

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 29, 1999** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 99/11/29

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Let us remember those who are no longer among us with the most positive of thoughts, and let us reach out with compassion, understanding, and prayer to those who suffer. May God bless them all and extend eternal salvation in a heaven of peace. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have another ACTISEC petition signed by 125 people mostly from the Red Deer and Ponoka area asking for

the Legislative Assembly to freeze tuition and institutional fees and increase support in the foundation of post-secondary education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I'd present an SOS petition signed by 117 Calgarians 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.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one petition to present as well, signed by 116 Calgarians in it looks like eight or nine different constituencies. They

urge the Government to increase support for 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 Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a Save Our Schools petition signed by 127 Calgarians that says:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge 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 Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by 110 Albertans from all across the province requesting this Assembly to urge the government to ban for-profit hospitals in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I present a petition signed by 508 Albertans from Edmonton, Red Deer, Athabasca, Gibbons, Lac La Biche, and St. Paul, urging

the Government of Alberta to conduct an independent public inquiry of the Workers' Compensation Act, including an examination of the operations of the WCB, the Appeals Commission, and the criteria for appointments to the Board.

Thank you.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the ACTISEC petition I presented on the 25th of November on tuition freezes be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned, urge the Legislative Assembly to freeze tuition and institutional fees and increase support in the foundation of post-secondary education.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask that the petitions I presented to the Legislature be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to conduct an independent public inquiry of the Workers' Compensation Act, including an examination of the operations of the WCB, the Appeals Commission, and the criteria for appointments to the Board.

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to increase support for 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 Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to have the petition that I presented to the Assembly on November 25 regarding the WCB now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to conduct an independent public inquiry of the Workers' Compensation Act, including an examination of the operations of the WCB, the Appeals Commission, and the criteria for appointments to the Board.

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

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request the petition that I presented on Thursday last week be read and received.

THE CLERK: Mr. Speaker, that petition was not in order to be read and received.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the first tabling is a letter to William Hess, president of the Canadian Venture Exchange, and it's congratulating him and actually all parties concerned. This is the inaugural day of the Canadian Venture Exchange, a very exciting day for Alberta, for western Canadians and Canadians in general, and we wish them all the best. World capital markets are changing rapidly, and this move to the Canadian Venture Exchange from the Alberta Stock Exchange is going to be very positive for Alberta and for Canada. So I table that first.

I'm also tabling the government's '99-2000 quarterly budget report for the second quarter to all MLAs. We've also made public the progress report as required by section 9 of the Government Accountability Act.

I'm also tabling the quarterly budget report as the amended consolidated fiscal plan. The revised plan is required by section 8 of the same act.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling the restated government and ministry business plans. This document contains the restated business plans for '99 to 2002. These plans have been restated to reflect the government reorganization which was announced in May.

I'm also tabling the Alberta heritage savings trust fund second quarter investment report for '99-2000.

In addition, I'm tabling the Second Quarter Activity Report '99-2000.

Many of these reporting mechanisms continue to be unprecedented in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling 16 responses to written questions and motions for returns. Briefly, I'll categorize. The summaries address the Forever Homes initiative; aboriginal adoptions; the Children's Advocate annual reports for '95-96 and '96-97; interprovincial comparison reports from the Children's Advocate office for '97-98, and April 1, '98, to February 22, '99; requests for proposal for projects for women at risk having a fetal alcohol syndrome child; the role of the Children's Advocate with the authorities; agreements and arrangements between the 18 children and family services authorities and First Nations; drug alcohol abuse issues and group care facility issues; department of family and social services and First Nations bands' agreements; and a copy of the review on the Stoney First Nation's child care services from April 1, '98, to February 23, '99. It also addresses the percentage of children who stay free from abuse or neglect while in government care among other research on child abuse.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry. I must have left them in my office. I have letters of congratulations to Premier Mike Harris of Ontario and also to the Hon. Sheila Copps on the unfortunate victory of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. I serve notice today that I'm going to have to pay a bet, and once I get the Hamilton Tiger-Cat jersey, I'm going to seek your permission in the Legislature later to make a statement. But I do send a letter of congratulations to Ms Copps, of course, who is a well-known – what do you call it? Halligonian?

MR. DAY: Is that what you call it?

MR. KLEIN: I think it is. Or maybe that's a Halifaxian. Hamiltonian. That's right. Okay. And a letter, Mr. Speaker, to Sig Gutsche,

the owner of the Calgary Stampeders, for putting up a very, very good performance.

1:40

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have three tablings. First of all, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Alberta Registered Dietitians Association for the year ended March 31, 1999.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Alberta Dental Assistants Association for the year ended December 31, 1998.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists for the year ended February 28, 1999.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five documents to table. The first one is a letter from the president of the Alberta Medical Association dated November 25 registering opposition to Bill 40, the Health Information Act.

The second one is a news release from the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses dated November 29 registering their opposition to Bill 40.

The third is a letter from the mayor of Edmonton dated November 25, 1999, registering concerns with Bill 40.

The fourth is a copy of the Calgary regional health authority board minutes from October 19, 1999, and the CRHA performance report.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, an analysis entitled Acute Care Facility Design Capacity vs. Acute Care Beds In Service for the 17 regional health authorities.

Thank you very much.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of a letter written by Mr. Grant Hemming of Didsbury to Allan Rock, federal Minister of Health, in which he has asked him to ask the Premier of this province why he's

pursuing the privatization of hospital services, to decrease the "waiting time" for certain medical procedures, while allowing his appointed Regional Health Authority Board #5 to take our modern, full service hospital, and make it into a "long term care unit" as of April 01, 2000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will file with the Assembly a letter that I have written to all the women's shelters across the province asking for their guidance, their input and recommendations in dealing with family violence, not only family violence to be dealt with in the month of November but to fight violence in the home all year round.

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was able to attend the ninth annual fund-raising breakfast supporting programs to stop violence against women and children, and I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of their program for the breakfast.

I have a second tabling as well. I'd like to table five copies of the brochure for SARTE, the sexual assault response team of Edmonton. This program, launched today, provides specially trained nurses and physicians in Edmonton's emergency rooms to assist victims of sexual assault.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table copies of the consolidated fiscal summary establishing the Alberta surplus at \$2.8 billion. Short of this clarification, perhaps the Provincial Treasurer could ask Santa for a new calculator.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a report prepared by the research bureau of the Official Opposition, and it's titled Budget Predictions: Stockwell Day vs. the Alberta Liberal Caucus.

The second is an information piece also prepared by the Official Opposition which details how oil price forecasts and natural gas forecasts stack up versus leading industry experts and the Alberta provincial government.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Speaker I am pleased to introduce to the Assembly from the county of Barrhead Mr. Bill Lee, deputy reeve, and Councillor Steve Holsted and from the town of Barrhead councillors Adolph Bablitz and Edith Yuill. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Forestry.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly 44 grade 10 students from the Edwin Parr composite community school in Athabasca. They are accompanied by their teacher, Peter Driedger, and parents Darlene Hahn, Steve Coulombe, Karen Thunder, and Gloria Bury. I believe the bus driver, Richard Korbut, is also here. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Ms Linda Trimble, who is the associate chair of the department of political science and Canadian studies program at the University of Alberta. She is here with her class of senior-level seminar students who are taking the course in mass media and Canadian politics. Since the students are so intelligent and so aware of what's happening here, I'd ask you if I may introduce them individually. They are Mardi Bissett, Tannis Bujaczek, Tracy Bymoan, Ryan Chimko, Denise Fernandes,Carolynn Hawryluk, Sheila Jain, Marnie Lee, Reina Margolis, Kristina Molin, Michelle Mungall, Lauren Podlub-

ny, Kathryn Pringle, Chris Robb, and Laura Weir. They are in the public gallery, and I would ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. First of all, I would like to welcome Mr. Dennis Anderson, president of the Canadian Mental Health Association. As many members of the Assembly will know, he served this Assembly as MLA for Calgary-Currie between 1979 and 1993 and served in the cabinet in the portfolios of Culture and Multiculturalism, Municipal Affairs, and Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Mr. Anderson is currently president of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and he's accompanied by the following members of the Canadian mental health association alliance: Bev Matthiessen, Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities; Richard Scott, Alberta Mental Health Self-help Network Society; George Lucki, Psychologists Association of Alberta; Sharon Sutherland, Schizophrenia Society of Alberta; and Anthony Brannen, Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Alberta.

I would ask them to stand, Mr. Speaker, and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Another one, hon. minister? Please proceed.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, if I may. Today I'd like to welcome 17 students and their teacher, Mrs. Caroline Perley, from the Rimbey Christian school to the Assembly. They are seated in the members' gallery, and they are accompanied by parents Mr. Ron Soderburg and Mr. David Friesen. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 60 visitors from Lee Ridge elementary school in Edmonton-Mill Woods. There are 54 students accompanied by six adults: Mrs. Allison Sylvester – and Mrs. Allison Sylvester is the daughter of Jackie Edwards, head of visitor services, by the way – Mr. Jim Seerattan, Mrs. Sastri Gosine, Mr. Chris Ruhl; student teacher Miss Stephanie Tyson and aide Mrs. Lois Bruce. They're in both galleries, and with permission I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

1:50

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Violence against Women

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand before you wearing a white ribbon in my lapel symbolizing my support to end violence against women. I'm also pleased to see many of my colleagues wearing this ribbon as part of the national white ribbon campaign. The white ribbon campaign runs every year in Canada from November 25, which is the international day for the eradication of violence towards women, until December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

I'm pleased to state that this campaign is led by a Canadian organization called Men Working to End Men's Violence against Women. Men wear white ribbons to symbolize their opposition to violence against women. The white ribbon can be worn by women

to show their support for this campaign. I encourage all Albertans to wear a white ribbon in opposition to violence against women and, indeed, against all types of violence in our society.

December 6 marks the anniversary of the massacre at l'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, where 14 women were murdered. In Edmonton this year the annual memorial for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women will begin at the Citadel Theatre at noon and move on to Mary Burlye park on 97th Street and 105th Avenue at 12:45 p.m.

A special monument will be unveiled this year to mark the 10th year since the Montreal massacre. I am pleased to note the Alberta Foundation for the Arts provided grant funding for this monument, which was created by Edmonton artist Michelle Mitchell. The monument site will also include 15 trees, one for each of the 14 women of the Montreal massacre and one representing all other women victims of violence. Memorial events will also be held in other communities throughout Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the importance of ending violence against women in their homes and in society.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus I am pleased to see recognition of the white ribbon campaign by this government, and this morning I noticed a number of government members attended the ninth annual fund-raising breakfast supporting programs to stop violence against women and children.

I appreciate the effort of the organizers of the white ribbon campaign to run this national campaign and to be able to garner the resources necessary to do so, but in Edmonton and in many other cities the first and continuing public campaigns and recognitions were started by ad hoc committees of women based in the community. I was honoured to help found the Edmonton event while still on the Advisory Council on Women's Issues. I then chaired the committee for five years. This committee of volunteers raised money to pay for event costs by selling buttons at each year's event. The resources, media, and sponsorship available to the white ribbon campaign was not easy to come by to a small group of women.

It's a sad irony to me that the white ribbon campaign's access to power and influence is a constant reminder that men continue to enjoy that access while grassroot women's organizations, shelters, sexual assault centres, and outreach programs continue to struggle for funding and other kinds of support.

I well remember the announcement of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women passed by the provincial, territorial, and federal ministers of the status of women, but as I commemorate this day each year on December 6, I am increasingly aware that until we address the issues of poverty, isolation, employment barriers, struggles for women to cope with the judicial system's barriers of time and money, addressing systemic alcohol and drug abuse, having the MEP programs truly strengthened, and putting the political will towards addressing problems experienced by aboriginal women on and off the reserve, we will not be able to eradicate violence against women in this province.

Recognition is not enough. We have much work to do.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before we get into the next item of business in the Routine, might we revert very briefly to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, one of the most positive things about the U of A is the Red Deer students who attend there. One of those students is here with us today, Melanie Stewart, whose father is also the fire chief in Red Deer. Melanie worked and served the constituents of Red Deer in my constituency office this summer. Accompanying her, also from the U of A, is Greg Sweeney. I'd ask that they both stand and be recognized in the Assembly today.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Regional Health Authority Contracts

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier's two-tier privatization plan – in other words, this skimpy little five-page document – continues to allow contracts with third parties to be hidden from taxpayers, as is the case now with the existing contracts. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the Premier continuing to hide from taxpayers the contracts between regional health authorities and third parties?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I've stated previously in this Assembly, those contracts are subject to the same rules of freedom of information as are any other documents. I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The contracts with the regional health authorities are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The regional health authorities, in this case the Calgary regional health authority, I think, did considerable work to provide the maximum information on the contracts in terms of the overall obligation of the Calgary regional health authority that they could do within the parameters of that particular legislation. In this respect, they are bound just as we are as a provincial government to abide by that act.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the provincial government, then, amend the freedom of information act so that taxpayers may know where their dollars are being spent on health care in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, one of the questions – as a matter of fact, the only question to which the hon. national Minister of Health, Allan Rock, alluded as it affected the Canada Health Act was the issue of public administration, one of the principles. He asked the same question, and as we prepare the answers, the answer is yes. We will make all those contracts as open and as transparent as possible. That's what legislation is all about. But right now the only legislation we have to address this particular concern is the legislation we passed to require regional health authorities and other components of the so-called HUM sector, or MASH sector, to comply with those principles of FOIP.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will this Premier release the contracts with third parties? It is within his authority to do it.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it is within my authority. I have to abide by the laws of this land just like the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition. That's why we introduced freedom

of information and protection of privacy legislation, to make available to the public certain information and to protect individuals from the release of particular information. This Liberal opposition helped to draft this legislation through the public consultation process.

These contracts that have been let relative to eye surgeries, relative to abortion procedures, Mr. Speaker, by RHAs are subject to the rules of the freedom of information act. We have indicated publicly that when the legislation is introduced relative to the new health policy, we will try to make these contracts as open and as transparent as we possibly can without violating some fundamental principles relative to freedom of information.

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

Private Health Services

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier has certainly created suffering in health care. The two-tier privatization plan that he's outlined is leading us downward to a disturbing path. I have tabled studies in this Legislative Assembly, first, with respect to New Zealand, then with respect to the United States, and now a Canadian study by McMaster University that clearly shows that quality and access to health care are negatively affected by contracting out. My questions today are to the Premier. Given that this centre at McMaster has indicated that quality and access, reduction in cost are not available, why is the Premier continuing to promote contracting out in his scheme here in Alberta?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, there is no two-tiered health care plan. The legislation that we're proposing as a result of the policy statement is to protect the publicly funded health system as we know it today and to uphold without question the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act.

Relative to destroying the system, Mr. Speaker, that person over there, the leader of the Liberal opposition, when she was minister of health, had the opportunity to do something about it. She did absolutely nothing. The system was starting to suffer and to suffer greatly when that individual was the minister of health. We had to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask this question. There is the authority now for regional health authorities to contract various services. We do know and there is some evidence to support the fact that the contracting of cataract surgery, for instance, has alleviated some pressure on the public health system. Will this member stand up today if she's so opposed, because she didn't do anything when she was the minister, and say that she is absolutely opposed to RHAs contracting out abortion services? Will she stand up and say that?

THE SPEAKER: No, but I will.
Please proceed.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's own policy talks about contracting out despite the fact that there may be significant risks – and I'm quoting from the McMaster study – in pursuing this strategy and may be more harmful than good. Why does he continue to pursue the contracting out option?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's contribution to the public debate on this particular issue providing it's reasonable debate. But she's talking now . . . [interjections] No, no. She's talking now about her opposition to RHAs, as we speak today,

contracting out services. Will she stand up in this Legislative Assembly and say that unequivocally she is opposed to RHAs contracting abortion services?

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will this Premier commission a study by the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge – some of our students are here in the Legislature today – to look at the contracting out option and whether, in fact, it is less cost-efficient, or is he afraid of what our universities might tell him?

MR. KLEIN: No. As a matter of fact, I would add to the Liberal leader's challenge that the universities and all of the professors who are associated, these scientists get involved in the debate and offer us their opinions. I would welcome that, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition for bringing that up, and I say publicly before the television cameras: please do. I challenge the medical profession and I challenge all Albertans to really offer their input. That's precisely why we put the policy out, to really engage Albertans in this debate, to engage Canadians in this debate, to make sure that when we introduce legislation, it is the right legislation to protect the public health system as we know it today.

THE SPEAKER: Well, let's try it again, and let's see if the decorum could improve just a bit.

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

Alberta Hospital Ponoka

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Alberta Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health was announced to address their serious concerns regarding the crisis in mental health, a crisis brought about by this Premier's lack of commitment to community mental health services. Unbelievably, the latest government spending spree has allocated \$95 million for the Ponoka hospital without consulting community and mental health organizations. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier explain why the minister of health is spending the equivalent of 37 percent of the mental health annual budget on Ponoka hospital, which coincidentally is located in the minister of health's riding?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, why? Why would this hon. member ask me to respond on behalf of the minister of health when he's sitting right here and is perfectly able to respond on his own behalf?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, since 1993-94 spending has increased 100 percent or it's doubled as far as community mental health services are concerned in this province. There are initiatives going on specifically with respect to children's mental health in conjunction with other departments and the school system and the community in general. We have also initiatives that have been announced with respect to additional research into mental health treatment as well as special crisis units operating particularly in Edmonton and Calgary with respect to and focusing on the needs of young people.

With respect to the figures that the hon. member mentions, in terms of the upcoming budget year the commitment to that particular capital project, I believe, is about \$7 million. Mr. Speaker, it is not going to, I don't think, jeopardize the major, major effort that we're making in terms of community mental health services in the province.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has often

said that the buck stops with him, why is your government spending \$95 million on bricks and mortar for a single hospital in Ponoka as opposed to increasing much-needed community service throughout the province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister pointed out, we're trying to strike the right balance.

Again, I will have the hon. minister reply as to what the hospital at Ponoka actually does and the service it provides to this community.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Hospital Ponoka is a regional centre for southern Alberta. It is the home of telepsychiatry in this province. That was initiated and started and developed there. It is well known, and most people in this province give a great deal of credit to the brain-injured treatment centre there, which is well known and serves all parts of the province. In addition, their work with respect to the mentally ill, including a number of young people – by the way, they have a school there – is, I think, of high quality. They have been one of the leading health authorities in the province in terms of establishing on their own initiative regular reports to their clients, to the families of their clients.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's been a major effort there to serve in a very high-quality way the needs of people in the province of Alberta. Quite frankly, I think that it is long overdue in terms of renewing parts of the hospital and rebuilding it. Since, as I've said, some of the buildings date from 1912, in fact, they're eligible for historic site status.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister of health couldn't find the time to meet with the members of the alliance prior to the \$95 million announcement, will the Premier commit this afternoon in the Legislative Assembly to the members of the alliance who are sitting in the gallery that there will be no development of the Ponoka hospital until the alliance's report has been received and acted upon?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely convinced and I know that a great deal of study went into this particular situation prior to the commitment of funds for the upgrading and the modernization of the Alberta Hospital at Ponoka. I see absolutely nothing wrong with it. At the same time, we committed to a new hospital or an upgraded hospital at Manning. There comes a time when we have to commit funds for the upgrading of hospitals, institutions, schools, universities in this province.

I would say to the hon. member: answer the question. The tone of her question is that she would like to do away with that hospital. [interjections] No, no. I would ask the question just as I asked the other question. You know, they talk about bricks and mortar in one breath. They talk about contracting out and how they oppose contracting out. They haven't answered the question: would they like to see the elimination of contracting out as it relates to abortion procedures, and would they like to see the closing down of the Alberta Hospital at Ponoka? I mean, state it.

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

Private Health Services

(continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's agenda is to promote private, for-profit involvement in public health care at any cost. In fact, the higher the cost the happier the government so

long as it guarantees and pads the profit margins of private business interests. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the government promoting the privatization of health care by forcing public hospitals to charge a facility fee that is less than one-quarter, less than one-fourth, of what WCB now pays to private clinics for exactly the same procedure?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to WCB those are contracts that the Workers' Compensation Board negotiates with the regional health authorities. It has absolutely nothing to do with the publicly funded health care system. It has nothing to do with the policy statement that was sent out.

The policy statement simply says that we are firmly committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act. It says and Mr. Rock acknowledges that we need to find new ways to reduce waiting lists and alleviate suffering. He said in his letter that the status quo simply is not acceptable.

The key principles: all Albertans will have access to insured medical services through the publicly funded and publicly administered health system, no Albertans will pay for insured medical services, and nobody will have to pay to get faster service. Does that hon. member agree with those principles? Does he agree with those principles?

Regional health authorities will be responsible for all insured surgical services. Does he agree with that principle? Private providers of insured surgical services will be able to operate but only under contract and only if it will improve access, improve efficiency, or reduce waiting lists in the public system. Is that evil or wicked, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. To alleviate suffering? Would he like to prolong suffering? If he wants to, stand up and say so.

These principles, Mr. Speaker, will prohibit the development of a parallel, private health system, that so-called awful American, two-tiered health care system. It will specifically prohibit it.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if for a change the Premier would answer the questions honestly.

Let me try another one. Why won't the Premier admit the obvious; that is, in order for private facilities to compete, they require facility fees four and a half times higher than public hospitals for the same procedure?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, quite obviously, facility fees are prohibited under the Canada Health Act. We went through that with the Gimbel eye clinic. Right? We were penalized, and finally we conceded to the federal government. We said: okay; we will disallow this kind of thing.

As it relates to WCB, that is separate and apart from the Canada Health Act, and I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, if I might supplement. If one looks at the definitions under the Canada Health Act, item (i) indicates that

"insured . . . services" means hospital services, physician services and surgical-dental services provided to insured persons, but does not include any health services that a person is entitled to and eligible for under an Act of Parliament or under any . . . Act of the legislature of the province that relates to workers' . . . compensation.

So there is a specific exclusion in the Canada Health Act.

Further, Mr. Speaker, the rates that our hospitals, our public health care system in the province can charge for WCB work are the result and were part of an overall national agreement, an interprovincial and federal agreement with respect to rates for that particular

service. So there is a very definitive level that can be charged as far as our public health care system is concerned.

DR. PANNU: My second supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: how can the Premier continue to spread the grotesque myths that surgeries will only be privatized if they cost less when the reality is that right now the WCB with full government concurrence is paying private clinics four and a half times more than it pays public hospitals for the same procedures?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is entirely up to the WCB to negotiate a contract with the regional health authorities. Again, I have to repeat that this has nothing to do with the policy statement that we have issued leading up to the legislation that we hope to introduce next spring.

Again, I'll have the hon. minister explain it.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, just very briefly, the fact of the matter is that when the Canada Health Act was debated and ultimately proclaimed, the result was that WCB services were excluded from the insured section or the insured component of that particular piece of legislation, as were services with respect to the armed forces, and I could go through the rest of the list.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Provincial Budget Projections

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has worked hard since 1993 to eliminate the deficit and to rebuild Alberta's fiscal strength. We've received praise for our efforts from Albertans and from people across Canada and across the globe, but for the past week we've heard speculation from the opposition and in the media that the government's economic cushion was going to be \$2 billion or even \$3 billion. They call this an embarrassment of riches. Can the Provincial Treasurer please explain what the actual figure is?

MR. DAY: I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, when you see manufacturing in the province increasing by 10 percent and new housing starts by 17 percent and the population increasing by 2 percent and weekly earnings going up by over 3 percent and an unprecedented number of investments coming in, we're not embarrassed about that. We feel pretty good about that; I can tell you that right now.

Mr. Speaker, where the different figures come from is hard to say when it's the opposition that are tossing them out. We do know that since the beginning of this budget year the increase in dollars that have come in through oil and gas prices being higher than anybody in the world projected is a little over \$2 billion in terms of an increase in revenues. Maybe that's where the \$2 billion figure comes from. If you add to that the \$600 million that we had projected would be there in terms of increased dollars at the end of the year, that's \$2.8 billion. Maybe that's where they're getting their 3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, you can't say that you have a surplus when you still have a large debt and when you still have spending commitments through the year. Of that \$2.8 billion you have to take off the \$200 million which has gone to the agriculture disaster situation. Then you apply the 75-25 rule: 75 percent of whatever is left must go to the debt. That brings it down to \$2 billion. That's \$2 billion in available dollars. But we are allowing a onetime flow-through of \$600 million off that \$2 billion to go to the counties and cities

around this province at the request of those mayors and councillors. That leaves \$1.4 billion.

That is the approximate economic cushion, of which you're going to see 75 percent go to debt, and some, in fact, is going to an increase in assets. Our projection is that we will be putting on the debt by the end of this year more than double what we had thought back in March. We will again lead the country in this. That's not an embarrassment. We feel pretty good about it.

THE SPEAKER: Perhaps it's timely to remind all hon. members that the purpose of question period is not to have a private member ask a question of the government to verify something that the opposition would have said or something that the media might have reported.

Please proceed, hon. member.

2:20

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Provincial Treasurer. I understand that oil and gas prices are quite volatile, but can the Treasurer explain how his budget forecasts for oil and gas can be so far from what the actual amounts are right now?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is something that is not being reported in the media, and I'm happy to address that. As a matter of fact, so that I don't have to give a long answer, I'll table these documents which show the graphs of where the major predictors in the world are, and Alberta is there. This shows that when we tabled our budget in March, we estimated that oil would be at \$13.50 a barrel. Along with the major investment houses – Lehman Brothers, Peters and Co., S and P, Goldman Sachs, ARC Financial, RBC Dominion – the world thought that oil would be right in that particular area. As a matter of fact, not that they're a major predictor, but I have inserted here the Liberals. They were right there. They were right there with the rest of the world. Nobody was predicting at that time that oil would be \$13.50. However, it is a lot higher than \$13.50.

I'd like to table that along with five copies of the natural gas forecasts. Ours is in there along with the rest of the world. We were right on target. Nobody in the world, including the Liberals – they're in here too – thought that that was where the price would be today, and that's part of the reason we are where we are today.

I'm also tabling, Mr. Speaker – and then I will conclude and sit down. I'm going to table something that should bring a sober second thought to anybody who gives any credence to the Liberal's ability to project or be accurate. This is very important. The Liberals put out a news release today that said that their estimates for the . . .

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

MR. DAY: Yeah, they're nervous about this.

They tabled something today, Mr. Speaker, that said that their projections were that revenues would be \$19 billion.

THE SPEAKER: Please, hon. Provincial Treasurer. I'm reminded, as well, that this afternoon I think the Order Paper basically says that government motions 24 and 25 will be introduced.

We're moving on to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Family Violence

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has decreed that November is family violence month, and a good thing, too, as Alberta and B.C. continue to have the highest rates of shelter

use for domestic violence in the country. Funding for women shelters is now under Children's Services and is administered by the new CEOs of the regional children's authorities. To the Minister of Children's Services: under whose authority does a CEO of a regional children's authority threaten to cut off funding to a local women's shelter?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with any CEO threatening to cut off funding to any women's shelter.

I'd like to just respond that through the prevention of family violence budget we have contributed in this year's budget \$10.4 million to women's shelters, which comprises about 25 percent of the funding that shelters actually gain. They are funded from the local level; they are funded by nonprofit support. We have 18 shelters funding 349 spaces in Alberta.

In the attendance that I had at a breakfast recently as guest speaker for women's shelters, I received absolutely no such reference, but I'll be pleased to receive the information and look into it. Mr. Speaker, it would be most courteous if people have information of this nature to table it so that I can come forward and respond.

MS BLAKEMAN: I'll be happy to supply you with that information.

A further question to the Minister of Children's Services. What is the government hoping to achieve by refusing to release the turn-away rates for women's shelters?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we have absolutely no problem talking about the information from women's shelters and the statistics. One of the things that we have noted is that there are approximately 9,000 people that were turned away last year, but they were not without space. They were provided space through the Ministry of Human Resources and Employment. No one is ever turned away. They are always given additional opportunities to find accommodation external to the shelter.

Further, the spaces that sometimes are available as excess spaces within shelters – for example, if a mother and a child are there – are spaces where additional children would be placed in that room, and it is not conducive to fill up the spaces. So to make an assumption that all of the beds are always filled because there are people that are not able to stay in a shelter would be erroneous.

Mr. Speaker, we will be pleased to provide additional tablings relative to the detail of the women's shelters spaces in all eight centres of the province.

MS BLAKEMAN: Good.

My last question is to the Minister of Justice. Why did the government not provide enough funding to fully train the police officers and special justices of the peace who administer the new Protection against Family Violence Act? You knew that we were proclaiming it in June. Why didn't you provide the funding?

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, we have been devoting resources to training police officers, training Crown prosecutors. We're working very diligently to make sure that in this area of domestic violence the courts, the prosecutors, and the community work together to achieve what we want, which is to drag domestic violence out of the dark and into the light, where it can be examined and dealt with.

There is always a question of sufficiency of resources. We make the best use of the resources that we have to train as many people as possible, but in this area, until domestic violence is totally eradicated, there will never be enough money. We have to do the best we can with the resources we have.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our families and our communities continue to be devastated by the impact of family violence. More than 4,700 domestic-related offences occurred in the city of Calgary in the last year, and in half of these instances children were present. We can't continue to allow this to happen if we're going to have healthy communities. To the Minister of Justice: can the minister please tell us what this government is doing currently to address the issue of family violence?

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a very important question and one that should be highlighted at the end of domestic violence month, at the end of November. As was mentioned earlier in the House, it's not something that should be limited to this month alone but something that we have to deal with on a year-round basis. If we want to have safe communities, we have to have safe homes, and if we're going to have safe homes, we need to teach our children that violence is not an appropriate reaction to frustration, not an appropriate way to deal with issues that adults have. So we need to put every form of resource we can into this area.

One of the more interesting projects that has happened recently – there have been two or three projects that are under way. One is the act that was passed earlier on domestic violence, on family violence. That's being implemented, and as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre indicated, we need to devote more resources to that area all the time until we have completely eradicated domestic violence.

We've also issued bail notification guidelines so that victims of violence can be notified by Crown prosecutors and by police when the perpetrators of that violence are released into the community so that they can know, so that the victims can be part of the circle.

As well, a recent announcement in Calgary, a community-based project, a pilot project brought together by people in the community in Calgary working with governments at all three levels, is the domestic violence intake court. The purpose of that court, Mr. Speaker, is to increase the safety of victims of domestic violence, to hold offenders accountable for their actions, and to provide earlier counseling for victims and for the abusers.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: could you please describe what level of financial commitment this government is giving to the issue of family violence?

MR. HANCOCK: I think it would be difficult, Mr. Speaker, to give a complete picture of all the areas where we deal with domestic violence. As we heard earlier in question period, Children's Services co-ordinates a number of the dollars that go into the area. Each area of government and each department of government is involved in some way in this issue.

For Alberta Justice's part we've reallocated over \$2 million in funds over the next four years to cover this domestic violence intake court in Calgary, as an example. Those funds will cover the cost of two Crown prosecutors together with administrative staff. It will cover the cost of six probation officers and rent for office space, et cetera. This will not be an added cost to the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. It's a reallocation from within the department. But it shows the importance that we're putting on this particular area. I would hope that if that particular project is successful, which we expect it will be, other communities will want to take similar actions.

2:30

The community, though, it should be pointed out, has raised considerable funds in this area as well through charitable donations and foundation grants. The breakfast that was referred to this morning is very important. In addition, the federal government has set aside \$910,000 for this Calgary intake project. So that's just one example.

The total number of dollars through the victims of crime programs, through Children's Services is a very large sum. Finding all the money from all the various departments would be difficult, but that gives an example of where we're going.

MRS. BURGNER: My final question to the same minister: how is it that you expect this project to work in the Alberta justice system to deal more effectively with the question of family violence in the cases before the courts?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's precisely why the Calgary intake court project is so important. What we need to do is deal with these issues as they happen, deal with them quickly, equip the police with the ability to respond, as we've done through the family violence act, equip the Crown prosecutors with the ability to respond quickly and get cases to court on an early basis, have the courts dedicated to this project so that the cases can be dealt with very quickly.

As important as all of that is having community involvement, the community services that are going to provide counseling. Because most of these offenders are going to come back into the community, it's important that they come back into the community better equipped to deal with their temper, better equipped to deal with their tendencies to violence so that we can protect people from future incidents.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we can't forget the victims. The victims have to have access to the counseling that they need, and these, as well, are being provided in this process.

So the Calgary intake court project is a very important project. It looks like it's going to be a successful project. We hope to get that up and running and then perhaps see it modeled across the province.

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

Sleep Apnea

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A constituent of mine has been diagnosed with sleep apnea. Now, this is a condition that in the words of his doctor may cause premature death if left untreated. The province has a program which provides machines called continuous positive air pressure machines to those diagnosed with sleep apnea but only available to those diagnosed after July 1, 1999. My constituent was diagnosed earlier than that. My questions are to the minister of health. Why does provincial policy prohibit my constituent from accessing this lifesaving machine?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the situation is somewhat different from the hon. member's across the way, but I will certainly check further into his contention.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, in the course of diagnosis of this very, very serious condition the medical advice that we are working on in developing our coverage is that there are various levels in the progress of this particular disease. We do provide coverage for this specifically with respect to the machine when a certain set of criteria is met with respect to the condition of the individual.

MR. SAPERS: Given that my constituent does suffer from level 1, has gone through the sleep assessment process, and is eligible but is being denied this machine simply because he was diagnosed prior to the July 1 arbitrary date, will the minister of health make a commitment to ensure that every Albertan that is level 1 that could benefit from this lifesaving equipment receives it as soon as possible?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly make sure that people are being treated equitably in this regard.

Since this is an individual constituency case – and I commend the member for bringing it forward – I would ask him to provide me with any further information he might have, and I will follow through on it.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is only one of three constituents that I have corresponded with the minister about, I'll ask him again just to make it clear: will the minister change the policy, get rid of the arbitrary July 1 date, and ensure that all Albertans who medically require a CPAP machine will get one as soon as is possible? This is a lifesaving procedure, Mr. Minister.

MR. JONSON: As I've indicated in my previous answer, certainly I am aware of the seriousness of this particular condition, Mr. Speaker, and I undertake to review the matter.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Sarcee Trail Extension

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past summer the Tsuu T'ina Nation approached both the city of Calgary and the government of Alberta with a proposal that would extend Sarcee Trail from Glenmore Trail to highway 22X along 37th Street. The western boundary of my constituency of Calgary-Lougheed is bounded in part by 37th Street, so this proposal would affect many of my constituents. Several months have passed, and I'm wondering if the Minister of Infrastructure could provide us with an update as to the status of this project.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In July of this year His Worship Al Duerr and I met with Chief Roy Whitney of the Tsuu T'ina Nation to discuss the possible extension of the roadway that was described. At that meeting we agreed to form a working committee to draft shared principles as to how we will proceed with further negotiations of this project. Presently our staff along with all of the respective administrations are working out the content of the MOU.

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that update.

I have a second question for the same minister. In that the proposal advanced by the Tsuu T'ina Nation does involve seeing this new roadway go across Tsuu T'ina lands, I'm wondering: when the new roadway is built, who will be responsible for that new road?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, the roadway will be an integral link in the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary will be the owner of the road and will be conducting all of the consultations although we will be working very closely with them with respect to the memorandum of understanding to ensure that all of these shared principles are built into that agreement.

MS GRAHAM: Mr. Speaker, my third and final question is for the

same minister. I know that Chief Whitney of the Tsuu T'ina is very concerned about protection of the environment and about consultation with people of the Tsuu T'ina, and as well my constituents are very concerned about these same issues. I'm wondering if the minister can advise what sort of consultation will be afforded Calgarians.

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, that's one of the issues that we had talked about at this particular meeting, keeping in mind that both the city and the chief – certainly the environment and protection of the environment is the first priority from our point of view, also full and open consultation with all of the residents along the proposed roadway. As a result, part of the shared principles and the procedure that we lay out in the memorandum of understanding will be that protection of the environment, frank, open consultation, and the fact that the city will undertake the consultations once this memorandum of agreement is signed. Those are integral for this project to proceed to ensure that all those residents living along the proposed roadway are aware of what is happening and the proposed design of the project.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Farm Income Disaster Program

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the trade ministers of 138 of the world's nations are meeting in Seattle to initiate the millennium round of the WTO negotiations. Agriculture is one of the sectors recognized as critical and potentially deal breaking. Last fall this government changed our FIDP program, which provides income support to Alberta farmers. My questions are to the minister of agriculture. Why did you change FIDP such that the base margin calculation now violates section 7 of annex 2 to the current WTO agreement, putting us now outside compliance with the WTO?

2:40

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, we are not outside the terms of the WTO. As a matter of fact, if the hon. member would look a little further in the agreement, he would find that if a program is to address a disaster, then you're not outside the terms of the WTO. All of our changes and all of the programs we announced back in October were dealing with a natural disaster.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This new version of the FDIP also makes our program incompatible with the federal government's agricultural income disaster assistance program, which is still consistent with section 7 of annex 2. Are farmers going to be able to apply for both of them now, one from the feds and one from us?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the process we've used all along is that a farmer applies under the FDIP, our program, and when the assessment is done on the application, if there is the possibility of further funds from the AIDA program, then in fact we pass the form on to the federal people, and they would assess it from that point.

The changes the federal government made to paying a negative margin. We urged the federal government that if they had to go that direction, not to go beyond the minus 20. We believe the changes that we made, zeroing the negative margins on the reference years, was a better way to approach it. Ours, of course, is a long-term program; it's not just this year, whereas the federal announcement is just for this year.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, the comments at the end: he said that it's

a long-term program. The WTO negotiations say disaster programs are short term. Does this mean that the current FDIP is going to be applied only to the '98-99 program and it will have to be renegotiated, redesigned, redeveloped after those two years?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the program is a disaster program, and if there is no disaster in succeeding years, then of course the program would not apply. But if there's a disaster, it will apply. So that's what keeps it in the green box.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Midwifery

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been my understanding over the past couple of years that Alberta was looking at midwifery services in remote areas of northern Alberta where doctor and nursing services were not readily available. Recently a constituent mayor in Little Bow indicated to me that there are a number of potential mothers in our part of the province who would like to access midwifery services, but the cost is quite prohibitive. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: what is the government doing with respect to implementing the funding request for midwifery services?

MR. JONSON: First of all, Mr. Speaker, just by way of clarification, the professional group that the member might have initially thought was involved here would, I think, be nurse practitioners, where we do have an overall accommodation for the northern part of the province and isolated areas for nurses with additional training to fulfill the role of nurse practitioners. It works very well.

With respect to midwifery, Mr. Speaker, we have during the last two to three years established the licensing procedure for midwives in the province of Alberta. At the time that this was a matter of representation to our standing policy committee and other discussions were going on, there was no indication – in fact, there was quite the contrary indication from the Association of Midwives themselves about having overall funding.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have had in place some \$800,000, I believe, assigned to this over the last couple of years for pilot projects with respect to midwifery in the regional health authorities. The take-up there was quite modest, I think perhaps one or two projects. Currently, we hope that there will be contractual relationships with midwives and that they'll become part of the regional health authority workforce. To date we do have a challenge in working through the regulations that will be necessary to provide for a privilege, you might say, in the hospital settings in the province.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the same minister: is government funding based on a north/south formula or is it going to be based on midwifery services throughout Alberta?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the funding that would be supporting midwifery services would be part of the overall regional health authorities' budget. So the answer there would be that along with many, many other services and individuals in the system, it would be funded according to the funding formula for regional health authorities.

MR. McFARLAND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The last supplemental to the same minister: what will the process be that the RHAs implement this in the next century?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, there are two steps involved here. First of all, the issue of developing the regulations in co-operation or in consultation with the other health professions has to be done so that there is the ability for the midwife to practise within the regional health authority. Then, of course, it will be up to the regional health authorities in consultation with their advisers and with the midwives to come to any contractual relationships that they might want to agree to with respect to services in their region.

THE SPEAKER: In 30 seconds, hon. members, I'm going to call on the first of five hon. members to participate in Recognitions. In the interim, that 30 seconds, might we revert briefly to the introduction of guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I regret that my visitors have left. Thank you for your consideration.

Recognitions

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, let's proceed on this basis, please. We'll call first of all on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, then the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Dr. Shirley Stinson

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to recognize a distinguished citizen, health professional, and registered nursing colleague, Dr. Shirley Stinson. A recent recipient of the Alberta Order of Excellence, Dr. Stinson has a long history of professional contributions in Canada and Alberta.

Born in Arelee, Saskatchewan, and raised in Tofield, Alberta, Shirley is an alumni of the University of Alberta nursing faculty. Her early practice included public health nursing in the Sturgeon, Leduc, and Strathcona health units. Her constant pursuit of knowledge resulted in further study, earning Shirley a master's degree in nursing administration. Her professional practice continued as a teacher of public health nursing and nursing management at the University of Alberta from 1958 to 1961.

Perhaps Shirley's most historic accomplishment was the completion of her PhD, making her the first Alberta nurse to earn a doctorate. Shirley's passion for health, nursing, and research, her constant mentorship of professionals throughout the health disciplines, most notably her finesse at practising both the art and science of nursing, makes her most worthy of this recognition.

Our congratulations to Dr. Stinson on her induction into the Alberta order.

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

Provincial Volleyball Championship

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the village of Carbon was the site of the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association 1A boys' provincial volleyball tournament. The village of Carbon along with Carbon high school, home of the Carbon Raiders, and an army of enthusiastic sponsors teamed up with a host of enthusiastic sponsors to host a very successful and enjoyable

tournament. Although the local Raiders' fourth-place finish was not quite good enough to win the tournament, they proved themselves to be top-notch hosts, making sure all their guests were well entertained and well fed between competitions.

2:50

Congratulations to all the athletes for qualifying to compete in this highly competitive tournament. They all gave it their very best, providing great entertainment for all the spectators. I ask this Assembly to join me in congratulating this year's Alberta Schools' Athletic Association 1A boys provincial volleyball champions from Rosemary, Alberta, the Rosemary Rockets.

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

Norwood School

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I recognize the outstanding contribution of the students at Norwood school and the contribution they make to the community. One hundred percent of the Norwood students, kindergarten to grade 6, participate in community service projects. These projects include sewing teddy bears for babies at Terra, collecting boxes for children in Bosnia, raising funds for breast cancer research, designing cards, baking cookies for senior citizens, and picking up the litter in the school and in the community.

The students of Norwood school were recently recognized by the Alberta coalition on child's rights with a citizenship award. I'm very proud of the students at Norwood school and the leadership demonstrated by the principal, Sandra Woitas, and all the staff at the school. This is an inner-city school that is dedicated to giving back to the community and instilling the values of community service in the students who attend Norwood school.

Thank you.

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

Canadian Finals Rodeo

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Finals Rodeo held at Northlands park in Edmonton is the premier rodeo event in Canada. As one of the fastest-growing sporting events in the country CFR is about great athletes, great animals, and great fans. Each November over 90,000 people from all over the province and Canada come to Edmonton to welcome the best and brightest in professional rodeo. Participants compete for national titles and a share in the more than \$500,000 purse, the largest in Canadian rodeo.

The Canadian Finals Rodeo is held in conjunction with Farm Fair International, Alberta's largest agricultural fair. CFR, together with Farm Fair, has an estimated annual economic impact of \$50 million for Edmonton and area businesses. I would like to congratulate the rodeo winners and all the competitors who took part in this year's Canadian Finals Rodeo and to congratulate the rodeo's organizers and volunteers on a job well done. It is a privilege for Edmonton and our province to host such a successful event each year.

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

Forest Heights Elementary School

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, September 25, 1999, I joined on the school playground over 300 former students and staff of Forest Heights elementary school. We

were there to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the school. Three generations of Forest Heights residents have been educated there since 1949, and the school remains today at the centre of the community.

There are presently 300 students enrolled, and the staff is led by principal Dr. Edward Friss. Students from all over the city of Edmonton come to Forest Heights to enrol in the very popular German bilingual program. This fine school ensures that our young people receive an excellent education, which is the single most important investment we can make as a community.

Forest Heights school has made that investment a top priority, ensuring a better future for the community, and the students, I believe, will gain the bright future that they deserve. I salute Forest Heights elementary school on its commitment to excellent, accessible, and affordable public education.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, on a point of order.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You adequately dealt with it during question period.

head: Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

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

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

THE SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 2000, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: Government Motions

Referral of Estimates to Committee of Supply

24. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the message of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1999-2000 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

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

MR. SAPERS: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Curious timing that we're dealing with \$1.4 billion worth of unbudgeted spending today. Of course, today is also the day that the government released the second-quarter update. I would be remiss if I didn't use this opportunity to make a couple of comments that were pertinent to the motion to refer this supplementary supply request to committee.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this is a record that's been celebrated or attained today, and I think this record is one that should be noted. The last Provincial Treasurer to reach in excess of \$2 billion worth of unbudgeted spending was Dick Johnston, and we today can

celebrate a new goal, a new personal best that's been set in terms of unbudgeted spending. Of course, it's the current Treasurer of the day who has managed to achieve that recognition.

Mr. Speaker, just a short piece of history as it pertains to this motion. This Provincial Treasurer was out by \$496 million in his expenditure projections in '97-98, out by \$428 million in '98-99, and is now out by an estimated, I don't know, \$1.4 billion, \$1.1 billion. It depends which day of the week it is when you're looking at the numbers, but pretty darn close to 1 and a quarter billion dollars in error just six months into the current fiscal year. This is certainly an achievement, but I'm not sure it's the achievement the Treasurer wants to be remembered for.

This government's spending predictions now represent almost 10 percent more than the original budget that was brought before this Legislature. What we know, Mr. Speaker, from the document that was just handed out, this rather thick document called Budget '99: The Right Balance, restated, is that almost every government department is being affected by the new spending requests and just about every government department has a new business plan because, of course, there was a government reorganization. While it may not be an absolute violation of the legislation on government responsibility and accountability, it is certainly a violation in spirit that we have seen this government operating adrift without business plans and performance measures for more than six months.

This combination of lack of performance measures, lack of business plans, lack of accountability, and finally, an increase in the budget well beyond what was originally debated in this Legislature for 28 days borders on what would be considered unacceptable performance in the private sector. I'm not sure that any chief financial officer would be able to keep his or her job based on this.

The Provincial Treasurer and his colleagues will, of course, point out the health of the Alberta economy and they'll talk about: why would anybody complain about things when things are going so well? In fact, Mr. Speaker, my experience is that's exactly when you have to pay close attention to the details, and it's exactly when you have to pay close attention to the accountability issues.

The last time the government of this province had more money than it knew what to do with we saw them getting into all kinds of trouble with things like NovAtel and MagCan and so many others. Billions of dollars worth of intrusion into the private sector, throwing around taxpayers' money like drunken sailors and causing huge upsets in the marketplace, huge losses, and brought us to the point where we were billions of dollars in debt.

The government, of course, had vowed it would never be in that position again. They even brought in a document, a bill, a law, called the Fiscal Responsibility Act. This Treasurer stood in this House and talked about the iron fiscal discipline that was now going to be imposed on the government because, I'm paraphrasing, he said that the government, frankly, just couldn't be trusted. He said: we can't be left to our own devices to do the right thing, so we're going to bring in this law which will provide iron discipline. Of course, what happens? At the very first opportunity, before the ink was dry on the pages of those reprinted laws, this government decided it wanted to break its own law.

3:00

All this money flowed in. The government had more tax revenue than it needed. It realized that it had starved some of our key and core program areas, and so what did it do? It found a way to break the law. Now, the law, of course, is the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and they want to violate the 25-75 percent dictate that is in that law. They'll tell you that it's only onetime spending, that it's okay. They just want to break this law just once, as though that's okay, Mr.

Speaker, just to break a law once. But they want to do it just this once, and we should just trust them, that it's the right thing to do.

You know what's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker? The right thing to do would be to forecast with honesty and integrity and then budget with honesty and integrity and then provide spending estimates with honesty and integrity and then allow your partners in municipalities and health authorities and school boards to plan with some integrity and then stick to the numbers.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now I can hear it already. I can hear the echoes already: is that Liberal member saying we shouldn't spend more on health care or education? Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it was this government that just a few short weeks ago was calling people who were demanding more funding for public education whiners and fearmongers. Can you believe that? Calling hardworking Alberta taxpayers whiners and fearmongers because they were demanding appropriate funding for public education. Well, this government has come a long way in a few short weeks, because far from calling them whiners and fearmongers today, what we see is they're going to increase that budget by about 5 percent.

Clearly there was underfunding in public education. The government has recognized the underfunding, but it shouldn't have been any surprise to them, Mr. Speaker, that it was underfunded, because they're the ones that underfunded it. They're the government that very cynically decided they were going to lowball revenue forecasts, and then they were going to use that to justify lowballing spending estimates on core and priority programs, and then they were going to wait and see what they could get away with. When it got to the crisis point and they had this embarrassment of riches flowing in and they could no longer say the cupboard was bare, they said: "Well, okay. Okay. We'll put a little bit more money out there for you. We'll help you deal with the crisis before it turns to chaos."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it forms an image in my mind which isn't a very kind image of the government, but it's an image of this. It's an image of how this government would deal with a man lying in the desert dying of thirst: holding the canteen out, just out of the grasp of that man lying in the desert, then just before he expires from his thirst, they turn the canteen and they drip just a few drops of water into his mouth, just enough to keep him going. Just enough to keep him going. That's exactly what this government has done. That's exactly what this government has done in health care, education, and infrastructure and in the way they deal with municipalities. It really is unacceptable. Albertans deserve far more than this from the government. They deserve a process that they can have some faith and trust in.

Now, earlier today in question period I tabled some reports for the Assembly, in particular for the Provincial Treasurer, because the Provincial Treasurer this morning – he could have invited me to join him on the stage, but he didn't do that. Instead he just made reference to Alberta Liberals in his news conference, and he was talking about Alberta Liberal projections. It's nice to see that our projections were more accurate when it came to oil price forecasting and natural gas price forecasting than the Provincial Treasurer's was, but you know what? You know what, Mr. Speaker? Our estimates, while they were more accurate than the Provincial Treasurer's, were still wrong, and I'm the first to admit that they were still wrong. We still underestimated revenues as well.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, what the Treasurer doesn't tell you is that when it came to the leading experts in forecasting the price of oil, the 11 plus the provincial government, this government ranked nine out of 12. They were the ninth worst in terms of those

forecasting. Of the seven industry experts forecasting gas prices, guess where Alberta's Treasury stacked up? Was it first, second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth? The answer to all those questions would be no. They were the seventh out of seven. They were the bottom of the class, not just the bottom half but the absolute dead last in terms of forecasting.

Now, even if we forgive the Provincial Treasurer for being wrong when it came to the energy sector – because of course we were wrong too, Mr. Speaker. We were wrong too. I know that somebody will stand up and point that out, so I'll take the hit right now. But, you know, there are some areas of provincial revenue where you would expect this government to be just a bit more accurate, things like personal income tax, corporate income tax, gaming, lottery revenues, user fee revenues, revenues from commercial operations like the wholesale sale of alcohol. These are all items where this government has complete control. They dictate it. It's all within their bailiwick. They are the experts. They are the ones that create the income tax scheme. They are the ones that create the user fee scheme. They are the ones that create the corporate income tax scheme. So they should be able to tell, you would think, with just a fair bit more accuracy.

So what we have is a government that was wrong on oil and gas, wrong on everything that's under their control, and altogether we see that they are around \$3 billion over. Now, that's before allocation. There are going to be some allocations on spending. Some of it is going to be in violation of the FRA until the government uses its majority to see that that law is amended. Then, Mr. Speaker . . . [interjection] Should we take a break for the minister? I'm just wondering. I thought that if he was having some kind of personal crisis, we'd stop.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we would have expected to see better than this \$3 billion error before allocation. Now, I'm as happy as anyone to see that this government is thinking about some tax reform, and I'm as happy as anyone to see that this government is going to make in excess of a billion dollar payment towards the debt. I'm very happy to see that there is going to be some more realistic funding of core priority areas. I just wish it was done within the rules, that it was done within the context that we all expect, that the partners of this provincial government and the municipalities, school boards, and health authorities were treated with some respect, that they were brought into the process, that all 83 of the men and women elected to represent Albertans in this Chamber were treated with the same respect.

How do I know, Mr. Speaker, that we're not being treated with that respect? Well, the next motion on the Order Paper – and I know I can't speak directly to it, because that would be like reading ahead, but I've seen the Order Paper, and I know what's coming. What's coming is a motion to limit debate on the results of this motion. So in essence what we have is a brand-new budget. We have well over a billion dollars of unbudgeted spending. We've got new government departments, new business plans, new performance measures, et cetera, and normally we would have 28 days to debate a budget. Now we're going to see this government use its majority to limit that debate to only two days.

And we all know how this government counts days. Sometimes they count days in matters of minutes. As long as it's introduced for debate, the Treasurer can well stand up and take his 20 minutes, then adjourn debate. Then you know what, Mr. Speaker? That counts as a day of debate in the Alberta Legislature. I will hope that we'll at least have two full days of debate when that time comes, and thank you for allowing me the ability just to reflect on that.

Mr. Speaker, the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the Government Accountability Act are both laws that should be respected, should be

adhered to. I have some other concerns about the lack of accountability that we see in today's announcements from the Provincial Treasurer and part of the package that we got as we were asked to vote on this motion. What we have is the Government Accountability Act that talks about providing performance updates. Most performance updates that I'm familiar with in the private sector include not just restatements of inputs but also performance measures related to outputs or accomplishments. What we have is a document entitled Second Quarter Activity Report, 1999-2000, for release November 29, 1999, which talks about updating Albertans.

I looked for output measures so that it would be consistent with the Government Accountability Act, and I don't find them. What I find is that, for example, when it comes to supporting families and children, one of the achievements that's highlighted – and this is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. I'm not suggesting this is a bad thing. But the very first bullet is "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome projects expanded." Well, that may be a very, very good thing. In fact, I know that's a very serious issue. But nowhere in this thin document does it tell me what the expansion will accomplish. Is it to deal with research? Is it to deal with more children? Is it to deal with mothers? Is it a preventative program? Is it a treatment program? There are no indications, no outcome measures whatsoever.

3:10

This is a little bit better than what we got with the last update, which was nothing. We got absolutely no performance report with the last update until, of course, I mentioned to the press that there were no performance measures. I wrote to the Provincial Treasurer and asked where they were, and the very next day, coincidentally I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Treasurer issued a one-page press release with some highlights. Well, this is a little better, because I didn't have to goad him into action, and of course it's more than one thin page, printed on only one side, if I recall correctly. It's about eight pages long, but in terms of content it's really no more substantive.

That's a real disappointment, because we're not just talking about chicken feed here. We're talking about billions and billions of dollars. In fact, if my math is correct, and I know the Provincial Treasurer will correct me if I'm wrong, I believe we're now talking about budgeted expenditures of more than \$17 billion. More than \$17 billion. Now, the last time the government spent that much money was just before 1993 election. In fact, the last time the government was budgeting that much money we saw Albertans rise up and demand some accountability for spending that much money, and we saw a government come into power that talked about tightening their belts and doing a better job. Now, thank goodness the economy is so robust, because I can't imagine the kind of trouble that our system would be in if in fact the economy was in the tank.

Mr. Speaker, let me just paint this picture for you, if I can. We've got hospitals still being closed and downgraded. We've got waiting lists all over the province. We have classrooms where there aren't enough desks for the number of students. We have schools that have been just short of being condemned in terms of their physical structure. We have children living in poverty. We have a high bankruptcy rate. We have all kinds of indicators which are really nothing to be terribly proud of, and that's with a really healthy economy. Now, with the way this government manages, just let your mind wander for a minute and think about the state of affairs if the economy were sluggish.

You see, what's called for, Mr. Speaker, is a government that actually knows how to govern and knows what that responsibility is all about and knows how to make management decisions for the long term. I'd like just to share with you a couple of ideas from the

Official Opposition on what that government would look like. A government that knows its responsibilities and wants to be accountable to taxpayers is a government that would do as we have offered to do. We would improve the budget-managing process by providing monthly, not quarterly, budget updates, so you couldn't get away with any shenanigans. We would provide quarterly performance reports based on real performance measures with real outcome measures. We would use an independent verification of revenues by independent forecasters. We wouldn't go to our in-house civil servants to tell us what we wanted to hear. We would go to the industry, and we would listen to the experts, because an Alberta Liberal government would not be so arrogant and conceited to think that they had cornered the market on all of the good ideas. We would go to those in industry that know the industry, and we would take their advice.

Mr. Speaker, we would prepare a fiscal strategy report which would set out 10-year trends for revenues and expenditures. In fact, the federal government has just gone to five-year forecasting, and of course we're happy to see that, but we think that a 10-year rolling forecast would be helpful as well. These are all hallmarks of a government that would be sincere and serious about accountability and taking responsibility for taxpayers' money.

Of course, we'll have some limited debate time in committee when we finally get to that other motion that I can't talk about, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I just felt that since this would be my only opportunity to comment, I would do so at this point.

Thank you very much.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to speak to this motion before us today, but I'm very disappointed that the government would take this kind of an opportunity to introduce their restated government and ministry business plans in the way they have.

What we're looking at here today is to talk about "the supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith." It is this restated plan, which is 322 pages long by my count, Mr. Speaker, and the Treasurer introduces it without a single word of explanation, nothing more than just moving the motion before us. I find that quite interesting. That same Treasurer can take two or three minutes to introduce one-sentence papers that he is tabling in this Assembly, yet he takes nothing but the motion to introduce what we have before us and with no advance warning that this was coming.

Surely with the kind of resources that the government has at its disposal the government would have had ample opportunity to tell us that the revised business plans were on their way, particularly when they know, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to have a scant two days to debate not the contents of this revised budget but what we are supposed to be at that time debating, the supplementary estimates to the general revenue fund, which in itself are 85 pages of new information before this Legislature and before the people of the province, making reference to a total of 1.4-plus billion dollars. In addition to that they dump on us this 322-page document revising statements.

Mr. Speaker, even though I haven't had any kind of an opportunity to make a thorough review of that document, I have of course taken a look at the area of keen interest to me, which is the Ministry of Environment. The first thing that I noticed was that there are very few changes in terms of the goals, strategies, and key activities or the business drivers or the operating principles or the vision or the

mission. In fact, if we go through this and we take a look at the first 10 pages of what is in this revised document – the accountability statement, the overview, the vision, the mission, the business drivers, the operating principles, the core businesses of resource management and environmental hazard management, the goals, strategies, and key activities of those – we have goal 1 that has four strategies in it. Goal 2 has another five strategies in it. Goal 3 has another two strategies in it. Goal 4 has another three strategies in it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about eight pages that have absolutely no change in them from the original budgets that we saw before us in the spring from the Minister of Environment. What a waste of paper. Wouldn't you think that's a complete waste of time? Couldn't they just have made a statement in here in terms of the revision, for the first eight pages, talking about everything from the accountability statement to goal 4, that there were no changes? Wouldn't that have been a reasonable thing to do?

When we're looking at this and reviewing it, it would have saved a lot of time not just for us finding what the relevant changes are, that should be before this Legislative Assembly and be debatable, but also in terms of their time that was spent in putting this together. Think of all the people involved in the ministry who worked on this and all the extra input time involved in processing this and the printing costs. Just because they think they've got billions of dollars of surplus in this province, because they can't budget properly, doesn't mean that they should waste time and money and printing costs and trees, which are very valuable to this province, in this kind of a process.

3:20

MRS. SOETAERT: Just like that.

MS CARLSON: Just like that, Mr. Speaker, because they don't care. They know they don't have to be accountable to that degree, so they're not going to be.

When we look at it, we come to performance measures. I find the first change between the spring budget that was introduced and what is in this new, revised schedule. What is different and new on the restated environmental budget is on page 109 in reference to the air quality index. We see that for 1998 new information apparently has become available to them, or they just weren't very good at reading the old information. The index has gone down from good to fair by one percentage point. Now, I don't know what would have happened that they couldn't have figured that out then, but there it is, so we have a change there.

We go through all the rest: the surface water quality index, reduction of municipal solid waste to landfills, timber sustainability, pulp production versus amount of biochemical oxygen demand discharged, species at risk, area of parks and natural reserves in Alberta, and park visitation. Nothing has changed there, so again more pages wasted, more time, more money, and more supplies wasted on another four pages back to back.

We come to the environment ministry income statements. [interjections] This is important. It's a waste; right? I hope you'll stand up and debate this and tell us why you would do that, why there's all this duplication in this, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, while this is a debate, just remember that we're debating this motion to have it referred to committee. We seem to have a number of people who are anxious to get into the debate. Right now we have the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, and Edmonton-Ellerslie, I would caution you

not to invite others to enter into the babble, because that's all it becomes when three or four people are trying to say something at the same time in a forum that was meant for only one person to debate at a time. Inviting your colleague or those opposite to join in with you as you talk results in incomprehensible exchanges of thoughts. So I wonder if we could contain ourselves to the debate that is at hand, and that is that this be referred to Committee of Supply.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was provoked, and I'm sorry that I was provoked. I hope that member will enter into debate on his own time, not my time. I'm sure that his constituents as well as many members' constituents will want to know what their members have to say about this kind of budgeting.

Debate Continued

MS CARLSON: So in terms of the motion, which speaks to us getting to the position where we can speak to the supplementary estimates, Mr. Speaker, I put to you that we cannot even get to the supplementary estimates in debate until we have thoroughly had a chance to review the revised budget, and that is a problem when we are not given any time within which to do that, when this revised budget is tabled at the same time as the motion comes before us. There should have been some sort of mechanism within this Assembly for us to review this and to be able to ask appropriate questions and to debate the changes in it and, in fact, some things that look to me like inaccuracies that I would like to ask the Provincial Treasurer questions about.

When we take a look at the environment ministry income statement, I see that there are quite a few changes here in the comparable '98-99 actual figures. We know that year ended on March 31, and what I see here is that there are quite a few changes in the figures on the revenue side, Mr. Speaker. Transfers from the government of Canada has significantly increased from the figure that we saw at the beginning of the year, and premiums, fees, and licences has significantly dropped. Now, if that's a change within the changes in the ministries, then I would like to know that. Perhaps it has something to do with forestry being changed, in the location of how it's handled in this budget, but I don't see that here, and I don't see where we're going to have time to ask those questions once this motion has been put forward.

So in terms of the spirit of the motion which talks about "all matters connected therewith," I'm asking the questions now. I was hoping that we would see some explanation from the Provincial Treasurer, yet we have not. He has not decided to give us any kind of an explanation in terms of that process or those changes, nor have we seen any ministers prepared to leap to their feet and defend the changes in their ministries. Certainly, that's what I would have wanted, to give all parties who will be a part of the discussion in this Assembly as much information as possible.

What happens when they share information is that our questions, then, are reduced because many of the questions are answered. In fact, I would put to the government that the debate time on some of these issues could be significantly reduced had we had proper explanation and questions answered beforehand on this motion. We're going to spend the rest of the afternoon on this motion, Mr. Speaker, and that could have been prevented, prevented with a free flow of information, had we had access to that beforehand.

You know, I met with the Minister of Environment just prior to this fall session being started to discuss some changes and courses of actions and miscellaneous statutes and a few things like that. I thought that had been a fair and open exchange with questions answered about what was coming forward. At no point in that

meeting, Mr. Speaker, did the minister tell me that he was coming forward with a restated government ministry and business plan and restated income statements for the ministry for exactly the same time period as we would be seeing this motion brought forward here today, where we are talking about all matters connected with the revenue fund.

Now, why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why didn't he just say, "Look forward to this coming," and "Gee, maybe I'll give you the information to review beforehand so that you can ask me any questions you have so that the valuable time of the Legislative Assembly is reserved for those contentious issues that we don't agree on"? That would have been a good thing to do. I thought that was his intention, but clearly that was not the intention of the minister. I haven't heard any of my colleagues talking about discussions they had with their appropriate ministers in terms of finding out what was coming down the pipe.

MRS. SOETAERT: Not a word.

MS CARLSON: Not a word. Not a word. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? We're happy to spend the afternoon here if that's what it takes to get these questions asked. We just hope that sometime . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: Because we're going to have to pass it some time.

MS CARLSON: Well, we're going to have to pass the motion, but not before all of our questions are on the record, Mr. Speaker. We hope that the government will do us the service of answering those questions.

MRS. SOETAERT: No.

MS CARLSON: Well, somebody says, "No." Maybe that's what's going to happen. I would hope that the government doesn't take the Scrooge approach and decide to be stingy with the answer.

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, it's that time of year.

MS CARLSON: Yes. It is possible that could happen. We're hoping that doesn't happen. Mr. Speaker, we're hoping they will come forward with answers. [interjection] I'm ignoring her. I will ignore her.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, but the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has been trying in various ways to get into the last two debates, and I wonder if she could . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: Wait my turn.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Wait your turn. Thank you.
Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be an interesting afternoon. I can see that.

In terms of this motion, we have to take a look at the general principles behind the budgetary process being done in this manner. It's something that we always have concern with in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because the way the process is done by this government is a clear indication that they do not want to be forthright, they do not want to deal with honesty and integrity, matters that concern budgetary figures with this government. We have seen this time and time again.

It's interesting that the Member for Red Deer-South would have brought this up, talking about the Dick Johnston days.

MR. DOERKSEN: When did I bring that up?

MS CARLSON: Just a few minutes ago, hon. member.

I think he recalls those times fondly. He says: better to err on the side of positive revenue forecast wrongness than negative revenue forecast wrongness, as we saw in the Dick Johnston days in this government. Well, I would put to the hon. member that both of them are equally poorly done.

3:30

MR. DOERKSEN: Are you trying to provoke me into debate?

MS CARLSON: I'm trying to provoke you to debate. I hope somebody from the government side gets up and defends what they're doing. It doesn't seem like anybody over there cares.

MRS. SOETAERT: We need to bring out the chicken again.

MS CARLSON: That's right. We need to put chickens on our desks and see if they'll respond to that.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you and to all members of this Assembly that whether your forecast is wildly inaccurate on the positive side or on the negative side, both are equally wrong and both deserve this government to have their knuckles rapped severely for having done so. There is no way they would survive in private industry for one second if they put forward their budget forecasts in the manner that we see happening here.

Mr. Speaker, just last week we passed a very good bill in this Assembly. That was Bill 41, the Regulated Accounting Profession Act, where accountants worked together very co-operatively to build a stronger base. The government supported that and brought forward that bill and wanted it to pass through quickly in this Assembly, which it did with all parties' support.

Mr. Speaker, since the government now has such a good working relationship with those accounting bodies, I would request that they go back to them and ask them to teach them how to properly budget and teach them how to not just forecast with honesty and integrity, which we haven't seen here, as my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora talked about, but to budget with honesty and integrity, which we haven't seen here. Then equally as important as bringing out the budget in the first place is adjusting that budget when conditions change.

Clearly, we see private industry doing that all the time, and we expect other nonprofit organizations to do the same thing. If they get more money, they change their budget. If money is taken away from them, they change their budget. They are expected to accurately reflect the changes that have happened in their environment and respond accordingly. Not the government. How can the government – we're talking about a budget of \$17 billion – get away with this? They would be tossed out on their tush in any other industry. It's true. That's what would happen. It is unbelievable and inconceivable to think that they can have these kinds of surpluses come in and not adjust their budgets accordingly.

Quarterly adjustments are all that's required to budget in this province with honesty and integrity. Instead, what do they do? They build in these little cushions and they say: "Oh, bonus. We've got this huge surplus. Now we can be the candy man and hand out candy to those who we think are most deserving. We'll give a little bit to education so that you don't cry too much in the future, and we'll give a little bit to health care, because a couple of sectors there

are making a lot of noise and we want to keep them quiet.” But they’re not fair in how they do it, and it hasn’t gone through a proper debate process, which is what the purpose of a budgeting system in this government is all about, and that is wrong. It’s very wrong, Mr. Speaker.

We will keep talking about it until we see some corrections happening. It’s simple for them to do. The smallest nonprofit operating solely on the basis of volunteer labour can do it, Mr. Speaker. We expect everybody’s household to do that. For sure you would change your budget if you had unexpected surpluses coming in to your family, the same as you would change your budget if you lost your job and no longer had the same kind of money coming in. To do anything else would be irresponsible and would be a disservice to your family. When the government will not change their budget and adjust accordingly, they are doing a disservice to the people of this province, and it is not a credit to what their rule is in terms of governing \$17 billion. That is very poorly done by them. Industry changes all the time to the cyclical changes in the market, and this government should be held accountable to do the same thing. That they don’t is absolutely irresponsible.

I would challenge the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek to also speak to this particular motion in terms of what he thinks of it now that he’s on that side, because he had a lot to say about the budgeting process and this particular inability of this particular government to adjust their budgets accordingly when revenue fluctuations and changes happen with them. I would like to know what he has to say now, as would his constituents.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In listening to the comments earlier, I was reminded of something that Sally Poplin said, the American commentator. She made just this observation that I think is appropriate, “Some couples go over their budgets very carefully every month, others just go over them.” She was obviously talking about family budgets. But, you know, is it not this government that continually brings us back to make that relationship between how we budget in our own homes, in our own families, and is this not the government that would have us speak in the same way and think in the same way when we come into this place? Or they may prefer the comment of Mae West, who said simply, “Keep cool and collect,” which may also be sort of the password for our Provincial Treasurer, a Provincial Treasurer who has distinguished himself, I might add, in this fashion.

Some of us who were not in the Assembly when Dick Johnston was the Provincial Treasurer watched with some shock and horror as Alberta taxpayers when we saw the abuse of the budgeting system, but we now have the current Provincial Treasurer, who will have brought in – this is the estimate – \$2.871 billion in supplementary supply during his 31 months in office. I’ll just repeat again: \$2.871 billion. This isn’t a little money here to sort of buttress a flagging budget. This is not a little money to deal with some urgent, absolutely unforeseen contingency. We’re just talking about a basic inability to be able to manage money.

I want to make this observation about the motion in front us, Motion 24, because as I understand the parliamentary rules, Motion 25 is not going to be debatable. I’m not going to have a chance to make an observation then, so I want to focus my comments specifically and directly on Motion 24, the one that says “the 1999-2000 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.”

Now, I’ve got some problems with that motion, Mr. Speaker. You as a veteran of this Assembly – and I might add a distinguished

veteran of this Assembly – may say: well, Calgary-*Buffalo*, you know that’s the way it always goes. But at some point do the taxpayers of this province not expect that there are going to be some elected members who are going to say, as our colleague for Edmonton-*Glenora* suggested just scant few moments ago, that we have an expectation that government is going to budget responsibly? Albertans have an expectation and the people in east-central Alberta have an expectation that government does a reasonable job of projecting what the needs are going to be to meet the range of services that 3 million people in this province require.

We have the current Provincial Treasurer with his \$2.871 billion in supplementary supply. By contrast, Dick Johnston brought in \$2.124 billion in special warrants in six years as Provincial Treasurer. Jim Dinning, who now runs the Calgary regional health authority, brought in \$611 million in supplementary supply during four years. So the current Provincial Treasurer is far and away the champion of supplementary supply, and it may well be . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of Order. The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rule 459, relevance and repetition. The motion, as the hon. member clearly read into the record again after it had been read into the record by the Provincial Treasurer, is a question of whether supplementary estimates should be referred to Committee of Supply. There have been a number of speakers, and I think it’s appropriate to have speakers to an issue. You wouldn’t want to cut off debate. But none of them have addressed the question of whether it’s appropriate to refer the estimates to Committee of Supply. They have ranged all over the place about other issues: issues about how budget processes should work, whether predictions have been right, whether this is the first, second, or third time a Treasurer has brought in supplementary estimates, about who the Treasurer is that’s brought in the most. None of them are relevant to the question of whether it should be referred to Committee of Supply.

3:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-*Buffalo*, on the point of order.

MR. DICKSON: On the point of order. I’m only disappointed that the Government House Leader arrested me as I was about to take full flight on my debate, and if he had had the patience to listen a little longer, he would have heard me develop what I hope is going to be a persuasive, focused, and cogent argument in terms of why this ought not to be referred to the Committee of Supply. I apologize to the Government House Leader for my tardiness in getting to my thesis, but I was hoping to buttress the argument in a way that would be unassailable even for somebody with his command of logic.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the concern, and I am mindful of it, and I can only tell you I feel constrained by the rules of relevance. I’m going to be working hard to stay within those rules of relevance, that all members are bound by but also heed the admonition of occupants of your chair, that debate is to be spirited and robust and that the chair will give a generous view of relevance, because your job, as you so well know, sir, is to ensure the fullest, most vigorous possible debate.

On the point of order. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair would note that in asking for . . . Oh, the hon. member is wishing to leave. I could sit for a

moment, and you could leave, and then we could carry on. Hopefully, I'll be able to compose my thoughts during that break.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader has stood on a point of order with regard to the debate by Calgary-Buffalo, citing 459 of *Beauchesne*, which deals, first of all, with relevance and then, secondly, repetition. There are enough words in here to drive trucks through.

Relevance is not easy to define. In borderline cases the Member should be given the benefit of the doubt, although the Speaker has frequently admonished Members who have strayed in debate.

Then we can go on for repetition.

In looking at the motion that we have at hand, it does ask the Assembly to approve Government Motion 24, to be referred to Committee of Supply. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has also mentioned that part of that same motion is that "all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply." Presumably that's the barn door that some people are moving toward.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has indicated that he was going to make some of his remarks relevant to what appears before us in the motion, so the chair is inclined to listen carefully to see this mastery of bringing it into relevance, and I'm sure it will then satisfy both the Government House Leader as well as the chair. So, Calgary-Buffalo, we'll take you at your word and listen carefully to you making this relevant without much repetition.

Debate Continued

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much for the instruction, Mr. Speaker. The reason I went back and actually read part of the text of the motion is that there's a reason we do this. There's a reason we refer it to Committee of Supply. What we're now doing is taking that first pivotal step in enabling the current Provincial Treasurer to become the king of supplementary supply. This is the point. There will be an opportunity to discuss the minutiae and the detail of the supplementary supply, and we'll be able to go through it in great detail in the two days if Motion 25 passes, but this is the front end of the process. This is really the opportunity where the global sense of supplementary spending and the extent to which that's appropriate can and ought to be addressed. In fact, it was Gertrude Stein who said:

As a cousin of mine once said about money, money is always there but the pockets change, it is not in the same pockets after a change, and that is all there is to say about money.

What we're talking about here is funding that's coming not by way of the regular annual budget that we deal with in late February and March of every year; it's coming by way of supplementary supply. As I say, there has to be a reason we do a motion here. Why is it not automatic? Why is it not automatic in Standing Orders? Why wouldn't it just say in 57 or 58 that no motion is required to take these estimates into Committee of Supply? Well, there's a reason: because there's a process, and part of that process is that the Legislative Assembly has a chance to address it. We get one kick at it, and this is it this afternoon. We get one kick at it before it goes into supply, because in supplementary supply there are some other rules, then, that instruct and inform our debate.

So right now we have that one chance to ask why it is that the current Provincial Treasurer has brought in six supplementary supply bills in 31 months, when by contrast Mr. Dinning brought in six supplementary supply bills in four years as Provincial Treasurer. This would be the time to ask why the Provincial Treasurer has brought in more supplementary supply – in 1997-1998, \$722

million; 1998-99, \$532 million; in 1999-2000, \$1.386 billion – more than Jim Dinning – his was only \$204 million – or Dick Johnston, \$507 million, did in any one year through supplementary supply or special warrant. That's a signature of this Provincial Treasurer and this government. I don't think they can be proud of it.

You know what was interesting, Mr. Speaker? When the motion was moved, we didn't hear the mover, the propounder of the motion, offer some explanation. One might have thought perhaps even an apology. But, no, we heard none of that. He moved the thing and sat down, presumably to not have to defend the odious nature of this huge supplementary supply requisition.

This Provincial Treasurer, who had no words to defend his motion that he has put in front of us, has brought in the largest supplementary supply bill, \$1.386 billion, since 1986. It just seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta would want that marked, would want that noted, would want that to be part of the record. So we have that here, and we look to see what kinds of cogent, persuasive arguments are put forward in terms of why it has to be done in this fashion, and we don't hear very many of those.

The concern I have is that this has just become routine. This has become routine. Obviously this Provincial Treasurer and the Premier and his cabinet colleagues think it's just fine to roll in here and put Motion 24 on the Order Paper as if it's as standard as motions 18 and 23, that it's just part of the normal routine, that we just slough off the supplementary supply because we didn't do the job adequately or properly last spring.

You know, go back and look through those budget debates of last spring, one of the five designated subcommittees of supply or one of the four A, B, C, D subcommittees of supply. Look at the way questions were put to those respective ministers. Had they thought about this? How were they going to cover that need? What we found time and time again was bland assurances that this powerful government had done their job in terms of forecasting responsibly, managing astutely, preparing professionally, yet every single cotton-picking fall we're back here, Mr. Speaker, looking at a motion just like Motion 24. At some point we have to say: "Is this good enough? Is this the way we're going to run the province?" We have a \$17 billion budget in this province, yet that doesn't seem to be enough for the Provincial Treasurer because he's once again done an inadequate job of forecasting need. It's not enough to say, as Sophie Tucker did, "I've been rich and I've been poor; rich is better." Just because this Provincial Treasurer happens to preside at a time of enormous wealth in terms of oil and gas revenue, that's no excuse to lower the bar. It's no excuse to reduce the level of accountability, no excuse to reduce the degree of rigour to which the government must be held in asking for this large expenditure of tax dollars.

3:50

Maybe if we saw some contrition on the part of the Provincial Treasurer, maybe if he came forward and apologetically said to Albertans – maybe he could put it on a web site, Mr. Speaker, simply indicate to Albertans: we haven't done a very good job of forecasting in 1999-2000, but hey, we all make mistakes. We make mistakes in our families – the government likes to use that family analogy, and it's true – and we make mistakes in government. We just made a big mistake here. It looks like \$2.87 billion in supplementary supply is going to be the new total for the king of supplementary supply, the current Provincial Treasurer.

DR. WEST: Liberals aren't used to having more than they spend.

MR. DICKSON: Well, you know, it strikes me, Mr. Speaker . . .

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, the chair has been interested in the interesting debate that some of the members have evidenced, but since they weren't officially recognized, we would wonder if they would contain themselves until their opportunity to speak comes. Then the chair would be happy to recognize them and would make admonishments to all who might interrupt them when they are having their debate, hon. Minister of Resource Development.

In the meantime, Calgary-Buffalo, if you could conclude your remarks.

Debate Continued

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. As I'm winding up my comments, because I know that there are others that wish to participate, I did want to make this observation. I know that the Speaker is always anxious to make sure that the repetition rule is followed, and I just wanted to confirm my understanding that the repetition is within a single speech; in other words, each member is entitled to get up and make the points they wish to.

I think the point is that I represent, as does every one of the 83 members, constituents that I think want to see responsible budgeting. The rule is not that 83 members couldn't get up and reinforce similar points. As I understand that rule that the Government House Leader referred to earlier, it's that a single member cannot simply go on recycling the same argument over and over and over. Because I'm mindful of that and I don't want to offend that rule, I'm going to wrap up my comments in just a moment.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that when Albertans are looking for an accounting, when Albertans are wondering why their 17 billion tax dollars have not been managed more judiciously, more frugally, more efficiently, I want to be able to say at least to my constituents that I registered my solitary protest on this particular day in November, that on November 29 this MLA registered his concern with what I regard to be sloppy budgeting and simply an unacceptable reliance on the tool of supplementary supply. I suggest that supplementary supply was never, ever intended for the kind of money that this Provincial Treasurer has come back looking for in the 31 months that he's held this office. It's absolutely scary.

I won't even get into speculating – we don't know how long he's going to hold this office. I think that there may be mixed opinions in this Assembly on how long the Provincial Treasurer will hold his austere office. In any event, he's already established a milestone that should frighten every single Albertan. They should quiver in their boots. They should be shaking in their boots at the prospect that the king of supplementary supply is at the wheel of the Good Ship Alberta, at least in terms of our finances. It's a scary prospect, Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to register that now on behalf of my constituents.

I'm looking forward to further debate, that I think is going to be more persuasive, more engaging, and undoubtedly more entertaining. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the Member for Calgary-Buffalo led into my comments in the way that he did, because I hope that my comments will be more engaging and more enlightening than what we've heard so far.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo talks about process. The only way the government can spend money is to bring in a budget or

bring in supplementary supply. That's the process. Before you can spend the money under supplementary supply, it has to go to Committee of Supply and then has to come back to the Legislature in an appropriation act. So what the hon. member is saying by debating the question of whether this should go to Committee of Supply and raising the concerns about it going to Committee of Supply, which is why I assume they're saying when they debate the motion – there are only two potential answers to the question, "Should we refer to Committee of Supply?" Yes, we should because there are things that we need to spend money on, or no, we shouldn't because we shouldn't be spending the money.

The member refers to what he calls "mistakes." Does he call it a mistake that we budget prudently with the known resources that government has at hand early in the year and then later on, when it becomes apparent that more resources are available, go back and look very carefully at where those resources might be spent in the interest of all Albertans? Is that the mistake? Is that the mistake? Should we be budgeting ahead of time in anticipation that there might be money available, go ahead and spend it, and then incur a deficit? Is that the mistake?

What portion of supplementary supply would that hon. member not want us to be spending? Does he not think that Learning deserves to have more money now that we know that there's money available? Is that what the member is telling the House? Is the member telling the House that regional health authorities shouldn't have more money because there's money available? Is that what the hon. member is saying?

I don't understand what they're referring to when they say there's a mistake in coming back to this House when there are known resources available and debating appropriately where those resources should be allocated. The place to debate that, Mr. Speaker, is obviously in Committee of Supply and then bring it back to the House under the appropriation bill.

The only answer I can get by the number of members opposite who have risen to debate the question of referring this to Committee of Supply is that they don't want it to go to Committee of Supply, and if they don't want it to go to Committee of Supply, it means that they don't want to spend the money. If they don't want to spend the money now that we know the resources are available, that means that they want to deprive regional health authorities and they want to deprive school boards. They want to deprive the Department of Environment, who's spending money fighting forest fires. They want to deprive the department of agriculture, which is funding the FIDP for farm income disaster. They want to deprive Albertans of the benefits of the increased revenue which has resulted from the prudent budgeting and forecasting that this government has done over the last seven years.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I almost wasn't going to speak to this motion, but the Minister of Justice has inspired me to speak to it.

I must tell you that a few years ago I was a brand-new MLA speaking to supplementary estimates, and the then Treasurer, Jim Dinning, stood up: oh, that means the Liberals wouldn't support farmers; oh, the Liberals wouldn't support health care. Well, here we go again, just a different version. He's talking about the same thing: the Liberals don't want to spend this; the Liberals don't support farmers. Well, you know what? That's just not the point, because I'm actually going to support this motion. We definitely have to put this motion into committee. You know why?

Actually, the theme of my entire speech today, which I've thought about at great length, is: I told you so. [interjections] Well, I thought about it, and he inspired me. I guess those two things came at once.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. The Provincial Treasurer will have a period of time at the closing of debate, and the hon. Government House Leader has already had his opportunity. We would hope that the hon. member could engage the Speaker in her line of reasoning on this motion to commit these supplementary estimates to committee.

Thank you.

4:00

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that clarification. You see, after Calgary-Buffalo I figured most points had been covered. Then the minister spoke again and inspired me. Then with my thoughts previous to the I told you so speech, I had to get up to address this Assembly and particularly you about the issue of moving this to Committee of Supply.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Here we were in the spring, Mr. Speaker, talking about Committee of Supply. We looked at that budget and said: "You know, some things aren't going to be covered by this budget, and you're going to have a surplus. Are you just trying to undermine public resources, or do you want to do some vote buying in the fall?" Guess what? It looks like they're vote buying in the fall and have undermined some public services.

I remember us talking about the farmers, particularly the farmers in my riding. Some of the hog producers were really hurting last year. Did the government step in then? No. They had the opportunity in the spring budget to step in then, before some farmers lost their farms. Did they? No; but they've put it back in supplementary estimates. It's a little too late for some farmers, not just the ones in my riding but certainly some all over the province. It's a little too late. I'm glad it's here. I'll support that money being spent there, but it's a little too late. We all saw that problem in the spring. Every single one of us knew that issue in the spring. It's too late now, but back it comes. Is it vote-buying time in rural Alberta? I hope that's not the reason.

I want to talk about the WestView health region. I said in this Assembly in the spring that they are underfunded. Compared to any other health region, they get less money per capita. They get a \$5 million boost with this supplementary estimate that's coming up. They'll get a \$5 million boost, but it's not committed for next year. It's onetime funding. They can't plan. So of course I'm going to support that this go to committee because WestView needs that \$5 million. But what will it do for their planning next year? Nothing. They don't know if they're going to get that \$5 million next year. Is it a vote buyer for the WestView region people? One would question if it is. It's certainly the wrong way to budget. Do we buy votes now or later? If that's the way this budget is set up, it's appalling.

Let's talk about health care boundaries and what it costs to move people in and out of boundaries, the issues and the trouble around that. I know of a patient who had to go from the capital region to Fort McMurray. The piece of equipment he needed to survive and to continue with life: no, no, it wasn't provided for; it couldn't be sent home with him. He had to find it in Fort McMurray, and it wasn't there. Then there's a big shuffle around the province,

political pressure, all kinds of people involved for something that should be there.

When we talk about money for the different health authorities, sure I'll support this going to committee, because they need the extra money. But poor planning. How do you expect them to plan for three to five years when you give onetime funding whenever the urge hits you or whenever there's enough political pressure? That's not the proper way to budget. In fact, it has been said that in some health authorities it is now becoming a safety issue because of the lack of funding, lack of staff, lack of nurses in this province. It was one thing to have a plan to try to recruit doctors to rural Alberta, but we'd better look at another plan called recruiting nurses, because that's an issue in WestView. I know it is. I will support this going to committee because I want this money spent. But you know what? It's a pity it has to be a vote-buying type of budget.

Let's look at education. This is the greatest story ever told. They decide they're going to give money to education. Parents out there think: good; my child won't be in a class of 36 anymore, because certainly a little bit of this money will trickle down to my school and we won't have crowded classrooms. Then they're told: no, no; it has to be spent on capital, either on debts incurred or on capital projects. So the parents think: oh, dear. Actually, half the parents don't realize that that's not how the money can be spent. Then at the Alberta School Boards Association breakfast and at their meeting the Minister of Learning says: well, that's really not the way you have to spend that money; I'd like you to spend it on capital, but it isn't a rule now. Jaws dropped around the room, saying: you mean, we can spend it any way we like? I mean, we're actually elected boards, and that's the way it should be, but you guys have been playing ping-pong with us saying: it has to be this way; oh, well, maybe it can be this way. So get your act together, government.

I think it was probably embarrassing for some of the ministers there, who've lived by a rule and suddenly it's not that way anymore because we're getting too much pressure over it. How about having some faith in elected trustees? That might have been a good way. Imagine putting your faith in people who are elected, who care about our children, who are the frontline people when it comes to educating our children. That's the way it should be. So we have that money, and I will support this going to committee because I do support that money being spent there. I told you so in the spring, that it wasn't sufficient for schools.

You know, it's a little late. One of the examples is the literacy money. Great, great. Why didn't we fully fund kindergarten? That's one of the issues here, literacy money. Why didn't we fully fund kindergarten three years ago? Guess where most of the money has to go? I'll bet you with those children who were unfortunate enough to be in that sad state of affairs when this government imposed a cut to funding for kindergarten. A sad, sad reflection on this government.

Now I want to talk a bit about seniors. I've been to a few lodges in the last little while, having a look at different situations. Are they going to be in this budget? Yes, I see some money to upgrade lodges. That's good. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, that a shower or a bathtub is not included in what is necessarily funded for lodges? Do you know that's separate fundraising on the side? It's not considered essential when lodges are given money by this government, when lodges are given money to renovate. Odd, isn't it? Odd. I think maybe they've just missed that one. I'm really hoping they have. I'm hoping some are saying: you mean that showers and tubs aren't covered in renovations? I mean, think about that.

Now I want to speak for a minute about infrastructure. I see lots of money coming into that, and that's another reason why I'm

supporting this motion going to committee. That's the area I critique. Certainly we said that our infrastructure is crumbling. At first the minister said: well, drive on the right-hand side of the road instead of the left. We know that he is more serious about it than this. That was a great day for me as a critic; I don't think I've ever had so much fun. I'm sure he appreciates that.

Do you know what? Here we will be fixing some highway transportation services, some school facilities. We will join in with the national infrastructure program. Well, good. That's very good, and that's why I'm supporting this. But you know what? Highway 794 is not finished. A third of it got done this year, and I'm sure it's slated for the next two years. Soon it will be changing to highway 44 because it will be primary, and it will go right from Slave Lake down to Westlock, down past Villeneuve.

MS CALAHASEN: Eighty-eight.

MRS. SOETAERT: No, it's 44.

Anyway, I was asked by the department, which said that many of the reeves and many of the MLAs have been asked: "What would you like to call this highway? Highway 44 has been suggested because it would be more continuous through the province. How do you feel about that? Do you concur?" So I said: sure, I concur with Highway 44, unless they would rather call it Soetaert Way. I actually put that on the note. I'll bet if there were a vote in here, it would pass. It would pass, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I bet Cypress-Medicine Hat is going to second that, and Lesser Slave Lake, I'm sure, will support me in that. So Soetaert Way, we will all know, was 794. [interjections] Absolutely. I know the rest want to hop up and support that as soon as I've done my speech. Anyway, I had that little piece of information that I know will be part of the supplementary estimates.

4:10

When I see supplementary estimates included on projects that will increase the safety of our province, I absolutely support them. When it's vote buying, I don't support it. If it's for a road or a facility that doesn't need it in certain ridings as an incentive to buy votes, I don't support that. I would like to see a real priority system that shows the greatest need. [interjection] Somebody says that's how you get re-elected, by vote buying and providing infrastructure for those areas. [interjection] And he says: good for you. That's appalling.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: For all those who wish to enter the debate, I'll take your names down, and when it's your turn, we'll call upon you.

Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, please don't pick up on every little thing that's said on either side of the House. As you well know, that can be interruptive to the flow of logic, that we hope will appear in this debate.

Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No more interactive debate. I appreciate that.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: I'm almost done pointing out some of the reasons why I will support this: because this money is needed throughout our province. I told you so, not you particularly but collectively, this Assembly. We mentioned it in the spring: is this going to address the shortage of beds in Calgary? No, it hasn't. Has

it addressed all the issues of older schools in the province? No, it won't. The budget didn't in the spring, and the supplementary estimates – in fact, Queen Street school in my riding has long been waiting, and it would be nice to see with these supplementary estimates. I would support that.

So at the end of this when the Treasurer gets to close debate, he may go on and on, "The Liberals don't want us to spend money here; the Liberals talk about blah, blah, blah," but let's really recount. This government put us into financial debt. This government is now trying to bail us out. This government has mismanaged health care and education dollars, embarrassingly so. Now this government is trying to tell the world that we're doing it all better and we don't make those silly, foolish mistakes. Yet things like trips to foreign places at taxpayers' dollars without itineraries continue. They continue. Some of the people came in here at the same time I did in 1993. That was: we're going to clean up house; we're not going to do that anymore. The very same people are now living in a government that continues to lend money to companies, to be in the business of being in business. Now they're going further; they're going to give money to private health care facilities. So all those people who stood righteously and said, "We've changed our ways" – not so. The circle has come right around. Not so.

So here we are with supplementary estimates. I support going to Committee of Supply. This money is absolutely needed in the province. So when anybody stands up and says, "The Liberals don't support," yes, we do. What we've said is that you have truly bungled the process of budgeting. You have undermined some of the very things that make us Canadian, that make us strong Albertans. Public health care has been terribly, terribly undermined in this province. I don't know about people over there, but as you were in your constituencies this weekend and as you were talking to people as you bought groceries or whatever else, I'm sure people came up to you, as they did to me and said: don't let them do this, Colleen; don't let them undermine public health care. I got that at several places. It took me longer to buy groceries than it normally should. That's the reality of what people are thinking.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, I've pretty well indicated all of my concerns. Well, not all of them; I will save that for when we get to Committee of Supply. I am disappointed with the way this government budgets. They give onetime funding at the end of the year because they can't plan. Of course municipalities and hospitals and schools appreciate it. Of course they do. But in the next breath the government will say: "Can't you plan? Can't you budget?"

Then we see municipalities with tax increases. Well, if we save it on one hand and take it with another – I mean, the Treasurer is famous for saying: same taxpayer, different pocket. What good does it do any of us if we're saving on one hand but municipal taxes have to go up? Let's make it fair for all the players in Alberta, all the players who are trying to deliver services, all the jobs that governing includes: the health authorities, the school trustees, the social service boards. In fact, I didn't get a chance to talk about that for a moment.

I wanted to mention some of the concerns, that I hope are addressed in this supplementary estimates, about movement of clients between boundaries – what's going to happen with that? – and if that in the restructuring is going to be stated in these estimates. I haven't had a chance to look at it that closely. That's a concern I have had. Certainly the whole boundary issue has to be addressed at all levels. It's an issue of access. It isn't a matter of where the boundary is drawn, ever, because somewhere there is going to be a boundary. It's the permeability of that boundary that matters in all areas, whether it be health care, education, social services, municipalities working together. Boundaries can't be a detriment; they've got to be something that can be worked with. So I'm anxious to see how that has been addressed in social services.

I'm pleased to see this money being announced. I know it's frustrating for people who have to depend upon the government for funding, because they don't know whether they will have the money next year in the spring. WestView health authority is a perfect example of that. They get the \$5 million now, of which \$3 million will probably go to debt and \$2 million hopefully to help with programs, but they don't know if they'll have it next year. So what do they do? Do they plan for next year expecting the \$5 million or not? I think that's a fair question. I'm sure all the MLAs that represent part of WestView must be wondering about that question. Certainly I am.

Mr. Speaker, I have expressed my concerns about the way this budget process goes. I think vote buying is an important part of this government's budgeting process, and that's a pity. That's a shame. That's the wrong intent. It's no wonder people say: oh, there must be an election year coming; they're giving money back. Isn't that sick? Isn't that a poor way of governing? That's about what happens. Every three or four years you can bet that the dollars will come back to the different areas that were hot spots, where people were saying: I'm not going to vote for you again. Of course, there is the suggestion that it is Christmastime, and maybe in the spirit of giving it happens annually at this time that a little money is given out. I've often heard the analogy of the Grinch, but I would never use that analogy here. No, that wouldn't be correct.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words supporting the motion going to Committee of Supply, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it. Thank you.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real privilege this afternoon to get up and speak to Motion 24. This is a motion that's going to take on real significance this year because we've got a whole series of different events that have been precipitated over the months since we approved the budget in the spring. We've seen the government undertake a major reorganization, we've seen oil prices change significantly, and we've seen some changes in priorities from the people of Alberta. So what we've got to look at this afternoon is referring this debate to committee so that we can actively pursue the rationale and the reason and the explanation for how the government has put together their fiscal plan under this new scenario.

To start with, we saw the government undertake a major restructuring in its departmental arrangement right after the budget was approved in the spring, so what we have to do now is make sure that we get a chance to debate whether or not the dollars actually followed the reorganization and the intent of that reorganization as it was proposed and put forward by the government under that initiative.

4:20

What we've got to do, then, is kind of look and make sure, if new issues have arisen underneath these new mandates: are they funded? Are they properly funded? Where did the money come from? One of the things that's been really interesting to follow in the last little while, that kind of builds in and supports this idea of a need to look at how these dollars are going to be allocated, is kind of the exchanges that we've been having leading up to the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, which is going to be coming forward imminently in this session.

One of the questions that was put to me with respect to a number of the divisions and departments in agriculture was: were there appropriate changes in the naming of the administrative heads of

those programs so that – and the rationale that was given there was that they wanted to be able to not limit how they positioned these programs, because they weren't sure yet that they were being assigned to the right department, so the broad base of these definitions was coming in.

This is kind of an indication that if we're going to see how these programs fit under the new structure and we don't have the option because of these changes we're proposing in the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, we're going to have the budget as the only place where these kinds of debates can be undertaken and where we can see how dollars are being shifted as programs move under this reorganization and structural change within the government. So I think that's one of the reasons why we have to be sure that this gets put to public debate in the supplementary estimates stage.

The next thing that we have to do is look at how the departments within their current structure have shifted dollars because of this mandate change, given the line items and the program priorities that were identified in the budget in the spring. We're going to need to look at the aspects of how that reorganization created efficiency, where it is going to cost us more money, which programs are going to free up some dollars for use within the departmental mandate that we have given to ministers under the series of financial acts that we deal with in determining how ministers respond and how they report back to the Legislature. Now they can move dollars around within their mandate. They only have to come back to the Legislature when they want to increase the total dollars under their departmental mandate. So this is one of the things that we have to really start to look at and see if these shifts are going to be able to portray any kind of change in mandate, change in program focus, or change in the relationship between the departments and the public in Alberta.

By having that kind of a debate, what we can do is convey to Albertans directional changes, the idea that issues now are going to be addressed differently, either in total approach or differently because they're now functionally assigned under a different ministry. So we'll have now a different minister who will be the spokesperson and will have to deal with it under the mandate and direction of that particular program.

The other change that we want to look at and be able to debate fully under the subcommittee structure is how we're going to be able to deal with and allocate the dollars that are freed up by the Fiscal Responsibility Act because of the surpluses that have shown up in the budget. I think we've seen a lot of preannouncement on this from the government in the sense that they've talked about, you know, new dollars for health care, new dollars for education, new dollars for support for issues like the farm income programs, how these are all going to get added into the budget or rearranged within the budget and see if the guidelines and the directions that have been released by the government through their news releases, through their public presentations, and through the debate that has gone on between them and the public concur and whether they follow directly through to the kind of issues that we're going to be talking about when we see the supplementary estimates in committee. That's kind of an important part of how we can deal with looking at whether or not these new programs truly add.

We're also dealing right now with amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility Act which will allow for another \$680 million to be allocated, and we have to follow through, assuming the passage of that act, in terms of the expectations that would go into the supplementary estimates. It will be quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, to see whether or not we end up actually dealing with supplementary estimates here before we've actually given the government approval to deal with those issues and to look at spending those extra dollars, because until that amendment to the Fiscal Responsibility Act is

actually passed, given Royal Assent, and is proclaimed, it's not law.

How can we actually debate that context here in the context of budgets? We're in essence saying: we're going to now debate and approve expenditures which in effect have not been approved by law yet. You know, those dollars are not available for us to debate. This creates an interesting situation, and it will be interesting to look at how the debate goes in subcommittee when we're trying to allocate dollars which have not legally been assigned to the government to allocate to departments or to allocate to programs. That will be something that I guess we'll have to look at and follow up on when the time comes. If you want to follow the normal process and follow the law that you are operating under, we would like to see that Fiscal Responsibility Act amendment actually approved and in place before we start talking about how we're going to spend those dollars.

The other thing that we want to look at is how the supporting documents and the supporting information that are presented with the budgets follow. We're seeing in the motion that it talks about sending to the committee all of the estimates and the other matters concerned therewith. Well, I assume that's going to be the business plans. We'll be able to talk about how those business plans fit the new departmental structure, how those new departmental structures are going to change the intent and the direction and the mandate or the relationship between the government and the people of Alberta in the delivery of those programs by looking at those business plans.

We've heard reference already today to a number of instances of how the reorganization will deal with the performance indicators and whether or not they will be reflective of the combined activities of the new ministries or whether they'll end up having to be revised as well. Some of them will have to be looked at very, very diligently as we move into that, because we want to make sure that the reorganization of the government contributes to the direction that Albertans see their government taking. If we don't get the time to debate that, if it's the kind of thing where we just have to assume it's all going to happen and that it will happen in some kind of an organized manner – by having these estimates and their associated documents up for public debate in subcommittee, this gives a real chance for a give-and-take, a question-and-answer type relationship with the ministers in those departments and for those kinds of clarifications that we'll be able to get.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I would like to suggest that historically we've always had a couple of days allocated for supplementary estimates. At least that's been my experience in the years I've served here. We usually get a couple of days to deal with supplementary estimates. Yet when we look at the magnitude of the changes that are before us this year, we've got the issue of the reorganization of the government, the way those budgets are going to fit together, how the programs will follow through. We've got the issues of the resulting priority changes within departments to follow through. We've got the impact of the projected surpluses in the budget and the Fiscal Responsibility Act, both the old act, allowing us to spend 25 percent of that surplus on onetime programs – and there I emphasize: onetime programs. That's one thing we're going to have to make sure of, that as we look at how those dollars are spent, they are truly spent on the onetime program components. Then we'll have to look at how all of those things fit together with the business plans. Yet historically we've only had two debate days to deal with that.

So as we conclude and vote on this motion, I would hope that before we get to the motion that sets the time limit for the debate in there, the Provincial Treasurer and the government will recognize the magnitude of the responsibility that is going to be assigned to

that subcommittee and that they will make appropriate adjustments and possibly think about giving us more than just the two days to deal with the issues of all of these kinds of things that need to be brought out and need to be debated in the public so that the public can retain the confidence in their budget process.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude and hope that everybody would take the opportunity to make sure this gets to committee.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to make a few comments as to whether or not it's appropriate to refer Motion 24 and the contents of that motion to the Committee of Supply. *Beauchesne* lays out fairly carefully in section 946 the reasons why supplementary estimates may be presented. There seem to be five that *Beauchesne* indicates are important.

- (1) for a further grant to an existing service, in addition to the sum already [presented].
- (2) for a new expenditure on behalf of a newly-enacted statute.
- (3) to meet the cost created by an unexpected emergency.
- (4) to transfer funds from one Vote to another.
- (5) to extend the purposes of a Vote.

It's really four of those reasons that we have before us in the materials that have been presented.

In the time that we've been in the House, I can't recall us ever having debated this particular motion. It's usually passed and we have gone on to the next motion, Motion 25. So it is, I think, unusual that we have paused this afternoon to look, again, at the referral of the motion.

I was reflecting on the purposes in the past, and supplementary estimates have been used by the government for some very good purposes. In the past I think there were supplementary estimates before us because of unanticipated enrollments in schools, so the department of education brought forward a need for additional funds. There were the unexpected course completions, higher rates of course completions than had been anticipated at budget time. I recall family and social services bringing forward some estimates that had to do with computers and, in particular, making sure that the system was Y2K consistent so that they wouldn't have to be concerned at the turn of the year. So I think the government has had some good reasons to bring forward supplementary estimates in the past, along with some questionable ones.

I think we all understand that there has to be a mechanism in place for the government to respond to change, to be able to deal with the unanticipated, and certainly that's what we have before us this afternoon. If you look through the detail – and we'll have a chance to do that at a later date – there have been some things that all of us know have occurred in the province that have to be attended to. I think of the forest fires in the northern part of the province and the extent of those fires. I'm sure that none of us could have anticipated the extent. I think the outbreak of disease is something, again, that the government could not have anticipated and has to make some accommodation for in adjusting their financial plan.

In health there are a number of the sums in the estimates that I think we might question. I think most of us were aware that the regional health authorities were going to need more money. Just how much it was I'm not sure we knew, but all of us knew that they were underfunded.

The sums that are included in Learning. I suggest that the sums that are in the Learning department are still woefully inadequate to deal with the kinds of problems that the K to 12 and the postsecondary systems are facing, particularly with the concern in terms of

deficits and the kinds of deficits that they're going to be facing.

The item that's been taken out of Learning and transferred to Infrastructure: the whole business of buildings and equipment replacement. Again, I strongly suspect that the money that's included in the estimates is going to be very, very inadequate for the kind of building and equipment demands that face school boards and boards of governors. We've seen that demand, when capital funds were frozen, lag behind the resources available, and it's now, I think, in some parts of the province becoming almost crisis proportion, where communities lack schools and there are schools that are bulging at the seams.

So I would suggest that in a couple of areas the money included in these estimates is not going to be sufficient and we'll be back at it again. But having said that, I think there are good examples, as I've indicated, of places where money is needed that was unanticipated, and certainly this is the mechanism for putting those dollars in place.

One of the questions that it does raise – and a number of my colleagues have raised the question – is the appropriateness of the budgeting process as we go through it in the Assembly. We seem to have resorted in many cases to pressure point planning: just putting enough into programs and hoping it will do and then, when it doesn't, coming back with a supplementary estimate. It's sort of squeaky-wheel financing, and I wonder if you can run a \$14 billion enterprise on that kind of principle. It may even point to the fact that we can no longer depend on full-year planning in terms of budgets, and we may have to look at a different mechanism rather than full-year budgets before we get too far into the future.

So with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude.

[Government Motion 24 carried]

25. Mr. Hancock moved on behalf of Mr. Day:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1999-2000 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund shall be two days.

[Government Motion 25 carried]

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

4:40

Bill 40
Health Information Act

[Debate adjourned November 25: Ms Carlson speaking]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to participate in second reading of Bill 40, the Health Information Act, introduced this fall session by the minister of health.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue in terms of private health care information and the information shared between physician and patient, which has been probably one of the hallmarks and one of the cornerstones of why the public health care system in Canada has worked to date. The protection of the conference, the protection of the consultation between a practitioner and a patient really goes to the most personal of reasons, reasons which to this time have been protected under our legislation in Canada.

I don't think any of us needs to be reminded of the many times that ministers of health have had an indiscretion and have spoken about a private health record of an individual patient, perhaps out of

all good intent, and have ended up violating something which is so personally confidential and private that it's really no one else's business except that of the patient and the physician, who have found the environment within which they could talk and discuss and protect something that is so very personal. We on this side of the House believe that ensuring that that very personal exchange is protected is a fundamental tenet of what has to be the test of this new legislation which now appears before this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have several highlights I wish to indicate with respect to why we in the opposition party are urging this government to slow down, to listen to the concerns being expressed by individual Albertans, by editorials across our province, by our Medical Association, by the Canadian Medical Association, by various chambers of commerce who have expressed concern about this legislation. What is the rush? Our urging to the provincial government is that they let this legislation sit before the Legislature in order that some of the promises that were made to Albertans will be met before this legislation is passed.

I want to outline four key points that we think are absolutely essential in this debate around the Alberta Health Information Act and urge the government to take note of these concerns which we place before the Assembly, concerns that have been raised by us as individual MLAs but also concerns that we have as legislators in seeing this legislation get rammed through the House, which, it appears, is the government's agenda.

The first key point that I wish to make on this legislation is that private providers have been left outside of this Health Information Act. Unless services are paid for by Alberta Health, these services will not have to be covered by privacy protection. As a result, we have these two tiers being set up in Alberta. The first one is that insured services will be covered under this Alberta Health Information Act; in other words, protection for the patient/physician dialogue and consultation. However, on noninsured services the act does not apply.

Now, before the government says that this is as it should be, let me remind Albertans and this government that some noninsured services are in fact of a very personal nature, and the protection of the information shared between a quasi health professional and a patient, we believe, should be protected from publicity just as insured services are. For example, if you take psychology services, an individual may well have some kind of a consultation with a psychologist. It may not be covered under Alberta health care but is, nonetheless, an extremely important part of that person's health. Very personal things may be revealed in that. It, too, should be protected under this act. Because of this decision to carve out private practitioners from the application of this act, we are creating yet another example of a two-tiered system in Alberta, a system where lower standards will prevail in private delivery of service as opposed to public service.

Let me also point out that the government's policy, which it has put forward in the Premier's privatization and contracting-out policy, is another concern of these kinds of services not having to come under the purview of this Alberta health information law. As a result, we are creating a system where there's one system for the public sector and one system for the private sector in health care in Alberta, which we find completely opposite to the way Albertans are telling us they want to see their health care protected.

[The Speaker in the chair]

So, Mr. Speaker, there are in fact very key linkages between the Alberta Health Information Act as it stands today and the policy on privatization and contracting out of health care services that the

Premier is putting forward. The two are very, very clearly linked. One of the reasons we are asking for a delay on this legislation is so that the two pieces of legislation can be looked at together rather than one piece of legislation being looked at now and yet another one coming up in the spring, presumably with the Premier's two-tiered, American-style health care system, that he's opting for.

Another part of this first point, that private providers are outside of the act, is the fact that we have about a million people under workers' compensation in this province who will be considered noninsured from the point of view of the Alberta Health care insurance plan and therefore will not be subject to the provisions of this Health Information Act.

MR. DICKSON: Unless they're in a public hospital.

MRS. MacBETH: Unless the services are delivered within a public hospital.

So the impact is that a WCB recipient's records, in terms of the conversations or the consultations that go on with his physician, are not protected under this legislation, whereas someone having that service delivered within the public system is. How many of our WCB recipients are, number one, aware and, number two, not very concerned about that gap in this legislation?

Mr. Speaker, in sum on the first point, private providers are outside of this act. We believe it's a carve-out that is inappropriate in a public health care system and disrespectful of the views of Albertans in terms of ensuring that their health information, wherever it is delivered, is protected from privacy provisions.

The second point that I would like to make is that the Alberta Health Information Act as it's currently appearing before us in this Legislature does not meet Canadian Medical Association privacy code provisions. Mr. Speaker, this should be a major, major red flag to this government in terms of their actions. The Canadian Medical Association and in fact the Alberta Medical Association have been very clear that the protection of patient/physician confidentiality be respected and have issued major, major concerns about sanctioning the secondary use of personal health information as allowed under the Alberta Health Information Act. It's not only our Alberta Medical Association but the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses who are extremely concerned about this sanctioning of secondary use of personal health information.

4:50

So the question that's on Albertans' minds is: who is getting one's personal health information, and what are they using that information for? If that information is available to the many, many agencies who have been sanctified by this legislation to have access to that personal health information, it is creating a huge concern in the community, and people are coming to realize how serious the consequences are of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as some of my colleagues have so eloquently expressed in second reading on this bill, the minister of health and therefore, presumably, ministers of Executive Council can get access to private medical records between a patient and a physician, and while I don't for one moment feel that those records would be misused by any of those members, the possibility exists that in fact they could be misused. The protection of the public to ensure that in fact the public has the freedom to talk about their own health needs within the confines of the four walls with their physician is a principle of public health that must be respected and which is being eroded by this act.

So, Mr. Speaker, we believe that the issue of the privacy code, the issue of this act not meeting the privacy codes of many of our own

medical and nursing agencies, is yet another reason why this government must delay the passage of this bill for the fall session.

There's a third point here, and the third point is that the promise was broken by this government to hold public hearings with respect to the Alberta Health Information Act. Public hearings are an essential part of ensuring that the people who are most affected by this legislation, in other words the 3 million Albertans who deal with their physicians on whatever basis they deal with them – those people have not been consulted by this act. Yet the minister of health had indicated that in fact public hearings would take place on this legislation. Mr. Speaker, consultation is very important. In fact, on March 17, 1998, last year, the minister of health sent a letter to our health critic at the time promising that there would be public hearings before the new health information law was built again. It did not happen; it is a broken promise.

The government will argue, as some of its members have during second reading of this legislation, that there was consultation done with several focus groups. The problem is that the way those focus groups were constructed does not give the 3 million Albertans who are concerned about access to their private information this opportunity. There's a huge difference, which this government's spin machine doesn't seem to understand, between focus groups, which look at specific questions, and broad public consultation, which we on this side of the House believe in, particularly when it is something as fundamentally important as protection of physician/patient privacy or the development of a two-tiered, American-style health care system.

The Legislature and this government have an opportunity to take this bill on health information and go out and do public hearings, the kind of town hall consultations where people can come in and understand what the contents of this bill are, can ask their questions, and can find the kinds of solutions for health information which obviously are needed. This kind of discussion, this kind of true public consultation, as opposed to the controlled environment of focus groups, is what our citizens in this province deserve, not the kind of work that is being done here.

Mr. Speaker, I know that people in the department of health have worked extremely hard to address the issues that are before us with respect to health information. We all know that there are issues with respect to health information that can in fact aid in diagnosis, that can aid in showing what are appropriate treatments or inappropriate treatments based on what one physician may have done or what one setting may have done versus another. What we're talking about here is a very different thing, and while the people in the department of health have worked so hard to come up with this legislation, I'm sure they would be the first to admit that what is needed is to take the legislation as it is currently drafted, delay its passage from this House in order to take that legislation out to Albertans and listen to their concerns. What is this government so afraid of hearing that they refuse to let Albertans in on the public consultation process that they in fact promised a year and a half ago?

Some of the other questions I will be happy to put forward in committee study of this legislation, but let me simply close by saying that I, too, have had the experience of bringing legislation into this Assembly, legislation which I was told by officials and by members of my caucus was excellent legislation and needed to be passed through the Assembly. I had that experience when the School Act was brought in in 1986, when I was first appointed a minister. You know, I heard something from the public which I hadn't heard within my own caucus, which I hadn't heard within my own department, which I hadn't heard from the experts with respect to education policy in this province. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Something inside me told me to listen to what I was hearing from

people out there who are just people who care about the future of this province. They may not have an expertise, but they need to know what the issues are.

As a result of listening to those people, as a result of that public consultation project, Mr. Speaker, the School Act was changed, changed to be better legislation. In fact, it went through this Assembly unanimously. The reason was because the consultation process had taken place. The legislation was stronger for that public consultation than it had been before it came forward.

So I am urging this government to stop ramming this legislation through the Assembly, to think about the questions that are being raised by very important members of our community, to keep its promise of calling for public consultation in the most open way that we as Albertans know it can occur, and to delay this legislation until those things have been met. Otherwise, this legislation will prove harmful to the spirit and the content of our health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member of the Health Information Act steering committee, it gives me great pleasure to join the debate on Bill 40, the Health Information Act. I wish to take this opportunity to respond to several of the points made on Bill 40 by opposition members during debate over the past few weeks.

Last week there was a suggestion that custodians will make money off providing health information. I would like to explain to all members here today that the act, in part 2 of the legislation, regulates fees for services provided. This part states that the cost of producing a copy of an individual's own health information to respond to a request by that individual must not exceed the actual cost of the service. As well, individuals will be provided with a fee estimate, and the custodian as well as the commissioner can waive any or all fees.

5:00

Another question raised was whether regional health authorities can make an invasive inquiry under the act and utilize the information before a professional body for disciplinary purposes. This section enables custodians to use individually identifying health information for conducting investigations, disciplinary proceedings, practice reviews, or inspections relating to members of the health profession for health discipline. This would permit a regional health authority to use individually identifying health information if they were concerned about the professional competence or conduct of an affiliate. In this case a custodian would likely be following up on a patient's, family member's, or colleague's concern about a specific incident that occurred. The custodian as the employer is responsible for the behaviour of its employees and other affiliates and would need to follow up on any incident that occurred. If the custodian determined that the matter was serious, the professional's regulatory body would likely be contacted to determine if the incident warrants disciplinary action.

We also heard a question on whether a regional health authority or other employer could obtain health information to screen prospective employees. The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. A regional health authority or other employer cannot obtain health information to screen prospective employees. Obtaining health information is considered to be collecting health information under the act. Within the act a custodian may collect individually identifying health information if the collection is expressly authorized by any enactment of Alberta or Canada or if the information relates directly to

and is necessary to enable the custodian to carry out a purpose under those listed specifically in the legislation.

The policy intent was that no custodian or an employer may use or get identifying health information about a prospective employee without the individual's consent. The act requires regional health authorities and other custodians to collect health information directly from the subject, in this case the prospect. If the regional health authority wanted to obtain health information about the prospect from another information source, it would have to first obtain the prospect's consent. This act contains some exceptions to this rule, but they are not relevant to this example. If the prospect is concerned about the health information being requested by the regional health authority, the prospect can notify the commissioner and the commissioner may choose to review the matter. The custodian is subject to following the commissioner's orders and is accountable to the commissioner.

We also heard a question on the collection and use of the personal health number. Basically, it is currently an offence under the Health Information Act to collect or use health information in contravention of the act. This would apply to someone requiring a person to provide the personal health number and an authorized receipt using it for another purpose. However, the legislation is not out of touch with the realities of life, Mr. Speaker. For instance, the act recognizes an Albertan's right to provide their personal health number to whomever they would like, including day care centres, baby-sitters, et cetera.

A suggestion was made that the establishment of ethics committees by regulation will not be transparent enough and that the scope of reach is too broad given the extensive lists provided under this particular section. This suggestion is a valid one, Mr. Speaker, and the intention is that a set of criteria and a process will be established to designate ethics committees under the act. As well, this regulation will list the designated committees.

With respect to questions concerning the ability of researchers to use health information, it must be emphasized that research by definition is academic: applied or scientific health-related research. The ethics committee must determine if the proposed research is of sufficient importance that the public interest in the research outweighs to a substantial degree the public interest in protecting the privacy of the individual. The list presented in this section is a list of considerations the committee must take into account to make that determination. It is not a definition of research or a list of research uses.

Comments have been made in this House that employees of Alberta Health and Wellness will have access to our health information and this could potentially lead to problems. Like all other affiliates referenced in the act, employees of Alberta Health and Wellness may only examine or use individually identifying health information that is in accordance with their duties with the custodian. If custodians question the role of an employee or their right to obtain identifying information, they may certainly seek clarification of the employee's status from the department. In most cases, employees arriving on-site for inspections or investigation purposes will be duly authorized in writing to conduct that activity. Similarly, employees of the department are constrained in their use and disclosure of health information in the same manner. The scenario that anyone from the department can walk into a doctor's office and demand to see their neighbour's or anyone else's health information simply could not and would not happen.

Another point made were concerns raised with respect to gaining access to samples, tissues, and specimens. It is recognized that there is an important privacy-related issue, but one can debate whether or not it is a health information records issue. This issue, however, is

not presently addressed in Bill 40. A process is being developed to discuss these matters on a national level.

Another suggestion made was that the onus should be on the physician or collector to justify denial of access to records rather than the individual to justify the needs for access. This legislation makes it very clear that the onus is on the custodian to prove that the applicant has no right of access to the record or part of the record.

With relation to fees a suggestion was made that there should be a minor fee for photocopying set in legislation, not fees for searching and providing the records. Well, Bill 40 clearly indicates that any fees chargeable under the act will be limited to an amount that will not exceed the cost to produce a copy of the records for the applicant.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There are also fee waiver provisions under the act. The custodian or the commissioner, following consideration by a custodian, may make a fee waiver decision.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have an apparent point of order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under *Beauchesne* 333 I wonder if the member would entertain a brief question?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, all you have to say is yes or no. You do not have to give any reasons.

MR. DUCHARME: No, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Debate Continued

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the principles as to when to charge fees and how much to charge are set out in the act itself, the regulation will set out the detailed amounts by type of record. Setting them in regulation allows them to be charged over time as new record formats evolve, copy costs change, and so on. This regulation among others will be subject to review by stakeholders as part of standard operating policy.

With respect to the idea that sensitive health information may be released when collection processes are used to collect a fine or a debt in relation to an Alberta Health Care Insurance Act account, this is just not the case, Mr. Speaker. The rules regarding disclosure for collecting a fine or debt and disclosure according to regulations only apply to demographic-type information such as current name and address. There is no aspect of sensitive health information contained in this type of information subject to these rules. As well, we must remember that Bill 40 sets out authorized uses and disclosures. Collection, use, disclosure, and creation of health information in contravention of the act is a violation of the act and subject to a fine of up to \$50,000.

Another point raised in the House was that no one can guarantee that information is safe, secure, and will be kept confidential. In this regard, I wish to submit that while one always has to be concerned about the security of information stored electronically, one cannot assume that information stored on paper or hard copy form is more secure. In a paper-based world access is generally given to the file. The entire record is disclosed and so on. With an electronic record,

however, it is possible to have a greater level of user authentication to limit users to see or use only part of a record or file, to limit users to see or use a file without seeing the identity of the individual, and so on.

I also wish to comment on the point raised in the House last week stating that the list of disclosures without consent listed in the legislation is too broad. Disclosure with consent is clearly the starting point. Any exceptions to that position are specifically identified in the legislation. This style of legislation achieves transparency for the reader and public, but it also can generate concerns with respect to the length or size of the list of exceptions. The list in Bill 40 was carefully developed and was the subject of consultation throughout the process. Specific exemptions reflect current legislation such as FOIP and various health statutes, current practice, and projected need. The commissioner recognizes this in his recent report.

This is a long list of persons to whom identifying information can be disclosed without consent. It is difficult to take issue with these. Many of these disclosures happen now, without consent. But I think Albertans should be aware that these disclosures are going to be made.

5:10

Now, Mr. Speaker, last week's advertisements by the Alberta Medical Association appeared in the daily newspapers stating their opposition to this bill. In this particular advertisement a number of situations were stated that would cause Albertans to react with fear and alarm over particular areas of the legislation. Since these areas mentioned are indeed very critical to the principles contained in this legislation, I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight in terms of these advertisement allegations.

The first point deals with the idea that details of medical, diagnostic, treatment, or care information about a person may be disclosed without your consent and against your doctor's wishes. This simply is not true, Mr. Speaker. In Bill 40 custodians are the gatekeepers to individuals' medical files. They have the responsibility to safeguard these files. Bill 40 enables custodians to collect, use, and disclose individuals' personal health information, but it establishes common rules to guide them in their gatekeeper role. The rules governing the sharing of information – for example, the disclosure of information – are on a consent basis.

The starting point in the bill is that custodians must obtain patient consent before disclosing diagnostic, treatment, and care information to others. The bill then outlines a limited number of scenarios where custodians do not have to obtain patient consent. These scenarios reflect current practice in Alberta's health system today. In these instances the decision to disclose the information is up to the custodian, but the bill requires the custodian to consider the express wishes of the individual before making a decision to disclose the information.

The bill also sets out a limited number of situations where patient information can be disclosed by custodians without consent to the minister and health authorities for health system purposes. In these instances the minister and health authorities need the information to manage the health system, plan for new programs, and protect the population from communicable diseases. Even though the bill authorizes the ministers and health authorities to obtain this information, it requires them to collect the least amount of information at the highest degree of anonymity. In most instances the minister and health authorities will only need nonidentifying information. In some instances the minister and health authorities may initially need individually identifying information, so they link different pieces of data from the different sources together, but the identifiers are stripped from the data once the necessary linkages

have been established. Only in a very few instances will information have to remain in identifiable form. If a custodian has a concern about the minister or health authorities obtaining an individual's health information in identifiable form, the custodian may contact the Information and Privacy Commissioner. In Bill 40 all custodians, including the minister and health authorities, are accountable to the commissioner.

A second point made in the recent advertisements put forward by the Alberta Medical Association was that if you give consent for your electronic patient file to be seen by your doctors, nonphysicians could also have access to it. Again, Mr. Speaker, this statement is not complete. In Bill 40 the rules governing the disclosure of paper-based records govern the disclosure of electronic records. Only individuals authorized to see an individual's paper-based records have the authority to see his or her electronic records.

Bill 40 places one additional requirement on electronic records to safeguard them even further. Before a custodian can disclose individually identifying diagnostic, treatment, and care information by electronic means, a custodian must obtain the individual's consent. Once an individual consents to the disclosure of his file by electronic means, other custodians may have access to it, but they must be authorized to do so. When information is stored electronically, it is subject to greater security than paper-based systems. Computers automatically track who gains access to information through an audit trail. This safeguard isn't present with paper-based systems. The audit trail will document custodians' use and disclosure of information. The audit trail will help to ensure that custodians can be held accountable for their behaviour regarding health information.

The last point I wish to speak to today, Mr. Speaker, is the alarming statement contained in the advertisement that under this law patient files currently safeguarded in doctors' offices across Alberta would be accessible to others. In Bill 40 the only people that can access patient files in a custodian's office are those that have been authorized by the custodian. In very few cases the minister and health authorities may access a patient's file without the individual's or the custodian's consent, but this would only be done under strict circumstances. The minister and health authority would be under the custodian's scrutiny when collecting the information this way. If a custodian were concerned about their request for information, he may notify the Information and Privacy Commissioner to hold them accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify a few points in this important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and to speak in support of Bill 40.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the Assembly consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.
Calgary-Buffalo.

head: Introduction of Guests
(*reversion*)

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to introduce a guest we have in the public gallery this afternoon, and that is Louise Rogers, the president of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, who is here with a keen interest in Bill 40, currently being debated. I'd invite Miss Rogers to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Second Reading

Bill 40
Health Information Act
(*continued*)

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 40 at second reading and the principles that are embodied in Bill 40. There has been a fair amount of debate about several of the principles, but I think they have been outlined by the Alberta Medical Association, among others, in trying to help the public better understand what the bill is about.

The first principle, the principle that lays out the right to privacy, I think has to be probably the one that most concerns patients and those on this side of the House. It's just imperative that patients have that right to determine who can be privy to information about their health, the condition that they may or may not be in, and who that information would be shared with. So the very first and I think the most important principle is the right to privacy.

A second principle that is found throughout the bill is that health information is a very special kind of information. It's unlike much of the other information we deal with in our lives. This information has personal details that have the power to affect our lives in a way that other information has not. We've seen, for instance, the arguments in terms of those that the Psychiatric Association and the Psychologists Association are having over the disclosure of information that's given to them in privacy and how patients are alarmed that that information might be made public and, in fact, have been alarmed that it has been requested in several lawsuits.

So I think it does point out the very special nature that health information has and how special that information is. It's the kind of information that rests primarily with a patient and a doctor, and I think that every effort has to be made in any kind of legislation that we have in front of us to make sure that the information is treated as such.

A third principle that's been identified is that health information must benefit the patient. The primary purpose of any gathering of information is that it will be used to benefit the patient, to make sure that the patient's care is promoted and that the patient's health is promoted. Secondary to that the information might be used for other purposes, and I think that we would all agree that given the special nature of health care information, those instances would be limited and be very circumscribed.

5:20

I can think of having patient information used for research purposes and from my own background recall how ethics committees at universities and research institutions take great care in treating personal information about research subjects. It's important that this kind of information be treated with even more care. I'd be interested in the comments of the previous speaker in terms of the kinds of ethics committee that's going to be put in place. I understood him to say: to oversee the use of that information.

I think a fourth principle that's been identified is that the purpose of sharing information should be made very clear to patients. Putting that principle in place, one can imagine, is not going to be without difficulty in some instances. Given the state some patients may find themselves in mentally, when being asked to share their information, they may not always be in the best position to make those judgments. So making sure that the purpose is made clear to

them, but I think even more important is making sure that the patient is in a state to clearly make a judgment about whether or not that information should be shared.

A fifth principle that pervades the legislation is that patient information must be kept confidential. I think all of us have great worries in this respect. It wasn't that many years ago that a government hard drive from the health department found its way into a public auction in this city, and the hard drive with patient information was actually auctioned off. It wasn't discovered that the information was on it until after that sale had been made. Those of us who are on the Internet are well aware of the warnings that flash up periodically that indicate that the information you're transmitting may not be confidential and that you should be aware that in transmitting that information, it may be uncovered by a third party.

So the accountability, making sure that those records are confidential and that they're kept confidential, is an important concern. It's one that I think calls for a balance. There has to be the proper sharing of information, and that I think we all recognize. There are good instances I think lately that have been reported where the sharing that should have been done wasn't done because fears that confidentiality would be compromised were in place. Making sure that all the issues around confidentiality are an important part of this legislation: I don't think we can with good conscience pass this legislation until we're all assured that that is in place in this part of the bill.

A sixth principle that's been identified in the bill is that patients must give consent for the disclosure of information. Again, it goes back to the fourth principle, that the sharing should be made clear to patients, but they have to be the ones in control of their own information. Unless there is some rather unusual circumstance – and I think the bill tries to make some provisions for that – I think it has to be made paramount and made clear to everyone handling that information that it's up to the patient to give consent.

A seventh principle is that the health information must be accurate. This places a large burden on custodians of the information and those people who are contributing to the pool of information on a particular patient to make sure that the information that's contained in a record is completely accurate and opportunities for the patients, should they wish to review that information, to ensure that that accuracy is what they would expect.

The eighth principle identified is that health information must be secure – I talked about security already – again, making sure that people who are unauthorized do not have access to a patient's information. We can all think of situations where the disclosure or the sharing of that information could be very, very harmful indeed to individuals. We think of companies who have tried to gather information about employees on application forms. We think of companies who have tried to subject employees to particular health tests. One can only expect that that information was being gathered to make judgments about that employee and their suitability to hold the position. So making sure that the health information must be secure is a principle that's, again, part of the act.

The ninth principle is that individuals have the right to access their own information. One would almost think that this would go without saying, but I can recall – and it wasn't that many years ago – that parents had difficulty in accessing information from the accumulative record cards held by school districts about their children. It was a long time before parents were given that access by a number of school districts. Certainly students were not given access. A principle in this bill is that individuals have the right to access their own information. It's an important principle, which I think, as the bill proceeds through the next stage, we'll have to ensure is there and is explicit enough to make us feel confident that the right is protected.

I guess the 10th principle that's been identified is that practices must be open to scrutiny and they must be made very explicit. Patients and custodians alike have to have full knowledge, and the conditions have to be very, very carefully set out under which information is gathered, the conditions under which that information is used. Again, we'll have to remember that the bill will be passed, and there'll be an immediate awareness by those people involved of this need to be explicit. As the bill fades from memory and new people enter the professions and new people start taking up roles of custodians, that kind of . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: It being 5:30, according to Standing Orders 4(1), the House stands adjourned until 8 this evening.

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

