

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 8, 2000**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 00/03/08

head: Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'll call the committee to order. We will be dealing with Executive Council in the Assembly, and upstairs will be Infrastructure. That's committee B. So I'd ask those members of committee B to please make their way upstairs.

[The committee met as subcommittees A and B from 8:01 p.m. to 10 p.m.]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for subcommittee A, please.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Subcommittee A of the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Executive Council for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All those that agree with the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

MRS. LAING: Madam Chairman, subcommittee B of the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Infrastructure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I move that the Committee of Supply rise and report progress and request leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

MR. TANNAS: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Executive Council and the Department of Infrastructure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Third Reading

Bill 12

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2000

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure, honour, and privilege to move third reading of Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2000.

I have made my comments with respect to the efficacy of the bill on earlier occasions and would ask the House to support early passage.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We do have some comments on Bill 12 at this stage. While ultimately we will be supporting it because we really have no choice in terms of seeing the need for additional spending in a variety of departments that this government, in our opinion, has not adequately planned for in terms of their resource allocation, we still have concerns about this process and how it moves along every time we see these interim budgets in here.

10:10

While this bill has been up for debate a number of times, we have asked many questions, Madam Speaker, and we have yet to see answers being provided to those questions. So it's once again a sad day in this Assembly when we are asked to vote on the spending of millions of dollars and we can't even get a few simple questions answered. We've certainly asked that we at least have some explanation of the new spending that's going to contribute to meeting the defined outcomes and performance measures that we've seen in the budgets and how this will address our specific concerns in this province at this stage, particularly with regard to health care funding, to education funding, to infrastructure funding, to environment funding, and to taking care of those in our society who are less able to take care of themselves than others. Those would be seniors, children, people living below the poverty line: all people for whom we have some responsibility that we don't see being addressed in an adequate fashion.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

With the addition of the spending of these moneys, we don't see the outcomes that are going to result from them, because we haven't had answers to our questions and because this spending is not done in the standard kind of manner that we would expect from a government. Certainly we see industry being responsible in terms of how they report to their shareholders. We would expect nothing less from a government. Instead, Mr. Speaker, what do we get? We get the current Treasurer, who has brought in more supplementary supply requests than the previous two Treasurers combined. That is, we think, definitely an appalling state of affairs and something that we hope will be rectified with the possible appointment of a new Treasurer, given the new career plans of the existing Treasurer.

Mr. Speaker, every time we speak to the interim supply bills when they come in, we bring forward a number of excellent recommendations, good ideas that we'd be very happy if this government scooped and implemented. It isn't that they don't know how to do that.

They've done it many times in the past with some of the good ideas we've brought forward as the Official Opposition in this province. It wouldn't hurt our feelings if they did it again.

We've talked many times in this Assembly and outside of the Assembly about economic and fiscal strategy reports, about using long-term trends, as far as 10 years. I know that this government's mandate is election to election, and we see these rolling three-year budgets, but any long-term strategic development certainly has a long-term component to it which is longer than three years. Hopefully they will be able to take that into account at some time.

We've talked many times about annual performance reports that have meaningful measures in them. We get reports that are sometimes questionable in nature in terms of the kinds of measures that are used and whether they give us specific reference points that are useful from one year to another. So we would like to see that.

My particular favourite recommendation, which we have brought forward many times, is monthly budget updates instead of quarterly updates, Mr. Speaker, a very responsible thing to do. If industry can do it, government can do it. Certainly there are adequate staff, well-skilled staff who have the ability to do it, but we don't seem to see that coming forward from this government. It would be a far more

responsible way to address the kinds of fluctuations that we see in revenue than what happens now.

If we could pair monthly statements with a stabilization fund, Mr. Speaker, we would be well on our way to providing a kind of revenue monitoring and allocation system that would be world-class in nature instead of running the province like some rinky-dink operation that doesn't have enough resources to give us any kind of useful information. We wouldn't be seeing all these requests for out-of-budget, unplanned spending.

These are really good ideas that we've brought forward. Like I said, we'd be very happy if the government implemented them instead of having to come back in here time after time and having to vote on spending that really does not come into any kind of parameters of well-thought-out action. So in complete frustration, Mr. Speaker, once again I will have to support this bill, but it is an inappropriate way for the government to conduct the business of this province.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

[At 10:15 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]