

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 13, 2000**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 00/03/13

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Welcome back.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask You, Father, to renew and strengthen in us the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of this Legislature. We ask You also in Your divine providence to bless and protect the Assembly and the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members, would you please remain standing so that we might now all participate in the singing of our national anthem. I'll call on Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us.

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Thank you. Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

MR. WHITE: Sir, I rise on behalf of 209 citizens of Edmonton, St. Albert, and Stony Plain to present a petition that in part reads that they urge "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted this afternoon to present a petition signed by 292 fellow Calgarians. This petitions "the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to present to the Assembly a petition signed by 178 residents of Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and St. Albert. They are urging the government "to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system]."

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to present a petition to the Assembly signed by 142 residents of Alberta from Edmonton, St. Albert, Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan, Devon, and Mayerthorpe. All of these citizens are urging "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-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to present a petition signed by 111 Edmontoni-

ans which urges "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 today signed by 302 people from the Edmonton, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, and Fort Saskatchewan areas. That brings just today's total to over 1,200. This petition is urging "the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a petition calling on 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." This petition is signed by 1,111 Albertans and includes 841 signatures collected by Melissa Johnson, a graduate student in health promotion at the University of Alberta. Of these 841, 244 are residents of Lac La Biche and area. In five days Ms Johnson has collected 1,176 signatures.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, hon. member.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MR. BONNER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would ask that the petition I presented to the Legislature last week be now read and received.

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-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, request that the petition I put forward the other day now be 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-Manning.

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask that the petition in respect to support for public health care that I introduced on March 9, 2000, 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 request that the petition I presented on March 9 regarding private health care be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask that the petition I presented on March 9 urging the government to stop promoting private health care be now read and received.

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.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the petition I tabled last Thursday now be 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-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I tabled last Thursday be now read and received.

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-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully request that the petition I tabled Thursday last regarding the support of 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.

head: Introduction of Bills

#### **Bill 14**

#### **Alberta Treasury Branches Amendment Act, 2000**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 14, the Alberta Treasury Branches Amendment Act, 2000.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, will streamline the operations of the Alberta Treasury Branches, and it'll bring the financial institution more in line with the processes and standards for other banks and financial institutions. Basically, it will transfer responsibility for appointment and recruitment of the CEO to the board of directors. It will change the year-end to October 31 and provides for the

treatment of unclaimed balances as recommended by the Auditor General.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

1:40

#### **Bill 15**

#### **Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2000**

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave today to introduce Bill 15, being the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2000.

The Business Corporations Amendment Act will strike a better balance between protecting the rights of shareholders and creditors and also at the same time supporting legitimate business transactions and lending transactions of corporations.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 15 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. First of all, I wish to table five copies of a letter from me to the Prime Minister of Canada indicating to him that the conduct of his Health minister in Calgary last week was a disgrace to him and his government.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table two copies of two letters dated September 30, 1999, from the Hon. Allan Rock, one to our minister of health and the other to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, both urging the Alberta government to hurry up and pass legislation similar to Bill 37.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of a CBC radio transcript from December 1999 in which the same minister, Allan Rock, says that he has no problem with the sale of enhanced services to patients at the private King's centre clinic in Ontario.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of an October 18, 1990, *Edmonton Journal* story headlined "Federal cuts undermine health system - minister: Betkowski slams 'backing out'."

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got 11 letters to table today. Five of these are from Hinton, six are from Edmonton, and all of them are opposed to Bill 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two sets of tablings. The first are letters from Gary Buxton and Eva Zidek of Canmore and Wendy Ehlers and Lorraine Cooper of Calgary. They are letters to the Premier, and they are opposing the Spray Lakes development in Kananaskis Country.

My second tabling is copies of over 60 signatures from people throughout Edmonton who are opposed to the development in Kananaskis Country. This petition has been previously tabled with the minister.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I have two tablings today. The first is five copies of a report compiled by Mr. Brad Severin, who is the senior tax manager for BDO Dunwoody. This report compares taxes paid under the existing tax-on-tax policy versus the Treasurer's proposed 11 percent flat tax. What it shows is that there is an Alberta disadvantage at the \$35,000, \$50,000, and \$65,000 income levels.

Mr. Speaker, the second is a report that is titled Business Losses under Stockwell Day. That's the title of the report. What it does is chronicle that there are \$409.9 million worth of business losses that have been racked up under this Treasurer, or equal to the amount of \$378,000 per day that has been lost.

Thank you.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling a report by Steven Shrybman, solicitor, with regards to a legal opinion concerning NAFTA investment and services: disciplines and proposals by Alberta to privatize the delivery of certain insured health care services. This report was requested by the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Thank you.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings today. I'd like to table appropriate copies of three different letters from citizens objecting to Bill 11: Gordon Inglis, Dr. Ede, and Ms Karen Schuster.

My second tabling here is five copies of an article on barrier-free building design and handicapped parking that was contained in the last status report on persons with disabilities. The article, in my opinion, written by a very bright, young architect specializing in barrier-free design, solves the dilemma with handicapped parking.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table this afternoon copies of a letter to the hon. Minister of Learning dated January 27, 2000, from the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta with respect to the future of the Sainte Marguerite Bourgeoys school and the Francophone program in that school.

Thank you.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of brochures to table today on the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000. This is an exciting millennium event that the Leader of the Official Opposition and I attended in Fairview yesterday, March 12, 2000. The brochure says: "Come out and be a part of the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 as it makes its way through your community." This is a 16,100 kilometre trail that connects Canada from the Arctic Ocean to the Pacific and to the Atlantic Ocean with the longest multi-use pathway of its kind in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to table five copies of a report that was prepared by an Alberta injured worker in which he requests clarification on questions and concerns from the chairman of the board. This would be involving the Workers' Compensation Act, its policies and its procedures.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the chair has three tablings today. The first is five copies of a message for Commonwealth Day, March 13, 2000, The Communications Challenge, from Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

As well, the appropriate number of copies of a memorandum from the hon. Member for Red Deer-South requesting that Bill 202, the Marriage Amendment Act, 2000, be brought to third reading on Tuesday, March 14, 2000, and the appropriate copies of a memorandum from the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore requesting that Bill 205, Emblems of Alberta (Alberta Dress Tartan) Amendment Act, 2000, be brought to Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, March 14, 2000.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Dr. Anne Marie Decore, wife of the late Laurence Decore, and their son Michael. These two guests and other members of the Decore family including Laurence's brother Leighton and his wife, Bev, and Michael's fiancée, Gill, are with us this afternoon following the announcement of the Laurence Decore awards for student leadership. This is a \$50,000 scholarship named in memory of Laurence. I know I speak for all members when I welcome these honoured guests and thank them for being here today. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Forestry.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 23 bright students from the Boyle school in my constituency. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Corrine Sachko and Mrs. Emily Thomson, by Mr. Carl Parson, the bus driver, and by parents Mr. Dave Madoche, Mrs. Fran Anderson, Mrs. Doris Splane, Mrs. Suzanne Berube, Mrs. Linda Kuraitis, and Mrs. Karen Turner. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of 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 43 energetic students from John Barnett school in northeast Edmonton. I had the pleasure of attending their DARE program graduation last month. They are accompanied by two teachers, Mr. Tony Kimble, grade 6; Mr. Barry French, grade 5/6 split, and by helpers Mrs. Shirley Zubick and Mrs. Wanda DeWolfe. They're in the public gallery, and with your permission I'd like that they now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to introduce 25 students and a teacher, Mrs. Lorraine Williamson, from St. Gerard school in the constituency of Edmonton-Norwood. The grade 6 class is here to spend a week at school at the Legislature. They are off to a good start, and we hope to see lots of them during the week. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My guests will be coming in at 2 o'clock and leaving before the end of question period. So if I may let everyone know that the seniors from Spruce Grove are here today on a tour that they are very much enjoying, and they will be in the gallery later. I will relay that the Assembly has given them warm greetings.

Thank you.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of guests to introduce today. The first one is Ms Kathaleen Quinn. She is seated in your gallery, I understand, and her students who are in social work at Grant MacEwan Community College are seated in the public gallery. I'll ask Ms Quinn and her students to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second set of guests are Ms Tena Wiebe, who is my constituent, and Melissa Johnson, a graduate student at the University of Alberta, who has been collecting a huge number of signatures opposing Bill 11. I think they are seated in the public gallery. I'll again ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a longtime friend who is here today as an Edmontonian, not in his role as a newspaper columnist. I would ask Mr. Hicks on Six, Graham Hicks, to stand, but he's on crutches due to a broken bone. Apparently he was trying to stomp on frozen grapes. Anyhow, if you would wave, Mr. Hicks, and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives from three very distinguished groups. They are here today in the public gallery for the introduction of the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2000. They represent stakeholders from their professions, as well as many other business interests that depend on their services. I am pleased through their diligence, hard work, and professionalism that we found unanimous consent with respect to dealing with the amendments in this Business Corporations Amendment Act. With us today are Peter Lown, director of the Alberta Law Reform Institute; Janice Henderson-Lypkie, counsel from the Alberta Law Reform Institute; Andy Hladyshevsky from the Alberta Law Society, who serves as chair of the business corporations act committee; and Wayne Kauffman, associate

executive director of Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta. Accompanying them in the gallery is Bob Foord, director of policy and planning with Alberta Government Services. I request that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions today. First, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Jim Salahub and his granddaughters Kimberly, Courtney, and Ashley, who are visiting the Assembly and the Legislature today. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

It is my extreme pleasure to introduce another national championship team from the University of Alberta. With us today seated in the members' gallery are seven members of the University of Alberta Panda women's hockey team. This year they won their third – I repeat, third – Canada West championship and their first national championship in only their third year of existence. We can be proud of these students for their athletic prowess, but we can also be proud of them for their academic achievements. Last year the U of A led the country with 79 academic all-Canadians and has done so for seven of the last eight years. I would ask Shelley Reynolds, Danielle Nystrom, Frances Castle, Lori Shupak, Stacey McCullough, Trish Dubyk, and Erin Kuzyk to stand, and through you, Mr. Speaker, I invite members to join me in recognizing these fine athletes by giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

It is also my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce on behalf of the Member for Calgary-West some of her constituents who were visiting in Edmonton and St. Albert this weekend and who are here this afternoon at the Legislature. Mr. Chuck Fowler and his son Bryan Fowler from Calgary-West, and Gloria Allen, who lives in St. Albert, and her daughters Kari and Katie Allen are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask these friends of government to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, it gives me tremendous pleasure today to introduce to you a guest visiting from the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora. I would ask that Karen Sevcik please rise and be acknowledged by the Assembly. Amongst her many other responsibilities Karen is the president of the Edmonton-Glenora Liberal Constituency Association.

head: Ministerial Statements

#### **Laurence Decore Awards for Student Leadership**

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta's Alberta heritage scholarship fund finances and administers a number of awards that are named after great Albertans. Recently Premier Klein expressed his desire to include the late Laurence Decore in their prestigious ranks. Earlier this afternoon, with the support of Dr. Anne Marie Decore, we saw that idea come to fruition.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all of the members of this Assembly will agree that Mr. Decore was a passionate and dedicated leader and a true champion of our province. That's why the Laurence Decore awards for student leadership are such a fitting tribute to him.

Throughout his career Laurence Decore served as an alderman, a mayor, an MLA, a well-known proponent of multiculturalism, a party leader, and a Leader of the Opposition. He was well respected and admired by people across this province. He was a good leader and a strong leader. His contribution to Alberta and his spirit will not be forgotten.

The Laurence Decore awards for student leadership will distribute

\$50,000 worth of scholarships each year, and every year it will be shared by 100 Alberta postsecondary students. I'm very proud that this government is honouring Mr. Decore by recognizing our student leaders. These awards will recognize postsecondary students who have demonstrated their leadership skills through participation in student government or other school- or community-based organizations.

As seems only fitting for a leadership award, Mr. Speaker, the recipients must be nominated by their peers, the people who respect their abilities, like we as his political opponents or political compatriots have respected Laurence Decore's notable skill and drive.

Mr. Speaker, our current student leaders are our future leaders. I am pleased that we are able to offer them this support while honouring Laurence Decore, a man whose energy and political prowess gave Alberta so much.

2:00

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

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the creation of the Laurence Decore awards for student leadership. I welcome the presence of Mrs. Laurence Decore, Anne Marie, their son Michael, and his fiancée, Gill, and Leighton and Bev Decore, the brother and sister-in-law of the late Laurence Decore.

Laurence was a very respected man in this province. Some of his major accomplishments have been noted by the minister of education, including his work as a successful lawyer, mayor, Leader of the Official Opposition, leader of the Alberta Liberal Party, and valued member of the community. Laurence was proud to say he was a Liberal, and his leadership attracted many supporters. He was a true Liberal, believing in justice and equality for all. He fought for public health care and public education, and it is right to honour his memory.

The creation of this award recognizes these values and Laurence's accomplishments. Laurence Decore loved Alberta. It was his home, and it was one of his passions to see the province strong. Laurence loved Canada, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms bears his mark in protecting the multicultural strength of our nation. It is fitting that these awards be bestowed on those students who show the same kind of leadership for which Laurence was renowned.

It is my hope that some of the students who are awarded these scholarships will go on to provide this province and our country with the valued legacy and public leadership that Laurence was able to do in his lifetime.

On behalf of the Official Opposition I thank the government for the honouring of this award upon Mr. Decore and his family.

head: Oral Question Period

### Private Health Services

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are learning the truth about the Premier and about this government through the reckless experiment with private health care. Albertans just don't trust this Premier any more when it comes to health care. Right here on March 7 through the *Hansard* record the Premier told us: "We heard from medical professionals". Well, he may have heard, but he certainly didn't listen, because the Alberta Medical Association came out last week and said that Bill 11 won't work. Which medical professionals did the Premier consult with?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to consult with the AMA, and we appreciate their comments. As a matter of fact, that's

what the whole exercise is about. That's why the bill is out there to about 3 million Albertans, including the medical profession, to get their comments. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, I'll have the opportunity with the Minister of Health and Wellness to sit down with the executive of the AMA to determine exactly what they want in terms of amendment.

I would point out that the AMA didn't reject Bill 11. They want amendments, but they haven't said which ones. As I mentioned earlier, we put the bill out to receive input and look forward to receiving the suggestions of the AMA relative to the amendments they want. I've said all along that we are open to amendments, and I would also like to point out that the AMA position statement supports our view that "contracting is, and will continue to be, an integral component of the publicly-funded health care system." That is a direct quote.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, earlier the College of Physicians and Surgeons said that hip replacements would not be allowed in the Premier's private hospitals. So, again, which medical professionals did the Premier consult?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the College of Physicians and Surgeons said quite clearly that there is a need to put clear rules in place to govern and control surgical facilities. I would remind the leader of the Liberal opposition that Allan Rock used to say this, too, before he reversed his position. As a matter of fact, in September, as I pointed out in my tabling of 1999, he wrote to the college and to our health minister urging us to pass a law similar to Bill 37. Well, this Bill 11 is a bill that is similar to Bill 37, but it goes a lot further in terms of protecting the public health care system as we know it today.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, doctors don't like it, economists don't like it, and Albertans don't like it, so are only the people that the Premier consulted on his private hospitals bill the troika of Dinning, Davis, and Love in Calgary?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of people who don't like what other people seem to like as a proposal or proposition to fix the health care system, the AMA does not like what the leader of the Liberal opposition says. This is a quote from a newspaper article: Alberta Liberals said Wednesday they would prevent doctors from working in both the public and private health care systems, but the idea has been described by the Alberta Medical Association as a disaster for Albertans. I think that that quote is attributable to the leader of the Liberal opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is clearly experimenting with the health care system and pushing ahead with private health care despite the objections of physicians, economists, small business, religious leaders, students, seniors, and citizens living in rural Alberta, people from all over our province and from all walks of life. He thinks he knows what's best for Alberta no matter what the evidence, but Albertans don't trust this Premier. Why should Albertans believe the Premier's health care scheme when students in our province are taking time from their studies to protest this legislation?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, protest is a fundamental part of democracy. If we were afraid of this bill, we wouldn't send it out to every household in this province to receive comment, whether it's through protest or whether it's through reasonable discussion and reasonable debate of the issue, whether it's coffee shop talk or

protests outside the Legislature or the comments of the AMA, the comments of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, or the comments of anyone for that matter, even the comments of the Liberal party. It's out there for everyone to see and for everyone to comment on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the bill is true. The bill is absolutely true. There was one error in the bill. That was an honest error. It's being corrected.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about propaganda, this is propaganda, again I presume at taxpayers' expense. This is propaganda where it says that the Klein government wants to introduce two-tiered, American style health care into Alberta. That is fear mongering. That is propaganda. That is simply not true. What is fueling the emotions of Alberta is this kind of malicious information, this kind of Liberal propaganda.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, students and others have actually read the bill, and they think, along with other Albertans, that the Premier should withdraw it. When will the Premier consider withdrawing the bill?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the bill won't be withdrawn, but if there are reasonable amendments that can be introduced to address concerns that could come about as a result of a consensus, then certainly we will consider that, just as we will consider the concerns of the Alberta Medical Association. They have said that the bill in its present form is not acceptable to them. They would like to see some amendments. We would like to see the amendments that they propose. I understand that the deputy minister of health has been in touch with the executive of the AMA. We have said to them in a very reasonable way: tell us what you want in terms of amendments, and we'll sit down and discuss it.

2:10

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the question I received last night in Fairview at a town meeting was: why is the Premier experimenting with our public health care system? Can the Premier answer that for the people of Fairview?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is no experimenting going on here.

AN HON. MEMBER: Final answer?

MR. KLEIN: Final answer. You know, this is not how to be a millionaire, Mr. Speaker. This is serious business. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, there are no private hospitals. I just heard some of the chippering and yittering over there talking about private hospitals. The bill says that "no person shall operate a private hospital" in this province.

Getting back to the question, there is no experimenting. I remind the leader of the Liberal opposition that when she was the health minister, there were 37 private surgical clinics opened and operating under her watch, Mr. Speaker. Was that experimenting at that particular time? Since then, about 10 more have opened up. All this legislation does is set down rules and regulations for the conduct and the operation of surgical clinics, something the Leader of the Opposition failed to do when she was the health minister.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, one of Alberta's leading moral leaders, Bishop Henry of Calgary, spoke out against Bill 11. He said amongst other things, and I quote, that private hospitals promise only an array of new problems, end quote. No solutions, just more

problems. My questions are to the Premier. What is the Premier's answer to Bishop Henry's objections to Bill 11?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'm sure that if Bishop Henry wants to phone either myself or the Minister of Health and Wellness, he will find out, and we will reiterate to him that there is no proposal whatsoever in Bill 11 that would allow a person or corporation to operate a private hospital.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, is the Premier saying that Bishop Henry and physicians and economists and students and seniors and Albertans are all wrong?

MR. KLEIN: No, they are not all wrong, Mr. Speaker. That's why we sent out the bill. That's why we sent Bill 11 to 1 million households in this province, to get their comments, to get the comments, the wisdom, the guidance of good-thinking Albertans relative to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, people throughout this country, including the federal Minister of Health, including all the Premiers, including all the provincial ministers of health talk about change. They talk about change. This government is the only government actually doing something to bring about change and to bring it about within the parameters and the confines of the Canada Health Act and to do it within the parameters of Alberta health care and the publicly funded system as we know it today. We are the only government with the courage to actually bring about change.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier deal with the real problems which he's created in health care and stop this reckless experiment before he destroys the public health care system?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, this leader of the Liberal opposition, this hon. member should know more than anyone else what has brought about change. She commissioned, when she was minister of health, The Rainbow Report, which talked about meeting the challenges of an aging population, which talked about the need for the regionalization of the health care system. We did that, and we're doing that right now. And we did it politically. We didn't send our bureaucrats out into the field to do the work for us. We did it ourselves as MLAs.

MRS. MacBETH: Point of order.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition talks about churches. Well, this brochure, this piece of propaganda was found in a church pew. It was found in a church pew. I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of these pamphlets are out there at taxpayers' expense. We can't FOIP the Liberal opposition, so we can't find out, you know, what prompted it. But I can tell you that what's in this brochure is absolutely false.

It says that seven years of cutbacks, layoffs of health care professionals, and widespread closures of beds, operating rooms, entire hospitals set the stage for private health care. That is an absolute untruth. That is false. That is misleading. That is the malicious kind of misinformation that I'm talking about. That is pure propaganda, because the Liberals know as well as anyone else that we have increased funding to health care by almost 40 percent, and we have included in budgets and our business planning over the next three years money to hire some 2,400 new frontline workers, including physicians.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. interim leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has lost the trust of Albertans when it comes to its private, for-profit hospitals scheme. A 42-page legal opinion released earlier today on the NAFTA implications of Bill 11 strikes another blow to the credibility of this government. Canada's medical system is being threatened by this government's reckless scheme to privatize health care. My questions are to the Premier. Why does the government keep claiming that Bill 11 is NAFTA-proof when the just-published legal opinion by a well-known trade expert as well as studies released by economists, doctors, and other public interest groups over the last few weeks indicate that the NAFTA exposure will be the most serious threat posed if this Bill 11 is passed by this government?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of meeting with two representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Calgary about two and a half, three weeks ago, one of whom was Mr. Mutton, who's the head of the Alberta branch of CUPE. They told me that they had hired a lawyer and some economists to prepare this document, so I would consider this as being a paid political opinion by CUPE and by a CUPE-commissioned lawyer. I indicated at that time – and they have expressed a willingness to co-operate – that we would be delighted to have our lawyers sit down with their lawyers and discuss the finer points of the NAFTA agreement.

We have our own NAFTA experts, including officials who were involved in the original NAFTA discussions, and I can tell you that there is nothing in Bill 11 that exposes us under NAFTA.

I will have the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations explain further.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Shrybman is the executive director of the Vancouver-based West Coast Environmental Law association, and he has done a number of papers on environmental law and international agreements. I have a copy of this document as well. Obviously it was released this morning, so I have had a first look at it. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this document that suggests that there is any danger to us under NAFTA in Bill 11. In fact, the carve-out, which is discussed in here, was negotiated by the government of Canada, and it does protect the health and social services sector. I tabled in this House about 10 days ago an actual copy of the carve-out.

2:20

As the Premier indicated, Mr. Speaker, we have experts here who were involved in the actual negotiations, who were at the table, and who were ensuring that the province of Alberta's interests were protected. We are confident today that our experts are right and that there is no threat under NAFTA in Bill 11. There is no basis for that.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the government is so sure that Bill 11 will not threaten the future of Canada health care, will this government make its own legal opinion public in full and without any further delay? If the Premier is so sure that Bill 11 won't have negative implications under NAFTA, I challenge him to release that information to the public.

MR. KLEIN: Fine, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem doing that whatsoever. If the hon. member would please extend the courtesy of giving us a reasonable amount of time to look at the opinion of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, we'll be glad to provide an opinion relative to our position on NAFTA as it affects the

delivery of health care in this province. We'd be glad to make that public, absolutely.

### Speaker's Ruling Legal Opinions

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, *Beauchesne* 408(1)(c) reads, "Such questions should . . . not require an answer involving a legal opinion." Section 410 reads, "Questions should not seek a legal opinion or inquire as to what legal advice a Minister has received."

Carry on, hon. member.

### Private Health Services (continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that case I'll ask another question of the Premier. How can a government that can't even put out an accurate householder be trusted to accurately assess the NAFTA implications of its private, for-profit hospital scheme?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there was the mistake of one line on one sidebar. I know that this hon. member was a university professor. I know that he is a very learned individual, but will he stand up and say that he is absolutely exempt from making a mistake, that he has never made a mistake in his life? Will you stand up and say that, that you're absolutely perfect?

Mr. Speaker, one line. It was a printer's mistake. We apologized for that. It was an honest mistake, unlike the deliberate, vicious, misleading, malicious misinformation that's in this brochure. That is deliberate.

The mistake in the bill was an honest mistake. It was one line leading to the wrong section.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Family Violence

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Victims of family violence need to have trust in the legal system. They need to know that their complaints will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. As a survivor of domestic violence I like many others was shocked to read in the *Edmonton Journal* on March 11 the two articles concerning the promotion of an RCMP officer who was convicted of assault causing bodily harm to his wife. That officer is now responsible to supervise investigations into family violence issues. My questions are to the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. What kind of treatment would a victim of domestic assault receive within an RCMP section led by an officer who choked his own wife until she was rendered unconscious?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the initial answer to that is that that question calls for speculation on my part as to what type of treatment they would receive, but I would like to say a couple of things in response to the question. First of all, the government of Alberta has taken a very, very strong stance on domestic violence. I use as an example the new domestic violence intake court which is being set up in Calgary as we speak and hopefully will be operational within the next month. We take the whole question of domestic violence very, very seriously.

With respect to the specific instance that is being commented upon, I understand that incident happened in 1991. A conviction was entered. I guess one of the questions that needs to be answered, perhaps needs to be discussed publicly is: can a person, having been convicted of an offence of that nature, ever purge themselves of that offence and go on to lead a productive life?

MS PAUL: My first supplementary is to the same minister. Will you make a commitment to this Assembly and to all Albertans that you will implement and fund mandatory professional counseling and treatment for all convicted offenders of family violence as part of their sentence, as addressed in my Motion 539?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the issues that's currently being addressed, for example, in the pilot project on the domestic violence intake court in Calgary, the question of bringing together a partnership between prosecutors, the courts, community groups to identify family violence offenders, to fast-track them through the court process, to have them dealt with in an appropriate manner by the court process, and, yes, to make sure that there's appropriate treatment available so that those offenders can be treated and can be returned to the community and the community can be safer and particularly their domestic partners can be safer because of the treatment.

MS PAUL: My second supplementary to the same minister: will the government under the jurisdiction of the Justice department immediately set up a task force to look at finding solutions to eradicate violence in our homes, in our schools, and in our communities?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different initiatives under way in that area as we speak: the safe and caring schools initiative, the task force on children at risk. There's a task force looking at violence in schools. In fact, I've had some discussions with the Minister of Children's Services with respect to the whole question of domestic violence and what we might do to highlight the issue of domestic violence.

Whether or not we'll proceed to a task force on that is still a subject of discussion, but certainly I think I can say that we would agree on the fact that there needs to be a stronger understanding in the public of the harm that's caused by domestic violence, not just within the family but in teaching our children that violence is an appropriate method to solve problems. Therefore, we do need to key in on that essential question, and we do need to find results. I'm open to any suggestions that might come forward from the member opposite or otherwise as to how we might deal with that important issue.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Redwater.

### **Seniors' Health Care**

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As if it wasn't enough to double-cross seniors by shredding the seniors' report and slashing their programs, now we have the Premier and his cabinet blaming current and soon to be seniors as justification for bringing in private, for-profit hospitals. But only 10 percent of Alberta's population is over 65 currently. Manitoba and Saskatchewan are already at 14 percent seniors, but they aren't bringing in private, for-profit hospitals. My questions are all to the Premier. Mr. Premier, where are the studies, where is the concrete proof to back up the government's claims that seniors are somehow a burden on this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the exact opposite is true. Seniors are not a burden on society. As a matter of fact, we owe it to our seniors to provide the best possible health care available, and we provide it to seniors, who are probably more active than ever before, to make sure that the health care system is there for them when they need it.

We want to be able to address in a meaningful fashion the afflictions and some of the anomalies that are associated with the aging population.

2:30

Mr. Speaker, one of the most telling studies was done under a former minister of health who happens to now be the leader of the Liberal opposition. I alluded to it earlier. It's called The Rainbow Report. This was a very significant report and was the basis for a lot of the health care restructuring that we did. This hon. member should know more than anyone – and I'm talking about the leader of the Liberal opposition. The Rainbow commission on health care said: let us look at the biggest problem which health care administrators believe they face, and that is the anticipated cost of caring for an aging population. Mr. Speaker, that is true.

Mr. Speaker, here is a document. I don't have five copies. I'd be glad to table it. It's from the Calgary regional health authority, and it's a chart that shows relative health care expenditures by age. The lowest ages are on the left-hand side, my right, of this page. The highest expenditures are when you go from 70 to 75 to 80 to 85 to 90. The chart just shoots right up.

So this is not picking on seniors by any stretch of the imagination. This is making sure that the care is there for them when they need it.

MS BLAKEMAN: Why are this Premier and his ministers attacking the very people who built medicare and who depend upon it the most? Blaming seniors. For shame.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, we are doing precisely the opposite. What we want to do under the Health Care Protection Act is to make sure that health care is there for seniors when they need it.

The opposition members obviously don't understand what is going on. I don't know the kind of mail they get relative to waiting lists. It is heartrending to hear of people who are waiting 12, 13, 18 months for joint replacements. If we could move some of the minor surgery, such as we have done in the case of 140 different surgeries, very minor surgeries, out of those huge bricks and mortar hospitals, full-scale hospitals, then we could free up much more space in those public hospitals for the kinds of things that our seniors want and need, the kinds of things that they want and need to maintain a quality of life. That's what it's all about. We want to make sure that our seniors have the quality of life that they deserve.

### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, it should not have gone unnoticed that decorum was at an absolute high point when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs was addressing questions. It seemed that no hon. members had interjections. It continues to amaze me why that changes depending on who asks the question and who is answering the question.

So let's try it again, and let's try and remember that the milieu and the decorum in the House when the question was asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and then responded to was really the model.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### **Seniors' Health Care (continued)**

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Why, Mr. Speaker, are this Premier and his ministers using seniors as scapegoats to justify Bill 11. Why?



MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that question and the suggestions contained in that so-called question – there is only one word to describe it, and that's nonsense. There is an adjective, and it's "absolute" nonsense.

Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the hon. member to research some of the facts relative to the number of seniors moving to this province from places like socialist Saskatchewan – the Liberals would know all about that; they've moved a long way toward what it's like to be an ND in Saskatchewan – or socialist British Columbia. They're moving back here in droves, and the reason they're moving back here is that they know we offer quality health care for our seniors. We offer the best seniors' benefits program of any jurisdiction in the country, and we intend to keep on doing that because our seniors deserve nothing less.

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

### Private Health Services

(continued)

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Medical Association held a meeting last week at which delegates held considerable discussion on the government's Bill 11, the proposed Health Care Protection Act. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Could the minister advise members of the position taken by the AMA delegates as a result of these discussions?

MR. DICKSON: Point of order.

MR. JONSON: It's my understanding that at the representative forum of the Alberta Medical Association held on Friday and Saturday, there were essentially two motions that were carried. First of all, the Alberta Medical Association had prepared a position paper with respect to the matter of contracting with private surgical facilities.

Just to summarize very quickly, Mr. Speaker, I think the key part of their position paper is that they indicate that

lost in the debate is a discussion regarding contracting in general.

Contracting is, and will continue to be, an integral component of the publicly-funded health care system. More can be done, however, to ensure that these contracts serve the public interest. Albertans deserve assurances that the following rules will be protected or enhanced:

- Physicians are the agents and advocates of patients in the provision of medical services.
- RHAs are the agents of the public in contractual discussions with privately-owned health facilities.
- The Provincial Government is responsible for ensuring a sustainable public health care system that provides reasonable access to all Albertans with no direct, out-of-pocket, costs for insured services.

With respect to the overall direction herein, Mr. Speaker, we in government certainly have no issue with that particular statement. This overall position statement was passed.

The second item that was important in this meeting is that the Alberta Medical Association representative forum passed a motion indicating that they did not support Bill 11 in this current form. That seemed to be, Mr. Speaker, connected to a concern that the Alberta Medical Association has over not enough being done with respect to expanding the number of doctors in the province; that is, the whole area of physician supply. With respect to that particular point, I would just like to indicate that we have worked with the Alberta Medical Association, put several millions of dollars into our rural physician action plan, which was a collaborative effort between government and the AMA.

We have recently announced the expansion of the overall internship component over the next two years at our universities or training institutions, and, Mr. Speaker, most important of all – and the AMA's been quite complimentary about our joint efforts here – we have been working and are nearing completion on developing an overall report which projects into the future the physician needs for this province for several years to come.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that the meeting of the AMA delegates also supported increased funding for the public health system, could the minister tell members if government plans to add any additional funding for health?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the budget recently tabled with the Assembly and conveyed to all Albertans clearly indicates, we have made and we are making a substantial additional commitment to the health and wellness sector in the coming three years. We are adding over a billion dollars in funding. I believe it works out to about 21 percent. I think it compares favourably with any other province in terms of projected increases. We are somewhat disappointed at this point in the corresponding commitment that we'd hoped would be there from the federal Liberal government. Nevertheless, there is a substantial commitment clearly indicated by the government to health care funding.

2:40

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister once more. Delegates at the AMA meeting also expressed the need to recruit more physicians for Alberta. Given that sentiment, could the minister tell the members if the government is taking any action to increase physician numbers in this province?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I have referenced that point previously in my remarks, but I would also like to indicate that we are right now, and we can point to various statistics indicating that there are physicians coming to this province from other locations in Canada and elsewhere to practise in Alberta because it's regarded in this nation as a pretty attractive place to practise. Further – and I think this is particularly significant and a favourable indication – we are finding that a higher percentage of graduates from our medical facilities than was the case a few years ago are choosing to stay in this province and practise here and make their careers here.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's too bad there are not more positions for rural doctors.

The one thing about this experiment with private, for-profit health care that the Premier can't control is how the NAFTA tribunal and the World Trade Organization will interpret Bill 11 if this government continues to proceed with a plan that will endanger Alberta's health care sovereignty. In a recent legal opinion received by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, one that the minister alluded to but forgot to mention, it was stated that "Alberta's plans to privatize the delivery of surgical health . . . services threaten the integrity of Canada's public health care system." My first question is to the Premier. Given that respected lawyers and economists across this country are warning that Bill 11 will have major NAFTA implications, why does the Premier continue to roll the dice with our health care sovereignty?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, nobody is rolling the dice. This bill is simply to put in rules and regulations relative to the operation of surgical clinics. Those rules and regulations did not exist before.

I find it very curious that for the past number of years, certainly when the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition was minister of health, there were private, contracted-out surgical clinics operating and I didn't hear a peep. I didn't hear a boo from the Canadian Union of Public Employees. I didn't hear anything from the Canadian Union of Public Employees. I'm curious to know why now. Why now? When we want to tighten up the rules and regulations relative to the operation of surgical clinics, why would they be concerned?

As to the intricacies of NAFTA, again I'll have the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations explain.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, in fairness, we received this document at about 11 o'clock. I received it about noon today. I've gone through it. Again there is a lot of conjecture. What if? Well, it doesn't matter about what if because government procurement by provincial governments is excluded from that agreement. So take the what if away. I would prefer that we deal with facts, and I would prefer that we look at this under the context of what is. By the own admission of the author of this document there has been and will continue to be likely – I'll just quote one little line:

Canada's health care system is a mixture of public and private sector service delivery. Most physicians providing insured medical services operate private for-profit businesses subject to certain regulatory controls, e.g. licensing and extra billing.

That is what Bill 11 is about, putting some rules around clinics.

So the study itself admits that Canada's system is that mixture and has been for some time. It's interesting that NAFTA has been in place since 1986 and it's interesting that there were 30-some clinics under the care of the former health minister and there has never been a NAFTA challenge. Isn't that interesting, Mr. Speaker?

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister of intergovernmental affairs had earlier talked about the carve-out provisions and has enough time to read selective parts of the report, when the report indicates that Canada's sectoral reservation for health care is qualified and ambiguous because it only applies to health services to the extent that they are social services established for a public purpose, can the minister indicate how she can continue to claim that the carve-out provisions will protect our public health care system?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, I can. The carve-out sections, if you read them very carefully, do apply. If you go through this document that was tabled, I'm having a hard time finding a place where the author of this document actually refers to the carve-out. So I suggest that the hon. member pay some close attention to the carve-out.

I repeat again that the procurement of government services, public services in health, are not under NAFTA. We can procure those services with no NAFTA challenge. So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we deal in fact, not in what if the sky should fall. Let's deal with what the government of Canada negotiated on behalf of the Canadian people for protection of the health and social service sector.

The opposition may not have any faith in the government of Canada's negotiating powers, but I do have a lot of faith in that, and I suggest that they have protected it very well. I also further suggest, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, that we have had some 40-odd private clinics in this province for almost as many years as the life of NAFTA. To date there has not been one challenge under NAFTA,

not one in its entire lifetime. I doubt that there will be a challenge in the future either.

MS LEBOVICI: Given that this is new territory that we are treading into, can the minister of intergovernmental affairs provide any instances when the carve-out provisions have been challenged?

MRS. McCLELLAN: If I understood the question – could I find an instance where it had been challenged? – no, Mr. Speaker, I could not.

The other thing that I would just like to relate to the hon. member is that probably one reason that it hasn't been challenged is because the people who would look at this suggest that it is strong protection and is not worthy of attempting a challenge.

We have in International and Intergovernmental Relations one of the most respected trade experts in this country. He has reviewed this at length many times. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this person doesn't sit in an office and read studies and reports. He actually was at the negotiating table with the government of Canada.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, if I have to look for expert opinion on NAFTA, on trade policy, on protection, I'll put my faith in the government of Canada's negotiators and, most explicitly, in the government of Alberta's chief negotiator at those. I suggest that they have served us well and have an agreement that will protect the health and social service sector in this country.

#### **Speaker's Ruling**

#### **Questions outside Government Responsibility**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the chair has great concern over the expenditure of valuable House time for the last six or seven minutes with respect to this series of questions. Earlier in the day the chair did rise and point out *Beauchesne* 408(c), dealing with legal opinion, also 410(13), and also section 409(3), asking for opinions and the like.

More importantly than all of that, there are approximately 6 billion people living in the world, and I'm sure that on any given day there are hundreds of thousands of reports that are being published and written. The report in question, that was the premise of this question, is not the property of the government of Alberta nor any member of Executive Council. One has to take great liberty in dealing with some of these questions, because where are you going to end up in a question period and where are you going to begin?

#### **Seniors' Health Care**

(continued)

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, on Friday I had an excellent discussion on Bill 11 with a group of seniors at Canyon View, located, of course, in that beautiful city of Red Deer. They had smart questions not only about Bill 11 but about all aspects of health care. My questions are to the minister of health. In view that the population of seniors will double over the next 20 years, will that affect our ability to provide necessary health services?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, one of the most positive, I feel, characteristics of demographics in Alberta currently is that we do have an increasing seniors population. We have a population which is living longer at a better level of health than ever before. I think that is a very, very positive feature of the province of Alberta. As was alluded to earlier in question period, we do have a trend in western Canada if not across Canada of seniors moving to Alberta to become part of this province's population, part of the economy, part of the culture of the province.

As has been the case in offering whether it's education or health care services over the years, we have to plan for the healthy aging and the aging in place of our seniors. It will require a commitment of resources. It will require working with the seniors population to provide the best possible services, as has been done through the development of the Broda report, the long-term care report. Overall, Mr. Speaker, I regard it as a very positive development, one that, yes, we have to plan for and devote resources to as far as our health care system is concerned and as a government, but we are certainly committed to doing that.

MR. DOERKSEN: Can the minister assure Alberta seniors that they will not have to buy private insurance to pay for necessary health services?

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We fully comply with the Canada Health Act as we sit in the Assembly here today as government. Our ability to further regulate and enforce the provisions of the Canada Health Act would be enhanced should the Assembly choose to pass Bill 11.

I also want to point out that right now we have put in place a direction, in keeping with the Canada Health Act, to make sure that people are not going to be charged for medically necessary services, nor will there be any queue-jumping in terms of access to those services. In Alberta we also offer a range of services that are not under the auspices of the Canada Health Act in terms of being insured but do cover a number of the other needs that Albertans, particularly seniors, benefit from coverage of.

MR. DOERKSEN: Will the minister also advise what action he along with the Treasurer will take to eliminate the health care premiums?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, at this particular point in time there are no specific plans to eliminate health care premiums. However, it is something that the minister – I can only speak for myself on this – would be interested in exploring, but there is no immediate plan to eliminate the health care premiums.

#### head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now we'll call upon the first of five members to participate in Recognitions today, but in the interim would all hon. members kindly voice their enthusiasm for the arrival of the visiting group of seniors that was introduced earlier today by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

#### Writing Home Project

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday evening past I attended an event at our Musee Heritage de St. Albert celebrating the Writing Home project. This project provided an opportunity for teacher Judy Weber's grade 5 class at Ronald Harvey school to meet and work with seniors from St. Albert's Ironwood Estates and the Westlock care centre to discuss museum artifacts and their uses. The students then wrote stories after meeting with Gail de Vos, who is an author of children's literature, and they painted delightful pictorial renderings after meeting with Lewis Lavoie, an outstanding mural artist.

Mr. Speaker, this project was funded by Museums Alberta and presented by Musee Heritage. I wish to commend Giselle Roy, who co-ordinated the Writing Home project; Tracey Stefanyk, its

education co-ordinator; and our Musee Heritage exhibition co-ordinator, Jean Leebody. It was a marvelous project both in its participation and in its display.

Thank you.

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

#### Public Debate on Bill 11

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize two Members of this Legislative Assembly, one on each side of the House. The first one is the Member for St. Albert, and the next one is the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I want to recognize them because they have agreed to debate Bill 11 tomorrow night at King's college starting at 7, a two-hour debate carried live by CHED radio. I commend them for facing the public and allowing Edmontonians to participate. I hope others will follow their lead, the Minister of Health and Wellness or his associate up against the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark or the Premier of the province up against the Leader of the Official Opposition. This could lead to recognizing a great deal more members in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

#### Women's CIAU Hockey Championship

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the University of Alberta Pandas hockey team, who were introduced earlier today and who recently captured their first Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union women's hockey championship. Women's hockey was introduced to the U of A three years ago, and since then the Pandas have won the Canada West Universities Athletic Association championship each year, and this was their third consecutive appearance at the CIAU tournament.

Along with the honour of winning the CIAU championships, the Pandas' head coach, Howie Draper, was named Canada West coach of the year. Draper, a U of A alumnus, has coached the Pandas hockey team since its inception in '97 and has been a key element in establishing such a strong women's hockey program.

Part of the Pandas' success can be attributed to their participation of team members in other amateur athletic competition. Some team members have participated in the Arctic Winter Games and the Canada Games. The opportunity these athletes receive at these events and the skills and leadership experience they are given is invaluable. I commend the University of Alberta Pandas for their hard work and determination and would ask that all members congratulate them.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

3:00

#### Health Care Workers

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize all the health care workers in the province who have held our system together in the midst of radical cuts and the recent assault on public health care in the form of Bill 11. Alberta's nurses, doctors, and other health professionals and workers are just like the rest of us in the province who expected a period of calm and rededication to medicare when the government began generating multimillion, billion dollar surpluses. What a shock to realize that instead of entering a time of healing, we are being forced into a new period of stress and uncertainty. The only reason our system is still

able to function effectively is because of the commitment and dedication of health care workers across the province. The Official Opposition joins with every Albertan in saying thank you to all these wonderful, dedicated, and much-appreciated people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: A couple of points of order here today. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition

#### **Point of Order Provoking Debate**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been authorized on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition to speak to a point of order she had raised. This had to do with her third set of questions to the Premier. The Premier again referenced The Rainbow Report and said to the effect that his government was doing what The Rainbow Report recommended. The authority I would cite would be *Beauchesne* 417, the enjoiner that answers "should not provoke debate."

I can save a lot of time, Mr. Speaker, by referring you to page 346 of *Hansard*, when virtually the identical issue was raised on March 9, 2000. Let me simply say that it wasn't The Rainbow Report, authored under the current Leader of the Opposition, that recommended blowing up the General hospital, selling the Holy Cross hospital for a song, terminating the employment of 10,000 qualified registered nurses and health workers, and doing all of the other things that have resulted in longer waiting lists in the province.

Thank you.

MR. HAVELOCK: I'll be very brief, Mr. Speaker. There's absolutely no point of order. The hon. member across the way simply used a point of order as a means to once again expound on a particular health care perspective. In fact, quite frankly, the Premier's response may generate debate. It seems any response the Premier gives in this Legislature generates debate, but he is responding to questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the opposition caucus. This again seemed to have been an exercise in clarifying a particular position. There is no legitimate point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Agreed, and thank you both for making this matter as brief as it really was.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### **Point of Order Oral Question Period Rules**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second item relates to the question raised by the Member for Redwater when he went to the Minister of Health and Wellness. My authorities here would be *Beauchesne* 409(8), "A question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again" and 410(9), "Questions should not repeat questions already asked." Further, in the alternative, the other basis would be under *Beauchesne* 409(6) and numerous other authorities' past rulings, that the minister has to be asked a question within his competence.

I didn't know that the Minister of Health and Wellness is now a spokesman for the Alberta Medical Association. The first question was – and this is a paraphrase; I don't have the transcript in front of me – what were the recommendations or the decisions made by the Alberta Medical Association at a meeting held over the weekend? It was compounded because we'd already had a discussion in the first three sets of questions about the recommendations coming from the AMA meeting.

The second two supplementary questions I can take no issue with because I think they were perfectly appropriate, but the first question can do nothing other than flagrantly offend. I understand here that ministers are to be accountable, not to be offering commentary. I mean, we could be asking ministers about anything any organization decided anywhere in the province because it might happen to coincide with their ministerial responsibility. That's not the purpose of question period.

Thank you very much.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, if I get the gist of the argument, one, he's suggesting that you should not raise an issue through question period that has been previously asked and/or answered. Mr. Speaker, every day in this House the opposition members raise the issue of health care. They raise it legitimately, because it is an important issue, but the manner in which they raise it is not legitimate. They continue to harp away on the fact that we're promoting private hospitals when in fact we aren't. In fact, they are legislated against in the legislation very specifically. They continue to distort and they continue to provide misinformation regarding the issue. So for them to rely on repetition is quite frankly simply amazing.

But to get also to the point regarding the AMA position, the opposition raised the AMA position through its questioning. They misrepresented that position, and then they tend to squirm when the health minister gives the straight goods on what the position actually is.

So again there's no point of order here, Mr. Speaker. It's simply another attempt to use a point of order to clarify what in essence was a weak line of questioning from the Official Opposition for probably the 12th or 13th day in a row.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members and the two gentlemen who just participated, I wonder in my mind if either one of you is really serious about this business. Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who also serves as the Opposition House Leader, if I take it that you want the chair to enforce 409(8), "A question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again," methinks you have violated question period repeatedly every day, virtually every question in the last 10 days. So I'm going to take that under advisement.

Now, to the Government House Leader. There's absolutely no doubt in the chair's mind that the hon. Member for Redwater did violate. It was a very, very poorly written question. When the hon. Member for Redwater says, "Could the minister advise members of the position taken by the AMA delegates as a result of these discussions," it's not the purpose of ministers of Executive Council or members of this House to explain what an outside body or an outside group is saying or doing. But, then, that's absolutely no different than the intervention that the chair made when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark asked the question just a few minutes later.

So I'm telling you that if you want to stand up every day after question period and go through this stuff, you're going to find a much more aggressive chairman who will in fact imply and invoke all of the rules, and this question period is going to become a very, very interesting arrangement.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

#### **Bill 6 Special Payment Act**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of pleasure and pride that I rise to introduce second reading of Bill 6, the Special Payment Act.

The principles of this bill I think are relatively straightforward. We've had in Alberta for some time the issue of the disenfranchised widows, a group that banded together because they felt they had a particular issue with the Workers' Compensation Board and were seeking relief. They felt that a law that had been changed in the past, 1984 I believe, 1982 perhaps, where they had some entitlements and then had those entitlements removed, was not a just decision and were seeking some sort of recompense for that.

Now, a bit of the background for the members, Mr. Speaker. All through the process of arriving to today, I believe it's fair to say that we've had a fair amount of co-operation between the disenfranchised widows group and the board of directors and administration of the Workers' Compensation Board. It was unique in the sense that they both wanted to find a resolution, but they were looking for a vehicle in which that could happen.

3:10

Originally they had made a proposal to the government of Alberta that a board of reference be used. This is a manner in which the government can bring before a court an item for a decision and some direction. The government of Alberta and the minister of the day had agreed to look at that as a possible means for resolution. When the Executive Council had a reorganization and I came to the ministry, I was then approached by representatives of the board of WCB to consider further this board of reference. I expressed initially some hesitation but agreed that we would at least proceed to see whether or not it would be a means to the end that both parties were looking for.

Unfortunately, based on representations from our Department of Justice, it seemed that there were some barriers that would get in the road of that. I think in fairness to the parties one of the barriers that I was most concerned about seemed to be the time line in which to receive a resolution to this situation. I was advised, although somewhat informally, that we might be looking at up to three years before there would be a particular decision.

Well, I don't know the particular ages of all the people involved with this, but that did not seem to me to be an expeditious way in which to handle it. The answer, then, that the government of Alberta indicated to both parties was that, no, we would not seek a board of reference but we would do whatever we could to assist in a manner for the parties to arrive at a negotiated settlement. Upon further discussion between the two parties they realized that under the current Workers' Compensation Act there was no real provision for them, should they arrive at a negotiated settlement, to be able to make a payment under that act. So they asked us for legislative relief to that structural barrier that was then in front of them.

What we have here today, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 6 is a means to allow the Workers' Compensation Board and the disenfranchised widows group, actually for any widow or widower that qualifies under this particular bill — it provides them now the opportunity to arrive at a settlement and for a special payment to be made. So it's on that basis that it is here in front of us today, and I would seek the co-operation and the support of all members of this House in the expeditious approval of Bill 6.

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 6, the Special Payment

Act, at second reading. This bill will enable a onetime payment from the Workers' Compensation Board for remarried widows and widowers whose spouses died from pre-1982 work-related incidents.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the minister responsible for the WCB, the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, in the development and sponsorship of Bill 6. With the successful passage of Bill 6 a five and a half year battle by the Disenfranchised Widows Action Group will come to a close. The struggle by this group for a settlement to this issue has been long and strenuous and at times bitter. It is an issue that has spanned the terms of three different ministers who were responsible for the WCB, but to this minister's credit, his quick and timely intervention has paved the way for Bill 6 to be debated in this Legislature today.

Prior to changes to the WCB act in 1982 widows and widowers were entitled to a lifetime pension, except if they remarried or entered into a common-law arrangement. Many of the widows had young families and were not only hit with the tragedy of losing a spouse but also the secondary tragedy of trying to raise a young family on a small widow's pension. At that time it was not uncommon that many of these widows did not have a career or some type of postsecondary education to rely on in this time of need. Two members of this group told me that in 1966 one of their pensions was \$80 a month and the other member's pension in 1975 was \$210 per month.

Changes to the Workers' Compensation Act in 1982 removed the provision for lifetime pensions in favour of term pensions and services to encourage long-term self-sufficiency and financial independence through additional job or vocational training. Benefits are now based on 90 percent of the deceased worker's net income at the time of the accident, subject to maximum insurable earnings.

If the spouse is employed, they receive a five-year term benefit which is reduced 20 percent each year after the first year. If the spouse is not employed, they are entitled to vocational rehabilitation to achieve gainful employment defined at a net income level that equals or exceeds 75 percent, which is what the deceased worker would have been entitled to had their accident resulted in permanent injury. These new benefits were provided to surviving spouses regardless of whether they remarried, lived common law, or stayed single.

An all-party committee presented this new legislation to the Assembly in 1982. It was well-meaning legislation but unfortunately treated one group of widows differently from another based on an arbitrary date. The lump sum payment worked out to be considerably less than what a long-term pension could be worth. It became an issue of fairness.

Approximately five and a half years ago the Disenfranchised Widows Action Group was formed and proceeded with the goal of getting their pensions reinstated and a lump sum payment for the years they had been denied pensions. They have been buoyed along the way by results obtained by other groups with similar causes.

In 1987 the government of Canada recognized and corrected a similar discriminatory error by reinstating Canada pension plan surviving spousal benefits. In 1996 disenfranchised widows in British Columbia won a court case against the WCB and had their pensions reinstated retroactive to 1985.

In 1997 Ontario made similar changes to its legislation to reinstate WCB benefits to widows. The hon. Cam Jackson, minister responsible for seniors at that time, spoke these words in Ontario's Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to join my colleague, the Minister of Labour, in proposing an initiative worth over \$135 million to some of the most vulnerable members of Ontario society.

These same words, I think, could be said here in Alberta for our Disenfranchised Widows Action Group.

Mr. Speaker, in a number of provinces varying degrees of reinstatement of pensions have occurred in some areas or just financial settlements in lieu of restoration of pensions. The province of Ontario, from my understanding, has gone even further than this proposed legislation will. I'm sure it is no secret to the members of this Assembly that the Ontario compensation system is in serious financial trouble, but they have put in place a plan that will restore the widows' pensions in addition to a cash settlement.

3:20

In December of 1998 Motion 518, WCB disenfranchised widows, was introduced in the Assembly by this member. The purpose of this motion was to address the unequal treatment in pension benefits for widows and widowers of WCB claimants. Unfortunately, this motion was defeated at that time. The principles that this motion was introduced on were those of fairness and the protection of the vulnerable. However, the manner in which these widows have been treated since 1982 meets neither test.

The timely passage of Bill 6, Mr. Speaker, will go a long way in helping to correct the issues of fairness and the protection of the vulnerable widows and widowers who were affected by changes in legislation. I applaud this minister for listening to their plight and recognizing that there is an injustice in this province with respect to the widows' pensions. You have taken steps to correct at least in part the injustices that have gone on for a number of years.

I've had the honour and the privilege of working with these widows since early 1997. It has taken many years to bring their issue to this position. If there is one thing that I can point to with some degree of honour and privilege, it is being able to work with the widows. For all of the attempts that we make in this Legislative Assembly to effect some change that affects people in a positive way, this is one of those issues.

Shortly after I was elected in 1997, our former leader, Grant Mitchell, spoke with me on representing various groups or issues in the Legislature. At that time the light at the end of the tunnel was quite dim for a resolution to this issue, but Grant had great optimism that fairness would eventually prevail for these widows. Through their efforts and the efforts of many others we are now on the verge of bringing about changes to restore some sense of justice and fairness with widows' pensions.

Now, it is interesting to note that the other part of that financial and emotional hardship that the widows had to undergo was that if a second marriage dissolved, there was no basis for the restoration of that particular pension for those widows. In other words, once you remarried, your pension was forever gone as a result of that remarriage.

I've talked to a number of the widows for several years now, Mr. Speaker. They have told me of their extreme emotional stress at the loss of a spouse. I can only reference the cases that came to my attention. The widows would tell me that they would wake up in the morning with their families, all cheerful to start the day. They would see their spouses off to work, out the door of their house. Several hours later they would have a police officer, a coworker, or a friend knocking at the door, indicating that perhaps they should come to the hospital because there had been a serious accident. The widows have indicated to me that their lives were forever unalterably changed as a result of those events that were beyond their control.

To add insult to injury, many of them, unfortunately, after the loss of their first spouse were involved in marriages that subsequently went bad and ended up in divorce or separation. The widows had no recourse to any reinstatement of their pensions after a remarriage.

They wound up financially worse off than when their spouses had died.

The unfortunate part is that WCB has opted, I am told, for an \$80,000 lump sum payment. If you did even a rough calculation, that money would have been considerably higher for a number of the widows that have been cut off for a great number of years. This \$80,000 figure was arrived at without any negotiations with the Disenfranchised Widows Action Group on a take it or go to court if you're not satisfied with the offer.

Many members of the widows' group are seniors. They have struggled without pensions for so many years. The WCB in Alberta is perhaps the only WCB in Canada that has a huge surplus. They have so much money that they can even afford to buy ads on television when they have a total monopoly for providing compensation to injured workers in this province. So how did they arrive at this figure of \$80,000? You know, with the settlements I have looked at, the figure of \$80,000 appears to be the lowest. This is perhaps not the right time to ask this question, but I think it is important for the public, the widows, and the members of this Assembly to know how that figure was arrived at. We would like to know how this settlement compares with those across Canada.

I'm not sure if the minister has heard this or not, but not all the widows are satisfied that they will be receiving full justice as a result of Bill 6. Some of them are dissatisfied with the level of compensation that has been offered. Others are upset that the pensions were not reinstated. There are many that feel they have been short-changed on both counts. It is unfortunate that these vulnerable members of our society have been placed in a take it or leave it position or take your chances in court. This action would only result in more delays and costly legal proceedings, that they cannot afford.

Now, as well, when I was looking over Bill 6, Mr. Speaker, I did have some concerns on section 9 regarding regulations. These regulations are simply too wide open. They're too vague, and they allow the minister to effectively write the bill without recourse to this Assembly. I do note that there are others that think this matter is long past its time to be resolved. They have fought the good fight, but they are tired of fighting for what is rightfully theirs. Many of these people are seniors who want to get on with their lives. Time is of the essence to them. They would like to have this matter dealt with. This legislation for them will bring an end, or a closure, to this matter after a number of years.

We would hope for them a speedy passage of this legislation. If we find that there is consensus on this particular piece of legislation, I would like to have royal assent given to this matter as soon as possible. This would allow the WCB to put the money in the hands of those widows and widowers who deserve timely closure of this chapter of their lives. Even as we debate this issue here in the Legislative Assembly, time is of the essence for some very sick members of this group. I look forward to this bill going through second reading and on through committee and third reading as quickly as possible.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Disenfranchised Widows Action Group for your resolve, your determination, and the opportunity to work with you. If we do meet on any other issues in the future, I want to be on your side.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity for me to add my comments to this bill.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak to Bill 6 at second reading and to congratulate the minister for his work

on this bill and also to congratulate my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. He spent a great deal of time and effort ensuring that the needs of this group of people were met in the best possible way.

There is occasion sometimes in this Assembly for us to be able to address grave wrongdoings that have been done in the past, and this bill is certainly representative of an instance like this. I know that the minister has had legal opinions saying that they were not legally bound to do what we see before us with this legislation, but I and many members of this Assembly and of this province and all of those women and their families affected in this circumstance believe that this government was morally bound to do something about this grave wrong that was done to these women back in the early 1980s. Certainly, while the formal battle to receive payment has been going on for about five and a half years, the informal battle that these women have been waging has been happening for them, for the most part, since the day their husbands were killed in work-related accidents.

If we take a look back at that time period in our history of the province, in the '50s and the '60s, when most of these accidents occurred that we're addressing now, women had a very different kind of placement in our society than they have today. They were expected to marry and stay home and take care of their families and support their husband in their husband's work role in society. When something happened to change that relationship, particularly when the husband died, the husband and the wife expected the employer to provide for the wife and the children of the family in some sort of regard.

Let's remember that back in that period of time very few women worked, and those who did work were in very poor-paying jobs. It was hard for women to find employment outside the home, and it was hard for them to be single parents, quite different from how it is today, where there are a lot of opportunities for women in the workforce.

3:30

Then when these women were faced with the unexpected death of their loved one and the unexpected challenge of trying to decide how to provide for their families, they were also given the unexpected challenge of having to fight with their employers, particularly with WCB, to get any kind of monetary coverage for their families. For many of these women it was a battle they fought for years, trying to find financial support and any kind of adequate redress from the WCB. Many of those women have told me over the past few years that they were literally told by government officials that they talked to and by members of the WCB at that time that they should just be quiet, go home, take care of their kids, and find a husband, that that would solve their problems.

Well, society has changed a lot since then, I'm happy to say, Mr. Speaker, but during that time period it was very, very difficult for these women to take the next step in their lives. It became the ultimate problem in these women's lives and shadowed their experience for the remainder of their lives up until this point. It is the single biggest outstanding issue that they had to work around and resolve while still doing the very important task of trying to raise their children and provide for their families.

When we look back and when historians look back at this time period, we should be and they will be appalled at how these women were treated over time. It has been a huge struggle for them. It's interesting to see that in 1982 when the legislation was changed, it wasn't addressed as has happened in many other instances, where we see clauses like this grandfathered. If a commitment was made to pay people for their lifetime in terms of a benefit and then legislation

changed, generally speaking, for those people addressed during that time period there's a grandfathering clause so that the rules remain the same for them, or at that point in time some form of compensation is made to those people. Not in this case, Mr. Speaker, and I have to wonder if it didn't happen in this case because we're talking about women. We're talking about women who did not have positions of power where they could negotiate adequately on their own behalf. That's a question that I have for the minister, and I'm hoping that he'll be able to answer that.

The minister in his remarks made a statement where he said that it is his belief that there was a fair amount of co-operation between the group and WCB. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that to be true at all. That is certainly not what I have heard from these women. To be quite blunt, these old women were bullied. They were bullied into accepting a lump sum payment, with no interest accruing, that is far below, in fact way less than one-third, what most of them would have been entitled to.

The wording of the letter that came from WCB was coercive in nature. It told them: this is it; this is the only offer you're ever going to get; you're not going to do any better; opt in or forever opt out and as individuals then take WCB to court. Well, we know the struggle that these women have faced for literally decades. As individuals fighting the system they got absolutely nowhere, Mr. Speaker. They know that this is an all-or-nothing, onetime offer that is substandard. That I also find appalling.

These women feel the pressure not just for themselves but for other members of their group, many of whom, as my colleague from Edmonton-Glengarry has said, have died recently or are very infirm and may not make it through another round of negotiations. They feel tremendous pressure to take the settlement as it stands and not to continue the fight for more fair and equitable treatment. It's too bad that that's the position they are in, Mr. Speaker, but it's certainly a corner that they have been backed into.

Having said that, these women have struggled for a long time, and they're tired, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we saw that when they were here for the introduction of this bill a little while past, for first reading. After the bill was introduced and we met with them outside in the rotunda, you could see how drained they were physically and emotionally, how relieved they were that finally there was some closure, yet at the same time how bitter they were, how upset they were, how unfairly they felt they had been treated in terms of the settlement. A settlement of \$80,000 in terms of a lump sum payment is the lowest settlement that has been made across this country so far and from the richest province in the country, so I think that speaks for itself.

These women will be very happy to have closure to this issue, but once again, as has been the case for them over the decades that they have struggled in this fight, they will not have been treated fairly, Mr. Speaker, by this government or by WCB. So because of that I will not be supporting this bill in principle at second reading. I will be supporting the bill when it comes for a final vote because I understand the constraints that the women are under in terms of age and health. I will be happy to see that there has been recognition of their concerns and their situation when the final vote is taken, but certainly in principle it is impossible for me to support this bill.

MR. DICKSON: Just to speak very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I very much support Bill 6 and the purpose of Bill 6. You know, we have a responsibility. I feel I have a responsibility as a legislator when I see a section like section 9 – and I know my colleague for Edmonton-Glengarry touched on it – to be consistent with the concern that at least I've tried to always raise with subordinate lawmaking whenever I see a section that allows a minister to “make

regulations respecting any matter that the Minister considers necessary or advisable to carry out the intent of this Act.”

I know that this minister may be a reasonable, practical man, anxious to respond to the need while we have the statute. I understand he may well say with all sincerity: I would never abuse this; it's just the little details, to fill in the things that aren't done in the act. But given the fact that in this province subordinate legislation – in other words, regulations are not vetted, are not screened, are not reviewed by any kind of an all-party committee such as the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: They're not going to be.

MR. DICKSON: Well, to be consistent, the concern has to be raised again, Mr. Speaker.

As much as it pains me even to raise it on a bill – I mean, I listened to the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, and he talked about the importance of moving the bill through quickly. I want to respond to that. I genuinely do, but I'm also torn because at some point is democracy – it's always the death of a thousand cuts. It's not somebody putting up a banner across the front of the Legislative Assembly saying: closed for the next five years.

MR. SAPERS: No longer an approved legislative facility.

MR. DICKSON: No longer an approved legislative facility, end of quote.

What happens is that it's these little ways. We talked about it and will talk about it in Bill 3. We see it again here. So, Mr. Speaker, it's again to highlight the concern. I'm concerned that somewhere down the road people who study whatever happened when we started losing democracy in Alberta and when they start charting the course, they're going to point to something like section 9 and say: you know, here it was. I don't want anybody to say that the MLAs were asleep at the switch, that they didn't understand the significance of it and didn't understand the consequences and the ramifications. Just because it's tucked in an important bill, a positive bill, a good bill doesn't make that section right.

3:40

You know, the most impressive kind of leadership I can think of, Mr. Speaker, the most impressive kind of leadership I could ever imagine would be for the minister of human resources to say: we would never abuse the trust this Legislature has given us, and that's why I'm going to make some commitment that the regulations would be vetted by somebody other than the Member for Peace River and his regulatory or deregulatory task force, whatever it's called.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a good bill and a good initiative, and it's certainly one that I'm going to vote for, but I just register in the strongest possible terms the disquiet I feel, how uncomfortable I feel with section 9. Just because it's easy and it simplifies things doesn't make it right.

I'm reminded of the Railway Act we saw not so long ago and talking about the armadillo complex that sometimes we see, and I remember my concern there. We raise these things in bill after bill after bill, yet government continues to bring in things like section 9. Why would that be, Mr. Speaker? Is it that they don't think we're serious? They don't think anybody cares? They think that they just never make bad decisions? I don't know what it is. I can only speculate. But I do register that very strong concern.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour to stand up in support of Bill 6. I certainly want to congratulate the Minister of Human Resources and Employment for bringing this bill forward and for initiating the actions that caused the WCB to reconsider their position with respect to the disenfranchised widows. I want to thank all the other hon. members on both sides of the House who over the years have spent considerable time in discussions with the widows who were affected. I know that there's been a lot of effort made by a lot of people over a lot of years to bring this forward.

Now, the bill may not be seen by all parties as adequate, but I think one has to recognize that there is really no need to defend or prove anything with respect to this bill, and therefore it applies to everyone equally. So I think, in respect of that, that certainly is going to speed the remedy and make the compensation that perhaps should have been paid to some of these people along the way a lot easier.

I also want to thank this minister for doing the right thing with respect to . . . [interjections] I'm not sure if I'm missing something here. With respect to the reviews that he's currently ordered with respect to the service review committee, that I'm honoured to be on, as well as the committee that is currently looking at all of the appeal mechanisms, I believe this minister does the right thing, and in the end there will be some major opportunities to improve the operations of the WCB with respect to those injured workers who are severely injured.

We also know, though, that the WCB indeed does a very good job of a large part of their work, with respect to 85 percent of the injured workers who are not seriously injured. I think these reviews are going to allow visibility to come into the system and certain actions to be recommended by these committees. I certainly commend the minister once more for allowing those things to happen, because it's been a long time coming.

We'll be able to learn, I think, through the questionnaires that are currently now available, as I understand it, in all MLAs' offices across the province, not just government MLAs but every MLA office across the province. I would certainly encourage injured workers who feel that perhaps their case was not given due process to help us to pinpoint exactly what the problems were that they encountered and to give us enough detail so that we can in fact make appropriate conclusions with respect to what they're telling us and make appropriate recommendations to the minister.

So I certainly again want to thank the minister for everything that he's done so far. I know that this bill may not be the last bill of this kind in this particular minister's history. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 6 has certainly been a long time coming. I can remember back in 1995 probably, maybe even as early as 1994, there was a resident in my constituency, actually a woman that lives in the apartment tower right next to my constituency office, that came to see me. She sat down with me and my constituency manager, Kim Cassidy, and told us her story about the loss of pension and what it meant in her life and the struggles that it meant for her personally. Then she told me about this group of mostly women who were in the same situation. She started talking to me about growing court decisions and court challenges in other jurisdictions, wondering whether or not they would have to do the same thing in Alberta that was being done elsewhere to get some justice and some satisfaction.

I said that I thought their case made perfect sense, that their issue was a good issue, that their arguments were well founded, and that



even though obviously there were some policy disagreements between myself and my caucus colleagues in the provincial government, even though that was the case, the logic and the weight of their argument would be impressive and they would be able to make common cause with the government and come to a speedy resolution. As I say, that was back in 1994, 1995.

Well, I will say that the minister that has inherited this file, the current minister responsible for the WCB, I think can distinguish himself from his predecessors at least in this regard. He has sincerely listened to the plight of these disadvantaged Albertans, and he has seen to it that under his watch something appropriate has been done about their concerns. I thank him for that.

Mr. Speaker, I have shared in the anger and the frustration of these men and mostly women over these past five or six years, and for the life of me I can't figure out why it took us so long to get here. I also can't figure out for the life of me why, when the settlement is finally offered, it's at the bottom end of the scale. You know, it's always a difficult judgment, and the government in the past has fallen into the situation where they wanted to make sure that the most amount of money went to the claimants.

We saw the ill-considered Bill 26, where some limitations were going to be put in in terms of legal rights. The government backtracked on that, but I do accept that somewhere in the thinking around that bill there was a sincere belief that the maximum amount of whatever settlement dollars would be offered would go to the claimants. That's the only justification that I can think of when it came to the attempt to use the notwithstanding clause in Bill 26.

In Bill 6, you know, the disadvantaged women do have the right to say no to the \$80,000, and they could go to court. Some of them I'm certain will do that. For some it's already too late, Mr. Speaker. This is not a youthful group of men and women, and for some it's simply too late. I understand that the money won't be paid to estates, and I think that's an issue. Others just simply may run out of time. If they did choose to go to court to try to get what in their minds, in their beliefs would be a more fair amount, they simply may run out of time. There are a few members of this group that I know who are gravely ill.

3:50

I think it's important to encourage the government to look for areas of injustice that they can correct legislatively. I am glad that this minister has seen to it that his responsibility is being discharged by closing this file. On behalf of the women that I've had the privilege of getting to know over these past half-dozen years, I think a certain amount of closure will be celebrated, but I would really appreciate it if the government would look carefully into the delay over these last number of years, would look carefully at the reasons why any settlement is on the table and ask themselves collectively whether or not this is really a fair amount, the \$80,000, whether or not it represents a real measure of justice.

Mr. Speaker, I guess for some of the recipients of this special payment, they'll say: yeah, it's terrific; it's all we could have ever hoped for. For some of them that may be true, but for others – and these are the men and women I'm particularly thinking of – it won't be any measure of justice. It will be seen as an insignificant amount compared to the loss of pension benefits over many, many years and the loss of future benefits, which of course will be forgone.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

Madam Speaker, I don't want to delay debate on this bill. We'll get into committee. There may be some discussion around section 9, there may be some discussion around the dollar amount, but, you

know, it wouldn't be entirely unique for the government to bring an amendment to its own bill. We have time between now and third reading to take a look at the dollar amount and to rethink it. I would encourage the minister to do just that and have that discussion with his cabinet colleagues.

Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment to close debate.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just some comments, I suppose in reaction to the members that have spoken previously.

First of all, I want to say that I do appreciate the support that we're finding here today from both sides of the House. I certainly appreciate that, and I am sure the widows and widowers involved will appreciate that as well.

I think it's important to make sure that people understand that with the Special Payment Act we're not taking anything away from any of the widows in the sense that they still have a pathway through the courts if they determine that the negotiated settlement is not to their liking.

The settlement itself is an issue for the WCB and for the widows. My role here today is simply to try to do the best that I can in providing, then, an opportunity or a pathway for the parties to arrive at a conclusion, to arrive at some closure without the use of the courts, if that's what they determine.

I hesitate to get into the numbers, because again that is not the business of the government of Alberta but the business of the Workers' Compensation Board. The briefings that I've had to do with on this particular file have indicated that Manitoba and Saskatchewan in arriving at lump sum payments – I'm told the amounts were \$72,000 and \$75,000. For the record, perhaps that information might be useful.

I did appreciate and took as a compliment the comments from Calgary-Buffalo, but I would just want to indicate to the hon. member and to all members of the House that however reasonable or however practical he might see me, the act goes above and beyond that, because any minister, any person that is accepted into Executive Council has to take an oath of office, and certainly within that oath it then is our responsibility to govern ourselves in accordance with the good of the people.

I don't know, when it comes to regulations, that section 9 is that sort of a section to be feared, and I would want to assure the member that whoever comes behind me, as surely they will, in this portfolio, that minister will be duty bound and honour bound to do the same that I have.

So with those comments, I'd like to move second reading of Bill 6.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

#### **Bill 4 Surveys Amendment Act, 2000**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environment.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to bring the Surveys Amendment Act, 2000, for second reading. The amendment is a straightforward change. I can help explain that change by giving members of the Assembly some brief background.

Alberta's municipalities, land developers, utility and resource development companies, and government rely heavily on accurate

and up-to-date maps called cadastral maps. For the reference of the House a cadastral map shows the boundaries of the subdivisions of land for purposes of describing, recording, ownership, and taxation. To provide cadastral maps as efficiently as possible, my department has made two changes to mapping services in Alberta.

First, we took advantage of new technology and worked with Alberta's two land titles offices. Descriptive plans and plans of surveys are now in a digitized format. This data is integrated into our base maps, which then can be distributed electronically. Alberta is leading the country in electronic cadastral mapping services, with the support and participation of Alberta's land surveyors and their association.

The second thing we did was privatize mapping services to a not-for-profit agency. Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd. is now responsible for updating and distributing digitized mapping data.

Technological advancements are beneficial and inevitable, but they have a cost, and no matter who provides the services, they still need to be paid for. Last spring, consistent with our government's user-pay policy, this House amended the Surveys Act to provide ministerial authority to collect a cadastral mapping fee. Land titles offices in Edmonton and Calgary collect on behalf of my department and forward those fees to Spatial Data Warehouse. However, the wording of the earlier amendment refers only to fees for mapping plans of survey. Section 89 of the Land Titles Act states that descriptive plans are not plans of survey, but Spatial Data Warehouse maps both kinds of plans and is entitled to fees for both services.

The Surveys Amendment Act, before us for second reading today, adds the phrase "or a descriptive plan" to the Surveys Act. This will allow us to ensure that Spatial Data Warehouse receives fees for all the plans that it maps on our behalf, and I ask members of this Assembly for support for this amendment to the Surveys Act.

4:00

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have some questions about this bill, although in general it's a very small amendment that's being brought in here. We can see that the problem that could have presented itself, had this amendment not been brought in, would have been that the cadastral surveys have to be registered with the Land Titles Act and there's a payment or a fee when a plan of survey is submitted to update this mapping, but no fee is currently required when a descriptive plan is submitted. So this is an oversight, as we understand from the industry, that is being corrected by this process, particularly when you take into consideration that the descriptive plan is not actually surveyed but is a plan drawn on the basis of a verbal description.

What might have happened, then, is that we could have seen people trying to submit descriptive plans to save money when a plan of survey was required, a potential loophole in the legislation and something that was apparently overlooked by everyone involved in preparing the legislation when it came before us in the House last spring. We can see where this bill meets the requirement.

Madam Speaker, there are a few questions in terms of the privatization that the minister has undertaken to put this fee collection process into a not-for-profit agency. When we did a search on Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd., it was very interesting to see the people who are going to be in charge of this not-for-profit agency. First and foremost is the assistant deputy minister for the department in the land and forest service. So who we see listed here on the corporate search is Cliff Henderson, who currently, as I

understand it, is still the assistant deputy minister, land and forest service. I'm wondering why it is that he's involved at this level in this not-for-profit agency. In addition to that, the other names listed here are primarily people in a senior position in a local large company here in Edmonton.

I'm sure, Madam Speaker, that there's some easy explanation for this. I'm sure that these positions were in effect tendered to some extent to find out that we have the right kind of representation on this board, and if not, then these positions clearly must be transitional positions. I'm hoping the minister will clear that up for us and tell us exactly what the process was in terms of establishing this not-for-profit agency, what the intent is in terms of those people who are holding key positions in this organization at this time, and exactly what it is that all of these people are doing in these positions.

Also, of course, the big issue here always is remuneration. I understand that this is a not-for-profit agency, but I also understand that fees of \$100 are being charged for each plan that is being registered. Now, it's a couple of computer clicks to enter these into the system and perhaps some other work. We want to ensure, Madam Speaker, that any remuneration paid out to people involved in this process is done on a fair and reasonable basis and that any jobs that were the outcomes of this were advertised for in a fair and reasonable process.

Those are my questions at this stage, and I'm sure that the minister will be happy to answer them, not just for me but on behalf of all of those people out there in the province right now who want to ensure that there is openness and transparency in every action that this government undertakes.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The minister and my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie have covered a great deal of the area that I wish to cover. I won't repeat those items again, although the nonprofit firm set up to carry on this business raised a number of questions on this side of the House that have never really been explained. My colleague has covered most of the areas that I wish to in that regard, but I've saved this question.

As we understand, the fees and charges of the province of Alberta are held in abeyance currently in order to restructure those and find out whether in fact those can be applied as fees and not as taxes. Is this organization set up to impose these fees, on a willing public presumably, in an attempt to get around that provision that came about by a challenge in the courts in Ontario, I understand? That's a question to be answered some other time, I suspect, unless the minister has the answers here now.

The other area that concerns this member is that it appears that this is a relatively minor and innocuous change in the act and would not in the normal case warrant a full bill, particularly if the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations in this Legislature was utilized in this House for the purpose it was intended, to review law and regulations. Certainly to have an all-party committee review these matters that would arise now and again from the imposition of an act and get it down to an administrative level, you'd find that the act simply does not fill the bill, as it were, and there are some errors of either commission or omission. The committee would be able to deal with that. An all-party committee would receive the tacit consent and knowledge of the opposition parties, and then it would make miscellaneous statutes much more inclusive, such that this side of the House would not have any reason to debate those matters as is tradition in a miscellaneous statutes act.

With the absence of the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations, how does the government expect the Legislature to

work in the manner it was designed, which is having the opposition question and call to question both the government's motive and mode of operation? How could it work? It's a question that should be put and should be debated in government caucus a great deal more than it apparently is.

Madam Speaker, with that, this member has no further remarks on this bill, as it was adequately covered by the minister and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Just a couple of quick comments. We've received an explanation, I think, in terms of what the purpose of the amendment is. My query would be this. I'm not intimately familiar with the *Surveys Act*, but when I look at section 46, which is the section being amended, what I see is that "the minister may make orders," and really what we're doing is we're amending the (b) part to expand what one of those orders may cover.

Now, perhaps the minister can advise us. There are some orders that in fact are treated effectively as a regulation. They're subject to the *Regulations Act* of the province of Alberta. As my colleague a moment ago said, although we don't have all-party oversight of regulation, at least there's some procedure for publication of regulations, and they're accessible. We also have a beast called ministerial orders. Most ministerial orders aren't subject to the *Regulations Act*, and they're just darn tough to find, Madam Speaker. The courthouse in downtown Edmonton has an excellent library, but normally you can't go in there and find those orders. I can go to the courthouse in Calgary. It's got lots of laws and regulations for this province, but I typically can't find ministerial orders there. So my question to the minister is: what kinds of orders are these in section 46? Are these the orders that are subject to the *Regulations Act*? If they're not, how do Albertans access them?

I'm a believer, I think along with my caucus colleagues, in plain language and that whole movement to make laws accessible to Albertans, and I'm always a bit uncomfortable when we're dealing with orders that may be well known within a department. But, you know, laws are not for the people in the department; they're for the rest of us to manage our affairs.

4:10

I'm mindful of the fact that the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association – I mean, there's a finite number of members, and they may customarily deal with these. Maybe they have ready access to ministerial orders. I don't know; I'd need the minister's help with that. This seems like a fairly innocuous bill, but I'm hopeful the minister can tell us what kinds of orders these are and what process is utilized to make sure that regular Albertans like me or you, Madam Speaker, or any of my constituents can go and find out what these things are and what's in them and so on.

The other observation I'd make. Since we're dealing with section 46, this is somewhat collateral to the bill but certainly relevant. This is one of those things that the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Eurig* decision was focused on. They were looking at probate fees in the *Eurig* decision, but, you know, I expect the fees here may be a significant cost, and perhaps the minister could just offer us some assurance that the *Eurig* decision from the Supreme Court of Canada has been reflected in these orders. They may not be, and I'll await confirmation from the minister. These ministerial orders may not even be subject to the *Regulations Act* of the province of Alberta. It may be that they have not been assessed under the *Eurig* decision. Perhaps we could just have the minister sort of sign off on that,

Madam Speaker, and tell us that he is as usual way ahead of this member, that he anticipated this concern and it's no problem, that it has been looked after. I'd just like to have that assurance myself.

I daresay my constituency, Calgary-*Buffalo*, being in the heart of the oil patch, has lots of land surveyors' offices. I'd hate for some of them to think that some of these questions weren't being asked. Otherwise, it seems like a pretty straightforward piece of legislation.

I've learned about a new kind of map I knew nothing about before. It just goes to show you that you can plunk away for 22 years in the practice of law and think you've dealt with lots of land and survey instruments, and then something like this comes along to show you how inadequate your knowledge is, Madam Speaker. So thanks for the education, Mr. Minister, but hopefully you can educate me further on some of the items I've raised this afternoon.

Thanks very much.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. minister to close debate.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be happy to review all of the comments made by members of the Assembly and respond to them accordingly.

At this point I wish to move second reading of the *Surveys Amendment Act, 2000*.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

## Bill 5

### Land Titles Amendment Act, 2000

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

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 5, being the *Land Titles Amendment Act, 2000*.

Madam Speaker, in general terms the intent of Bill 5 is to place certain land title practices in legislation and to ensure that the *Land Titles Act* is in sync with certain federal legislation. In 1996 amendments to the *Land Titles Act* consolidated the north and south Alberta land registration districts into a single Alberta land registration district and provided the statutory authority to establish a land titles office at one or more locations. An amendment to the act is now required in order to provide for the appointment of a single registrar of titles to be responsible for the land titles office. In conjunction with the foregoing, an amendment is also proposed to establish the use of only one seal for the Alberta land titles offices which are located in both Edmonton and Calgary.

An amendment is also required to allow the registrar to accept for registration copies of leases and other registrable instruments which are certified by the chief executive officer under the *Parks Canada Agency Act* or a person duly authorized by the chief executive officer. This amendment is required to ensure the act accommodates the recent amendments to the *Parks Canada Agency Act* by the federal government.

On April 18, 1998, the general register was abolished. All writs of enforcement and other registrable instruments as defined must now be registered on a certificate of title. Commencing in 1995, there was a three-year transition period associated with the abolishment of the general register which required that certain legislative provisions be maintained during that three-year period. As this transition period has now expired, some sections of the *Land Titles Act* require minor changes to reflect current legislative procedures. As well, Madam Speaker, the proposed amendments ensure that all

sections dealing with writs, which are now in different locations throughout the act, will be in one location, allowing for both clarity and ease of reference.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, there is a section in the Land Titles Act which enables a person to bring an action against the registrar of the district in which the land exists for the recovery of damages. An amendment is required to reflect that there is only one land registration district and one registrar for the land titles offices in Alberta.

In closing, I would like to note that formal discussions have taken place with the Law Society of Alberta and with Parks Canada of the federal government as well as informal discussions with many institutions and that these amendments reflect those discussions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I'd suggest that there are probably few single statutes in this province that are more important than the Land Titles Act. We have an amazing system of land registration, one of the best in the world. It has been recognized as one of the best in the world for many, many decades, and I know my colleagues in the Alberta Liberal caucus are anxious to ensure that the integrity of the land titles system is assured and protected.

I guess it appears fairly straightforward as I look at Bill 5. I would have felt a little more comfortable if the sponsor of the bill had said that he'd reviewed this not just with the Law Society of Alberta, which is the formal regulatory body for Alberta lawyers, but that he had also discussed it with the real estate section of the Canadian Bar Association, north, and the real estate section of the Canadian Bar Association, south. It's the Canadian Bar Association that in fact does advocacy on behalf of lawyers around legislative change, around issues that lawyers deal with all the time. The real estate sections, particularly in Edmonton and Calgary, Madam Speaker, are very strong. They're well attended. These are people, men and women, who deal every day with the minutia of the Land Titles Act and the land titles system. Now, I know my colleagues, people like Calgary-Glenmore and Calgary-Lougheed, if asked would have made that suggestion to the bill sponsor. By the fact that he didn't mention it, I don't know whether he has talked to them and they had problems with this.

Madam Speaker, as I look at it, this seems fairly straightforward, but I think given the importance of the Land Titles Act and the rules to those people who are charged every day with the implementation, the processing of it, I would have felt and would feel more comfortable if I knew that those real estate sections in Edmonton and Calgary had reviewed this and were comfortable with it. They may well confirm that they have no issues or whatever. It's not to say that they make legislation; they don't. Just because one of those groups might have issues, it wouldn't be necessarily a reason to vote against the bill, but it would seem foolish of me not to solicit advice, take that advice and share it with members here in the Assembly.

4:20

I know that I've asked a similar question to some of our Conservative colleagues about the significance, the impact of this, and I haven't to date heard that assurance with respect to the Canadian Bar Association, so I'll do that on my own. I'll be happy, Madam Speaker, to make those inquiries. If the bill sponsor, our friend from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, has got that information, maybe he could just send me a note saying that the real estate sections didn't have any issues with it.

I think it's very dangerous for us to go in and open up a bill as

important as this one and do some tinkering with it without making sure all of the major groups that are going to be directly affected (a) know what the contemplated change consists of and (b) are supportive of it. If they're not supportive, then it just seems to me that the sponsor of the bill has an obligation to come in and, with a view to putting all the information in front of us, to say: the Canadian Bar Association, northern real estate section, has got some problems with section 7; these are the problems, and this is why I as bill sponsor and why the government aren't dissuaded after hearing those concerns.

We haven't heard that. Far be it from me to be, you know, trying to shine my flashlight in dark closets and trying to find out what else is there, but I just think, given the importance of the bill, we want to know that information. There may be others who share that concern. Perhaps not, but it's just too darn important to rubber-stamp this bill. You've heard my comments many times before that I don't think my job here ever is to be a rubber stamp. There may be people who wish to use a great big rubber stamp over my skull, but that's not my job here, to rubber-stamp . . . [interjection] Battered by both sides, Madam Speaker, battered by both sides.

I don't want to be a rubber stamp, and that's why I asked that question. I look forward to some clarification, and if I don't get the clarification, Madam Speaker, I want to make you a promise. I want to make you a promise right now that if this bill gets to committee stage – and I'm sure it will – I'm going to again ask these questions. You're going to be sitting there in the chair saying: "Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I remember you asking those questions. Have you not got answers yet?" I want to have answers by the time we deal with this again at committee stage. You probably are wondering what the answers are to those questions that have been asked, so I promise I'll send you a note if you're in the chair when we get to the committee stage on this important bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, do you wish to close debate?

MR. JACQUES: I would ask for the question, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

## Bill 1

### Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act

[Adjourned debate March 6: Mr. Herard]

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, I'm more than pleased to take the opportunity to speak to Bill 1. You know, often things in this Legislature are a bit like a hockey game. The only things that are reported are the fights and the goals, but there's a lot of play in between that never gets reported. Here we go with a bill that has support on both sides of the House, so I want to speak to that for a little while and maybe tie in some other issues that I think will relate to this bill eventually or that should be addressed by further work.

Virtually, the objects of this bill, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act, are to

support a balanced long-term program of science and engineering research based in Alberta directed to the discovery of new knowledge and the application of that knowledge to improve the quality of Alberta's economy, communities and environment.

We're putting quite a chunk of coin into that, \$500 million if I'm

correct, to be used by the foundation, and in that we're going to establish an advisory council. In that advisory council, as I understand it, there will be a few different people of different backgrounds. I guess, though, my question is: who will make up the members of the board? Will there be an opportunity to have members of the public? I think the more inclusive we are of different walks of life, different interests, then the better we are served. So that will maybe be an interesting issue that the minister can address at some point: the designated trustees that section 2 will have and if it's only science professionals that will be in the legislation. Surely there might be other science professionals that may be also included in that. I would be interested in hearing about that at a later time as we discuss this bill.

You know, I sometimes think that people don't realize how very significant research in general is. No doubt that in this fast-paced world that we live in, the big focus on engineering . . . Somebody is beeping, but what's new in here? [interjection] No, it's really not me. It's really not me beeping. I'm usually much louder than just a beep.

MR. DICKSON: Somebody has come unplugged.

MRS. SOETAERT: Somebody has come unplugged.

DR. MASSEY: Undone.

MRS. SOETAERT: Undone. It's a machine, we hope.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I think everything is under control.

MRS. SOETAERT: The Member for St. Albert escorted her machine out. Maybe that's part of the research.

To the bill, Madam Speaker. There's a whole realm of research and technology out there that we have to deal with, but my point about research is that it's more important than we ever think. There are scientists that spend countless hours doing research, and the general public says: well, what does a research scientist do anyway? Little do we realize the far-reaching benefits of some of the work they have done. I am pleased that this is for science and engineering, but I guess within that we should always look at the other disciplines that deserve the same amount of research respect and finance that comes with that.

You know, when we convince people to come to our province and we say, "Listen; we have some great research money, and you would be a great person to do research in our province," we also have to be more encompassing in what we offer here. People move here for all kinds of reasons, and as we entice people to come to Alberta to do research, I think we also have to entice them with quality of life. You know, as people make decisions about lifestyles, one of the things they look at before moving to a place is the quality of education. Is there a school nearby where my child can go to school? Is there adequate health care? As people are enticed to do research in our province, this kind of money and commitment and encouragement is only part of what will bring them here.

4:30

I've often said here in the Legislature before that we have to value all disciplines: the humanities, the arts. I'm not saying that this bill doesn't recognize them, but I'm saying that as we start this, let's also encompass the other things. I often think of the movie *Mr. Holland's Opus*, an excellent, excellent movie. It talks about: if we take away the fine arts, what will our students have to write about? I often encourage members of this Assembly and wherever I go about

the real value of a comprehensive education, a comprehensive research plan. I guess that in those other disciplines within the colleges, NAIT and SAIT, the universities, we also must look at the humanities, because I don't want those forgotten as the old pendulum swings towards technology and science and research and all those things that we all rely on more than we know. There's the other side of the pendulum, too, that I don't think we have focused on enough as well.

I know this is based on the medical research foundation, and to my knowledge that works very well. I support this legislation, but I also within it question the things that may be missing. As we do research and as universities and secondary institutions can access this, I express concerns that while we're doing that, we're also not realizing the restrictions that we sometimes put on people to go, to access those secondary institutions because of funding issues, because of the expense of it. I guess if we value research and if we value knowledge, then we should value the availability of those secondary institutions, which I think are becoming more and more inaccessible every year.

When we look at the U of A tuition rising 6 percent, that's a chunk of coin for summer students who make 6 to 7 bucks an hour and for their parents. Obviously many of these young people have to be supported or at least helped along or have loans cosigned by their parents. I think when we're looking at a knowledge-based society and something that's really important like this research, we can't be just narrow. We have to be more comprehensive and look at the whole picture of knowledge in this province, and what we really, really value is the accessibility of secondary education for young people.

You know, it's interesting. In this province many years ago only up to grade 8 was public education. The rest was all private and expensive. Maybe some people can even remember when parents paid for their children to go into the convent or off to the city so they could get an education. Now, of course, we have public education to grade 12, except for some exceptions when we have to fund-raise for books, et cetera. That's veering a bit, but it applies. It applies to a society that values knowledge. I hope that someday I see – and I mean, heaven knows, this government would never approach it. If we truly value knowledge, why aren't we making secondary education far more accessible? In a society that truly values secondary education, would we have such tuition costs? Would that become public education? Imagine an Alberta that valued education so much that secondary education was part of the public program. Maybe not possible in this year's budget but certainly a goal we should all at least look at and say: would it ever be a possibility within our realm to make secondary education public?

Well, we have a government that now is supporting engineering research, and that's a good move. That's a good move. But I think that if we apply knowledge right across the board, it can't just come in a little flagship bill. It can't just come as a one-shot announcement where we pound our chest: "Look at us. Aren't we wonderful? We're the heroes of knowledge." The reality is that, as in so many others, this government has failed.

So I do support Bill 1, but with it I express my concerns that just because we now have a foundation set up for science and research, that doesn't mean, then, that we can just toss away the rest of all the education issues and failings, shortcomings that this government has created. We now have students fund-raising just to get books and photocopying and essentials for the classrooms. We have bake sales. We have sub sales. We have all those kinds of things. In a society that really values education, why are we not acknowledging that we have shortcomings all the way through the system? Instead of addressing all those issues, we do come up with one foundation.

That is good. But you can't say in your little platform speech or out in your communities, "Aren't we wonderful for supporting research in this area?" and then forget that you have underfunded education, taken money away from kindergarten, and raised tuition costs prohibitively.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Relevance**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. member, the chair has listened intently here. I'm a firm believer that one can always bridge, but you're bridging awfully, awfully far away from what is before me in Bill 1. Let's get back to the overall principles within the bill.

MRS. SOETAERT: It is actually university based, and bridging is an engineering topic.

#### **Debate Continued**

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The scholars need research assistants who are university students. If tuition is too high, they can't go. It's like a circle. You see, it's a vicious circle. We've got the research, but if you can't get there to access it, you can't go. It's a vicious circle. So there's a lot of bridging going on around here on this Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act.

MR. SMITH: It's a good bill.

MRS. SOETAERT: It's a good bill. Absolutely it's a good bill, but it's just one piece of a huge puzzle with a government that doesn't value education in other areas but touts the \$500 million, half a billion dollars. That is wonderful, but the reality is that it's only part. It's one part of a puzzle that these guys won't put together.

Regretfully, there's still fund-raising. Students work full-time all summer and part-time during the year, and they still don't have enough money for tuition. Those very researchers who will be accessing this foundation – we don't want them to be unable to access it because of prohibitive costs just to get to university. Really, it is all part and parcel of it.

I'm supporting it, but I don't want people to ignore the fact that that's just one step. We have to get there in order to access that research. I would bet you that some of the very people who may say, "You know, I can't afford secondary education," are the very ones that may have accessed this and done something very notable for Alberta, maybe for the entire world. We could have been on the map because of that one researcher who maybe couldn't access university because of prohibitive tuition costs.

4:40

I think I've touched on some of this. The advisory council will be an interesting one. I know it only mentions the engineers and agronomists, if I understand this correctly, so I'm hoping that maybe there will be other members from the public that will be on this foundation, that it won't be just political appointees. Of course they're going to be appointed, but the reality is that we hope their focus is on research and what things are going to be valuable for Alberta. I'm sure, just quite sure, almost sure that that will happen.

I hope I made a few points and woke up a few people on a Monday afternoon and made new friends, Madam Speaker. The reality is that I'm glad we're supporting research. We should support it in the humanities as well. Maybe that will be the next opportunity. We can't just be narrowly focused on engineering and science. As much as I support those, there are other disciplines that should be acknowledged as well, and research is just as important in

those areas. Let's look at the whole picture of knowledge and education and research in this province, because it can't just be one single little flagship. It goes together with the whole package. I will support this little piece of the puzzle in hopes that other pieces will come forward. Mind you, we'll have to provide the pieces. I know they'll never be able to put the puzzle together without us.

Madam Speaker, with those few words of support and encouragement from me on Bill 1, I'm pleased to be able to speak to it, and I thank you for that opportunity.

MR. DOERKSEN: Madam Speaker, I too want to speak for a few minutes at second reading of Bill 1. Bill 1, of course, is the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act.

I want to make a couple of compliments, first of all to the Minister of Innovation and Science, who has brought this bill and this concept forward to our government. He should be commended for his foresight. Secondly and just as important is the Alberta Science and Research Authority, which is a group of individuals who are not all politically alike in their beliefs, who gather around the table on a regular basis to provide objective policy advice to the government with respect to research, science, and a whole range of how we can be more effective in this area. So I wanted to make sure, Madam Speaker, that they were acknowledged in the development of this particular fund.

The science and engineering research act, or this fund, is set up similar to the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. Like that fund, Madam Speaker, the beauty of an endowment fund is the fact that it's a fund that keeps on giving; you know, like that rabbit we see on TV, the Duracell battery rabbit, that just keeps on giving. These are funds that keep on giving.

MR. SMITH: Eveready.

MR. DOERKSEN: Is it Eveready? Okay. Well, you know what I'm talking about. I don't watch TV that much, Madam Speaker, so I don't always get these names right, but the concept about giving on a continual basis for a long time in the future as an endowment for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren is what's important.

I think of another fund that does the same thing. It's the heritage foundation for scholarships. I don't think that's the correct name. One of those scholarships is the Alexander Rutherford scholarship, whereby high school students can earn up to \$2,500 over the period of their high school studies to help further their education. The reason I'm bringing this up, Madam Speaker, is I'm pointing out to you the benefits of an endowment, which is what we are talking about here. In the case of the science and engineering fund it's a \$500 million endowment, which will keep on giving for science and engineering research well into the future. That's exactly the same concept that we had in the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research as well as the one where we provide scholarships.

The objects of the foundation, of course, are set out in section 3, where it talks about:

- (a) stimulate research in science and engineering,
- (b) promote effective means of using in Alberta the science and engineering resources available in Alberta,
- (c) support science and engineering research laboratories and related facilities in Alberta,
- (d) promote co-operation in research in science and engineering . . .
- (e) encourage young Albertans to pursue careers in research in science and engineering.

Madam Speaker, the fund is going to be governed by trustees, and the makeup of that group of trustees is set out in section 2. Again,

what you have here is similar to the Alberta Science and Research Authority. You're going to have good-thinking Albertans who are going to sit on this council to provide the expertise, because frankly those of us in this room cannot possibly provide all the necessary expertise and guidance to invest in something of this nature. We need their advice. We need their opinions.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, I want to point out that had it not been for the fiscal policy of this government, this \$500 million fund would never have been possible. By getting our budget under control, our spending under control, by reducing the debt, by putting ourselves in this fiscal position, it made it possible for us to even entertain this fund at this moment, at this time, and it's good for all generations of Albertans into the future. More than that, because of the fiscal policy of this government, I expect we're going to see another \$100 million added to this fund every year for the next five years to increase it to a billion dollars.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I do want to stand and vote my support for Bill 1. Thank you.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I had intended to compliment the minister – and I will do – for bringing this forward at this time, because it's long, long overdue that some moneys be spent in this manner in this province.

I will have to pick up from where my hon. colleague from Red Deer-South left off and beg to differ in some small manner. This government continually believes that they saved this province single-handedly from this destruction of overspending. In fact, if those that are old enough to remember 1989 will recall, there was an election that year. It was one Laurence Decore, who was honoured today by some expenditure of some funds to further the education of young people in leadership. That man was the one that held the wallet and said: this should not be the way. The current government of the day was overexpending. This government takes this great pleasure in saying how wonderful that they chopped the budget and were able to be fiscally responsible, as though they were the only people in the entire world that would consider doing that. My kids would say: get out of here.

MR. DOERKSEN: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: A point of order from the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

MR. DOERKSEN: Under citation 23(i), imputing motives. Madam Speaker, in my address, if it was not clear to the member of the opposition, I was not giving credit to the government solely. It was the fiscal policies of this government, which were accepted by the people. In fact, they rose to the occasion. They were the ones who helped us through and were the ones that were responsible for us to be able to achieve for all of Alberta what we have been able to achieve in this province. It's not due to the people in this room. It's due to the people of Alberta. I want to make sure that that's clear.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order, hon. member.

MR. WHITE: Madam Speaker, I presume that the Speaker and the Clerk are taking note of my valuable time being used for this non point of order. Quite frankly, this wasn't even a clarification. This would be called an interruption. That's all. In fact, he agreed with

what I said. He in fact said that all he did was say that the government provided the opportunity for the government's largesse to put this fund into place, and I was taking umbrage with that. That's all. In fact, I was just using his very words and taking the same position that he was. I presume that the time that has been allotted for this pointless point of order, this disorderly order would be taken off.

4:50

THE ACTING SPEAKER: There is no point of order. What happened is exactly what I said a few minutes ago. This particular stage of the bill is to go over the principle of the bill. If you veer off too much from the actual bill and what is in the bill, then this type of thing results.

So let us move on with the contents of Bill 1, hon. member.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. WHITE: Thank you. Speaking to the principle of the bill, that which brought this bill to this point was that the government in their largesse thought: yes, it's a good time to put some money into this. Personally, I think it is a bad time to take money out of science and technology at any point in this province of Alberta that relies on that and that alone.

Think of the industries that we rely on. The oil and gas industry has in fact financed this government to be able to come to this point. In '93 it wasn't a major expenditure problem. The problem was that the price of oil was down to the extent that we could not continue to spend as we had spent. In fact, to get to this point, this is the area in this part of the world that requires a continual and a continuity of expenditure. You don't just sort of add water and stir in the science and technology area and crank it up and turn out people and have them research in any one area without a sustained effort. Cutting the universities down in the interim – what do they call the number of members that sat in the back row there, Mr. Minister? I can't recall the name.

MR. SMITH: The good guys.

MR. WHITE: They were the ones. It was the good guys in the back row. That's what it was. At the time it seemed their single purpose was to chop and cut and chop and cut and chop and cut. Now, of course, we've moved. [interjection] Yes. Only the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has remained true to the principle. He still is a chop-and-cut guy.

Now we have the current minister, who says: whoa; turn around here. A major turnaround. Personally, I'm really happy he has seen the light. I am more than happy. I'm ecstatic that he has seen the light to pour money into this area of this society that so sorely needs it. In fact, I've heard him speak on the subject, and he speaks quite eloquently and quite knowledgeably about this particular area of endeavour that is truly a place for government to be. Private enterprise simply cannot fund nor should it be expected to be able to fund fundamental research. Not the applied research, not that which we generally see the products of, but the fundamental research.

Being an engineer myself, I have a little difficulty with the title being: science and engineering. My view of engineering is the application of those elements of science that come together in a creative fashion that can be put to some practical use economically. That is one version of a definition of engineering. In fact, engineering in this province has done very, very well. Engineering in fact can do and does do a great deal of research on their own. I speak of the oil industry, which does it exceedingly well. But what they don't do well is that fundamental research, that research that goes right to the heart of matter and its relationship to other matter and the

movement of that matter and the discovery of what makes the substance react to various temperatures and other conditions.

The policy I would think would have been better applied to the universities. I have a number of questions that relate to that. Why would a foundation be necessary when we have two universities that in so many areas are pushing the envelope of knowledge in all areas of research and are grossly underfunded and have been grossly underfunded for a number of years in the undergrad area as well as the graduate area? This financing would speak to fundamentally the graduate area, I would think, but with a graduate area that has a substantial expenditure of public funds in the acquisition of that fundamental knowledge, what it does do, speaking to the questions raised by the Member for Red Deer-South, is it inspires those minds. It inspires those minds when you have that kind of research going on close at hand and you're a young university student that has arrived at a place where the world opens up. All of a sudden you find that there are some areas of science that are just blossoming right before your eyes, right there where the knowledge of three or four people in a particular area of science are world renowned.

All through my career and up to the mid-70s and right into the '80s that was occurring in both our major universities to a great extent. Then we had the '92 plunge. We collectively – I was part of that too – packed off a great deal of those that had pushed out the envelope of human knowledge. Yes, you don't see an immediate action and reaction from any of that knowledge, but a great deal of the development and assembling of that knowledge in an order that can be functionally used comes from that.

Now, you'll note that one of the first and best computer science labs in all of Canada and all of northwest United States – I believe California was leading the charge at the time. In Canada this university here, a mile and a half from where we stand, had in the '60s, in '63-64, a fabulous school. It grew, and it turned out some very, very good scientists that have gone all over the world. In fact, today we have right in this city a development of software that is being marketed the world over. I can think of two pieces of software right now that are delivering service to the world in the way of software development. That comes from expenditure – when? – not last week, not last year, but it's a sustained application of a principle that says that a government is responsible for developing that fundamental of science because business simply is unable to do it.

They cannot sustain it. They'd love to. They would love to be able to sustain a push in an area for 20 years, to have it to fruition, but a board of directors simply is not going to put up with that, nor should they be expected to put up with that. Pushing out that envelope in engineering requires studying a finite element. Now, how can you study the finite elements in the telecommunication industry, say, of pushing that envelope of fibre optics, the capacity of fibre optics? No firm can manage that. Bell Canada cannot manage it. It manages a great deal but cannot manage it all. In fact, it takes an AT&T, Bell Canada, Bell international to fund some of that research in one or two centres in the world.

Now, if you have that breadth of knowledge, as we did have in this centre in Edmonton, then this university would have received a great deal of those funds. As it was, in that particular area we did not. This particular university as well as the University of Calgary receives a good deal of funds from the oil business and rightly so, because they're pushing the envelope in the areas of downhole drilling, directional drilling, and directional recovery. All of that has just blossomed, because we have the experimental areas and deep-hole drilling here in the province of Alberta, and we discovered that. There were, in large measure, some exceptionally good science and research people at both universities. In fact there are areas of

marketing and agricultural marketing and those related areas in Lethbridge that are just ablossom.

5:00

This government seemed to be in the game a little late but strongly in the game with this bill, putting up half a billion dollars, soon, I hear, could be adding more. An endowment fund to turn off, say, 10 percent of \$50 million a year, is a very, very good fund. The application of that fund leads to a number of questions, fundamental questions, and a policy statement. In what areas of science and technology, if you will, and applied engineering does this government see the potential expansion? You can't just sort of throw the money out and say: well, we're going to throw it out there and decide that we're going to be all things to all people. It has to be targeted, and it's very, very fine targeting to target those areas that (a) we have some strength in currently, because you can't build on nothing, and (b) that there's going to be a long-term need.

I've heard this province talk about the smart society. I've heard so many eloquent speeches from politicians and academics alike on all of the these areas, but I have yet to see an itemized list that says these are the areas that precisely we should be spending substantial dollars on. Now, it may be early for that discussion with the bill at its current stage, but it is very, very late in the discussion as it relates to all the universities and the furtherance of knowledge-based industry in this province.

I have to wonder: what is AOSTRA's or any of the current government/industry-supported agencies' relationship to this fund? ARC: how does the Research Council relate to it? As I understood it, the Research Council at one time was supposed to be pushing the envelope. But in recent years, as I understand it, they have been more on the application side, the side to take some science that comes out of the university or comes out of the industry to commercialize, as it were, that science. Well, that is a very, very narrow area, and it is an area that is easily supported – no, not easily. It is much easier to support from a business perspective than the fundamental research. I would like to know what areas this application of perhaps in the order of \$50 million a year will go to.

I would like to know why we would set up an International Board of Review before knowing what areas one would be targeting specifically, because, quite frankly, the peer review is standard practice in a publication from any noted university. This act would appear to reinvent the wheel, as it were, or develop another similar wheel to do the same thing as all universities do as a matter of course. I have little difficulty understanding why it's needed under this plan, but I'm at a loss to understand why this Legislature wouldn't say that we need and have to direct the universities through the Department of Learning – it's called now – and advanced education to fund universities globally. It seems to me that this ministry wishes to have a micromanagement control on how the moneys are spent in these areas.

Well, politicians come and go. Policies come and go. This member would assume that if you do believe in long-term, sustained funding at a reasonable level in these areas, after you've chosen these areas, this is a long-term plan, and you can't move in and out at the whim of the government of the day. This member would much prefer that the magnitude of these moneys be spent and invested in a university as a whole with perhaps some assistance and some direction through appealing to the board of governors or the senate, as it were, of the university to apply these extra funds to these areas of expanding that envelope. Obviously this argument has not won out, if it was ever made in caucus. Quite frankly, it's disappointing. Looking around at the makeup of this House and the number of graduates that did come from the two universities in the



province of Alberta, you would have thought that the arguments would have been made to have this funding be brought along as the budget allowed, following this government's principle.

MR. SMITH: Did you say two universities, Lance?

MR. WHITE: I'm sorry. The two universities that house engineering and science research. There are a number of other universities, of course, in other areas that are growing rapidly and are doing a fantastic job but not in the areas of the applied sciences and the expanding of that envelope that I spoke about earlier.

Madam Speaker, I'd again reaffirm this member's commitment and a compliment to the minister for bringing this forward at this time and wish him well in the application of this. If this member can be of some assistance in the establishment of the advisory council of which he speaks or the International Board of Review, not directly, of course, but certainly with some further assistance in that regard, this member would certainly not be adverse to adding that assistance anywhere it can be put, because this is a very, very important part of the expansion of this wonderful province where we live.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 1, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act. I compliment the Member for Edmonton-Calder for his communication skills. I know as a trained engineer and practising professional that he's certainly one of the most eloquent engineers I've ever had the pleasure to hear from. I know he views his skills humbly and only his work in progress, but he continues to add interesting thoughts to the debate. Even though a point of order would bring him back to cause on this bill, it's a good job.

If I can speak briefly, Madam Speaker, to the bill, the principles and the buildup behind it. In 1993 the economy of Alberta was characterized at about \$73 billion in gross domestic product. It had roughly 8.3 percent unemployment. Investment was declining. There was a concern that the overwhelming engine of government spending was going to further curtail growth in the private sector and that there needed to be a time when there was a much better and a more favourable balancing of both investment and, actually, the partnerships that exist between the private sector and government.

5:10

From that period, Madam Speaker, the private sector took the bit between their teeth. They were able to react, as the Member for Red Deer-South correctly has pointed out, through a consensus procedure and an ability to move into a growth mode to capitalize on the great strengths that are in this province and actually move the gross domestic product up to this year where it is forecast to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion to \$103 billion. That's enough additional economic activity, production of goods and services, to equal another Saskatchewan, to equal another Manitoba. In fact, we are three and a half to four times larger than the other two prairie provinces. At that time, of course, we have seen some really interesting examples of job creation, knowledge enhancement, and some liberal descriptions of how to stimulate the knowledge industry.

One that comes to mind that was in vogue earlier, Madam Speaker, was the scientific research and tax credit program. That basically led to a tremendous amount of money wasted in the

system, in the private sector throughout Canada. In fact, it did more to turn lawyers and accountants into scientists and engineers as opposed to bright young minds and keen students.

Also, most recently we have seen the billion dollar boondoggle of the Human Resources Development department in Ottawa, that seems to be a direct reflection of some Liberal policy from the Alberta Liberals, where in fact they deal with over 70,000 accounts across Canada. Poor accounting, poor audit, direct job infusion. Basically, money wasted. It did nothing to promote the overall growth in the body of knowledge.

As we went through this, Madam Speaker, there was a tremendous interest in the government of Alberta to continue and to build on already strong spending in the science and research area but also to build the spending on an appropriate infrastructure and to put it into a place where in fact it had concrete and substantial results. If one were to view the first pass of the Tax Review Committee of two years ago and the standing policy committee of this government, we did also look at tax credits. We realized that in today's world, tax credits were not the way to go. In fact, there was a tremendous amount of work being done by an economist out of Stanford by the name of Paul Romer, who has flipped the theory of diminishing marginal returns over and said: now in today's value-creation world, once you spend a hundred million dollars on developing software, the next copy is 10 cents and the next copy after that is 9 cents. In fact, the principle is working absolutely in reverse of traditional industries.

We know how important the sector is just when we look at the activity of the stock markets over the last four months. The Dow-Jones, which is basically an amalgam of stocks in a broad economic array, has actually lost about 10 percent in value, Madam Speaker. If you look at the NASDAQ, the stock market where it is a reflection of Internet technology stocks, the very market where the principles of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act applies, you can see that it has held its own. It's down, I think, 140 points today, but it still holds close to around 5,000.

What we've seen is a government's attention to a private-sector need. For example, Madam Speaker, you will see Nortel Networks, that generally employs probably in the neighbourhood of 75 to 80 percent of all electrical engineers graduating in this province, at one time 100 percent of all the electrical engineers at the masters level and 100 percent of all of the ones at the PhD level. So we needed that infrastructure. Being fortunate enough to represent the University of Calgary, we were at an opening of the communication and technology building. There was a tremendous amount of excitement around that university, not only for this bill, of course, but for a terrific move that was supported by the minister of technology and led by the former minister of what was known as advanced education doubling the amount of engineering and computer science grads out of that facility.

So there's a tremendous amount of interest, a tremendous amount of attention, and a tremendous amount of resources being deployed by this government, these active, thinking members of this government, toward that knowledge sector and the development of jobs, jobs that can take place in Rocky Mountain House or Lacombe or Stettler. In fact, in the area I'm responsible for, Madam Speaker, there are a number of technically trained individuals working right out of your constituency today, and we know that that process will continue and that they'll continue to add not only value but jobs and a level of disposable income to that community.

So, Madam Speaker, from that genesis emerged the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act. A farsighted minister who knew that he would rather have events last for a long time rather than himself and have the legacy speak rather

than the re-election took a chance and went to caucus, went through a long process that engendered consensus amongst members of the academic faculty in Alberta, the chancellors of universities, Eric Newell of the University of Alberta and Ted Newell of the University of Calgary, the presidents, Howard Tennant, Terry White, Rod Fraser, of the university community, all great supporters of this bill.

I have a wonderful note from the president of the University of Calgary saying what an important legacy this is to the University of Calgary and more particularly to its students, whom it serves well. It serves in a process of education where we can put money forward to the infrastructure that has been constructed over the last number of years and where science and engineering research should actually take place, and, Madam Speaker, that's right in the universities.

So in fact this government is celebrating its infrastructure. It's celebrating its university infrastructure. It realizes the good work they have done to promote good, solid education and to promote an ability for Albertans to leap into the new economy proficiently, well trained, and with a great deal of expertise.

So it's certainly not hard to support this bill. It's certainly a clear recognition why this government values education, values growth in research and infrastructure, in fact can take a lot of research and knowledge from this and apply it directly to farms in the agriculture sector and to the petrochemical sector, the sectors that are not just in Calgary and Edmonton but are in fact located throughout rural Alberta, throughout Alberta in various places. I think it's a terrific, farsighted move that is not only going to be held as a legacy for the leader of this government but for each and every member in this government as they've participated in its development and emergence over the past two years.

I know that the minister will continue to do good work to ensure the success of this, to be able to shed some of the old-time thinking, some of the cloisters that exist in research and development inside government today. For example, I hear there is great action being planned for the Alberta Research Council. Being able to put it in a

more private-sector setting, Madam Speaker, would allow it to capitalize on new innovations quickly and effectively and to be able to move into the forefront of the marketplace.

So, Madam Speaker, I really want to commend the people who put together this bill, who look at the importance of balancing a long-term program of research and science and engineering and directing it to the discovery of new knowledge. I think that's a great testimony to everybody, opposition, government members, all who have been involved in this bill, and knowing that members will want to be as prolific in their praise as I have been, in view of the hour, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that we adjourn debate for the balance of this afternoon.

5:20

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we call it 5:30 and that we reconvene this evening at 8 in Committee of Supply.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with the motion by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. The Assembly stands adjourned until 8 this evening, when it will reconvene in subcommittee.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:21 p.m.]