of Education, and they appear to now be shifted into Community Development. My question is: were additional dollars added to the pot to compensate the arts groups for this additional expectation of services? I can't find it, but perhaps I missed it.

I'm also wondering if the minister has lobbied her colleague the Treasurer for a change in the tax structure which would favour philanthropy to the arts. If the province is to delink from the feds, it would make it much more possible to implement tax credits provincially to encourage donations into all of the sectors that are covered in the minister's department: youth, volunteerism, sports and recreation, arts and culture, historical sites, museums, libraries, et cetera.

Oh, boy, there is not enough time to debate this department.

I'd like to move on to women now. The minister has stated that women are now rolled in with human rights and citizenship and that no separate entity is required. I am still trying to determine what exactly is being done by this government for women. For example, has a gender analysis been done on the maintenance enforcement program regarding women and their children in poverty? Has any analysis been done on advanced education now that federal and provincial training programs were merged? The federal government recognized women as a specific target group entitled to specific funding. Has the women's policy program done any analysis on whether equal dollars are going to women in the area of training? Has any analysis been done on the effect of other government programs on women in Alberta? For example, the minimum wage and women, part-time work and benefits, how this affects women.

We already know that women are not equally represented or sometimes not represented at all on government decision-making committees. Has the women's program or policy program done any analysis on the effect of lack of representation of women on committees? Has any program in Economic Development or Labour or science, research and information technology or Transportation or Agriculture or Justice had any scrutiny by the women's policy regarding women's representation or the effect of departmental policies on the lives of women in Alberta? I would appreciate that information being shared if indeed it has been done.

Very briefly, I'd like to go to the issue of the community lottery boards. I note that in her response to me, the minister mentioned the investment of the \$50 million of lottery funds and said that it effectively doubled the funds available to community organizations, including arts and culture. While that is true and while I know that every organization that received those funds value them very highly, I think it's important to point out that given the criteria that was established under the community lottery boards, there could not be ongoing operational funding, so every group had to come up with a new project. None of this money went to support what the groups have been trying to do all the way along and for which they so desperately need the funding. Every group that managed to be successful in getting funds had to dream up something new yet

again. It didn't help them with their existing programming, which is where they've been needing the additional help. I think that's a point that needs to be underlined.

As well, while arts and culture and libraries were successful in getting grants -- by the look of things they seem to have gotten \$4.4 million out of the \$50 million. Well, that was great, and I'm sure people are grateful, but it didn't help. I mean, we're still putting the same amount of money into arts and culture and sports and recreation and libraries, even with the cuts, than we have been for a long time.

My last point. I noticed that in the lottery boards there were a number of projects that were funded which wouldn't seem to be what was coming out of the general direction of the gaming summit. For instance, we're funding -- I'm looking at some of them. This is money that's needed. There's no question, and I'm not saying they shouldn't have received it. They obviously needed it. But it's things like Elk Island public school regional division Listen Up. I mean, that's an important program, but it's obviously an educational program. Strathcona County Emergency Services for five life-pack ambulance defibrillators. That's obviously something that's very much a health resource that is needed. I wouldn't take that money away from those people, but I have to point out that this is money that I think most people on the street would consider essential services, and it's coming out of community lotteries. Therefore, there is less money available in there for the rest of the quality of life.

5:10

The last issue that I have here -- and I know there are a number of people waiting to speak -- is on racial tolerance. We have just passed March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and we had the member who is the chairperson of the human rights, citizenship and multiculturalism fund talk about her program. I'm wondering if this human rights, citizenship and multiculturalism fund has any plans to implement an education and tolerance package for Members of the Legislative Assembly. The Premier has said that this government has a zero tolerance policy, and I'm wondering if there's anything that we can expect for the legislators to assist us in meeting this zero tolerance.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Minister, I'm very glad to have this time to ask these additional questions.

**THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** The hon. Minister of Community Development, followed by the leader of the ND opposition.

**MRS. McCLELLAN:** Madam Chairman, I did not intend to speak today, but eventually it seems that the opposition critic for this area drives me to it. I'm a little bit sorry that I had my staff and myself work so hard in making sure that we had these responses here and, I believe, in the offices this morning so they could be reviewed. Obviously they weren't reviewed too well, or the hon. member would have realized that the reason that there's a reduction apparent in ASRPW is because of onetime funding of \$950,000 to the Grey Cup last year, which was hosted in Edmonton. I don't think that's too difficult.

I suggest to you that the arts and sports and cultural communities in this province are very pleased that there have not been reductions, where in other provinces, indeed in this country, there have been up to 30 percent. I think they clearly understand that health and education are a priority of the people in this province, and until those needs are met, they are happy to sustain their funding, and in fact publicly, if you attended some of these activities, you would hear them talk about the support that this government does give to arts

and culture. And, yes, festivals are receiving less funding, but it's sort of a marvelous problem to have. The growth of festivals in this province is phenomenal, and you know why? It's because they're good, and because people want to go to them, and therefore they support them. If they were so severely underfunded, I would suggest to you, hon. member, there would be less of them, not more.

I'm not going to go into all of the areas, but I was absolutely shocked at the comments on the community lottery boards and the community decision-making. Surely the hon. member does not suggest that I should in some way influence these boards and tell them they should not be funding that program, that it should be funded by Education. They should not fund this other program, that it should be funded by Health. The one thing that we said very clearly is that this would be community based: communities would make the decision, they would send their decision to me, and they would not be questioned. I think the community lottery boards will tell you that is indeed what has happened.

Again, all I can say is: hon. members, the arts and cultural and sports communities in this province do appreciate the support they get. The last estimates, I heard that there was a problem with Percy Page, that the groups were unhappy, so I went over. I met every group in that place. Indeed, I couldn't find the basis for that. I asked for names, and I would investigate it. I suggested at that time that if they were unhappy, the minister of public works could probably find somebody else to offer that building to rent free and their utilities paid plus the admin support that we give.

The last thing I will say is that if you look at this, you will understand there were no cuts in staff. Because of a change in amalgamation and alignment, the 38 staff are still there to support the recreation groups. They are simply in a separate division.

I'm not going to take the time from the opposition ND leader because I know she has some questions, but I may come back again, and, hon. member, all I can recommend to you is get out, get involved with these communities, go to the Winspear some evenings, go to the Citadel, ask them. I've been there when your name was mentioned -- didn't see you. But talk to these people, and ask them if they think that the support this government gives to the arts, the cultural community, and the sports community -- go talk to the parents of kids that went to the Canada Winter Games and represented this province in Newfoundland last month and represented us well, and ask them if they think this government is supporting sports and youth programs.

I rest my case if you would do that and bring back names instead of this rather negative type of criticism. I would appreciate some positive -- positive -- suggestions to improve how we deliver those programs. I'd like to add up the bill that I've heard over the last weeks of spend, spend, spend but no solutions other than money.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Madam Chairman. First of all in congratulating the Minister of Community Development on her role in getting the 2001 world track and field championships here . . . [interjections] Oh, yeah. She was very enthusiastic, and I'm really pleased. I'm pleased that the province is prepared to spend the \$19 million that it shows in our estimates book, but I can't figure out exactly where it's being spent. I don't expect a detailed breakdown right now, but if we could get it in writing later on, I'd be appreciative of knowing.

As I'm on my feet, let me make a pitch. You know what the pitch is. This pitch is for any work that's being done, particularly around the Commonwealth stadium area, in Edmonton. If a program could

be instituted such -- I mean, I'm envisioning calling it, you know, Helping Hand or Hand Up. There are a lot of people who suffer intermittent and sometimes chronic unemployment who live in the inner city who have to put up with a lot of the noise and the traffic and all that. Believe me; some of those rock concerts -- I live in Riverdale, and I can hear them. Okay? They do have to put up with a lot of inconveniences, and a lot of them have a very low income, have in some instances very limited skill sets but could be of use in some of the manual labour components of the work that's going to be done around this town as we prepare for and actually engage in the 2001 games. I'm not suggesting a separate ministry or anything, but if I can get the message through to the minister to particularly target some of the unemployed in the inner city, where they could be of help and where they might get that helping hand in terms of developing their skill sets, I'm sure it would be very positive.

Like I say, if I can get some kind of breakdown on how the \$19 million is being spent. I guess I'm going to have to ask the city the same thing, but I'll do that as a separate exercise.

Also, I'm very curious about the health care premium subsidy for seniors increasing by 20 percent. We know that the aging population isn't increasing by 20 percent in one year. [interjection] Okay. All right. So the minister will let me know that.

I'm pleased to note that a few weeks ago the regulations regarding the seniors' premium subsidy program were changed to make it consistent with the Seniors Benefit Act, which is what I'd asked last year when in fact the benefit act was up for contemplation and it made me scared that too much decision-making on the benefits act itself would be going into regulations.

One thing that I consistently hear from seniors is, again: can the government not bring back the financial assistance for property taxes? A number of them argue -- and I think they're reasonable arguments, although maybe not in all cases -- that there's a disincentive for them to remain in their own homes. In fact if they go into long-term care, even though they have to pay for that, the \$800, \$900 a month, they're still public dollars being used in that system.

Also, considering the expansion of some of the expenditure areas, I wonder if the funding for the Alberta Council on Aging could not be brought back. I listened very carefully to the member who is responsible for the seniors' secretariat. I understand that she's got a good advisory committee, but it seems to me that the Alberta Council on Aging was able to take on a whole wide range of issues and not care about jurisdictions. In other words, they would look at federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions and work on a kind of a cross-networked basis that seemed to be very successful. I believe the funding that had gone to them was like a few hundred thousand dollars a year, so maybe now is the time to look at re-funding that provincewide organization.

Two more questions. One, does anybody know the fate of the Provincial Archives? If anybody does, it should be in this minister's department, but we don't really know. [interjections] Well, you know, there's cultural funding in this minister's department. [interjection] Well, maybe I'll come back for the Public Works estimates as well. Just anybody on the other side who can tell me the fate. Presumably they're not leaving Edmonton; that would be a sin.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Who says?

5:20

MS BARRETT: I say. You don't take your provincial archives out of the provincial capital.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Why not?

MS BARRETT: Because that's one of the things that makes it a provincial capital, aside from this building.

Finally, I understand that the government has finally moved back into grants for the motion picture industry, and I say: thank goodness. I hope that means you realize it was a mistake to kill the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation. If you don't, then this is the last of my pitches. My shopping list for Christmas is just about done with this department. That is the reinstatement of the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation. I think a sheer granting program will probably suffice, maybe, but certainly the comprehensive approach taken by the corporation, I think, was pretty well a guaranteed recipe for success in the ventures that they did facilitate.

I'd like to close by again congratulating the minister. I know how much work she put into getting the 2001 games, and I know that Edmonton and Alberta will be substantial beneficiaries of that.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Madam Chairman. Time's short. A number of questions.

I do want to salute the Minister of Community Development. I don't know the last time I received a list of responses to questions within a week. Although she and I may disagree on whether they're full responses, I do want to salute that responsiveness. That sets a standard that every one of her colleagues on the front bench should be following.

Now, to the questions that I haven't asked. How many human rights panels in the 1998-99 calendar year? From July 1996 to November 12, 1997, there were 24 panel hearings. How many since that time? How many of those were referred by the director of the Human Rights Secretariat? How many were referred after an appeal to the chief commissioner? So what I'm asking, Madam Minister, is: what's the body of decisions and orders in that respect?

You know, there's a human rights publication that's even more interesting than *Centrepiece*. There's a publication from the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre which came out. The minister may be familiar with it. There was an article by Melissa Luhtanen from the University of Calgary law faculty. I just wanted to make the one observation. She's talking about human rights commissions. At page 5 she said:

In some provinces they are politically active, lobbying the government for needed amendments to their [human rights] Codes, while in others they stand back from the equality struggle and attempt to follow the legislation word for word.

What I'd like to know from the minister is: how many specific kinds of instruction, advice, information has the commission formally provided to the government, either through the agency of the Minister of Community Development or through some other source? I'd like to know how many recommendations and what issues.

Was a submission made by the Human Rights Commission around the UN convention on the rights of the child, an issue which has occupied considerable interest in this Assembly and outside? The minister will know that there were, I think, 30 or 40 Calgary communities or municipal councils that urged the provincial government -- not to ratify it, because that's an act for the federal government -- to implement it. I'm curious. In that debate, which engaged a lot of Albertans and a lot of local governments, I want to know: was there a recommendation that came from the Human Rights Commission? What form did that take?

How do we know, Madam Minister, when recommendations are made by the Human Rights Commission what the subjects are and what the recommendations are? What's the process for that to be made public and made in a way so that we can see it?

I'm particularly interested in the Cultural Diversity Institute at the University of Calgary. It may be the largest single grantee, it seems to me, from the fund managed by the Member for Calgary-Cross. There is a very large amount of money, and I'd like an update in terms of what's happening with the institute, how you're monitoring the funding that's gone into that.

Just following up on your response to me on employment equity. You know, the federal government in the first year of dealing with employment equity did 110 employment equity audits. So I come back and ask you, Madam Minister: why is it that we're not doing that?

My further question is: back in 1993 there was a survey done of grade 8 and grade 11 . . .

#### **Chairman's Ruling Decorum**

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. It is very, very noisy in here, and people are standing. You are not to be standing. Three members are standing. Someone has the floor. We've got four minutes left. Can we ask for some co-operation?

Go ahead, hon. member.

MR. DICKSON: I thought it was my usual too-soft voice, Madam Chairman, that was creating hearing problems.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. DICKSON: Just following up then. One of the things that I've been asking off and on since 1993 -- we had that survey of grade 8 and grade 11 students. It was a way of measuring attitudes and support for tolerance, understanding, and acceptance. I guess I've continually asked why we don't follow up on that. Why don't we do another sense of whether we're doing better or worse? In 1994, June 27, I got a letter from your predecessor, who told me that before planning follow-up to that earlier survey -- actually it was done in 1991. The recommendation was to replicate it three years later. What the minister of the time came back with was: well, first we've got the Jack O'Neill panel reviewing human rights legislation and the operations of the commission; that report is to be completed soon. Well, we all know what happened. That report was done. The equal in dignity report was done; that's history.

So now, Madam Minister, why don't we go back and do that? This may be a good benchmark for you to see if the money we're spending and the effort expended is resulting in a more tolerant and a more accepting community. We both know that Albertans are fair-minded and generous people, but like every community we have elements of intolerance. We have elements of bigotry, and we want to reduce that. We'll never eliminate it, but, Madam Minister, you have that unique opportunity to work towards reducing it as far as we possibly can. I know that you're happy to be enlisted in the campaign to do that. So I'm going to be very interested in those responses.

Then I guess the last thing is that having read your letter about independence of the commission, it's still a question that the things you talk about that the commission is doing are not leadership in a very public way, and I'll continue to press you in your appointments to the commission to ensure that that voice is not a quiet voice, that the voice is not one that's near mute, heard only by yourself and a few people with a keen interest. This is a voice that has to speak and be amplified to 3 million Albertans, and we're not there yet, Madam Minister.

Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]