

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, February 29, 2000**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 00/02/29

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O God, grant that we the members of our province's Legislature may fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of our people. Guide our deliberations this day and every day. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Klaus Glaremin, acting consul general, the Federal Republic of Germany. He's accompanied by Mr. Fritz Koenig, honorary consul of the Federal Republic of Germany based here in Edmonton.

Germany is a major international player with the third largest economy in the world. Alberta has been fortunate to have a very close trading relationship with Germany, fostered in part by the strong German-Canadian community in Alberta. There are over 530,000 Albertans of German heritage here in our province, making Germans the second largest ethnic group in Alberta. Germany is currently Alberta's ninth largest export market, with exports from Alberta to Germany totaling \$164 million in 1998. Germany is also one of the top European investors in Alberta, particularly in our high technology, communications, and oil and gas sectors.

On behalf of Albertans I want to wish our honoured guests very productive and enjoyable work in our province, and I'd ask our honoured guests, seated in the Speaker's gallery, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition from 23 of my constituents opposing private health care and supporting a universal health care system. I am not only pleased to table this petition, but I support it. In fact, all of my colleagues and I are a hundred percent in favour of a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. As the petition says: we want a universal health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, I really appreciate your enthusiasm for a petition, but please remember that I sent a letter to all members several days ago saying: let's proceed with some degree of hastiness with respect to several items. There's no need for editorial comments.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 140 Albertans from Cold Lake urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition signed by 120 people living in the Cold Lake area, and they are asking "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 140 people in the Cold Lake area, and they are urging this government "to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

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

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 237 residents of the Cold Lake area. That, I believe, brings the total from Cold Lake to 797 requesting that the government of Alberta "stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition to present to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly on behalf of 160 residents of Cold Lake, Alberta, another 160 residents, and that brings the grand total of what you've heard . . . [interjections] It does amount to a great number of people in that town that again "urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care," sir.

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg permission to present a petition signed by 80 citizens in northeast Edmonton 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. It was filed after the budget last week.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to present a petition signed by 75 people from north Edmonton. I attended and spoke at an Edmonton PAC meeting last week, and the organizers asked me to present this. This is 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.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present this petition signed by 220 Albertans who are asking this Assembly to pass a Bill banning private for-profit hospitals in Alberta so that the integrity of the public, universal health care system may be maintained.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to have the petition now read and received that I introduced to the Legislative Assembly yesterday regarding defending public health care.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would rise as well and ask that the petition I tabled yesterday in regards to support for public health care be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like the petition I presented yesterday to be now read back.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled yesterday be read and received today.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of the province of Alberta hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to pass a Bill banning private, for-profit hospitals in Alberta so that the integrity of the public, universal health care system may be maintained.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition with respect to support of public health care that I introduced yesterday be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday supporting public health care, not this government's plan for private health care, now be read back.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative

Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

head: Notices of Motions

THE SPEAKER: The Associate Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that tomorrow I will be moving that both written questions and motions for returns that appear on tomorrow's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

head: Introduction of Bills

Bill 7

Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act, 2000

DR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 7, the Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act, 2000. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The act consolidates all parts of the new Department of Innovation and Science under one piece of legislation and streamlines multiple acts into one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

1:40

Bill 10

Securities Amendment Act, 2000

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, being the Securities Amendment Act, 2000.

The primary focus of this bill is to address the loss of powers arising from the recent conversion and merger of the Alberta and Vancouver stock exchanges to form the Canadian Venture Exchange Inc., or CDNx.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 10 be moved on to the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 205

Emblems of Alberta (Alberta Dress Tartan) Amendment Act, 2000

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I request leave to introduce Bill 205, being the Emblems of Alberta (Alberta Dress Tartan) Amendment Act, 2000.

This bill proposes to add a second official tartan, a dress tartan, as an official emblem of Alberta that would complement the existing Alberta tartan.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Bill 206
School (Students' Code of Conduct)
Amendment Act, 2000**

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 206, School (Students' Code of Conduct) Amendment Act, 2000.

This bill will instruct boards to develop and implement a written policy respecting student conduct.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have a number of tablings. First of all, I wish to table with the Assembly the report of the World Health Organization, the World Health Report for 1999, entitled Making a Difference, along with a news release outlining some of the key features of this report, which outlines the World Health Organization's position of supporting a role for the private sector in health care systems providing there is public finance and governance.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the College of Physical Therapists of Alberta for the year ended September 30, 1999.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table with the Assembly the final audited financial statement of the Calgary Health (Crown) Foundation for the period ended December 9, 1998.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table with the Assembly the final audited financial statement of the Health Region No. 6 (Crown) Foundation for the period ended December 9, 1998.

I am pleased to table with the Assembly the final audited financial statement of the Capital Health (Crown) Foundation for the year ended December 9, 1998.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Alberta Dental Association for the year ended December 31, 1998.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the report of findings Waiting for Health Care and the Waiting for Health Care Technical and Statistical Appendix, prepared by Burke & Associates in conjunction with Ronald Wensel, professional corporation, and Harris McConnan, chartered accountants, an analysis of wait lists in Alberta.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings here. These are copies of letters sent to the Premier by Albertans. The first one is by Professor Shirley Stinson. Shirley Stinson is a well-known scholar in Alberta, has done lots of work on health care, and she expresses grave concern about the proposed privatization of health care in Alberta.

The second letter is from Mr. Ron Clarkson, who experienced a serious delay in receiving a timely operation for his ruptured appendix. He also expresses grave concern that the policies pursued by this government will undermine public health care.

The third letter is to the Premier from Mary Jane Pedersen from Canmore expressing her opposition to the development in the Spray Valley area around Canmore.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased this afternoon to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received from a constituent of Edmonton-Castle Downs, the Reverend G.E. Ingram. Reverend Ingram's letter reflects his support for the private member's bill, the Marriage Amendment Act.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table for the interest of the House this afternoon document numbered 001245 that I received from the Minister of Municipal Affairs concerning untreated pine shakes through a freedom of information request. This document is titled Response to Consumers, and it is blank.

Thank you.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the Report of the Court Reporting/Recording Committee out of British Columbia.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and table correspondence relating to the Ombudsman's investigation into the Social Care Facilities Review Committee. The failure of the committee to investigate the death of Mr. Wayne Oles has been clearly established as an abdication of their legislated responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one is copies of correspondence from the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier requesting that the government reverse its position and allow MLA expense claims to be accessible under the freedom of information act.

The second item is copies of expense claim forms for each member of the Alberta Liberal caucus, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I am pleased to today to table copies of a report entitled allowances and travel expenses for the 12 months ending March 31, 1999, as they relate to the Member for Barrhead-Westlock.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 59 bright, energetic grade 6 students from my hometown of Redwater. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Kathleen Baker, Miss Dawn Parkinson, and parents Mrs. Crystal Hrycun, Mrs. Debbie Clark, Mrs. Wendy Fairweather, Mrs. Lorraine Harynuck, Mrs. Karen Ullman, and Ms Trish Swinton. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'm happy to introduce to you and to other members of this Assembly Nola Bietz, who is here today representing CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. In addition to her association with CAPP many here will know Nola through other means. Nola used to work in the building as executive assistant to Jim Dinning in the mid- 80s. She is a long-time supporter of the PC party of Alberta, and in particular she is a supporter in my consistency of Calgary-Lougheed. In fact Nola was very instrumental in my presence here in that she was my campaign manager in the '97 election. If she hasn't already risen, I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of visitors from l'école Beausejour, which is a Francophone school in Plamondon. In the group we have 13 students from grades 10, 11, and 12. They are accompanied today by Mr. Andre Roy, who is the principal of the school; Mr. Claude Lamoureux, a teacher; Mr. Leo Piquette, the board chairman; Mr. Reed Gauthier, who is the president of l'ACFA; and also a parent, Mrs. Sylvie Walton. I would like to ask our visitors to rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Skip Gordon, our Liberal candidate in the next election for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. He's in the public gallery. With your permission I'd like him to now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, Mr. Leo Piquette is also a former member of this Alberta Legislative Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Freedom to Read Week

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise today in recognition of the 16th annual Freedom to Read Week, being held February 27 through March 4. During this week Albertans are encouraged to visit their local public libraries and, more importantly, exercise their right to read. Initiated by the Book and Periodical Council in Ottawa in 1984, Freedom to Read Week celebrates access to information and freedom of expression in Canada and is celebrated nationwide.

Taking time to celebrate this week is of utmost importance in Alberta. Libraries mark Freedom to Read Week by setting up displays and holding special events such as public readings and book displays.

The Committee for Freedom of Expression of the Book and Periodical Council of Canada states that freedom to read is a precious heritage; it is part of a much larger heritage common to the human spirit which we call freedom of expression. As minister responsible for libraries in Alberta as well as for human rights I applaud this statement.

Libraries provide equal access to people of any origin, race, religion, economic status, or view. Albertans are fortunate to live in

a country where this right is protected. In this province the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act ensures that all Albertans are offered equal opportunity to earn a living, find a home, and enjoy an array of services available to its citizens. This door of opportunity is open to all, and we can enter a world filled with information, opinions, and ideas. We can exercise our minds and discover the diversity of cultures and people that reside in our communities. It is up to all of us to experience lifelong learning and use the valuable tools available in our libraries in our journey of discovery.

In recognition of this event I invite all members of this Assembly to join me in supporting Freedom to Read Week.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to reply on behalf of the Official Opposition to the minister's statement. As I indicated in my recognition yesterday, the organizers have adopted a clenched fist slamming shut a book as a symbol for this week. The symbol focuses on censorship, on those forces in our society who, based on their personal and moral codes or ideas they find troubling, would deny others access to those ideas.

Recent discussion of material that some find odious on the Internet is a game putting citizens to the test. What do we do when we are forced to confront ideas that fall within the law but are deeply disturbing or offensive? Supporting intellectual freedom in our democracy is easy when we find it in the abstract. How we treat the Internet concerns will prove our commitment.

A first step would be clarification of the government's support for freedom to read. On February 25 we had a release from the Community Development minister indicating that the week has something to do with giving Albertans regardless of skin colour or creed access to libraries. Yesterday the government members denied unanimous consent to recognize the week, and today we have a ministerial statement asking all of us to support Freedom to Read Week. Maybe next year the Learning minister should be put in charge.

head: Oral Question Period

Private Health Services

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the special interests that are backing him are waging a huge propaganda campaign with public money on a scale never before seen in this province to promote their privatization agenda. Albertans are paying for spin doctors when what we need are medical doctors. As the Premier has already refused on many occasions to release the costs of the focus groups, the subject of these blank pages, will he table today the full costs, the contracts, and the agencies used to promote his privatization scheme?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, there are no special interest groups backing this legislation unless the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition is alluding to all 64 members of the Conservative caucus.

We want to do the right thing. I just got off a conference call with all the Premiers of this country and the three territorial leaders, all of whom agree that there needs to be a full restoration of the Canada health and social transfer for health care funding. The amount that will come to Alberta will fund our health care system for about six or maybe six and a half days, Mr. Speaker. All of the Premiers agree without question that the status quo is not acceptable, that meaningful changes must take place. None of the Premiers were critical of Alberta for taking some bold steps to alleviate pain and suffering and to shorten waiting lists.

Now, Mr. Speaker, relative to organized campaigns, relative to spin doctoring, I'm going to read from an e-mail. It's from Joan Swain. I think she's a Liberal researcher, and it was sent to the MLAs for Calgary-Buffalo, Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-Gold Bar, Edmonton-Whitemud, Edmonton-Calder, Edmonton-Ellerslie, Edmonton-Glengarry, Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-Meadowlark, Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Norwood, Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Manning, Edmonton-Centre, Lethbridge-East, and Edmonton-Riverview. It was entitled Health Petitions, and it reads:

Hi all. Just to let you know that as of today, we have 12,910 names on the petitions. If you have any more at your offices, please send them in . . . [as soon as possible]. We would . . .

[interjections] Wait a minute. Just a minute. The best is yet to come, Mr. Speaker. The best is yet to come.

We would like to have the presentation strategy finalized and it helps to know just how many we have, or [how many more we] can expect to receive.

Keep up the good work and keep them coming!

If that's not organized, what is?

2:00

THE SPEAKER: And it would be appropriate to have the document tabled as well.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the Premier won't answer the question, but let's try it again. Will the Premier at least have the courtesy to tell taxpayers how much of their sweat-soaked loonies are being used to convince them that privatizing health care isn't wrong?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition to wait and see the legislation, and maybe she'll be true to her word that she might support this legislation. There is a possibility she will support this legislation because it contains everything that she has been asking for.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't have to shake his fist at me.

Isn't the real reason why this Premier refuses to . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. members, it works both ways.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, isn't the real reason this Premier refuses to release any details on the costs of his propaganda campaign that Albertans would be shocked to find out how much of their tax dollars are going towards dismantling public health care?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wasn't shaking my fist; I was making a point.

I just tabled clear evidence—clear evidence—of who is orchestrating a campaign. It is not this government. It is the Liberal Party orchestrating a campaign of malicious misinformation.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, let's try it again. Second main question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, earlier today we tabled a report documenting how this government has undermined public health care and created longer waiting lists and increased stress and suffering, yet this Premier insists on spending public dollars to promote his privatization agenda rather than dealing with the health care needs of Albertans. I'll say it one more time: spin doctors won't cure our health care system and the problems this government

has created. My questions are to the Premier. Given that four out of five of all physicians surveyed felt that the waiting times had increased during the term of this government, why should Albertans trust a Premier who ignores the evidence that private health care increases the wait lists?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition wait and see what the legislation says. I can give her a hint. It's all in the policy paper. Obviously she hasn't read it, but basically it sets in place some very stringent regulations relative to contracting to private surgical clinics. It also provides regional health authorities with some options to shorten waiting lists and to alleviate pain and suffering. That's what it's all about. I don't see how the Liberal Party could be opposed to something that is so basic and so fair.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are sick of waiting, and they are sick of this Premier's nonanswers. Given that three out of four physicians in our province believe that the number of patients awaiting health services has increased—increased—in the past four years, why should Albertans trust a Premier who keeps saying he has a plan when Albertans know that that plan is more and more and more privatization?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, private/public partnerships are nothing new in this province. Again, I would remind the hon. member that under her watch the Morgentaler clinic was started in Edmonton in 1991. Morgentaler clinic two was started in Calgary in 1992. The Gimbel clinic, 1983, was operating under her watch. Another clinic was established in Calgary in 1990. The Mitchell surgery centre, 1969, continued to operate. The Northern Alberta Eye Institute, 1990, was established under the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition's watch when she was the minister of health.

Relative to orthopaedics, dermatology, urology, plastic surgery, the Coronation Day Surgery Centre Ltd. was established in 1982 and allowed to operate. Surgical Centres Inc., Foothills, 1992, was established under her watch. Surgical Centres, Southland, Calgary, 1988, was probably established before her watch but was allowed to operate and continue under her watch. The Rockyview Surgical Centre, 1989, in Calgary was started under her watch. The Banff outpatient surgery centre, 1969, was allowed to operate.

If anyone knows about private surgical clinics, Mr. Speaker, this hon. leader of the Liberal opposition knows more about it than anyone else because she was responsible for bringing most of them about.

MRS. MacBETH: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right. I was the health minister of this province, but I didn't have a fine of \$3.6 million from the federal government when I was minister.

Given that three out of four physicians in this study felt that the quality of health care available within their region had declined during the term of this government, why should Albertans believe a Premier who refuses to elect members to the regional health authorities and only appoints those who agree with his privatization scheme?

MR. KLEIN: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, elections will be held in conjunction with the next municipal elections, and two-thirds of the boards will be elected.

Relative to the comment of being fined, for 10 years facility fees were allowed. This leader of the Liberal opposition, when she was minister, did absolutely nothing to address the problem. We had to address the problem when the then federal minister, Ms Marleau,

took it upon herself to interpret what we were doing to be in violation of the Canada Health Act. She did nothing, Mr. Speaker. This person who was minister of health did absolutely nothing to curtail that particular activity. We had to take the action.

2:10

I would also remind the hon. member, when she is talking about being fined \$3.4 million, that under our watch we had to take a \$3.4 billion structural deficit and turn that into surpluses year after year after year.

Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Rules

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the chair did make a plea for some decorum prior to the initiation of that second set of questions. It did not improve, so perhaps it's now timely to just review what *Beauchesne* says about the question period. Let me take you to *Beauchesne* 409.

A brief question seeking information about an important matter of some urgency which falls within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the specific Minister to whom it is addressed, is in order.

- (1) It must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate.
- (2) The question must be brief. A preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence

There's no need for preambles on these supplementaries.

- (3) The question ought to seek information and, therefore, cannot be based upon a hypothesis, cannot seek an opinion, either legal or otherwise, and must not suggest its own answer, be argumentative or make representations.
- (4) It ought to be on an important matter, and not be frivolous.
- (5) The matter ought to be of some urgency.

There are additional items in number 409, but I want to just highlight a few from *Beauchesne* 410. It's been observed in the past that

- (1) Television has made a marked impact on Parliament and public perception thereof;
- (2) While some previous guidelines remain valid others have fallen into disuse . . .
- (3) Time is scarce.
- (4) In the view of the watching public, decorum is of importance.
- (5) The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account . . .
- (7) Brevity both in questions and answers is of great importance.
- (8) Preambles to questions should be brief and supplementary questions require no preambles . . .
- (9) Questions should not repeat questions already asked although this does not mean that other questions on the same point are out of order.

And I might go on.

This is important public time, hon. members. Decorum is important.

Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, your third main question.

Calgary Regional Health Authority

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Albertans heard the head of the Calgary regional health authority, the former Provincial Treasurer, the Premier's handpicked lieutenant of Calgary, and the architect of the cuts say, and I quote: it's better to experiment than to plan. This is an incredible insult to Albertans who depend on public health care. My questions are to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with his former Provincial Treasurer now responsible for a budget of nearly a billion dollars of taxpayers money when he says that it's better to experiment than to plan?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear those comments come out of the former Provincial Treasurer's mouth. I can tell you that the only plan I know of that he was the architect of was the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition's unsuccessful leadership campaign.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, Albertans see through this Premier's nonanswers.

Will the Premier fire his chosen chairman of the Calgary regional health authority given his reckless disregard for public health care?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I understand that the leader has some concern about Mr. Dinning being chair of an entity which has a \$1 billion budget. Actually it's somewhat higher than that. I think that's something of a comedown financially from managing a \$12 billion budget for the provincial government and for all Albertans and doing a very fine job of balancing it and moving this province towards a more sound financial footing.

Now, with respect to the speech that I understand the former hon. Provincial Treasurer, now chair of the CRHA, made, I think he is exhibiting leadership in the context of his duties in Calgary, Mr. Speaker. He, I think, has excellent qualifications to look at the future needs of the system down there from a positive perspective for health, and certainly I would not in any way consider recommending his dismissal. Certainly not. He's doing a fine job. I think the overall board down there is working hard to provide for the health needs of Albertans.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit, as his handpicked chairman has, that the Premier has no plan, just an experiment in privatizing that could end up destroying public health care?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is a plan, and it's a very bold and a very energetic plan. That plan will unfold when the legislation is tabled.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. interim leader of the third party.

Private Health Services (continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Friends of Medicare chairperson, Christine Burdett, received a telephone call earlier today from a reporter from the *National Post*. The reporter claimed to have knowledge of the contents of the government's private, for-profit hospitals legislation. The reporter said that the legislation bans private hospitals. He also added that that would cause Friends of Medicare to reverse its position on the legislation. As the interview continued, it became clear that the legislation does not ban private, overnight patient stay facilities. My question is to the Premier. How can the government justify leaking the contents of its private, for-profit hospitals legislation to a Toronto-based, right-wing newspaper prior to introducing the legislation in this Assembly?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member saying that if the *Toronto Star* had phoned and asked the same question, it would be appropriate?

Well, Mr. Speaker, basically the foundation for the legislation is contained in the policy paper. I can assure the hon. member that that reporter, hopefully, and no other reporter has a copy of the legisla-

tion. If they do, I would like to find out who gave it to them.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, why is the government using all manner of questionable tricks, which most Albertans are sure to find insulting and offensive, in a desperate, last-ditch effort to persuade Albertans that contracting out of major surgeries requiring overnight patient stays should be legalized?

MR. HANCOCK: Point of order.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would advise the hon. member to wait and see the legislation before commenting on it. At that time, he will have ample opportunity to debate any points that he might want to raise in this legislative Chamber. That is the time and the place, when the legislation is tabled, to debate the specific points that might or might not be there.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplementary to the Premier: if the government really wants to ban private hospitals, why don't they simply amend the Hospitals Act to require any procedure necessitating an overnight patient stay to be performed only in a public hospital?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this refers to a very specific act that is under the purview of the Department of Health and Wellness, and I'll ask the appropriate minister to respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member posing the question has read our policy document, he will note that we are proposing a much more comprehensive policy with respect to protecting publicly administered, publicly funded health care in this province than would be possible through simply making an amendment to the Hospitals Act. I can assure the hon. member – and he, I think, would be aware of that if he had read our policy document instead of whatever else it was he was reading. It will certainly address the overall plan that we have. Legislation will follow through from the policy paper according to what we've heard from Albertans. It will protect the public health care system, and it will have a number of prohibitions on such things as queue-jumping and being able to get preferential treatment because of the payment of money. Those kinds of protections will be built into the legislation.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Government House Leader, I did catch notice of your anticipated point of order that you want to raise. Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, you want to . . .

2:20

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to stand on a question of privilege pursuant to Standing Order 15(1) and reference specifically . . .

THE SPEAKER: You've given me notice. We'll deal with it later.

MR. DICKSON: Fine. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Federal Support for Agriculture

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Last week we heard that the federal government had announced a joint prairie farm disaster assistance program but restricted the benefits to only

Manitoba and Saskatchewan, excluding Alberta. Agriculture has been hit very hard in my area in the past few years, and farmers are calling me to find out what's going on here and if the federal government is playing favourites. To me this looks a little bit like the middle finger salute that someone else in Ottawa was famous for a few years back. I'll make it short and sweet with just one question: can the minister of agriculture tell us just what is going on here, and can he do something about it?

MR. LUND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, we haven't been able to figure out how it is that the Liberals feel that farmers across the country should not be treated equitably. We found out today that they have somehow figured out a magic formula using transportation costs, which certainly makes absolutely no sense.

As the hon. member that asked the question correctly indicated, in the Peace River country they have major transportation difficulties and costs. As a matter of fact, in the province of Alberta 44 stations have higher transportation costs than in Saskatchewan. Our costs since the Crow was bought out amount to an increase of about 116 percent. So we will be very anxious to see exactly how the calculations were done to figure out that in fact Alberta doesn't qualify.

We are going to be going down to Ottawa later today, and the objective will be to try to indicate to the federal minister that in fact there has to be equitable treatment of farmers across the country. I have consistently told him and his colleagues that we have situations in Alberta that are similar to Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

We are also going to be pressing that now is the opportunity for them to move ahead with the Estey/Kroege report, because quite frankly there are several millions of dollars, estimates all the way up to 300 million of farmers' dollars, that have been wasted right today in the fact that the transportation system and the handling system are not efficient in this country. Those are dollars that we need to see coming back to the farmer. So we'll be pushing them to move. They have used the excuse in past times that it would disenfranchise Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Well, they have now paid a pile of money to those two provinces, so we should be able to move ahead.

We will also be questioning the role of the provincial ministers. We thought that co-operation was a proper way to operate within Confederation. So we will be questioning that at this point, because, as you know, the two ministers that ended up getting money walked out of the meeting. So we question how that works: how does that work for unity in the country? Those will be the objectives of the trip.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

Education Funding

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the Wednesday before last week's budget the Treasurer promised Albertans that 2,200 new teachers and teaching aides would be hired. The 2,200 teachers and aides were part of a list that supposedly included more computers, severe disability funding, expanded early literacy programs, and increases in teachers' salaries. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Did the Treasury Department come up with the 2,200 teacher and aide figure, or was it supplied by the Minister of Learning?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, all of the budget matters, as I clearly indicated even in my opening comments on the budget, are an entire product of input from all MLAs, not just the Treasurer, not just the Minister of Learning, but in fact from all government MLAs

following consultations with school boards, regional health authorities, and business groups all over the province. The dollars that are allocated there definitely have that ability to hire that many teachers.

Now, the Minister of Learning has also been quite correct in saying that we want to respect the autonomy of those school boards. An individual school board may say: well, we're not going to hire 20 teachers; maybe we'll hire 18 and three teacher's aides. Those types of micro decisions are certainly left to the school boards, and we respect that.

The dollars are there that have the capacity to do that, and I would think it would be in that range by the time the business plan is completed. The member could tally it up and see if we were close or not.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. To the Treasurer: why did the Treasurer fail to tell Albertans that the list of education promises was a list from which boards would choose?

MR. DAY: Sorry. I think I just said that, along those lines. I thank him for echoing my remarks there, Mr. Speaker.

DR. MASSEY: Will the Provincial Treasurer set the record straight and tell Albertans exactly the number of teachers and aides that are in the budget and that they can count on being hired?

MR. DAY: I'll try it again, a little slower this time, Mr. Speaker. The budget is put together by all members and, in fact significantly on items to do with learning, by the Minister of Learning. The needs of all the school boards are taken into account, and then the money is allocated in such a way that those needs, should the school board so decide, can be met along those lines.

Now, should a school board have a different idea, they have the autonomy; the Minister of Learning wants to allow for that to flow. He may want to comment further on that.

We should also remember that the growth and the increase in spending actually goes beyond inflation and beyond student growth. So maximum flexibility is provided along those guidelines, Mr. Speaker.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The number 2,200 actually came from the calculation. When you take into account that the actual enrollment growth was calculated at around 1.4 percent, 1.4 percent of 550,000 is roughly in the area of 6,000 to 6,500. If you use an average of between 20 and 25, there are 300 students per year there, for a total of 900 teachers.

Mr. Speaker, the other place where there will be aides hired: there's a 15 percent increase in the special-needs funding. As we know, when it comes to special needs, we're anticipating a huge increase. There's a 10 percent increase for enrollment of kids with special needs, and we anticipate that there will be significant hirings there.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Treasurer is absolutely correct. This budget was about flexibility for the school boards. The school boards asked me for that flexibility. They wanted those dollars to be able to be put in the places they deemed absolutely necessary. We gave them that ability to do it.

Private Health Services

(continued)

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, critics of the government's policy statement on the delivery of surgical services have stated that no studies or reports exist to support private-sector involvement in a

publicly funded health care system. Using studies not directly relevant to Alberta's proposal, these critics repeatedly pontificate that no recognized authorities support even minor private-sector involvement in a public health care system. My questions are to the minister of health. Are there any major studies from acknowledged authorities to support Alberta's proposed policy to allow some surgeries to be contracted to private providers?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, certainly, as I think has been referenced in this Assembly, there are a number of studies, some reputable, some not, on both sides of this particular question. A couple of days ago I tabled in this Assembly . . . [interjections] The hon. people across the way want me to name them. I would invite them to read, you know, the names on top of the studies that I tabled a short time ago.

2:30

In addition to those studies, Mr. Speaker, that were very credible – they'd undergone peer review – I tabled today the 1999 report of the World Health Organization, which is a very prestigious organization. It's entitled Making a Difference, and it does lay out, I think, a very credible, documented, supported set of arguments pointing out that a health care system, provided it is publicly financed and publicly governed, can benefit from a degree of competition from new ideas, from innovation that could be provided by the private sector.

I would like just to conclude my answer by noting that the director general of the World Health Organization is Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, and she is supportive of the findings of the report. She's a very, very credible expert in the field of health care from the country of Norway.

MRS. GORDON: Again to the same minister: recognizing that you just said that they were credible, who exactly is the World Health Organization? Where are they from, and what do they do? My constituents want to know. [interjections]

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I have to remark that I find it rather incredible that the members across the way laugh at the title of the World Health Organization, which is an agency of the United Nations. The United Nations is one of the major, I think, accomplishments of the 20th and now 21st centuries in terms of co-operation and credibility among the nations of this world. So that, I guess, is reflective of their overall attitude.

The World Health Organization is noted for its work in terms of looking at the way of developing and improving health care systems across the world, certainly in the areas of disease control and immunization as well as in terms of managing and designing future health care systems.

MRS. GORDON: Could the minister please explain how this organization's report is relevant to and interacts with the Alberta proposal?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the report focuses on the pressures that are on government-run health care systems all across the world. It looks at the key factors that are involved in terms of improving and sustaining these particular health care systems, and of course it looks at the comparative effectiveness of them as they exist right now. It concludes in a general way – and I invite everybody to read the report – that the health care systems of the world that are run by governments would benefit from innovation, including very much so the competition, the different ideas that can be brought into a

system to improve it for the years ahead, provided of course that government takes responsibility for regulation and for standards. That is something, of course, that we've said over and over again. We do it now, and we will certainly be doing it in our proposed legislation.

Income Tax

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I think it's about time the government sent out their tax plan truth squads. I mean, if you were to listen to the Provincial Treasurer, you'd believe that he is responsible for \$216 million worth of federal tax cuts. Will the Treasurer confirm that the federal government in fact will be making over 52 percent of the provincial personal income tax cuts in Alberta during the 2000 tax year?

MR. DAY: You know, that was quite a convoluted question. I might have to get it in writing from him. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, how even when you try and do something nice and proper, the opposition still kind of gives you a hard time. I guess they think that's their role in life.

If people would observe yesterday, the Premier, in responding to the federal budget – this is to a different political party – actually made positive comments in some areas about the federal budget, and I made those comments, too. We give credit. I'm saying this live, here and on television. We give credit to Mr. Martin and the federal government for some of the good things in that budget. They listened, and they responded. We give credit for that. We're not taking all the credit for it.

Some people have suggested that Alberta, that the Klein government leading and setting the example affected the thinking. I don't know if it did or not, but I give them full credit for some of the good things they did in terms of reducing income taxes for all Canadians. Good for them.

MR. SAPERS: It's a simple question, Mr. Speaker, that could be answered with a yes or no. So I'll repeat it for the Treasurer. Will he confirm that in fact the federal government will be making \$158 million, or 52 percent of the total personal provincial income tax cuts in Alberta, during the 2000 tax year? Yes or no?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, we haven't run the numbers on that. I can tell you a couple of things that I can confirm, and I will. The average tax reduction for Albertans that will come into play because of the Alberta tax reform plan will be about 15 percent across the board. The average reduction for Albertans as a result of the federal cuts will be about a 6 percent reduction. So ours is more, but at 6 percent nobody is going to turn that away.

On the area of bracket creep I really want to commend the federal government and Mr. Martin, because as late as a week before his budget he was saying that the federal government would not move on eliminating bracket creep, and in fact he did. I want to congratulate him for that.

In terms of percentages, as the critic is asking, they will move up the basic exemption levels. The federal government will move those basic exemption levels upwards about 1.8 percent. That's better than nothing, and we appreciate that. Our exemption levels are moving up. The basic exemption level is moving up 70 percent, and the spousal exemption is moving upwards 90 percent. They're moving theirs up 1.8 percent. We'll take that. That's fine. More importantly, they also are eliminating bracket creep. We give them full credit and congratulations for that.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard of tax avoidance before but not tax question avoidance.

Mr. Treasurer, given that the federal government is able to direct

42 percent of its fiscal dividend or surplus to tax cuts, would you explain why, with your supposed leadership, Alberta is only directing 12 percent, only 12 percent, 30 percent less, of its fiscal dividend or surplus to tax cuts?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear almost a tone of anger that we're reducing taxes. Next year the combination of the federal tax reduction and the provincial tax reduction for a family – now this is an approximation – in the middle-income range, say around \$55,000, is going to be over a \$1,000, and depending on the number of dependents and what refunds they have coming to them, an average middle-income person, because of what the provincial government has done and the federal government has done, could be up to \$1,200, \$1,300, \$1,500. Just the provincial portion alone of the tax reduction on a family income of \$50,000 is \$907. Add to that \$500 or \$600 that the feds are putting through, and it's something like \$1,500.

I'm congratulating the federal government. I'm congratulating Albertans for telling us to reduce ours. I don't think a \$1,500 or even a \$1,000 tax reduction for a middle-income family is something to be angry about. We're quite excited about it, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Private Health Services

(continued)

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been some concerns raised by senior citizens that the government's policy statement on the delivery of surgical services signals a return to the days before public health care, when patients had to pay their own bills or buy expensive private insurance. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: can the minister assure Alberta seniors that they will not have to buy private insurance to pay for necessary health care?

MR. JONSON: Yes, certainly, Mr. Speaker.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister say what effects, if any, the proposed policy will have on seniors?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we're going to take great pains in our preparation of the legislation to ensure that seniors do not have to pay for their medically required services. That is a firm commitment. In addition to that, I would just like to point out that beyond the area of medically insured services as they relate to hospitals and to doctors and all the other people that work in the health care system in the acute care area, this government is firmly committed to providing for a continuum of care, to working through the recommendations of the Broda report in terms of healthy aging, and to giving a priority to having the best possible health care system in place for our seniors and pioneers in this province.

2:40

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: does the government's policy mean that medically necessary services may be deinsured, forcing patients to pay for their own medical bills?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the policy statement is very clear and the legislation will be even more precise in that all medically required insured services through the requirements of the Canada Health Act – in Alberta, of course, we go way beyond the specific

requirements for coverage under the Canada Health Act – will continue to be there for seniors, for middle-aged people, for children, for the population of this province. Yes, because the aging population are, of necessity, sometimes major users of the health care system, it is most important that those services be there for them. As shown by our recent budget commitments and also our firm commitment under the proposed legislation, we will make sure that the service is there for our seniors.

Child Welfare

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, the regionalization of child welfare, like health care, has created unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, gaps, and inefficiency. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Can the minister tell the Assembly how file management is co-ordinated for child welfare files at the district, regional, and provincial levels of the department?

Thank you.

MS EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member is aware, some of the most recent signings for child and family service authorities in the local area are even within this last year, and we are working very hard with those authorities to be sure that they're up and running, that their procedures are in order, that standards are in place, focusing primarily on the welfare of the child. A number of the things we have been doing over the past several months: working to alleviate problems affected by workload standards and making sure that the case and the review teams are managing properly.

On the very specific instance of files, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we are working with our partnering ministries in making sure that our record-keeping is in order, that we have a plan for the hundred-year retention of files for children. I'm very satisfied on our review prior to Y2K that the CWIS system and the backup to the CWIS system will guarantee that we have security of the files and that the files for children are fully protected.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it department policy that duplicate files on all children receiving services from child welfare are held at district, regional, and provincial levels?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, for the precise detail of how the copies are held, I cannot account. However, I have met with a consultant that is doing a complete review of the files. I've identified some of the concerns I personally have relative not only to the protection of the files and the privacy and retention of the files, but I'd be very pleased to table any response relative to the file management within the department at the hon. member's pleasure.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. What departmental process occurs if it is established that files are missing or incomplete?

MS EVANS: Again, Mr. Speaker, if this Assembly would so indulge, I would be pleased to bring the detail of that forward. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

Grizzly Bears

MRS. TARCHUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. Hundreds of students at the Lawrence Grassi school in Canmore have communicated to this government in

recent weeks their concerns regarding the future of grizzly bears. A well-known grizzly bear expert predicts a dangerous decline in grizzly populations in Kananaskis Country due to increased development and human activities. Would the minister please tell us what his department is doing to protect grizzly populations in Kananaskis Country from lethal contact between bears and humans?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I wish to say first of all that I share the concerns expressed by the students at Lawrence Grassi school, and I've read their letters. I'm also familiar with the work of Dr. Steven Herrero, the grizzly bear expert referred to by the hon. member in her question. I'd like to emphasize that the grizzly bear population is on the rise in the province of Alberta. A number of studies have been done throughout the province, including one in southwestern Alberta which dealt with DNA analysis, and it supports a population estimate of roughly 800 grizzly bears in the province, which is up from about 500 in 1987.

Mr. Speaker, my department is studying grizzly bear habitat in Kananaskis Country through support of the eastern slopes grizzly bear project, one of a number of different regional studies being done throughout the province. Our studies also show that human-induced mortality numbers of grizzly bears have been significantly reduced over the last 20 to 25 years.

In the Bow corridor, Mr. Speaker, we have taken a very proactive approach to managing human and bear conflicts. Our Bow region bear conflict prevention plan deals with the safety of people and the bears in Kananaskis Country. For example, when a grizzly bear is spotted on a public trail in Kananaskis Country, that trail is closed to the public. Our staff will then monitor the area to make sure that the bear has cleared off before the trail is reopened.

MRS. TARCHUK: Mr. Speaker, my second question is also to the Minister of Environment. Genesis Land Development Corp. currently has three development proposals in the Spray Lakes area of Kananaskis Country. These young constituents understand that this is prime grizzly bear habitat, and what they would like to know is: how does what we know about grizzly bears affect the proposed development in this area?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, before I proceed to an answer, I would refer hon. members to *Hansard*, issue 4 of this the Fourth Session of the 24th Legislature, where I addressed on page 93 a bit of background on the Genesis project. I said and I repeat again that the overriding principle in Kananaskis Country is the protection of the environment. The environmental impact assessment that I ordered for the proposed development of Genesis must take into account grizzly populations and the movements of those bears as part of a very stringent environmental review process.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, my department is gathering public input with respect to the terms of reference for the environmental impact assessment that Genesis would have to prepare should they decide to proceed with this project. I would encourage any Albertan with interest in the area to certainly come forward and provide their input. That information will ensure that a very comprehensive EIA is prepared.

MRS. TARCHUK: My final question is also to the Minister of Environment. These students are aware that a male grizzly bear will roam up to 1,200 square kilometres. What action is your department taking to ensure that bears roaming between federal and provincial jurisdictions continue to be protected?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize that while we do

co-operate with other jurisdictions, our efforts are primarily focused on looking after grizzly bears that are found on provincial lands. This includes some of the regional management initiatives that I referred to earlier: the southwestern Alberta grizzly bear strategy, the eastern slopes grizzly bear project, the grizzly bear relocation project, the Foothills model forest grizzly bear research, and the boreal grizzly bear project. My department is working with the federal government to address jurisdictional issues involving grizzly bears in Kananaskis Country and Banff national park through the Canadian Rocky Mountain Grizzly Bear Planning Committee.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we do place a great deal of emphasis on the protection of grizzly bears in the province of Alberta, and perhaps I'll conclude with this one note with respect to the Foothills model forest grizzly bear research that's being done. It is considered very much leading-edge research, so much so that recent presentations have been made by the Foothills model forest research in China because the Chinese authorities are interested in using the type of work being done in that research for the protection of panda bears in China.

2:50

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the first of three members to participate in Members' Statements today.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Youth Connections Program

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past five years Alberta has consistently maintained one of the three lowest overall youth unemployment rates in Canada, but we want to do even better. We are succeeding thanks in great part to a valuable youth employment program called Youth Connections.

In 1997 Alberta launched Youth Connections as two pilot projects, Edmonton and Calgary, to help young people age 16 to 24 improve their employment prospects. From the very beginning the service has been a hit. Working in partnership with local business, educators, and community agencies, Youth Connections offers young people who are unemployed or underemployed a way to connect to a career planning service, labour market information, work experience training, and meaningful employment opportunities. At Youth Connections they can find one-on-one career counseling, group workshops on a variety of subjects, computers for resume development and Internet access, a resource library, an extensive employer network, and much more. When appropriate, youth are also encouraged and assisted to go back to school.

By the end of the second year of operation over 10,000 youth took advantage of services offered through Youth Connections. Following this initial success, the Alberta government doubled the funding for Youth Connections to \$5 million to expand this unique employment service throughout the province, and expand they did. From the 13 new locations initially planned for this fiscal year, Youth Connections now helps young people in 20 additional sites from Grande Prairie to Lethbridge. By this summer young people from 32 communities throughout Alberta will have new opportunities to reach their full potential and share in the province's prosperity.

Youth Connections is a true success story. I would like to invite members of the Assembly to visit a Youth Connections site in their constituency and see what a fine job they are doing to give young Albertans a step-up in their careers and their lives.

Thank you.

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

Calgary Herald Strike

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The strike at the *Herald*, Calgary's oldest and largest daily, is poised to enter its fifth month. I would like to believe that any strike in the province would be a concern for the government, but when questioned a few weeks ago about the role of the government in the *Herald* dispute, all the minister in charge of stable labour relations could say was that he hadn't heard much about it. What a sad commentary on the importance this government places on stable labour relations.

Long and divisive job action is too common under the watch of this government. Calgary just finished a long, divisive, and occasionally violent strike at Dynamic Furniture and now faces yet another one at the *Herald*. During the Dynamic Furniture strike many workers expressed their frustration over the lack of leadership provided by government MLAs in Calgary to help resolve the dispute. The workers made their opinion known about how poorly the government handled the situation at the recent PC nomination in Calgary-McCall. The sitting MLA had to take the fall for an uninterested member in a government that places a low priority on stable labour relations.

So what should the role of the government be in the *Calgary Herald* strike, Mr. Speaker? Firstly, it should be informed and concerned. Secondly, it should preside over a labour relations framework that leads to a resolution, not to further confrontation. A perfect example of this would be binding arbitration on first contracts, and this is a change that the government refuses to make. Finally, the government should know when to intervene and when not to based on common sense, not on preference for one side of a dispute over another. Sadly, our government fails on all three counts, and the people who pay for this lack of concern are the people of Calgary who rely on the newspaper to keep them informed.

On behalf of the Official Opposition I'm hoping that a resolution to this dispute can be found fairly and quickly. I'm sure the current minister responsible does not want to be known as the Neville Chamberlain of Alberta labour relations.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Before calling on the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, hon. members, when this Assembly agreed to participate in these two unique processes, one called Recognitions and the other Members' Statements, several sessions ago there was one hon. member who was giving a member's statement and another member rose on a point of order. At that point in time the chair said that he really believed that the whole purpose of members' statements was to allow a member a free expression and did not recognize a petition for a point of order.

Inherent in that understanding by this chairman would be that discussion and statements made in members' statements might deal with policy and not deal with individuals. If members are going to make comments about other individuals, then methinks that the chair must rethink his statement of several years ago and perhaps see the need for points of order or points of privilege to arise out of members' statements. I just give that as a statement today, and some time and thought will be spent on this subject in the future.

Spray Lake Sawmills Ltd.

MRS. TARCHUK: Mr. Speaker, it's a great privilege for me to rise before the House today and recognize a business in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane that serves as a great example of progressive environmental stewardship and financial success. On February 23

Spray Lake Sawmills Ltd. of Cochrane was awarded the Premier's award of distinction as well as the EPCOR triple bottom-line award at the ninth annual Alberta business awards presentation in Calgary, hosted by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce.

The Premier's award of distinction is given to the organization which best embodies the Alberta advantage, exhibits overall outstanding achievement and leadership in Alberta, and demonstrates ongoing and consistent involvement in community events and organizations. The triple bottom-line award is given to a business that best demonstrates excellence in the areas of financial success, environmental commitment and achievement, and community involvement.

Spray Lake Sawmills has been part of the Alberta economy for over 50 years. The family-owned business is the largest employer in Cochrane and has maintained steady growth over the years. The company's primary objective is to ensure high levels of environmental performance and high levels of sustainability while recognizing other forest values and users. As part of its commitment to the environment Spray Lake Sawmills has over the past several years voluntarily embarked upon an extensive public consultation process that involved numerous stakeholders in developing harvest plans for the McLean Creek area of Kananaskis Country. Additionally, they are developing a range of unique wood by-products and have achieved virtually 100 percent utilization of the harvested timber.

Spray Lake Sawmills is a homegrown Cochrane success story and a provincial leader in the area of corporate citizenship. Please join me in congratulating the Mjolsness family and all Spray Lake Sawmills' employees for a job well done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Point of Order Decorum

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising under Standing Order 23(j), which prohibits the use of "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I'm mindful of the fact that you had to intercede twice today to remind members of the House about decorum, about the fact that the public is watching, about the fact that the reputation of members of the House is at stake not just as individual members but as leaders in our community, as politicians, and as people who are elected here to represent this House.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in his remarks – and I say that advisedly. It was supposed to be a short, succinct, brief preamble to a question, but it was indeed remarks. If I caught it correctly, he used, among other things, language like: all kinds of tricks. I'm using that simple phrase. There were other phrases around his question today, and there were other phrases around his question on previous days that I mentioned. It is inappropriate, in my submission, Mr. Speaker, to put in preambles of questions connotations of that nature which suggest that leaders of this province are up to trickery and deceit and those sorts of things.

3:00

It is quite appropriate for members opposite, including the interim leader of the New Democrat opposition, to raise questions about policy, to attack policy, to attack what the government is doing, even on occasion perhaps to provide constructive criticism, but it is quite inappropriate and improper, in my humble submission, to draw down all members of this House, including members of the opposition, to be raising questions of deceit, raising questions of trickery,

using language of that nature which throws mud on us all and sticks to himself as well as to everybody else, when we're trying to raise the level of public confidence in their politicians and leaders both on the government side of the House and on the opposition side of the House.

I think that in the context of your admonition to the House today twice about decorum, there should be a further admonition with respect to the preamble to the hon. member's question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on this point of order.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, I would like to just draw attention to what I said. The hon. Government House Leader talks about the reputation of members, the reputation of leaders of this province, and makes a reference to words like "deceit," which were never used by me and never used in reference to the leaders of this province or the leaders of this government or members of this House.

The words that I used – I just want to put them on record again. I'm talking about the government, and governments are accountable. Governments are motivated agencies, organizations, because they are to achieve certain goals. So I can't see how questioning a government, holding a government to account for what it does leads to or constitutes either insulting or putting in doubt the reputation of leaders or the members of this House. Never once did I refer to a person in my question, Mr. Speaker. I did use the word "tricks." Tricks are techniques or means. This is the sense in which I used the word "tricks." It could be techniques; it could be means.

I'm wondering where the point of order lies. I certainly am most respectful of the dignity of this House and of each member of this House and their right to be able to speak freely on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of Albertans without insulting each other. I don't see the point of order in the hon. House leader's submission today, so I think there's no point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, several points today. The chair did have to rise and remind hon. members about decorum. Quite frankly, of all the questions that were raised in the question period today – and the chair was taking some liberty with the calculation of them: 25, 28, 32. Thirty-two questions in all were raised today, and I do believe that of all the 32 questions, only four actually fell within all the rules of question period. I think 28 of the 32 could have been ruled out.

Methinks as well that it's amazing how many hypothetical questions we have about a bill that has not been introduced, and what will happen if no bill is introduced? Secondly, then, the second series of questions is: if we didn't have a federal budget yesterday, what would the other questions have been? Quite frankly, other than the Member for Peace River and the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, I think that the other 28 questions out of 32 quite legitimately could have been ruled out at one time or another.

Part of what happened today has to do with tone, part of what happened today has to do with manner, and I suspect that part of what happened today has to do with decorum. There's absolutely no doubt whatsoever that if one takes a look at *Beauchesne*, the word "trickery" has been ruled unparliamentary for a great period of years, and that is not the best question that can be used. But it's also been ruled parliamentary as well, so it depends entirely on the kind of situation that you arrive at.

Now, in the question that was raised today, this was the question by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government using all manner of questionable tricks, which most Albertans are sure to find insulting and offensive, in a desperate, last-ditch effort to persuade Albertans that

contracting out of major surgeries requiring overnight patient stays should be legalized?

Well, one would suspect that if we applied all the rules with respect to the tone of questions and not being argumentative and not asking for opinion, that question would have been ruled out right at the start and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona couldn't have asked his question because it would have violated certainly certain things in 409 and 410.

A lot of this is in reference to, again, the tone and the intent. It's quite clear that most of the Standing Orders that we have have to deal with individuals, allegations against another member, and in this case one does not appreciate the language overall that was used today in the Assembly. On the other hand, one also has to accept the word of an hon. member, and if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona makes the point that it was not his intent to insult anyone, that he was simply going after policy, well, then one has to accept that. But one would also say again: this was not our best day.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on a point of privilege.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd given notice before to preserve my right to make that argument. I've considered the matter further. I received some additional information and on reflection will not be proceeding with the question of privilege I'd given notice of before.

Thank you for the opportunity.

head: Orders of the Day

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

head: Second Reading

Bill 204

Agricultural and Recreational Land Ownership Amendment Act, 2000

[Adjourned debate February 23: Mr. McFarland]

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

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. With respect to Bill 204, I might start off by saying this. If this bill was genuinely focused on a thoughtful proposal to deal with protecting the family farm in this province, we might well have had a useful, thoughtful debate about it, but this bill is not that kind of proposal. Make no mistake about it: this bill is focused almost exclusively on the Hutterian Brethren Church.

It was interesting that the sponsor of the bill started off by saying: you know, this is not an assault on freedom of religion, and this isn't focused on the Hutterite brethren. But the entire second reading speech by the sponsor is replete with references to Hutterite colonies and particularly to Hutterite colonies in southern Alberta. In fact, he said at page 72 in Hansard:

This is the only church, the only charitable, not-for-profit corporation in Alberta, that wants religious freedom but is also the single largest farming unit in Alberta, that is also approaching closer than any one of the other groups the 15 percent limitation.

The Member for Little Bow in his defence of this bill has made it crystal clear that this is specifically targeted to and against those Albertans living on a Hutterite colony.

You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the proudest moments, I think, for the Lougheed government when they were first elected was the repeal of the Communal Property Act in 1972. That act, of course, had provided formally that you couldn't increase the size of a colony without the consent of the Communal Property Board. Communal living was described in the words of Grant Notley on November 15,

1972, as

one of the two principal tenets of the Hutterian faith, and as a consequence the act . . .

He was referring here to the Communal Property Act.

. . . whether by design or otherwise – conflicts with the principle of freedom of religion . . . [and] also offends the principle of freedom of association.

Now, it was interesting in the debate around the repeal of the Communal Property Act that Mr. Notley also noted a need for some form of rural land use controls, so there is clearly a case that can be made for talking about land use controls. In fact, I'll quote again from Mr. Notley, who spoke to the bill in 1972, where he said:

In the long run, it is my submission that the family farm is far more challenged by the threat of corporate farming, alien ownership of land or absentee ownership of land, than it is by the expansion of Hutterite colonies.

Mr. Speaker, it's instructive, and I encourage all members to look at the work that was done in this province around studying the impact of communal property and the Communal Property Board. The Department of Municipal Affairs' special advisory office put out a report entitled Communal Property in Alberta. What they did in this analysis was go through and debunk a lot of the myths that surround Hutterite colonies, and they dealt with some of the myths like: Hutterite colonies are not an economic asset to the province or to local communities; false. They dealt with the myth that Hutterite colonies are causing the demise of rural communities. False. They dealt with the myth that Hutterite colonies are crowding out other farmers. False. They dealt with myths such as Hutterites don't pay taxes, that they don't comply with the law, that they're not good citizens, and on and on and on.

3:10

I encourage members to read this item – it's in the Leg. Library downstairs – because it helps to give us some history around this thing, and it also helps to understand why I think it's so poisonous to start a debate around control of lands in this province by spicing your debate with reference to Hutterite colonies instead of focusing on corporate farms or absentee ownership and those kinds of things.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's also instructive if we look to some of the things said by the hon. Dave Russell when he moved second reading – this would be November 15, 1972 – to repeal the old Communal Property Act. I'll just paraphrase. He said that at that point the provincial government was bringing in the Alberta Bill of Rights, and he said quite frankly that

if this government was serious about its legislation with respect to human rights and the rights of the individual, and the rights that we want to confirm in the legislation of Alberta affecting all Alberta citizens, that The Communal Properties Act, in its present form, had to be dealt with.

He goes on to say that the way it was to be dealt with was that it was to be eliminated.

He said further:

It became apparent that if a person believed in the Bill of Human Rights, then The Communal Properties Act had to be repealed and it was that simple.

The provincial Conservative government, the first Conservative government in Alberta, to its credit proceeded to do exactly that, to repeal the Communal Property Act, and it is a credit to each one of those men and women in the Legislative Assembly at that time that they did in fact repeal it.

What is frightening, I think, is that as we listen to the Member for Little Bow, it's as if that debate had never happened and he would take us right back to the days of communal property boards. So much for freedom of religion. So much for freedom of association.

Mr. Speaker, the other comments I might refer members to are

some comments made, again, by the hon. Dave Russell in closing debate at second reading, and these were effectively some of the last words spoken around the old Communal Property Act. He was quoting from some of the reports – the report I'd mentioned earlier, that's in the library downstairs, and another one – and he said this.

"In 1770 Catherine the Great of Russia encouraged the Hutterites to come in and improve unsettled areas. In 1873 in the United States both government and railway officials pressured the Hutterites to move into the United States." Turning the page we find that the former premier Mr. Brownlee's government, "sensitive to the views of rural municipal organizations, urged the federal government to allow the Hutterites to immigrate. Due to the depressed conditions, local residents of southern Alberta wished to sell their land to the Hutterites; and moreover the fact that the colonies were self-sufficient made them an asset to municipal organizations.

We can go back. I have a keen interest in history, but I think when we deal with the bill that's in front of us, everybody ought to spend some time looking at the history on communal properties. I think that what it comes down to is this, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to deal with large corporate farms, if we're going to deal with alien landownership, let's deal with it from a starting point of respecting freedom of religion, respecting freedom of association, and let's make sure that the mischief we're going to deal with is appropriate and that the bill is appropriately targeted.

So I just come back to what I started out saying. I think it's fair to have a discussion about land ownership, although sometimes when I hear some of the comments from the Member for Little Bow, I sort of close my eyes and imagine we're back in the British Museum in London in 1916 beside Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, later known as Lenin. He would have thought this would be an excellent idea, this kind of state control of private ownership and this whole notion of having a bureaucracy deciding how big or how small farms are going to be and who can own farms. He would have felt right at home in 1917 participating and probably supporting the bill. I'm just trying to imagine in my mind the Member for Little Bow and Mr. Lenin sitting around the table in the British Museum and the conversation they might have had. But enough of that, Mr. Speaker.

I think my point is that I cannot support the bill, not because I don't think that there's a legitimate issue around it, but I have to find a way to distance myself, to dissociate myself as completely as possible from the observations and the remarks that were made by the Member for Little Bow. I've read the lessons that I think Alberta's supposed to have learned from that sorry experience with communal property. I've read the debates and I've read the recognition of Mr. Russell and that first Conservative government when they repealed it, and I don't want to go there again, Mr. Speaker. I'd urge all members to avoid the temptation to get into running roughshod over freedom of association or freedom of religion disguised as something else.

The next thing one might talk about is: well, we pass this bill, and then we'd better put in a notwithstanding clause because there's certainly going to be . . . [interjection] Well, we have our friend from Red Deer here who has some expertise in that area too. That suggestion may come, and I want to distance myself from any suggestion of the notwithstanding clause too. I'm not sure, when I hear the sentiments of the bill sponsor and what he's really focused on, namely Hutterite colonies, that any resulting legislation is going to pass Charter muster.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I support freedom of religion. I support freedom of association. I accept as a legislator that we have to design laws that respect those fundamental principles and work around them, and I'm fearful that this private member's bill is taking us in a direction which is more about abrogating rights than it is about trying to deal with some of

those legitimate questions in terms of land use planning.

Those are the comments that I wanted to make at this stage, Mr. Speaker. Thanks very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 204, the Agricultural and Recreational Land Ownership Amendment Act. The intent of this bill is to limit ownership of arable, cultivated land by any individual, corporation, or religious group to 15 percent of the total farmland in any municipality or county. The bill will help create a level playing field between Alberta farmers, corporations, and communal farming operations.

The Member for Little Bow has brought this bill forward because he and his constituents believe that all Albertans want to have fairness and a level playing field within the industry and a brighter future for their next generation. This issue is on the minds of many Albertans involved in some form of agriculture business.

This bill may well help solve some of the issues, but I believe that the issue is much bigger than landownership. This bill leads us into the discussion of monopolies, whether it be grain, machine agencies, chemicals, processing, Wheat Board control, as well as landownership. These all have a huge impact on the farmer and his ability to compete. His very viability is related to ownership of land.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I believe that before we target limited landownership, we should certainly have some solutions to many of the problems that I mentioned that cause the increased landholdings. It's no secret that rural communities in Alberta are undergoing massive changes as we begin this new millennium. There are a variety of reasons for the rationalization, and many of them are out of this government's control. I'd like to mention just a few.

Elevators, that marked every village and town in the province, are disappearing and will nearly be all gone by the end of this year. They are being replaced by huge throughput facilities that are approximately 75 to 100 miles apart. Farmers are struggling against transportation issues involving marketing freedom and a bureaucratic federal government that seems unwilling to change. These items transfer \$200 million to \$300 million to \$400 million a year back to the individual farmer.

Mr. Speaker, the cards are stacked and are forcing expansion by the producers. The product of our work, the commodities that we export, have been cheapened by backward socialist policies in Europe, causing surpluses in many of the world markets that we sell into. The Europeans swore after the war that they would never be hungry and short of food again, and they're prepared to subsidize accordingly. We have absolutely no control over what other countries do, so we have to find other ways to compete.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that global warming has also taken its toll. Battling these abnormal weather conditions has been a very difficult challenge. But monopolies are another big piece to the puzzle. There are only two major machine manufacturers left. Large combines and tractors now are costing up towards \$300,000. Even small ones are up to \$100,000 or more. Farmers are trying to buy those machines with \$3 wheat. That's like three cups of coffee for a bushel of their wheat.

As the Member for Little Bow mentioned last week, total ownership from gate to plate leaves control in the hands of a few. The same is true for chemicals and fertilizers. Control of markets means control of prices. If the price of wheat were doubled, I wonder if there would be any more money left in the producer's

pocket. Or would the input costs go up accordingly? Certainly the history in Europe has shown that the input costs go up accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, just for a minute I want to tell you a little bit of a story about monopolies. It was a university professor that started this going. Now, I don't know whether that means anything or not. It was about a cheap food policy in North America. As we developed bigger and better equipment and the prices stayed low, farmers kept buying out other farmers. They kept buying them out and the bigger machinery allowed them to do that until there were only a few left. Then one day there was a big drought in the southern part of North America, and one farmer, one producer, bought out the whole U.S. He had all this big equipment to operate it. That was the end of the cheap food policy. It not only did that. Inefficiency sets in when there's no competition, and there wasn't enough food produced. Now, I know this is a what-if story, but it shows the direction that we are taking in this country, and it's worldwide.

What I want to say is that we need to take a bigger view of this picture. I think we need to sit down and think about what we want our province to look like in the next 50 or hundred years, and once we do that, we can establish the policy that sets a framework for land use in our province. We need to develop a policy that will take us where we want to go in terms of landownership. As agricultural resources and markets for products are gradually owned and operated by corporations, the small, individual farmer slowly loses his ability to determine his own destiny.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is extremely complex. It's something that countries around the world are struggling with. We need to take a good look at some of the things the U.S. and Europe are doing and if they apply to our situation in Alberta. As was mentioned last week, some states do limit landownership. We need to find out how this is working, and we need to explore all of those types of options before we jump in and limit landownership. We have to study this problem and perhaps look for solutions that we haven't even considered before. By establishing a policy that addresses the use of land, we are one step closer to addressing the issues that face the agriculture industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 only attempts to address a small portion of this issue. Is there a level playing field in the province now? In some ways I suspect not, but if the playing field isn't level, it should be addressed either through the regulations or the specific acts that address that concern but not through the Agricultural and Recreational Land Ownership Amendment Act. I'm convinced that large corporations or the Hutterian Brethren Church would be willing to sit down with government and work out any differences, if there are any.

The good news is that the world's population is growing. The day will come when farmland is the most valuable commodity this province has to offer, long after the conventional oil has been tapped, and the best way for us to capitalize on that is to ensure that the agriculture industry is strong and diverse. My constituents believe that the independent farmer is still a part of this mix. This would be a great topic of discussion for the upcoming agriculture summit, where we will have some of the brightest minds offering their input. I look forward with anticipation to that input.

We know that the agriculture industry is changing. Technology and new challenges are changing the way we do business. New technology enables us to do more with less. Vertical integration in the industry has found new efficiencies, revolutionizing the food production industry. We find ourselves at an interesting point in our history. On the one hand, technology is showing us the limitless possibilities there are in the agriculture industry. On the other, corporate . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time

allocation for this subject has now expired.

3:30

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

Service Learning Program for High School Students

501. Mrs. Gordon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to incorporate as part of the high school curriculum a service learning program encouraging students to become involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility.

[Debate adjourned February 22: Ms Carlson speaking]

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

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and join in the debate on Motion 501 today. Service learning education has very positive goals and objectives. Its mandate to students is to aid in the development of young people into responsible citizens and contributing community members. By affording students the option of participating in meaningful service that is beneficial to themselves and to the greater community and reinforcing those lessons through academic preparation and structured reflection, students, parents, teachers, faculty, and the community can band together to provide young Albertans with tremendous opportunities to express themselves not just as members of society but as members of society who take ownership, responsibility, and pride in the contributions they offer.

Mr. Speaker, service learning is a new way to get back to basics. It is a learn-by-doing approach to the curriculum. Students enhance their education by getting real-life experiences in subjects they study while at the same time meeting community needs.

An effective service learning project is comprised of at least three components: preparation, action, and reflection. Preparing students with the knowledge and skills needed for service includes teaching students about their community and how to identify needs as well as providing them with the specific skills needed to perform the service activities. Preparation should include an explanation of why it is important to perform the service and what it means to be an active citizen.

Ideally, service learning should be used to teach curricular objectives, so preparation activities could be tied to classroom lessons. Some examples might include having a speaker come in to teach students about working with elderly residents in a nursing home before going to visit the site, having a representative from the United Way or a volunteer centre come and talk about the volunteer opportunities in the community, or performing a research assignment about the issue the service relates to.

Action is the second necessary component to service learning and is achieved by performing one or more of several activities. Some students are involved in direct-service activities, where students have face-to-face contact with the service recipient. Some examples might include tutoring, serving meals at a homeless shelter, or working with the elderly in a nursing home. Other students may perform indirect services without having face-to-face contact with recipients. This form of action usually channels resources to help alleviate a certain problem. Some examples include food and clothing drives, fund-raisers, and environmental projects.

Other students may choose to become involved in advocacy action by educating others about a particular issue, with the goal being to eliminate the cause of a particular problem. Letter campaigns, preparing and displaying posters, putting on plays, or developing

educational material for others are examples of advocacy measures.

Mr. Speaker, the final component to a successful service learning program is reflection. During this phase students consider the impact that their service had on themselves and the community as well as what worked well and what could be changed to make the project better. Reflection might include a journal, having classroom discussions, or videotaping the project and reviewing and discussing it after.

Service learning is not the same as volunteerism. Volunteers engage in service for a variety of personal reasons. They do not link their service to academic studies, nor do they receive academic credit for their efforts. Service learning also differs from community service in that people become engaged in that activity for yet another variety of reasons. Community service is a broad term that can encompass a court-ordered stipend or traditional voluntary services. It also does not link to academic studies, which is a basic tenet of service learning programs.

Work study internship is also different from service learning in that the student interns frequently work at a nonprofit business to benefit the financial standing of that business. Students are not necessarily working to improve their communities through their internship experiences. However, as my colleague from Wetaskiwin-Camrose pointed out, there can be potential for overlap between work study initiatives, special project courses, and service learning. Students could engage themselves in service learning if through their internship, experiences, or special projects they work to improve the health or welfare of their community while linking their services to academic studies.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of learning through service is gaining momentum among educational stakeholders. The advocates of service learning believe that this method facilitates school improvement. The combination of classroom work and community service produces significant improvement in student attitudes, motivation, and achievement.

Service learning represents an innovative approach to youth involvement and meaningful learning through community service activities. The relevance and power of the method lie in the capacity of service learning to connect classroom learning to real-life situations. Students involved in service learning benefit in numerous ways. Their experiences contribute to personal growth, knowledge, skills, and values, focusing on citizenship and civic responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the recently rekindled discussion on service learning has been fueled by recognizing a need to positively influence our current youth culture. Through service learning teachers and students would become energized through a unique educational process that encourages action to improve or enhance a real-life situation.

Action should be placed on the potential of youth, their strengths, participation, and capacity for making positive contributions. The involvement of youth in service learning activities can make a lasting difference by providing them a sense of purpose and motivating them to remain in school and learn. With the best interests of students in mind it is important to seek collaboration among the stakeholders and reach an agreement on how service learning can positively influence student development and student achievement.

Mr. Speaker, service learning aims to connect the personal and the intellectual to help students acquire knowledge that is useful in understanding the world by building critical-thinking capacities and perhaps leading students to ask fundamental questions about learning and about society while committing themselves to improve both. Service learning aims to prepare students who are lifelong learners to participate in the world. Service combined with learning adds value to each and transforms both.

So I would urge all members of this Assembly to support Motion

501, to encourage the building of new bridges between our educational system, our community, and the youth of our province.

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise to speak to Motion 501, the incorporation of a service learning program in the high school curriculum. This motion was sponsored by the Member for Lacombe-Stettler, and I must say that I am generally in favour of this motion. It does require a close look at what this would do to our curriculum studies in schools. Before giving full support to this particular motion, I think that there are a number of questions and clarifications that are required.

In looking at clarification, I think that there are some terms that we have to look at very closely. What do we mean by "good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility"? How would this course differ, for example, from what is happening in our CALM program now or in our social studies or even the component of our physical education 30 classes that requires most students in them to participate in some type of service learning? The Member for Lacombe-Stettler also spoke of the service ethic and the community involvement programs, and we would certainly want to have some more clarification on this particular point.

We do know right now that our education system, particularly education at the high school level, is quite restrictive, particularly on those students who are trying to graduate in the three-year program. If we put in another voluntary course, is this going to be another course that these students would not be able to fit into their schedules?

I think there are components of this course that are very, very beneficial, and it certainly would be a good balance to what is happening now in our schools, where we do have a tremendous amount of focus on math and science. I think this is proven by how well our students in Alberta do in these two disciplines, so I really do feel that this would be a great offset of those two programs and that if time permitted, it would not detract from the great strides that we've made in these two areas.

3:40

Edmonton-Glengarry, Mr. Speaker, is a constituency in northeast Edmonton, and Edmontonians will tell you that the northeast has long prided itself on the amount of community involvement by its citizens and the tremendous amount of volunteering that occurs in that community. By incorporating a course on service learning, we will put students in a situation where they will have quite a number of new experiences and, I'm certain, good experiences, but this will put pressure on our core programs.

When we look at schools, as well, we do realize that the schools themselves and the communities have a tremendous number of programs that our youth are currently involved in. I would hope to see some type of a situation here whereby these students could possibly get credit for the time that they do spend currently in the school programs, the community programs in place of volunteering. It might be that the number of hours required for volunteering in this course are written down to a certain degree because of this involvement. As well, those programs that do take place in the community and the school do not only involve participation by a student but also the volunteering of other students to serve as timekeepers, for example, during a basketball game or a statistician on a basketball team or whatever.

As well, we had a reference made in the last discussion on sports about how perhaps these students could get involved in increasing

their capabilities and abilities in coaching different sports. As part of my background I have been quite involved in sports here in the province, and I must say that all of the sports that we presently have in Alberta have a requirement that coaches who wish to participate in the sport must take coaching levels. Certainly in all sports the performance of coaches has increased tremendously as a result. I would think that if these students were to get involved in these particular types of programs, it would certainly be a great initial step in seeing them get involved as adults as they get older.

Now, all students do have the option of taking this course, Mr. Speaker, but one of the drawbacks is that if they do choose to take this course, in reality it is a type of involuntary volunteerism.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, I hate once again to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(4) the time allocation for this particular motion has now left us, and I must now put all questions, concluding the debate under consideration.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

Canada Health Act

502. Mr. Shariff moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to reaffirm its commitment to the five principles of the Canada Health Act and ensure that all provincial health care legislation continues to comply with these principles.

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

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and move Motion 502.

Mr. Speaker, public health care is part of the fabric of Alberta's culture, something very dear to all Albertans. Since the concept of publicly funded universal health care was developed over 30 years ago, it has become part of our identity as Canadians. Countless surveys have shown that when Canadians are asked to identify things that make them proud to be Canadians, public health care often tops the list. There is a comfort, a peace of mind that comes from knowing that when that day comes when we are most in need, our public health care system will give us the treatment we need. And when the crisis is over, Canadians don't receive a massive bill. Our public health care system means that we don't have to choose between what is good for our health and what is good for our bank accounts.

In 1984 Parliament unanimously passed the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act was intended to establish criteria and conditions for insured health services and extended health care services provided under provincial law that must be met before a full cash contribution may be made by the federal government. The act stipulates that the health care system must be publicly administered and operated on a nonprofit basis by a public authority. It stipulates that insured services must be comprehensive. It also says that the system must be universal, that all individuals are covered under the system. The act says that people must be covered no matter where and when they move within the country and that there are no charges for insured services. It seeks to maintain a universal level of quality across the country. It means that all Canadian citizens are guaranteed a certain level of quality and accessibility.

Along with this legislative commitment come the challenges of having to administer a massive system like public health care. It has become our province's single biggest expenditure. Of the \$16.2 billion we spent in 1999, 30 percent went to health care. In the 2000-2001 fiscal year our government will spend \$5.6 billion on

health care. Mr. Speaker, health care spending has been difficult to control. A growing population and inflation have resulted in steadily increasing costs. It is not easy to meet the challenges of maintaining such an immense and valuable system.

Albertans expect a good public health system, and they deserve it. We are bombarded with stories about the latest misstep in our health system. Opposition members remind us constantly about people waiting too long for surgeries or MRIs, people getting sent from one hospital to another, people sitting too long waiting for treatment in emergency.

[Mr. Hlady in the chair]

What you don't hear often are the miracles that happen in the health system. Every day around 32 babies are born in Calgary hospitals, and that is just the beginning. There are immunizations and programs for young mothers. There's long-term and palliative care, and there are people, thousands of people – doctors, nurses, emergency workers, physiotherapists and rehab workers, administrators, technologists, home care workers – a variety of people working in community programs. It's business about people, and it works.

The challenges facing our health care system are growing. It is not unreasonable to imagine that one day more than half of our total spending will be dedicated to health care. That's why we need to continue to find new opportunities to maintain our commitment to the Canada Health Act. We should leave no stone unturned in our search for newer and better ways of doing things. We must explore new technologies and methodologies. We have to make the health care system flexible enough to change with the times and adapt to new circumstances.

The biggest challenge we face in helping to end the suffering of Albertans is our finite resources. Mr. Speaker, in a perfect world there would be no waiting lists for health care in this province. Every person in need would have their problem addressed immediately. If you tore a ligament in your knee, you'd have it fixed the next day. Unfortunately, this is not a perfect world. We don't have the resources to treat every problem immediately. We cannot ensure that revenues will always be as they are now. We cannot commit to building more hospitals and more clinics because we are not sure if our sons and daughters will have the resources to pay for them after we are gone.

3:50

So how do we address this problem? How do we reduce waiting lists and help people get on with their lives as fast as possible? Mr. Speaker, our government has developed a policy statement on the delivery of surgical services. This policy will give the health care system the flexibility to contract out certain surgical services to private medical practitioners. Under the system the RHAs will be able to grant contracts to Alberta entrepreneurs to complement the existing health system.

This proposal means that waiting lists can be reduced without the government having to build new buildings and infrastructure. It means the government does not bear the long-term cost of maintaining health care facilities. It gives health care operators the freedom to go out and find ways of treating those who need to be treated. This policy will help Alberta meet the commitments laid out in the Canada Health Act. The policy even adds another principle, excellence. That means that services offered in a private setting will be legally required to be of the highest quality.

We have asked Albertans how they feel about this policy, and 59 percent of respondents said that they supported this policy, which is surprising, considering the massive campaign of misinformation that

is going on. When asked why they support the policy, 38 percent said that it was because they wanted shorter waiting lists. Of the people polled, 72 percent believed that contracting out services would reduce waiting lists, and that is what this all comes down to: do we want to have long waiting periods for treatment, or shall we try something new and innovative?

It is clear that there is a great deal of misinformation out there around this government's policy on health care. This is a perfect opportunity to express to Albertans our commitment to universal health care. Passing this motion sends a crystal clear signal to Albertans, opposition members, and the special interest groups who question our commitment to the Canada Health Act.

Special interest groups have continually spread misinformation about the proposed health care legislation. Albertans have seen an endless parade of television ads, press conferences, and so-called expert opinions. And I mean it when I say that it is a campaign of fear. We've all seen and heard how the lobbyists are going to seniors' centres and long-term care centres to supposedly educate them about this government's intentions. It's perhaps the cruelest of all tactics to go to the people who rely so heavily on the health care system and fill them with fear.

Mr. Speaker, I have to be honest here and say that I'm feeling like I'm experiencing *deja vu*. I feel like I'm having a terrible nightmare, that we've returned to 1993. In 1993-94, as our government fought to do what Albertans told us to do and eliminate the deficit, those who opposed us launched a victim of the week campaign to frighten Albertans into rejecting our reforms. They paraded the poor and infirm for all to see and branded us as evil tyrants. Over and over we heard that the sky was falling. The sick and the aged were told that our government was trying to take their care away. Look at us now. The sky has not fallen. Our health care system is still in place and is stronger and more efficient than it ever was. The sick and aged were used as pawns in this elaborate propaganda campaign and ultimately became real victims, victims of a cowardly tactic. The good news is that Albertans didn't buy it last time, and they aren't going to buy it this time.

Mr. Speaker, it is painfully clear to me that the status quo is not going to be effective in the not-too-distant future. This government has gone above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to the Canada Health Act. Let's talk about some of the things the Alberta system covers that are over and above those stipulated in the Canada Health Act. In addition to meeting the requirements set out in the Canada Health Act, the Alberta government has chosen to provide full or partial coverage for many other services, such as long-term care, home care, immunization programs for children, diagnostic services like CAT scans and MRIs, mental health services, extended health benefits for seniors and widows, respite care, palliative care, air ambulance, podiatry, physical therapy, speech pathology, and occupational therapy. The list goes on and on and on.

The point is that our government has been a reliable and responsible steward of the public health care system for decades. We will continue the tradition into the distant future. I'm proud to stand before the House and sponsor this motion. I'm hopeful that Albertans will see this as another sign that we are totally committed to maintaining universal public health care in Alberta. That commitment is solid throughout the entire government.

I also hope Albertans see the lobbyists and the special interest groups for what they really are, shameless alarmists with their own hidden agendas. Mr. Speaker, these lobbyists and special interest groups are looking out for their own well-being, desperately struggling for self-preservation, and like the dinosaurs they will ultimately lose their struggle, because the Alberta way is not to bury our head in the sand. The Alberta way is to meet problems head-on and find answers.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, this campaign of fear is not a new tactic. No, not at all. We have seen it all before. Albertans didn't buy it in 1994, and they aren't going to buy it now. The status quo could mean the end of publicly funded health care in Alberta. I invite all members of this Legislature to join me in reaffirming for all Albertans our commitment to the five principles of the Canada Health Act. Standing together and supporting this motion would be a reassuring gesture to concerned Albertans that we are not planning to privatize health care and that we are all in this together.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of health care is one that is dear to most Albertans. I think Members of this Legislative Assembly should be mindful that we are dealing with people: children, their parents, and the elderly. We must ensure that the people of Alberta know the truth about our government's intentions. If you agree that health care is facing a serious challenge, we should work together to find solutions aimed at preserving health care for coming generations. I urge members of this Assembly to put fear mongering aside in this debate and join us at the table and work towards positive change.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to address the motion that's been put forward with regards to the principles in the Canada Health Act. It's interesting to note that when the Official Opposition put that forward in legislation, members of the government stood en masse to reject the principles of the Canada Health Act. Here we are three years later, and all of a sudden it seems they have found the light.

It is also interesting to note that while we have the words that indicate there is a commitment to the Canada Health Act – and they are fine words indeed – about it being part of the fabric of our country and that the five principles are important to ensure that individuals who require health care do in fact receive the care that is needed, we have watched on this side in the Legislative Assembly, the Official Opposition's side, for seven years this government pushing the envelope with regard to those principles in the Canada Health Act to ensure that privatization is the end result of that pushing of the envelope.

4:00

We see it right now with regards to the provision of service of MRIs. We have seen a recent study with regards to cataract surgery done in Calgary that indicates that we in fact have a two-tiered system in Alberta. Those who can afford to pay may get a better lens than those who can't afford to pay and may get to jump the queue. We have seen that with the MRIs as well. So though it is all fine and dandy, Mr. Speaker, to say that this government – because my guess is that they will stand in full force and support the member's motion. In fact, while they will do that, there are other things that are happening in this province that indicate that there is not that support of the Canada Health Act in actual action.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't think this is a time to be coy with Albertans, and it is definitely not a time to hoodwink Albertans. They know what the truth is. They know intuitively that by allowing private, for-profit hospitals in this province, no matter what you call that, whether you call them overnight surgical facilities, whatever word you want to call them, that transgresses not only the spirit but the intent of the Canada Health Act and, in fact, also opens up the doors to NAFTA.

When you talk about victims of the week, you know, let me tell you about some of the victims of this government's health care

plans, and these are just some of the victims that I've heard of within the last little while. This is a letter that I just got out of my mailbox today. It's from a gentleman in Granum, Alberta. He and his wife are retired seniors. He is 71 years of age. She needs cataract surgery on both of her eyes. She has been told that the earliest she can have that surgery is January 2001 and that it will then cost her \$350 per eye to have lens surgery, but she still must wait another year. Her alternative is to go to Mexico, Mr. Speaker. The cost will be \$1,400 per eye, which together with airfare and accommodation will total some \$6,000. The eye centre in Calgary where she was examined told her that they could reduce the waiting time considerably but are restricted by the provincial government in the number of surgeries they are allowed to perform.

It further goes on to say:

I was a supporter for many years of Ralph Klein and the Conservative Party but no more and have canceled my membership. When I needed critical heart surgery I had to have it done in Vancouver because of the unbelievable waiting list in Calgary.

There is so much misleading information put out by the government and there is an old saying about fooling some of the people some of the time.

That's just one example.

There's another example, a phone call I got from a gentleman from Canmore who six weeks ago had broken his leg. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that he was sent to Edmonton, that he is now in the Glenrose? He's had two operations, he's still waiting for further surgery, and he has been in pain for six weeks.

There's the issue of the young teenager in Lethbridge who has been waiting months – months – for her surgery to occur, and as a result she may be missing out on a college soccer scholarship.

I have had calls in my office from people who are waiting for cancer treatment. On Friday I had a call from a constituent of mine whose father-in-law was at one of the hospitals here in Edmonton and was let out of ICU. There is no step-down in our major hospitals at this point, and you know what? They took him off the machines on Sunday; he died because there was no 24-hour care for him. And that's not the first instance of an issue that has occurred.

So do you want to stand up and say that you support the principles of the Canada Health Act? Well, you know what? Go right ahead and do it. But you know what? It's meaningless unless you start to put some of the actual reforms in place that were promised in 1993, when we stood on this side in this Legislative Assembly and said to you that if you do what you intend to do, this is going to be the result. At that point, the members of the government and the Premier and the Minister of Health of the time said that we were the ones fear mongering, that we were the ones that were representing the special interest groups, that we didn't know what we were talking about. You know what? If you go back to the *Hansards* of '93, '94, and '95, I guarantee you that exactly what we said would happen is happening right now. So why don't you do some research?

Speaking of which, I think the research that has been put forward to date has been research that has been faulty, that has come to conclusions – we did look at those eight studies, and it's interesting to note that five of those eight were in the Kevin Taft report.

I had a quick look at the WHO study that was submitted this afternoon, and the reality is that what that WHO study talks about is that if you are capital poor as a country, then you might want to look at private investors. I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that any organization in the world would consider Alberta capital poor. So again we have indication of how the government is trying to contort the argument, to make the argument one that sounds as if it's special interest groups, that sounds as if it is not based on fact, that sounds as if there is a malicious intent by the Official Opposition against reforming and changing our public health care system. Well, the

only intent we have is to ensure that private, for-profit health care does not find a foothold in this province.

The letter that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona tabled this afternoon was from Shirley Stinson, and I believe that's gone to all Members of the Legislative Assembly. In it she expresses her grave concern and asks the question:

Do Alberta's Conservative MLAs realize that privatization is not only a non-solution but that if introduced, it would in practical terms be irreversible under the NAFTA agreement?

Premier Klein, I would urge you and your fellow MLAs to find solutions which uphold the principles and - the public good - of the Canada Health Act.

Now, it's easy for the members of the government to say that it's wrong. It's easy for the members of the government to say that we are fear mongering, but the reality is that I have had letters, very thoughtful letters, that have been copied to me, that have gone to the minister, that have gone to different members within this Legislative Assembly on the government side, and they have asked very thoughtful questions. The Gould's is one, a husband and wife who have written to various Members of the Legislative Assembly and the minister of health.

There is another gentleman – I just happen to have these here with me – a Mr. Doram, who has also written. You know, he keeps asking the same questions of the minister over and over again: show me your studies; tell me how for-profit hospitals can be more effective, can be more efficient.

DR. TAYLOR: Read *Code Blue*.

MS LEIBOVICI: I have read *Code Blue*.

One question that was asked by Mr. Gould just recently, on February 28, was: "Are you suggesting that the for-profit hospitals will only have contracts for the short term?"

MR. SMITH: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming on a point of order.

Point of Order Tabling a Cited Document

MR. SMITH: It's a point of order, Mr. Speaker, under *Beauchesne*.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: *Beauchesne* or Standing Orders?

MR. SMITH: The member in quite an eloquent debate makes wonderful comments but refuses to table any of the documentation. So I'm simply pointing to the appropriate citation that requires that when she reads from documents, Mr. Speaker, she would be tabling the same, in fact tabling for the information of all the House so action can be taken on it. Under Standing Order 21.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Standing Order 21 or 23?

MR. SMITH: It was 21 actually. I was thinking of 23, and then I thought it wouldn't be quite as appropriate as 21.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Well, hon. member, 21 happens to be about closure, so I don't think that's quite the particular one that you were looking for, and based on that particular point, I don't think you really have a point on this particular case.

However, referring to 23, was there a particular sub under 23 that you were referring to?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, there is a citation that talks about the importance of tabling information which the member refers to and reads verbatim from. So it is simply that citation. I would ask that the member oblige the House and conduct herself in full accordance with the rules of the House.

4:10

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Well, thank you for that insightful thought. Unfortunately, I'm not sure exactly which point it is, so if you could come back with the specifics for me, we would be able to go forward.

If you'd like to continue, hon. member.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just put the minister's mind at ease. I have no problem in tabling these, and we'll get the appropriate tablings for you tomorrow. The reality is that you've all been copied on these, so you should know what I'm talking about. Actually, just to correct myself, you haven't been copied on each and every one of them, but you have been copied on the majority of them.

Debate Continued

MS LEIBOVICI: The one from Mr. Gould goes on to say:

As an investor I would be very reluctant to put my money into facilities, or sign a contract with an RHA, that would not provide for a reasonable guarantee of regular acceptable returns on my investment.

That to me doesn't sound as if we're protecting our Canada Health Act, if the government can't provide the answers to those questions.

[The Speaker in the chair]

That's just a sampling of some of the letters that I receive daily, and I know you receive them as well because most of them are on e-mail. What they are is they're pushed in somehow, and they go to everybody's e-mail. But I will, as I indicated, provide those copies for the minister and for the Assembly.

Now, I listened very carefully to the language from the member who put forward this particular motion. He talked about entrepreneurs in health care, and that, in fact, is one of the reasons that people do not trust the proposal that is put forward by this government. The majority of Albertans do not, I believe, think that health care is a commodity that's sold like a pair of shoes. They recognize and the member, having worked in the field of social services, should also recognize the fact that health care is a social good that cannot be measured in the same way as a pair of shoes. There are very distinct differences in what health care is, what the method is for measuring and for accounting for health care that is delivered in a province and in a country. In fact, that is what Albertans know and recognize.

Now, I've heard over and over again – and the member spoke about it today as well – that these special interest groups are just proliferating across the province and that in fact they are the ones that are indicating that the public health care system is under attack by this government, which is our position as the Official Opposition as well. What is interesting is that when you look at the magnitude and the number of people that are involved with regards to these so-called special interest groups and when you look at the magnitude of the government and the ability it has to spin-doctor, I don't think that's a fair comparison, and for the government to say "Poor me; pity me" I think is a real cry of desperation.

If, in fact, the argument that is being put forward here on a daily basis cannot be sustained by fact, cannot be supported by actual

cases of where this has worked in the world, then that's what we should be talking about in this Legislative Assembly, not how the government feels attacked and this member feels attacked by the so-called special interest groups, and I think it's very important for the Members in this Legislative Assembly to realize that. In fact, the Speaker always reminds us of that as well, that every individual in this province has a right and that as an Albertan every individual has the right to join with a group and to put forward their opinions on an issue. So why go around labeling Albertans, your constituents, people that may or may not vote for you – maybe some of them have – as a special interest group? That I think is rude, to say the least.

Now, when we talk about accessibility, portability, the five elements of the Canada Health Act, what's interesting is that in this province today we don't have those five elements. What we have set up through the system of the regional health authorities in this province right now are 17 regions, and there was a presentation recently that was provided to the standing committee by Donna Wilson to talk about the structure of the regional health authorities. We have barriers within our health care system right now, barriers with regards to access to long-term care; barriers with regards to physiotherapy services; barriers with regards to operations, orthopedics; barriers with regards to dialysis treatment. The list goes on and on and on.

So when we talk about supporting the five principles of the Canada Health Act, I would think that support would extend to within the province itself, and what that would be is a clear indication to the minister of health that what he has to ensure is that there will be seamless boundaries between the 17 regions and the Mental Health Board and the Cancer Board – so in a sense 19 regional health authorities have been set up – so that we can ensure within our own province that the principles of the Canada Health Act are being met, and right now they're not.

The reality is that we've heard a lot of spin from the government with regards to protecting the principles of the Canada Health Act. As long as the bill allows for overnight stays in a facility that is not a public facility but is a for-profit facility, the reality is that that legislation is meaningless, that in fact what the government has set up is a method by which it can contravene the intent and the spirit of the Canada Health Act.

So, as I said, while we will all stand and vote in favour of the Canada Health Act, there are realities in this province that must be looked at, realities that we hear from our constituents within our constituencies each and every day, realities we know exist with the inequities within the regional health authorities at this point in time, and the reality that the bottom line is that if there is a for-profit hospital open within this province, it opens the doors on NAFTA and kills medicare as we know it today not only in this province but across Canada.

I would direct the members to look at the WHO report that the minister put forward today in the Legislative Assembly. It talks glowingly of the Canadian system and the Canada Health Act, but what it says is that for poor countries, they may want to look at privatizing. So why don't we look at what we're doing right?

If members are looking for ways to deal with fixing the hospital situation, I would suggest that the minister of technology, who was waving *Code Blue* at me earlier, might want to look at the *Maclean's* article from January 17, 2000, by Michael Dexter, who has provided some solutions as to a plan to end the hospital crisis within the public health care system. It can be done, Mr. Speaker. What is required is a real will and commitment to not only support the principles of the Canada Health Act but also to enforce those principles and to ensure that our publicly funded health care system is sustained, maintained, and enhanced.

So thank you very much for this opportunity to shed some light on this discussion here and a perspective that I believe is one that provides a broader overview of what is happening in this government right now with regards to health care and the Canada Health Act.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

4:20

MR. SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me real pleasure to join in debate, particularly after I felt the hon. member who just spoke wanted to support, will probably support, is convinced that she should support but comes through in such a manner it's hard to tell when a Liberal is being positive. So I'm going to assume that there's support there.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to speak to the motion with respect to endorsing the principles of the Canada Health Act, and I also want to bring to the attention of the House that it's interesting that it would come forward from the Member for Calgary-McCall, one who's not afraid to put minorities over majorities, one who's not afraid to put compassion over conflict, and one who is not afraid to put community over partisan politics. Mahatma Gandhi once said: be the change you would see in the world. I believe the Member for Calgary-McCall displays those types of values and, not only that, underscores the importance of this act to Canadians as well as to Albertans, and thank you for the opportunity to discuss it in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I also immediately, without reading from it, will table something that we are talking about, that being the Canada Health Act. I think that it's often a good piece of information, once you're debating something, to actually look at that information. So I am tabling copies of the Canada Health Act, that has a couple of interesting portions to it that I think all members could value from in looking at.

In the preamble, Mr. Speaker, it says that
future improvements in health will require the cooperative partnership of governments, health professionals, voluntary organizations and individual Canadians.

In fact, if you were to take that one paragraph and undertake the discussion of the health care debate in the province of Alberta as it exists today, that's exactly what this government is doing. It's engaging the partnerships of governments, health professions, voluntary organizations, and individuals Canadians. It's quite interesting that it doesn't say anything about opposition parties in there, but – I don't know – maybe that was just an oversight in the drafting of the bill.

Also, the preamble of the Canada Health Act says that
continued access to quality health care without financial or other barriers will be critical to maintaining and improving the health and well-being of Canadians.

This is one of the very, very few references in the Canada Health Act that references finance or references cash. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, a lot of things are not attainable, are not possible unless there is financial wherewithal.

If you look at the attempt in the federal budget yesterday and the success of the provincial budget last week, which looks clearly at going through the rapids of debt, deficit, at a country going broke and being able to regather the strength and the forces at the other side of the rapids of debt and deficit and then move on and be able to put financial wherewithal to a social program that benefits not only all Albertans but all Canadians, I think that speaks very highly to the motives behind the plan of the government.

But continually – continually – we hear tabling of complaint after complaint, problem after problem. We've clearly identified that the

issue the government is looking at is one of access and reduced waiting lists. So rather than table the complaints, we would really expect the opposition to table solutions, to get on board the wagon to be able to start talking about how to build, how to construct, how to make \$5.3 billion of health care money work like \$6 billion of health care money or \$6.5 billion of health care money. There's nothing in the Canada Health Act that says that we shall waste money. I couldn't find that anywhere in there.

I think there is a government responsibility to ensure that moneys in the health care system are used wisely, are used prudently, are used competitively, and are used in such a fashion as to maximize the utility of the five principles of the Canada Health Act: to maximize accessibility, maximize portability, maximize comprehensiveness. This is where it works in concert with other groups, other parts of society, and this government to make a better health care system in what is inarguably now the best province in the dominion and a province where people continue to look for improvement, where people continue to feel comfortable living and working on the edge, and putting a health care system through that delivers real value to Albertans.

I love the catchphrases: private, for-profit, two-tier, American style. [interjections] Where's your what? Sorry; I missed that one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Where's your plan?

MR. SMITH: Where's your plan? Whatever.

Mr. Speaker, it's great that there are wonderful catchphrases in the lexicon of politics that talk about a health care system that spends \$5.3 billion.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of doctors who work under private corporations. Private corporations are acceptable under the Income Tax Act, and it's a way people form a company in order to better distribute their profits and income, but there have to be profits. It would tell me, then, that if a doctor forms a private corporation, a professional corporation, a PC, he or she would in fact be in the health care system for the purposes of profit.

Not long ago I went over to the Royal Alexandra hospital. They had purchased through the lottery fund, the terrific fund that it is, I might add, an angiogram device that would allow them quick access to reading angiogram results as well as a less invasive procedure. This was sold to them by the Toshiba corporation of Canada, and because I had actually had some experience with Toshiba before, I asked the manager there for Toshiba: "Well, sir, is this the nonprofit arm of Toshiba corporation? Are you actually selling products to the medical system and making a profit?"

DR. OBERG: No. You're kidding.

MR. SMITH: It's true. There are actually purveyors of product, there are purveyors of services that are actually making profit in the medical system today as we see it; for example, people who vend X-ray machines, people who vend MRIs.

Let me just spend one more second on Toshiba. At one time Toshiba used to sell a VCR machine, a video recorder. It sold in the early '80s probably for \$1,300 or \$1,400. Now, when we go out today to buy those VCRs, we'll notice they're about \$150 to \$220. When there's been inflation and world financial changes and all the other events, why would that equipment now be worth \$200 today? Same with cellular phones: \$2,300 in the 1980s, \$150 today. Would it perhaps be that the invisible hand of competition has officially allocated scarce resources? In fact, in many places inside and outside the medical marketplace there are records of innovation taking place through competition. When people go to the Alberta

Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, do they just get a grant for research? No, Mr. Speaker. They compete for a grant and for research.

So, in fact, competition works. Competition is there in the health care system today. In fact, if we go just to the preamble of the Canada Health Act, all we are doing is looking at future improvements in health in partnerships, and that's why I'm moving the question today, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: May I ask a question?

THE SPEAKER: Actually, hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt everyone, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

MR. SMITH: Oh, I just moved the question, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There's no question. I would have recognized her.

MR. SMITH: No. To the vote.

THE SPEAKER: You weren't recognized.

4:30

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

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

head: Main Estimates 2000-2001

Community Development

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would call on the minister.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thanks very much, Madam Chairman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question. Question.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I see we're off to a good start this afternoon, Madam Chairman.

My opening comments will be a little lengthier than what I would like. There's a reason for it. In the recent restructuring of the government, a few changes were made which I think are appropriate to address. I'll start off by saying that I am very pleased to be here to present our business plan and budget for the year 2000-2001. It's been nine months since the changes and since I was appointed as Minister of Community Development, and quite frankly it's been a very interesting time.

One of the challenges faced when I assumed this portfolio was learning about the diversity of Community Development's programs. We have seniors, sports, recreation, arts, libraries, volunteers, historic sites, museums, cultural facilities, human rights, citizenship, status of women, and all of these programs are interwoven within the ministry. As part of the government's consolidation of programs and one-window access to programs and services, special purpose and seniors' housing was later added to the ministry, and that was last November. In addition, there are some 10 agencies and funds that are administered through the department.

As we all know, communities are the heart of our great province, and people – and I stress people – are the heart of Alberta's commu-

nities. The Treasurer stated in his budget speech last Thursday:

Last year total employment rose by [some] 2.8 percent, with almost 43,000 new jobs created in 1999. Our [provincial] employment rate averaged 94.2 percent, the second best among . . . the provinces. Our population grew by two percent and that was almost double Ontario's population growth.

With such an influx of new citizens, young and old, supporting our communities is now more important than ever, and Community Development will provide the necessary leadership. The best way to strengthen Alberta's people and its vibrant communities is to continue to support them with strong financial management, people-friendly taxation, and policies that help our economy grow and diversify. Responsible fiscal management has been the hallmark of the current government. The new budget will continue the strategies that have served us well: the balanced budgets, debt repayment, prudent revenue forecasts, affordable spending plans, and open and accountable government. Community Development will help to put these strategies into action by building innovative partnerships with co-operating societies, private-sector corporations, and community organizations. We'll also share resources, working to reduce duplication and costs and garner broad support for community initiatives.

That, fellow elected members on all sides of the House, is the general theme of our new business plan. It is evident in the new business plan and budget of Community Development that the government's goals are supported. Alberta Community Development's first budget of the new century focuses on building stronger communities and working with Albertans of all ages. The ministry is participating in a number of cross-government initiatives and other partnerships in the achievement of ministry goals, and it should be recognized that a number of ministry actions have an important collaborative component.

In particular, Community Development is committed to working in co-operation with ministries across government to ensure the success of broader government priorities such as the Alberta Corporate Service Centre initiative, corporate human resource development strategy, economic development strategy, and aboriginal policy initiative. In addition, the ministry will provide leadership for a seniors' policy, a key cross-government initiative which will enlist the collective efforts of a number of government departments to meet seniors' needs for the future.

As I stated earlier, the effects of this department span all ages, but Budget 2000 does provide special attention to the needs of low-income seniors. Alberta's seniors helped build the province, and it was their hard work, leadership, and vision that helped us achieve the prosperity we enjoy today. In their youth and later as parents and community builders their dedication to family and a solid work ethic served as a backbone for the values we hold as so important today.

Albertans believe in healthy aging, allowing our seniors to live as independently as possible in a safe and supportive environment. Due to a lack of financial resources, Albertans recognize that some seniors need our support and assistance. This year the budget for the Alberta seniors' cash benefit program will rise to \$162 million, up from \$141 million. Of these funds \$146.3 million will provide financial assistance to approximately 130,000 low-income seniors through the Alberta seniors' benefit program. This program has been increased by \$13.3 million, or approximately 10 percent. I'd like to point out that this successful program is income tested, and benefits are given out on a sliding scale. We anticipate that recipients will see on the average a \$100 per year increase, and that could vary, obviously, depending upon the senior's income.

The other program offered is special-needs assistance for seniors, which provides financial assistance through lump sum cash pay-

ments to low-income seniors who are experiencing financial difficulties and are unable to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, transportation, medical supplies, or personal hygiene. Approximately 6,000 low-income seniors who may experience financial difficulties will be assisted through the special-needs assistance for seniors program. The current average payment is some \$2,700, and there is a maximum payment of \$5,000 per year. Although the 1999-2000 budget was set at \$8 million, the forecast indicated that some \$15.6 million would be required. The 2000-2001 budget has been adjusted to \$15.7 million to ensure that the necessary funds are available to run the program.

One of the most effective ways to understand the needs and concerns of our seniors is through the daily contact that staff have with the callers to the department's 1-800 information line. The line has received some 723,000 calls since it was introduced in 1994. It's anticipated that the 750,000th call should come through during the spring of 2000, and quite frankly I'd like to be there to take that particular call personally.

I'm proud to say that we do have one of the best income support programs in Canada for low-income seniors, but as new and aging seniors are attracted to Alberta for its quality of life, we will have to develop long-term strategies to deal with the impact of the aging population. The governmentwide study of the impact of the aging population will be completing its report this spring and along with report A will provide the government with recommendations for action. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-West, who was the chair of the steering committee, and the Member for Leduc, the vice-chair, for their continuing commitment to this important project. As the population of our province grows and ages, the provincial government will continue to demonstrate its concern about the well-being of Alberta seniors, particularly those who are in need.

4:40

With respect to homelessness, I think this is where we can honestly say that this ministry is about communities. A community is a group of people who come together for a common cause and are ready to lend a helping hand to their neighbours. This government believes communities are the heart and soul of Alberta. We'll continue to work to ensure that those families and individuals who are most in need have access to temporary shelter and support services.

We are committing \$3 million in new funding this year for programs to help us work on homelessness issues with our partners. This is in addition to the approximately \$10 million in the Human Resources and Employment budget identified for operating emergency shelters. We understand that our strength lies in building partnerships with other levels of government, private and not-for-profit housing sectors, churches, and community-based organizations, and we certainly want to open the lines of communication there.

In addition, the Hon. Claudette Bradshaw, federal Minister of Labour, will be consulting with the province in regard to the federal government's recent announcement of new funding for homelessness programs. I would like to say that we're going to work with the federal government as best we can to ensure that the programs they come forward with are complementary and integrated with the efforts of the provincial government and our local communities and in support of our business plan goals. I've got the assurance from the minister that that will in fact happen as a result of a private meeting I held with her on her visit up here. Collectively I think we can work and we can make community-based decisions for the short term and find long-term solutions to address the underlying factors that contribute to homelessness.

With respect to historic sites, I've just mentioned three of the six new ongoing funding adjustments to our budgets. I'd like to briefly point out the remaining three along with onetime funding initiatives. Alberta has a rich natural and cultural heritage to preserve and appreciate, and the minister's network of 18 provincial historic sites, museums, and interpretive centres, as well as its cultural facilities in the Provincial Archives, are testimony to the value that Albertans place on this rich heritage.

This business plan includes steps to preserve the future of the ministry's heritage infrastructure, including a replacement facility for the Provincial Archives of Alberta. One million dollars has been added to the base budget to address the most urgent needs related to operating and maintaining the 18 historic sites, museums, and interpretive centres as well as the Provincial Archives. This is in addition to the \$300,000 increase approved in budget '99 for this particular year of 2000-2001. In addition, 1 and a half million dollars in onetime spending has been allocated to replace audiovisual equipment used in exhibits at the province's heritage sites.

Although protecting valuable historic and cultural resources is our primary role, Alberta's 18 provincially owned historic sites and museums provide significant tourism and economic benefits to our province. In 1998-99 these sites attracted more than a million visitors, an increase of some 8.3 percent over the previous year.

The largest feature exhibition in the Provincial Museum's history will be the Jesus through the Centuries exhibition, which runs from October 7, 2000, to January 7, 2001. This world premiere event we hope will attract thousands of visitors from across Alberta, western Canada, and indeed the rest of North America. Jesus through the Centuries is the third in a series of five international exhibitions celebrating the millennium and illuminating human achievements.

Although five years in the future, preparations for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Alberta becoming a province have begun, and \$600,000 in onetime funding has been budgeted for planning the centennial celebrations.

With respect to human rights, the business plan will continue to focus on actions to foster equality and reduce discrimination, including educational initiatives to promote fairness and access and increased understanding of the growing diversity in the province. Strategies to ensure effective operation of the Human Rights and Citizenship Commission will continue to be implemented. In support of this, the base budget of the human rights and citizenship services branch will be increased by \$300,000 to provide adequate funding to manage the anticipated volume of complaints received. This is in addition to the \$100,000 increase approved in budget '99.

In support of the provincial active living strategy and the development of the country's Trans Canada Trail, Community Development has committed \$1.1 million in onetime lottery funding to Alberta Trailnet. These funds will assist with Alberta's portion of the Trans Canada Trail development.

I'm sure some of the members have heard from their constituents both in support of and with concerns about the trail development. Trail issues are complex and touch many pieces of legislation, six or seven in all I believe. As people and landowners voice concerns over loss of privacy, trespassing, and liability, this department and this government are exploring options and legislation to reduce the potential liability of landowners adjacent to public-use trails as well as other concerns. We'll be looking at some legislative changes there, and I certainly would appreciate any kind of input from any members.

The 2001 championships have brought the eyes of the world on Edmonton, starting now, I guess, and culminating in the summer of 2001, when the 2001 World Championships in Athletics makes a first appearance in North America. This project was granted a total

of \$40 million over four years by the province, to be matched equally by the government of Canada and by the 2001 World Championships in Athletics organization committee. As part of our commitment the provincial government will provide \$10 million in funding for this fiscal year, 2000-2001.

Volunteerism continues to play a significant role in contributing to the high quality of life Albertans value. By working together to achieve common goals, Alberta volunteers are creating stronger communities and a stronger province. According to a spring 1999 survey, 72 percent of all adult Albertans reported that they performed some volunteer work in the previous year. The ministry will continue its support of volunteers, including the co-ordination of provincial activities for the International Year of Volunteers in 2001.

Alberta volunteers are recognized for their valuable assistance in the delivery of important programs in the areas of health, arts, libraries, youth leadership, education, sport and recreation, the environment, seniors' services, children's services, and public safety. It will be our responsibility to bring government representatives and external partners together to work on the priority area of services for children and youth.

Grants and foundations. Albertans are proud of the diverse recreational, educational, social, cultural, and heritage programs and activities and recognize their contribution to the outstanding quality of life that we all enjoy. During this next fiscal year provincial, regional, and community-based organizations will have access to some \$46.9 million in grants through Community Development's lottery-funded foundations and agencies: the Alberta Foundation for the Arts; the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation; the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation; the Wild Rose Foundation; and the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund.

The Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. I'd like to bring your attention to changes in the funding for the foundation. At my request the chairman and the board of directors of the ASRPWF reviewed the foundation's quarterly grant program relative to other grant programs and made recommendations to eliminate duplication of funding to initiatives eligible for funding through other provincial government and lottery-funded agencies. As of April 1, 2000, projects eligible for and receiving funding through other provincial government funding agencies will no longer receive funding from the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

4:50

Capital projects I excluded from the grant program. The foundation, however, will still maintain a smaller grant program to meet the needs of applicants not covered by other funding agencies. A new grant program, a development initiatives program, was created with new criteria to fund projects that fall within the mandate of the ASRPWF Foundation. Updated guidelines are now available to the public. Applicants should be directed to look to other resources, such as a community lottery board or the CFEP, for capital projects that are no longer eligible under the grant program.

The new development initiatives program is a redistribution of the funds and eliminates funding duplication. In recent years communities have demonstrated their need for the program, and the reallocation of funds will allow the programs to continue. The elimination of duplicated funding frees up funds to maintain the municipal recreation/tourism areas program and to return a portion of the previous reduction to provincial sports and recreation associations. This will allow us to support the business plan efforts to provide financial . . . [Mr. Woloshyn's speaking time expired]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I hate to interrupt you, hon. minister, but you can get back up again. I'm sure you'll welcome the opportunity to hear the opposition, and then you can get back up again, hon. minister. [interjections] No, no. This is the call of the chair.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I will abide by your ruling, but I'd like to say that if there are questions that we can't or don't answer here, we'll take them down and respond to you in writing.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, that was 55 seconds. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I hope that the minister is enjoying his new ministry. It is all of our quality of life in Alberta, and I'm glad that he is inspired enough that he wants to continue on. I'll be looking forward to that.

Community development is quality of life in Alberta. It's as we attempt to achieve quality of life for some groups of people in Alberta, and it's also all of the activities and facilities that do offer us quality of life. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We do allow a lot of latitude and leeway at this stage in committee, but could I please ask people to take their seats. Please. Please. We have to be seated.

Go ahead, Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much. So I'm pleased to start the debate on the estimates for the Department of Community Development. I do understand that there's an agreement to be able to continue this debate over past tonight. I think this is the first department that is debated, and that's not a long time to prepare for this since the budget was introduced last Thursday. So I look forward to continued debate on this, in particular because in the past the opposition has only been able to squeeze out 48 minutes in being able to comment on the department estimates. [interjection] That's correct. It was two people at 20 minutes apiece, and one person only got eight minutes.

This department covers seniors; women; multiculturalism; youth; volunteers; museums and archives; libraries; historical sites; amateur sports; games; recreation; arts and culture; the Francophone Secretariat; the Seniors Advisory Council; the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund; the Human Rights Commission; the Alberta Foundation for the Arts; the Alberta Sports, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation; the Historical Resources Foundation; and now also housing. So now we have 20 different areas. That's less than two and a half minutes per sector, so I'm pleased that there will be more debate on this area this time around.

Now, I note in the department summary – and for reference ease for the minister, that would be on page 86. I'm wondering about the accounting that's presented here. There have been at least two programs removed from underneath the auspices of the department between last year's budget presentation and this year's, that being AADAC and the community lottery boards, and at least one program added, the special purpose housing, but I do not see those changes reflected in here. I notice that under the special purpose housing there is a gross comparable figure from '98-99, when this wasn't even in the department. So I'd like the minister to give a reckoning that shows the total change in the department from last year to this, because there were the budget amounts for AADAC, which was about \$33 million and has been taken out. Community lottery

boards was about \$51 million. It was taken out. None of that is reflected in this summary, and we have a new program of 82 and a half million dollars coming in with the special purpose housing.

Now, one of the first things I'd like to talk about is funding for libraries, which appears in two places, vote 2.1.2 and of course under the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. I am aware that there have been a number of members of library boards from across the province contacting their MLAs with their concern that the libraries are still being funded on a per capita basis based on 1997 population figures. Well, as is so often brought forward in this Legislature, we've had some significant population growth in certain areas of the province. I'm thinking of Calgary, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, and I think even close to the minister's own home in Spruce Grove. I note that the province has gone to great measures to recognize that population growth in the areas of infrastructure and education taxes and other things but no increase in this per capita funding formula for libraries.

I'm asking the minister: when will the department create a policy to cope with the per capita funding needs of libraries and have it somehow attached to a more realistic or flexible figure rather than sticking it to a certain point in time? That doesn't seem to be working, and certainly libraries are hurting. I think that is connected to a question about the government's commitment to literacy if we are struggling so much with funding for libraries. So I've just touched briefly on that, and I hope we'll be able to come back to it later.

I'd like to talk a bit about women, which should be under vote 6, but that's hard to tell because the word never appears anywhere in the document nor is there any reference to women's policy and programs anymore. It's simply human rights and citizenship, and under the vote itself, the breakdown vote, once again it doesn't give any information about all of the sectors that have been captured under that. So specific to women, once again, exactly what programs does this government provide? In answer to that question, a few years ago I was told the Stepping Stones program, but please don't tell me that one again because that really isn't a program provision. It's an information kit. There's no staffing behind it. If you ask for that, they put it in the mail to you. You're on your own.

We no longer have an Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, which was doing research and an analysis and gathering information on what was affecting women in the province. There doesn't seem to be any sign of the Women's Secretariat, which was doing policy and program work. I'm sure that the government is not trying to make women disappear. I wouldn't want to believe that of the minister, and I wouldn't want to believe the minister that the government doesn't believe in equality, so I am wondering what the rationale is here, seeing as there's no mention of it anywhere in this document. Is there a belief that women have somehow achieved parity of earnings or perhaps equal access to training dollars or entrepreneurial support or loans for small businesses?

5:00

I note in the excellent report, which has been tabled previously, called *Fractured Voices*: a report on the fairness business in Alberta, that over 50 percent of the 1993 human rights cases were based on gender-related issues. Those are all possible human rights issues that were brought before the Human Rights Commission. Over 50 percent of them were gender based. I am still looking for some kind of proof or tabling of reports or anything that the government could manage to bring forward that's showing that a gender analysis was being done of proposed legislation or changes in programs and services. I've seen nothing of that, but I'll ask again and see if anything can be brought forward. I'll raise a couple of examples that, without trying very hard, I found.

Sixty-four percent of the supports for independence recipients in southern Alberta are women, and a number of these are in rural centres outside of the major centres in that area. There are no transportation grants to travel to the mandatory training sessions in these larger centres, and there's no child care available either. A real catch-22 situation has been created here, which mostly affects women. Are they supposed to then leave their children unsupervised and somehow hitchhike or walk to get to these mandatory training sessions in order to achieve this? Why hasn't this been identified or dealt with? This first came to my attention, this whole situation, in the early '90s. It's come back to my attention. It's still existing. Why don't I see any comprehension of what's going on there?

I'm also wondering what the government is doing or what advice was given to the government. Or was there anyone in women's policy and programs that was giving advice regarding the termination of moneys by the Alberta Mental Health Board to the treatment group program for men who batter that was run by the central Alberta women's shelter? Was the effect of the cancellation of these moneys on women considered? I don't see anything that indicates that.

Once again I would ask for the rationale from the minister, seeing as women's policy and programs is supposed to be under this ministry, and despite the lack of proof I believe it's still there. Why are women's shelters located under Children's Services and not under women's policy and programs? I think it's much better suited to be under the division in Community Development rather than under Children's Services, so I'll ask that question again.

Once again, I hope to return to other questions on women's issues, but I will move on at this point to seniors, which is vote 4, services to seniors. I'll remind the minister of the programs that were cut or reduced since '92-93. The ones specifically that are gone included the Alberta assured income plan, the senior citizens' renters' assistance program, seniors' independent living, seniors' emergency medical alert program, the housing registry program, and the property tax reduction. Those are just a few of what was cut or reduced.

As the minister has alluded to, we have seen a doubling of demand on the special-needs assistance program in the current fiscal year; that is, '99-2000. The budget for next budget year 2000-2001 is indicating that volume increase and almost doubling of demand upon the programs. I don't think it's accurate to say that seniors are getting more money. In fact, the additional funds into this program are simply coping with the demand on it. I think there's a direct tie between those programs that I just talked about being cut and the fact that we have a doubling of demand by seniors on the special-needs benefit. It's certainly what I had been watching in the community but had not been able to find any proof, any statistical analysis on it that would indicate that seniors were suffering. They were saying to me: "I'm having a hard time. All of these cuts have cost me extra." And it varied between \$1,500 and \$6,000 a year. "I'm having to use my savings. I'm having to borrow money from friends and family. I've cut out a lot of things." But I wasn't seeing any sort of proof positive.

I think we've got the proof positive now. I think what's happened is that for a lot of lower middle-income seniors, the loss of those programs has really hurt them, and they're the ones that are sliding down the economic ladder towards, however you want to put it, disadvantaged, lower income, or poverty. The minister used another phrase, that I can't remember at the moment. Very, very interesting.

I am looking forward to what's going to come out of the government's response to the impact on aging study. As part of this, I've been thinking: well, what could the government be doing? I'm wondering why there is no funding of seniors' centres included

under the budget. To me, that is a penny of prevention that is worth millions of dollars of cure. If we know that it's important to have an active lifestyle, if we know it's important to battle isolation with seniors, to get people out of their homes, to get them in fitness classes, to get them exposed to nutrition counseling and all kinds of other beneficial programs like that, plus just plain fun, frankly, then that is what these seniors' centres are doing. I have to give credit for stealing this idea from my local seniors' centre, West Edmonton Seniors, but there is a suggestion that \$100 per senior participating in a seniors' centre per year would probably save us the \$1,000 or \$1,200 per day that we have to spend on acute care beds. I think it's worth considering that. I don't see it in the budget here, but perhaps the minister can elucidate.

I have just a couple of tablings here. I am sorry; they were in the middle of my notes. I should have tabled them earlier. One is a letter from constituents, a very thoughtful letter from Don Perdue, Velma Park, and Doreen Wood, just explaining how they are trying to live with dignity but finding it very difficult when their rent is increasing from \$145 to \$245 a month, a significant increase for them. They were inquiring about possible rent controls. But to me it's indicative of the problems that a number of seniors are having as they struggle with property taxes and rent increases, that in many cases have doubled. You're hard-pressed in downtown Edmonton to get a one-bedroom for under \$550.

The second tabling that I have here is around the special-needs assistance program, and this is a copy of a flyer that someone received when they asked for the paperwork to apply for the fund. It just notes that there are restrictions now being placed on the special-needs assistance for seniors program. The program will fund one appliance in a benefit year, and they will no longer fund freezers at all. "Freezers will no longer be considered for funding," which is really interesting.

So not only do we have an increase on the demand there, but there are restrictions being placed on that program, and I do question cutting off the freezers because I know that when I have been struggling to economize, a freezer was my best friend. It allows you to buy food on sale or buy bulk food. If you can eat meat, then perhaps you can get a friend or a son-in-law that's out hunting game or perhaps ice fishing that can help you out with a hind quarter, that should last you through the winter. You can store a lot of food in those freezers. What you get out of the top of a little fridge just doesn't cut it. There is not a lot you can get in there if you are trying to save on food. So I do question that.

Now, the increase, as the minister pointed out, in the Alberta seniors' benefit will on average be around \$100 a year, between \$9 and \$10 a month, 29 cents a day. That's the big increase that's being touted here. Finally, the minister is clarifying very properly that this is really only affecting the most disadvantaged seniors. I think some of the media that was out there previous to the budget release was indicating that all seniors in Alberta would get a 10 percent increase, and nothing could be further from the truth. Still, Mr. Minister, I have to say that 29 cents a day – I mean, telephone rents have gone up by \$3. I've already talked about property taxes, rent, food. I'm sure every senior really appreciates that \$9 or \$10 a month, but it's not going to alleviate their suffering by very much.

5:10

Now, specific to West Edmonton Seniors in my riding, I know that the minister had been asked for assistance around their rent. This is a centre that is renting space in the General hospital. Their rent has increased from \$342 plus their housekeeping costs in '98-99 to just over \$1,000 for most of '99. As of January 1, 2000, their rent is up to \$4,212 plus the housekeeping services. You know, here are

these centres. We know they're doing good work, we know they're keeping seniors healthy, we know everything they're doing is right, and here they're going from \$342 to \$4,200 in rent payments. I do put in a plea with the minister for any assistance that can be rendered there. That makes it very difficult for them to keep going and offering services at a reasonable price.

I'm wondering if the interim ministry committee that's dealing with implementing legislation affecting seniors and investigating the protection for persons in care will be developing standards of care. It is one of the things that we are sadly lacking here. I know that the organization FAIRE has been very vocal in trying to bring that lack of standardization and criteria to everyone's attention here in this Assembly. I'm very aware that the day homes and boarding type of homes that are taking in seniors now are not covered under the protection of persons in care, and that really just affects institutional care.

I will have to continue with my many questions later. Thank you very much.

MR. SAPERS: Just 40 more seconds.

MS BLAKEMAN: Just 40 more seconds? Yeah. He got 40 more. I should get 40 more. I'll contain myself.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Edmonton-Centre.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'm happy to contribute my comments and questions this afternoon on the Community Development budget. Before I begin, I would just like to make a few comments about the budgetary process.

As usual, we find it a very unsatisfactory process. From the point of time when we get the budget and the budget information to the point of time when we start debating and then complete the debate on the budget, we don't have enough opportunity to get out to our constituents to review the budget with them and get their feedback. By the time we receive most of the feedback on the budget, these budgets have been voted on because of the tight time lines the government imposes on us.

Madam Chairman, I know there were some negotiations that started on this process this year only to be halted before any progress was made. Some of the ideas being brought forward in terms of why that was halted was that this is the last budget before an election, so there was no need to make any kinds of revisions. Well, Madam Chairman, that isn't good enough. Certainly people need to have a process in place whereby they can review the billions of dollars this government is spending and have adequate time to give their feedback and present it to all members in this Legislature so they can be properly debated before this massive budget is voted on.

My questions on Community Development today centre around the ministry core business plans. First of all, I would like to make the comment that I think the government doesn't do too bad a job in some areas of promoting community development and in some areas of preserving and protecting and presenting the unique natural, cultural, and historical resources. In some areas I think they do quite an appalling job. Certainly the dollars that are being spent don't support, I believe, the core business plans outlined here or the goals. Those particularly would be in terms of supporting the independence and well-being of seniors, which I will elaborate on; protecting human rights; and promoting fairness and access. I'm assuming that women's issues come in that area because it's . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Who can tell?

MS CARLSON: Yeah. Who can tell? There's no doubt about that. They seem to have been written out of the last couple of budgets of this government but are noticeably absent to any degree certainly in this budget. When I get to my comments on issues that are of particular importance to women, I will be addressing them under the human rights areas, because it seems that clearly fairness and access are not being supported for women at that level.

Then of course the huge topic in many parts of Alberta these days: supporting Alberta's special purpose housing needs. Whether we're talking about the homeless, the working poor who cannot find adequate housing, seniors who can't find adequate housing, or people with special needs, Madam Chairman, we have an appalling problem in this province, appalling not only because people can't find places to live but because this is supposed to be the richest province in this country and we cannot find places for our children and our seniors and those less advantaged than people who have got full-time, well-paying jobs. We can't provide housing for those people, and that's a real problem, as I see it.

Going to page 64 of the business plan, I'd like to talk about some of the achievements of the desired outcomes that the minister says his department will be measured by, and the first one there is "customer satisfaction with community development assistance provided." I want to know who it is they're asking in terms of satisfaction, and I'd like to see the questions, Madam Chairman, because the people that I talk to in the community certainly don't come in with a 98 percent satisfaction rating.

Some of the questions I'd like answered in this regard. Are those questionnaires going out in an anonymous fashion, or do the people answering them feel that their funding or their support from the ministry is somehow tied to how they answer the questions? Certainly if in fact the surveys are anonymous and there can be no clear tie between funding and their responses, then a 98 percent rate would be outstanding, but, Madam Chairman, I don't think that's the case here. It certainly isn't what I'm hearing from the community. So if the minister would be prepared to table not just the questions they ask in the satisfaction surveys but all of the conditions surrounding the asking of the questions, that would be very important, I think, for us to take a look at and to review. Then perhaps we'll have some suggestions on how that system can be improved.

The next item here is the "level of community volunteerism." It's interesting to think that the government can take credit for volunteerism in this province. I know that we have a very high participation in this province, particularly compared to other provinces, but I don't think it's because of any efforts made by this government, Madam Chairman. It seems to me that, particularly in education, parents and grandparents and relatives of schoolchildren have no choice in this particular climate but to volunteer in order to ensure that their children are getting the kind of support they need within the school system, and I would have to take a look at that in many other organizations. People volunteer for a number of reasons, but unfortunately as time goes on in this society, it seems that a lot of times they have to volunteer because they cannot afford the fees and the costs associated with having involvement in recreational, sports, or cultural activities or in basic education in this province.

So I am personally offended and I know that there are a number of my constituents who are also offended that this government should take credit for the level of volunteerism in this province. Once again, I'd like to know how they measure that particular target. I think it's a very nebulous kind of answer to be able to tie down.

5:20

Another question there is why, if they're saying that 72 percent of Albertans participate in volunteer activities, they only have a target

of 55 percent addressed? Was there such a huge jump from the previous year of '97-98? If so, why is that, Madam Chairman? Did they try to nail down the answer to why there would have been a significant increase? I would think that a lot of that had to do with the necessary nonvoluntary volunteerism that's required in the school systems at this particular time.

The next achievement outcome is the "percentage of population participating in sports and recreation activities." They've got this listed at 79 percent, and "the target is to increase participation in these activities to 90%." Once again, let's have some details on this. How is the minister measuring it, and how are they going to get to a 90 percent participation level? It would seem that by the time people put in a workday, by the time they put in their nonvoluntary hours supporting programming both in a recreational capacity and in an educational capacity, there isn't a lot of time left over to participate in sports and recreational activities. Let's get some details on how they expect they can get up to the 90 percent level and find out exactly what is happening there.

The next achievable desired outcome here is "equitable access to public library services for all Albertans." I understand the concept of equitable in terms of not all communities in Alberta having access to libraries, but I am quite offended by the minister's statement that came out earlier this month when he talked about the concerns of access being based on skin colour or creed. I don't know what generation he's living in or what country, but it doesn't seem to be Alberta.

The problem in Alberta of access to libraries is the access for the books to get into the libraries. That's the problem here, and that's where we see the discrimination coming in. I've never seen anybody turned away from a library door anywhere in Alberta, but we have seen many, many instances of cases where books have been turned away from library doors. For the minister's information, that's the essence, the reason why we need a freedom to read profile in this province and why it is still very appalling to see government members deny unanimous consent to recognize this week.

Definitely it's an issue for all of us to be very concerned about. Freedom to read what you choose when you choose to read is an issue of fundamental access to democracy. So I am hoping that he is going to clarify why it is that he doesn't address the real issue there, which is access to books, not access based on colour or race. If he could give us that information.

Now, the target is 60 percent in terms of access, and they say that they're achieving 53 percent of Albertans having used a public library. Once again I'd like to know how they're counting that. I'm assuming that what they're doing is counting the number of memberships that people have to libraries. If that's the case, how are they counting family memberships and children who may have children's memberships to the library? There could be some double counting there. I think it's a very important piece of information for us to know in terms of people who are accessing libraries.

With the lack of increase in dollars – I say that's a decrease in dollars really, because they're not keeping up with inflation or any other kind of monetary aspects – how does this minister expect libraries to compete in a market that is becoming increasingly cluttered with other types of information flow? If libraries have to keep up with inflation in terms of their operating costs and staffing, in fact they're seeing a real decrease in the purchasing power to put books on the shelves. Let's have some information on that. I'm sure the minister is gathering that information. How does he expect these libraries to compete in the information flow given all the other access that people now have to get information from?

I'm particularly thinking of the Internet. It's got to be a direct competitor to public libraries. So where does he see this going, not

just in the next 12 months, but surely they must be doing some studies in terms of the future viability of libraries in the next five to 10 years. If he's got any information on that, if he could table it and provide it to us, that would be very important.

Next on their list of achievements with desired outcomes is the "impact of support to arts and cultural industries." This is a very interesting one, Madam Chairman, and I continue to wonder why this is in Community Development and not in Economic Development, where it rightly belongs. We've seen . . .

MR. SMITH: What?

MS CARLSON: I'm sure the minister would like to address that.

There's no doubt that in the past arts and cultural industries, particularly film development at all levels, have been a major economic driver in this province. It should be recognized as such, and it should be then classified under Economic Development. If you want an industry to take off and be self-supporting, then you have to address it at all levels as a self-supporting industry, and that doesn't mean putting it into Community Development, where you expect to find not-for-profit kinds of ventures.

It's exactly that mind-set which I believe has led to the downfall of film development in this province. It wasn't that many years ago,

Madam Chairman – in fact it's certainly been in the years just preceding and since my having been elected – that the film industry in this province was a thriving industry. We were able to provide an industry that was, I think, second to none in Canada, and it looked like it was going to take off in a major way and provide serious employment for many people in this province.

Since that time, the government has mismanaged and bungled any kind of support they've given to this industry, and we've seen a number of other provinces move ahead of us by leaps and bounds in terms of the economic benefits they've received from this industry. I think particularly of B.C. when I speak to that, I think particularly of Manitoba, and I think particularly of Ontario. All those provinces, all those governments treated this industry as an industry, not as some little nonprofit venture that they would pat on the head and throw a little money at when they felt like it and pull the money and support back when they didn't feel like supporting it, Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but under Standing Order 4(3) I must adjourn Committee of Supply until 8 this evening.

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