

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 21, 2000**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 00/03/21

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O Lord, grant us a daily awareness of the precious gift of life which You have given us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here signed by 206 people from the Blackfalds, Bowden, Bashaw, Red Deer, Olds, Rocky Mountain House, Lacombe, Mirror, Delburne, Innisfail, and Torrington areas, and they are petitioning the government of Alberta “to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system].”

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present to the Assembly this afternoon. It is signed by over 200 residents. They’re from Red Deer, Vegreville, Mundare, Innisfree, Willingdon, Two Hills, Didsbury, Carstairs, Eckville, Innisfail, and Peers. These citizens of Alberta “petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.”

Thank you.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 302 Albertans from Slave Lake, Grande Prairie, Widewater, Canyon Creek, Woking, and Fairview that states:

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

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition supporting public health care in Alberta, urging “the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.” This is on behalf of 252 Alberta residents from Lac La Biche, St. Paul, Ashmont, Myrmam, Fort Saskatchewan, Redwater, Bruderheim, and the town of Gibbons.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, sir. I have the pleasure today to present a petition on behalf of 238 people, all from Edson and area. They “urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.”

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am presenting a petition signed by 200 people from Rocky Mountain House who are urging “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 today to present a petition signed by 200 Albertans primarily from Edmonton-Glengarry constituency. This was a petition they drew up for themselves where they state:

We believe, after careful assessment of all the information available on this matter, that this legislation will have far reaching, destructive consequences for all of us and all of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition signed by 170 residents of Red Deer, Innisfail, Jasper, Stettler, Rimbey, Bluffton, Calmar, and Bowden urging the government “to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system].”

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a petition into the Assembly today. It’s been signed by 248 residents coming from Red Deer, Lacombe, Sylvan Lake, Bowden, Didsbury, Carstairs, Peers, Mundare, Vegreville, and Innisfail. These Albertans are joining with other Albertans and petitioning the Assembly “to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.”

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of 307 Albertans from Lethbridge, Coaldale, Water Valley, Cochrane, Black Diamond, Claresholm, Stavely, and Taber to submit a petition. They “petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system].”

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with 175 signatures on it. Residents from Rimbey, Red Deer, Innisfail, Huxley, Luzan, Gibbons, Hinton, Edson, Cold Lake, St. Paul, and Lac La Biche are all urging the government “to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system].”

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to table this petition signed by 396 Albertans from Hinton, Edmonton, Donnelly, Falher, Girouxville, McLennan, Blackfalds, Westlock, Lethbridge, Canmore, and Leduc. The petitioners request this Assembly “to pass a Bill banning private for-profit hospitals in Alberta so that the integrity of the public, universal health care system may be maintained.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented on March 16 against 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.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would ask that the petition I presented regarding the undermining 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.

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

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

THE CLERK:

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

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I request that the petition which I presented to the Assembly yesterday urging the government to stop destroying our public health care system 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 Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd request that the petition standing on the Order Paper under my name now be read and received.

Thank you.

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-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to ask that the petition I tabled the other day 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. leader of the third party.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented yesterday 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.

head: Notices of Motions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Written Question 9.

I am also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 11, 12, and 23.

Thank you.

1:40

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to table the Treasury ministry business plan, 2000-2003. It shows that the goals are very clear, maintaining Alberta's healthy position at a level that's sustainable and continuing to ensure that the people of this province enjoy the strongest fiscal advantage of any province in the country and also maintains very clearly that we'll continue our award-winning tradition of being open and accountable by making sure Albertans have all the accounting fully available to them of our financial goals and performance.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to table today five copies of a recent Fraser Institute study. This compares all provinces and federal budgets from '95 to '99. It shows very clearly that Alberta received top marks, leading all provinces and the federal government in overall fiscal performance. It points very clearly to Alberta's prudent approach to budgeting and that it's working. It says that Alberta scored top marks: 77.9, top rank on the classification of tax rates and revenue. When it comes to debt management, under debt and deficit marks – as I've said, we scored overall top marks in everything, and in this particular category we scored a perfect 100.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings. The first one: in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I'm pleased to table five copies of a letter addressed to Ms Charlene Hay, who is co-ordinator of the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, congratulating NAARR for its commitment to addressing issues of discrimination.

Secondly, I'm also pleased to table an information bulletin from Alberta Community Development encouraging all Albertans to speak out against discrimination. As I'm sure all members are aware, today, March 21, is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and it's the 11th anniversary of that day in Canada.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I will be tabling five copies of a document entitled Supporting Safe, Secure & Caring Schools in Alberta. This will provide administrators and educators with a comprehensive framework to deal with and prevent violence in schools.

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

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a letter I sent to A-Channel today, pointing out some concerns with respect to the nature of the recent poll on Bill 11.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the March 14 editorial of the *High River Times*. The editorial lead is Bill 11 Is Far from the Devil in Disguise. The editor advises, "Before High Riverites buy into the hysteria mounting around this legislation, we suggest they read it themselves" and see what it really means.

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. members, all of my cautions with respect to tablings and reports today will apply the same opportunity for others to editorialize.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This information speaks for itself, so it really doesn't require editorial comment. I'm going to table with the Assembly five copies of a meeting with representatives of the Auditor General's office on March 23, 1995. It was a presentation between the Auditor General and representatives of the Alberta Treasury Branch regarding West Edmonton Mall financing, and curiously this particular presentation was not discussed in the Auditor General's special audit report on West Edmonton Mall.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling this afternoon as well. It's from Mr. Keith Purdy, who is the president of CUPE local 8 and a concerned citizen, who indicates that he is requesting that the government "stop Bill 11 now and protect universal medicare. Listen to the public and perform your public duty to speak for the people."

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour of this day to eliminate racism I'd like to table two different documents, which I have found helpful and I hope others do. The first is an article, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, by Peggy McIntosh.

The second is an article from the multicultural community project called Working With People With Differences.

Thank you.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of a newspaper from the Edmonton Police Service.

It's called *Community Connections*, and it outlines a number of things that can really happen in a great way when there's real consultation with community.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling a letter to Genesis Land Development that outlines concerns around the Spray Lakes proposed development in Kananaskis Country. This letter is written by Laureen Wright of Calgary, but in addition to that it is signed by 17 other concerned citizens in Calgary who would also like to express their concern about the proposed development in Kananaskis Country and share that concern with the government.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a letter from Mr. Keith Purdy, president of CUPE local 8, and he is expressing his concern about health care and the direction it is going in this province.

The second letter is a letter I received through freedom of information, and it is entitled Rotting Government Approved Pine Shakes. I was delighted to receive this last year.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, if a tabling has been made once, it need not be repeated.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings, if you will. The first is from Peter Nettleton of Calgary, and he is a fellow graduate engineer of long standing, 47 years in the oil and gas business. He starts off a letter to the Premier: "As my M.L.A.," so this is directed primarily at the Premier. He is most adamant in his letter that he is categorically against any further development in the Spray Lakes resort in Kananaskis Pathways Corporation and the Mount Sparrowhawk heli/cat skiing operation. He strongly objects to both developments there.

The other one is also directed to the Premier. It is from Nancy Hansen of the city of Calgary. She also strongly objects to the Spray Lakes development as it concerns our "endangered species," "wildlife movement," "the impact on the ecology" in the region, and particularly "Canmore's drinking water."

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two tablings here. The first one is a letter from Dr. William Olsen, professor emeritus of nuclear physics at the University of Alberta. He's expressing his opposition to Bill 11 and calls on the Premier to call a plebiscite on the bill before proceeding with it.

The second letter, Mr. Speaker, is from Fairview, signed by 10 residents of Fairview also opposed to Bill 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a program from the celebration of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha by the Legislative Assembly yesterday. The constituency of Edmonton-Glengarry is the home of two very active mosques, and

we would like to thank them for their participation in yesterday's celebration and congratulate them on the feast of Eid al-Adha.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I'm tabling today two letters, one dated March 15, 2000, and one dated March 20, 2000, received from the Ethics Commissioner indicating that he will not be investigating the matter referred to him by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 29 enthusiastic grade 7 students from the H.A. Kostash school from Smoky Lake. Accompanying them are teachers Mr. Denis Harris and Mrs. Phyllis Sadoway and parent helper Mrs. Delores Jarema. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Merci, M. le President. C'est un honneur et un plaisir pour moi cet apres-midi de vous presenter 15 etudiants de la province de Quebec, de la ville de Pohenegamook. Ils sont ici en echange a l'ecole F.G. Miller de Elk Point. Ils sont accompagnes aujourd'hui par un professeur et sa dame, M. et Mme Guy Genest.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 30 students and seven adults. Of these 30 students, 15 are from the F.G. Miller junior and senior high school in Elk Point. They are accompanied today by two teachers, Mrs. Lily Pentek and Mrs. Cheri Lindquist, also by bus driver Mr. Laverne Wilson, and by two parent supervisors, Mrs. Doris Wilson and Mrs. Zapesocki. The other 15 students are visitors from Quebec from the community of Pohenegamook. They are accompanied today by one teacher and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Genest. The students are exchange students with the F.G. Miller high school in Elk Point. They are seated in the public gallery. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome from all the Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 31 members of a tour that has been organized by the professional businessmen's club called the Probus Club of Edmonton. Their tour leader is Mr. Holmes. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly four students that are with us today from Wye school. Their names are Sharnell O'Donnell, Brett Keith, Amanda Malowski, and a grade 2 student Daniel O'Donnell. All students are stars at Wye school and are accompanied today by the father of two of the students, a man who distributes the famous Hygaard Fine Foods across the world, Mr. Rick O'Donnell. If they would please rise, then we could show our appreciation for their attendance.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal Party of Canada is the only political party that has an Aboriginal People's Commission within its party framework. Last Thursday at the national convention in Ottawa a new executive for the Aboriginal People's Commission was elected. Aboriginal convention delegates elected four prominent aboriginal Albertans, and it gives me great pleasure to introduce them to you and through you and to members of the Assembly today.

The new national co-president is Mrs. Irene Morin. The new national vice-president of finance is Mr. Garry Parenteau. The national vice-president of women is Ms Martha Campiou. The new national vice-president for communications is Robert Coulter. Also joining the new executive is Phillip Campiou, a photographer from Cree First Nations, and Brad Enge, president of the Alberta Aboriginal People's Commission for the Liberal Party of Canada. Mr. Enge is also the director of the indigenous law program at the University of Alberta. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine and a good friend to many of my colleagues. She is a senior member of the Edmonton women's Liberal policy association, an active member in the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods, an active member in the federal constituency of Edmonton Southeast, and just recently back from a fun-filled weekend at the federal convention. I would ask that Heather Rempel please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm please to introduce 37 very special visitors from Edmonton-Highlands, all of them seated in the public gallery. They are members of Club 55 and are accompanied by their president, Roy Matvie; by their group leader, Edward Sharun; and helper Joseph Wasylchuk. This seniors' club was established in 1979 and is involved in community building projects and seniors' recreational activities. They have donated thousands of hours of their time and their dollars in support of many charitable organizations. They've all participated in the Alberta Seniors Games since 1980 and have won many medals. I'll request that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

### Regional Health Authorities

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1997 the Premier promised Albertans that the boards for regional health authorities would be elected, but they were reappointed instead, one of this Premier's broken promises. More proof is reported in a number of recent polls, which show that Albertans just don't trust this Premier anymore on health care. My question today is to the Premier. Given that the Premier broke his promise to elect regional health boards, why should Albertans believe you on Bill 11?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it wasn't a broken promise. It was a

postponement based on requests from various regional health authorities who were simply in the midst of restructuring. The election of two-thirds of the board will take place in conjunction with the next municipal elections.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: was this postponement in the election of regional health authorities so that the appointed boards could follow through with the initiation of contracts for private hospitals?

MR. KLEIN: No. It was done so that they could complete their work mapping out pathways to health in the various authorities in the various regions, Mr. Speaker. Most of them have completed their work and are now prepared to face the challenge of elections in conjunction with the next municipal elections.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier admit that the appointment of the RHA boards was necessary to implement this hidden agenda of privatization of the public health system?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, you know, I'm very disappointed with the tone and the language of the particular question.

I will take the hon. member back to The Rainbow Report. One of the very specific recommendations in The Rainbow Report was that there be the regionalization of health authorities. Mr. Speaker, there were something like 200 various health boards and health authorities in this province. Very few of them were elected. As a matter of fact, about 99 percent of them were appointed boards.

We have said that there will be elected boards. Two-thirds of the members will be elected for each of the 17 authorities in conjunction with the next municipal elections. Most of the authorities, if not all, have completed their pathways to health, and now it's time to get on with the elections.

THE SPEAKER: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Private Health Services

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans learned that they couldn't trust this Premier on his promises on the expansion of the Alberta special waste treatment plant, and they know they can't trust him on his promises about Bill 11 either. The Premier promised that he would never bring in hazardous waste without consulting with Albertans, but he did. My questions are all to the Premier. How can Albertans trust the Premier on Bill 11, when he broke his promise and did not consult Albertans before importing foreign hazardous waste?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to the importation of waste from other jurisdictions, there were in fact hearings before the Natural Resources Conservation Board, and I made sure that those hearings took place.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, on this issue I quote the Premier on September 3, 1994, when he said: if there was something to hide, we'd do it.

Will he answer this question? Will the Premier admit that he has no more intention of keeping foreign private hospitals out of Alberta than he did about keeping foreign hazardous waste out of Alberta? Another broken promise.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, when this bill is passed, the Alberta Health Care Protection Act, when it becomes law, I will obey the

law. I have a sworn oath and a duty to obey the law. I would hope that they will too.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, when the Premier broke his word on the waste treatment plant, why should Albertans believe that he is ever going to keep his word on Bill 11 or that they should believe anything he says on this bill?

MR. KLEIN: I never broke my word on that particular issue, Mr. Speaker. There were hearings before the Natural Resources Conservation Board.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans learned that they couldn't trust the Premier on Swan Hills, and they know that they can't trust him on Bill 11 either. On Swan Hills the Premier prepared a secret communication plan in January 1993 to keep the \$100 million loan guarantee to Bovar under wraps until after the election. On Bill 11 the Premier's secret communications plan consists of these blank pages that he is withholding from Albertans. My questions are to the Premier. Why should Albertans trust this Premier on Bill 11 when they couldn't trust him on Swan Hills?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have any letter from any Albertans relative to any decisions vis-a-vis Swan Hills in 1993 saying that they didn't trust me on this issue. Relative to the importation of waste from jurisdictions other than Alberta, there were hearings before the Natural Resources Conservation Board, a board, by the way, that was set up under my ministry when I was minister of the environment.

Now, if you want talk about honesty in the distribution of a publication, this publication, this bill has been sent to every household in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. That is open and honest, and as I've said before in this House, a bill that purports to become law is the most important document that one can consider in this Legislative Assembly. That's being open and honest.

MS LEIBOVICI: Why doesn't the Premier just admit that Bill 11 is a front being used to hide private hospitals, just like this secret communications plan was to hide the truth behind the Swan Hills loan guarantee?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is hardly a secret plan. I mean, this is hardly a secret plan. It's only gone out to 3 million people in the province. There is nothing secret about this. This is open. It's honest. It's straightforward. The only thing secretive and sinister is the malicious and vicious campaign of misinformation being conducted by the Liberals.

MS LEIBOVICI: Will the Premier stop hiding behind Bill 11 and table the true action plan, the one that was developed by his Public Affairs Bureau that sets up private hospitals in this province that you will not release the details on? You have the authority to release those details, you and the minister of health do. Why don't you just do it, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is the plan. There is nothing more; there is nothing less. This is the plan. Read it. Understand it.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More evidence of Alber-

tans' overwhelming opposition to Bill 11 came out last night when a poll was released showing that Albertans opposed the bill by a margin of 3 to 1. Meanwhile, despite massive public opposition to the bill and despite the fact that two constitutional lawyers have shown that Bill 11 violates the Canada Health Act, the federal Liberals sit idly by allowing this government to push arrogantly forward. My questions are to the Premier. If the opposition of churches, seniors, nurses, doctors, labour groups, and now a new poll which shows overwhelming popular opposition to Bill 11 won't make this Premier blink, then Albertans are asking today: what will it take for the Premier to blink?

MR. KLEIN: Certainly I'm not going to blink on a poll that was faulty in its questions, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has tabled a letter sent to Chris Duncan, the news director of A-Channel, whereby he complains, quite rightfully so, about the questions that were posed.

A specific example:

Question #4 in your news release with respect to Albertans having an option to pay extra for faster service implies that such an option would be available under Bill 11. This is absolutely [false and] inaccurate. Bill 11 [specifically] prohibits anyone from paying to get faster service and prohibits anyone from receiving payment to provide faster service. The Bill contains harsh penalties for anyone contravening this provision of the legislation.

Again, that shows how faulty the question was. I mean, I would be concerned if it were implied that that was in the bill. It's not in the bill. Quite the opposite is true, Mr. Speaker.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, as usual the Premier blames the Albertan for asking the question.

Rather than withdrawing Bill 11 now, why is the Premier waiting for the federal Liberals to get a spine transplant before they respond to his request when two constitutional lawyers have already convincingly argued that Bill 11 violates the Canada Health Act?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, when you get more than one lawyer on a case, there are going to be some differences of opinion. The person whose opinion really matters is the federal Minister of Health, who is responsible for the administration of the Canada Health Act. As it pertains to the Canada Health Act, the federal minister is responsible for the administration of that act, and we have asked him. I'll be speaking to the Prime Minister in Calgary later this week to ask the same question, to see if we can get clarification relative to the bill, which has been sent to the minister, as to whether or not it contravenes the Canada Health Act.

That's all we want to know: yes or no. If the answer is yes, then what do we need to do to fix it? That's all.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier using the federal Liberals, then, as an excuse when citizens here in Alberta are demanding that this bill be withdrawn now?

MR. KLEIN: No, that isn't quite true, Mr. Speaker. When you pose a question to Albertans that implies that you can get faster service by paying extra, yes, that creates concerns. That is wrong, because the bill prohibits that, quite specifically prohibits that. The bill prohibits and proposes to levy very harsh penalties for people who charge extra.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is in the bill that purports to become law. The law is the truth.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

2:10

## Diabetes Treatment

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been asked by constituents to investigate the need for broader coverage of diabetic supplies. Since these supplies are important in the management of the disease and in avoiding the costly complications associated with diabetes and since our government is placing an emphasis on wellness and the prevention of illness, it seems appropriate to consider expanding coverage to 100 percent of diabetes medication and supplies to diabetes patients. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: is Alberta Health and Wellness considering extending Alberta's coverage as part of the provincial strategy regarding diabetes?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

That's too short an answer for the tradition of the Assembly, so I would like to elaborate just a little bit. We are working with the Alberta Medical Association and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research to develop an expanded program and make sure the proper clinical practice guidelines and other protections are in place. Yes, we are expanding the program.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you for that good news.

To the same minister: how does the level of coverage Alberta provides compare to that of other provinces?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think our overall coverage for kidney dialysis is very important. Of course, one of our emphases is on trying to prevent diabetic conditions from being developed in individuals across the province through health promotion activities related to diabetes.

In direct answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, I think we can indicate on behalf of the Alberta health system that they rank in the top third of the provinces in this nation. We want to be number one, but certainly in the number of people that we serve and the costs that are associated with being diabetic in terms of monitoring devices and so forth, our coverage goes far beyond what is deemed to be medically required under the Canada Health Act. As I said, the coverage compares favourably with the rest of Canada.

MR. JOHNSON: My final question to the same minister: what is the response of Alberta Health and Wellness to the October 1999 position papers of the Canadian Diabetes Association, Alberta and Northwest Territories division?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I do not have committed to memory the provisions of that particular study. However, related to this, through the funding provided under provincewide services in Alberta Health and Wellness's budget, there is additional money for the expansion of kidney dialysis sites across the province.

As I've said before, we have more emphasis on the prevention of diabetes. We have committed some additional \$2.4 million in that area in the budget, so we are certainly making this a priority within our overall program.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

## Private Health Services

(continued)

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have the plan. It's now clear that Bill 11 is all about kicking the doors open to private hospitals in this province. Yesterday the Premier confirmed as much

for Albertans when he tabled a letter from Dr. Dennis Modry. It seems that the only people supporting Bill 11 are the Premier's special interest backers, those who want to build their own private thoracic park in Alberta. My questions are to the Premier. Why should Albertans trust the Premier on Bill 11 when the real blueprint for private hospitals is right here in Dr. Modry's 1996 report? Why should they trust you, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I consider that question and the comments contained in the preamble to be an absolute insult to one of the most renowned heart transplant surgeons in the world, and this member should apologize.

MS OLSEN: I'll table this document for the Premier.

Will the Premier admit that Bill 11 is all about private hospitals when Dr. Modry's report on Building Partnerships in Health Care Restructuring leaves the door open for the deinsurance of services in this province? Why should they trust you, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: This bill in no way, shape, or form speaks to the deinsuring of services. It does speak to the issue, however, of private hospitals. As a matter of fact, section 1, part 1: "No person shall operate a private hospital in Alberta." That will become the law.

MS OLSEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I never thought I'd see it. When will the Premier stop being a puppet for special interests like Dr. Modry and listen to the AMA, the nurses, teachers, seniors, and the majority of Albertans who want this bill pulled?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the majority of Albertans, having read the bill and understanding the bill, want it pulled. The bill protects public health care as we know it today.

In response to this question I have two *Toronto Star* articles and one *Globe and Mail* article that I would like to table and read a couple of sentences from, because they allude to the so-called opposition that the Liberals say is out there against Bill 11. In the first, a public service union employee is quoted. She says, "We are opposed to [the] Bill . . . because it will place health care at the mercy of profit-hungry operators." And the hon. member alluded to that.

The second says:

For better or worse, the health system itself is being fundamentally altered. For most of this century, the trend . . . has been toward more public ownership of the means of health, more public control. [This new law] will permit something quite different to flourish.

Finally – and this in agreement with what the hon. member said – the third is headlined Health Bill May Flout Free Trade Pact, referring to NAFTA and the Canada/U.S. free trade agreement.

Mr. Speaker, they are not talking about Bill 11, quite surprisingly. Oh, no. These articles are from 1988 and 1989, and they are talking about Bill 147, the Independent Health Facilities Act, which was passed in Ontario over 10 years ago. According to the *Globe and Mail* the act gave Ontario the power to regulate, license, and finance private clinics and pay for surgery that was otherwise performed in public hospitals.

Guess who brought in that legislation, Mr. Speaker? Was it some evil Progressive Conservative Party? No. It was a Liberal government, and the health minister who championed this bill was none other than Elinor Caplan, who just happens to be a minister today in the Chretien cabinet along with Allan Rock.

So, Mr. Speaker, all the fears being raised by the Liberals in Alberta and Ottawa today were raised against the Liberals in Ontario

10 years ago. In Ontario the fears have not been borne out. There has been no trouble with NAFTA. So why today are the Liberals in Alberta and in Ottawa attacking Alberta for something the Liberals in Ontario did over 10 years ago?

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

### Child Poverty

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent report by the Inter City Forum on Social Policy stated that there are over 90,000 children living in poverty in urban areas throughout Alberta. In addition, the report stated that in Calgary 1 in 4 children lives in poverty while in Edmonton the number is closer to 1 in 3 children. My question is to the hon. Minister of Children's Services. What is the minister doing to improve the lives of children living in poverty throughout this province?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today in answer to the hon. member's question. We have received the intercity forum report, and we are studying it very carefully, but beyond that the government in the last three years, four years at the most, has implemented the family tax credit, endeavoured to reduce taxes for families, worked with the national agenda on the national child benefit, and provided free health care benefits through the Alberta child health benefit for low-income families. In terms of expanding the early intervention programs, we've moved from \$2 million two years ago to \$21.5 million in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are concerned if any child is hungry at night or if any child lives in poverty, and we are looking very carefully at how we measure poverty and how we improve the lives of families and children, particularly in Alberta.

2:20

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: since this report contained a number of recommendations related to support for low-income families, how will this minister and this government respond to these recommendations, and when will we see some action?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, last October Mrs. Klein chaired the Children's Forum, which also addressed the issues of poverty, and it was Mrs. Klein herself who insisted that poverty come on the agenda as one of the five themes, recognizing that poverty does exist in Alberta.

From that, we saw on February 9 the release of the forum report, which similarly talks about several recommendations. These recommendations, Mr. Speaker, are being taken by all of the partners in the Alberta children's initiative. Every minister is reviewing those recommendations and will no doubt review them in the context as well of the intercity forum report and determine and release later this spring some of the action statements that will be implicit this year and also follow through on our Premier's recommendation and commitment that within the three years following the release of the forum report, we would respond in action or in kind to each one of those recommendations.

So, Mr. Speaker, simply put, we have in fact got an agenda addressing the poverty issue. We've got a plan for it, and that plan will be released later this spring.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Since that same report contained a number of strategies for addressing the

factors common to poverty, what is the minister doing to promote and address these strategies?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, the first comment I would make is that we are ensuring that those Albertans who need support are in fact getting it. I think it's important to advise the member that we're also trying to ensure that other Albertans, then, are given the tools they need to work their way out of poverty.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've said in question period previously that I do have some difficulty with various groups at times in defining poverty. Nevertheless, referring to this report, they do allude to some of the underlying reasons for poverty, and let me address those. One of the characteristics addressed was disability. All of the members here in the House know that assured income for the severely handicapped benefits were increased last fall. We've announced just recently a minister's Employability Council. That council will be providing advice to this government as to how we can work more of the disabled into the workplace.

Another characteristic was lack of education. Again, we're taking action, Mr. Speaker. Training is being provided to welfare clients to enhance their employability. Youth Connections has now spread right across the province. It started here in Edmonton and in Calgary and has now gone throughout the province to help youth make connections to the workplace.

Another characteristic was income support. All of us know and recognize the great strides that the government of Alberta has made with low provincial tax rates, and also the Alberta family employment tax credit has just done wonders for many of these families in providing for their children. The minimum wage was increased. The maintenance enforcement program works to make sure that both parents are providing for the children, and then, of course, we have the shelter allowance.

So the changes that we are making, Mr. Speaker, are based on one simple philosophy: you don't help families get out of poverty by keeping them on welfare.

### **Private Health Services**

*(continued)*

MR. SAPERS: When it comes to Bill 11, Mr. Speaker, this Premier has quite a track record of talking about the truth yet still managing to avoid it. Now, the Premier thinks he can trick Albertans with a propaganda campaign on health care just like he thinks he fooled Albertans about his role in orchestrating the West Edmonton Mall refinancing. Handwritten notes on a February 15, 1994, memo from the Premier to a certain Jim and a certain Ken provide ample evidence of his personal involvement. My questions are to the Premier. How can Albertans believe the Premier about Bill 11 when he didn't come clean about the February 15, 1994, memo, which reveals that he was orchestrating the West Edmonton Mall refinancing right out of his own office?

MR. KLEIN: Everything that was asked for by the Auditor General was provided to the Auditor General in his investigation of this affair, Mr. Speaker. To say that we were trying to hide something or that something was done secretly is absolutely false. It is wrong. It's a mistruth. I know I can't say that it's a lie, but it's close to it if it's not.

If it's about a matter of trust, well, I recall an election in 1993, and the people elected this government because they trusted us. I remember an election in 1997. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? There are now 64 of us in this Legislature, and there are only a few of them. That speaks to the issue of trust. When people elect us to

govern them, they're saying to this party, they're saying to this government that they trust us.

MR. SAPERS: Hang on to those past glories, Mr. Premier. Hang on.

Isn't the real reason that Bill 11 puts the government above the law that the Premier knows that his private hospital scheme, or what he likes to call approved surgical facilities, is destined to end up in court just like the West Edmonton Mall refinancing deal that pumped public money into a private venture? Isn't that what Bill 11 is all about?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the legislation, as I pointed out before and I'll point out again, says that "no person shall operate a private hospital in Alberta." So any reference to private hospitals and the promotion of private hospitals is irrelevant, because the bill proposes to do absolutely the opposite.

I just find that those questions are irrelevant, and I'm going to answer them in that fashion in the future.

MR. SAPERS: How much longer, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier going to continue to deny the truth, shave words, twist language about his private hospital scheme? Are Albertans going to have to drag the truth out of him just like they had to do with West Edmonton Mall?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again the truth is in the bill. Part 1, section 1: "No person shall operate a private hospital in Alberta." Nothing could be clearer than that. The truth again is in the bill, the bill that purports to become law. The law is supreme. If they don't believe in the law, then stand up and say so. When it comes to information, nothing can be clearer – nothing can be clearer – than the bill that has been sent to every household in Alberta. The only misinformation that is being spread is being spread by the Liberals and their cohorts, Mr. Speaker. It's vicious, it's malicious, and it's wrong. It's wrong for them to do it, and they know it. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: With your permission, hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, we'll proceed.

MRS. SOETAERT: Okay.

THE SPEAKER: I'll check with you again later too.

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

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that a year or two ago a group wishing to establish a private, for-profit hospital asked the College of Physicians and Surgeons to accredit their proposed hospital. Can the Minister of Health and Wellness clarify: what is the role, legislated or otherwise, of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in respect of their powers to accredit or reject proposals for private, for-profit hospitals in Alberta?

2:30

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the role of the College of Physicians and Surgeons is one of looking at the proposed services to be offered by a clinic or a surgical clinic or a full-scale hospital and determining whether certain criteria are met with respect to, first of all, the qualification of staff that will be providing those services, with respect to the suitability of the facility to some extent – at least the assurance must be there that the equipment and the resources are available to provide these services – and of course they look at the



whole area of patient safety and the viability of the particular services that are to be offered in that particular facility.

Mr. Speaker, yes, there was a request that went to the College of Physicians and Surgeons from a group known as the Health Resource Group, or HRG. The College of Physicians and Surgeons did consider that particular request.

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: since the College of Physicians and Surgeons has the authority to have said no to the possibility of private, for-profit hospitals, why did the college not make that determination?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, correspondence from the college would indicate, first of all, that initially they were positive towards the application of HRG but purely from the point of view, as I said, of the qualifications of their staff, their capability to offer the services they were proposing to offer. I would like to say that the College of Physicians and Surgeons in this respect were fulfilling their mandate. Their initial determination was that HRG was able to fulfill the requirements of the college with respect to quality controls, et cetera, and qualifications of staff.

However, Mr. Speaker, the college did not proceed with the accreditation of HRG because they were concerned about its place within the public health care system, and they again in their correspondence indicate that this is a responsibility of government to determine. However, as all members of the Assembly know and most acknowledge, we did not anticipate this particular type of proposal in legislation that was passed many years ago. There is a legislative gap or a legislative vacuum in current health care legislation, and we need to fill that gap. We need to have the proper legislation in place so that we can say yes or no through our health care system and through our regional health authorities to proposals of this particular type that come forward. That is, I think, one of the really very, very important reasons for Bill 11 being before the Assembly and its necessity of being passed.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This Premier is spending millions of taxpayer dollars on a propaganda campaign designed to sell the unsellable in this province: private hospitals or approved surgical facilities, if you prefer. Over 60 percent of Albertans polled firmly rejected private hospitals in this province. Phase 1 of the propaganda plan was an absolute failure. It shows that Albertans just don't trust this Premier anymore. My questions are to the Premier. How much more taxpayer money is this Premier going to inject to try to stop Albertans from rejecting Bill 11: \$3 million, \$4 million? How much more money?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is the major campaign, sending out the bill. Nothing could be more open or more honest, more straight-forward than that. We're waiting for the comments of Albertans, and we seek the wisdom and the guidance and the intelligence of Albertans relative to the drafting of this bill.

One thing that is highlighted in the bill is that "no person shall operate a private hospital." "No person shall operate a private hospital."

Mr. Speaker, just to make sure that there's absolute clarification on this matter, there are already – and the Liberals know it, because a number of these clinics were established under the watch of the then health minister, who is now leader of the Liberal Party. There are 47 private surgical clinics now operating in the province of

Alberta. What this bill does is put some fences around them and provide some rules and regulations.

MS BLAKEMAN: Well, my next question is also to the Premier. Given that phase 1 and the truth squads have failed, what's the next step in the propaganda campaign? The ads didn't work. The TV commercials didn't work. What's next? Please share it with us.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is no propaganda campaign. The truth is in the bill. The only propaganda campaign being conducted is being conducted by the Liberal Party. It's a campaign of vicious misinformation, malicious and vicious misinformation, and they should be ashamed of themselves.

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay, Mr. Premier. What other special interest groups does this government have lined up to join in his propaganda campaign for Bill 11? Insurance companies? Private clinic operators? Private home care companies? Who else is lined up, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, hopefully who is lined up are the 3 million good-thinking Albertans, the people we've asked to provide us with their guidance and their intelligence and their wisdom to make sure that the bill is right. The truth is in the bill. The truth will be in the law.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many rural people come to urban centres for surgery in private clinics. Given that fact, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Could the minister explain where these patients go when they have adverse effects to anesthetics?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in clinics across the province the staff, whether it be a dentist or a physician, of course has basic training in first aid and in resuscitation. All the clinics, doctors offices across the province have a protocol or a procedure whereby if there is a difficulty with a surgical procedure of some type, they would be immediately transferred to the nearest emergency facility. That is standard procedure, and such professionals in these clinics, I think, take their responsibility in that regard very seriously and would act accordingly.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. Some rural Albertans have told me that the 12-hour rule for private surgical clinics discriminates against rural patients who must spend money to stay in a motel if they are required to stay away from home. Could the minister tell me if this is true?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not in any way think the existence of surgical clinics discriminates against rural Albertans. It is a fact of life in this province that there is only the economy of scale to have certain highly specialized procedures, whether we're talking about certain types of dental surgery or certain types of cosmetic surgery or if we are talking about major operations – it's only practical to have them centred in cities. I as a rural MLA would like to see urban people come out to centres we can establish in Fairview and Ponoka and other parts of the province, but that is not the current reality.

So with respect to specialized hospital and medical services generally, there are going to be times, particularly when people

travel long distances in this province, when, yes, they do incur an extra cost of having to stay in the urban centres overnight or maybe for several nights.

2:40

MR. MARZ: Again to the same minister: could the minister explain if Bill 11 would change what some people see as a problem for rural Albertans?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would not want to predict where specialized surgical clinics would locate, but I think it has the potential of benefiting rural and urban Albertans by providing for more effective and efficient delivery of specialized surgical facilities and therefore taking the load off our full-service hospitals and utilizing the expertise or the advantage of highly specialized, repetitive, efficient provision of surgical services. So in a general sense I think it would benefit all Albertans, rural and urban.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Private, for-profit health has been proven conclusively to be a bad idea for almost everyone except health care managers and their investors. Nonetheless, this government has made a clear public policy decision, choosing private profit over public interest. To the minister of health: will the minister explain why the overwhelming evidence condemning private health care was rejected out of hand?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the assertion of the member. He does not refer to who has rejected our proposal out of hand. We certainly are offering an alternative through this legislation under very controlled circumstances.

The hon. member says that types of private health care have failed. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was pointed out earlier this afternoon that in Ontario a Liberal government established an independent hospitals act under which, as I understand it, there are four independent surgical centres or hospitals in operation in Ontario. They seem to be providing good service. In fact, the Shouldice clinic is internationally recognized for their expertise in their particular area of surgery.

So, Mr. Speaker, the premise on which the member's question is based is, in my view, faulty as usual, and I do not think he has a point.

MR. WHITE: Perhaps I could rephrase the question for the minister. Would the minister table any reports other than the ones from 1988 that were cited today or any evidence from any source that private, for-profit health care is of net benefit to the citizens of Alberta?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's move across the country then. It has been pointed out in this Assembly before – but in view of the question it bears repeating – that in the province of Manitoba the government of that province continues to contract with four different surgical services. The one in downtown Winnipeg offers quite a comprehensive list of surgical procedures, and the people involved are quoted as saying that this particular surgical centre, the one in Winnipeg, provides good service, that it takes a load off their busy hospitals. They at the moment at least have certainly no plans of changing its role or disbanding it. It's evidently serving the people of Manitoba rather well, and I could work my way across the country. Maybe that's the next question.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, that is not the next question. The question is the same as the first question. Will you as minister of health in the province of Alberta table reports, studies, findings, whether it be from Manitoba or from Ontario or from any province, anywhere in the world, that say conclusively that privately owned hospitals aren't profitable? Would you table something, sir?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do wish to commend the hon. member for getting one of his comments correct, and that is that, yes, we do have private enterprise. We do have private operators operating within our publicly funded, publicly administered health care system across Canada, so that is certainly correct.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we have tabled with this Assembly studies from reputable sources which indicate the potential advantages of certain types of private surgical services being provided in the health care system. Certainly we acknowledge, for instance, that on other issues, such as compliance with NAFTA, where I understand the Canadian Union of Public Employees has hired lawyers to interpret NAFTA, they come up in a negative fashion, so the debate is going on. But I think there is demonstrable evidence across Canada that Canadians and the governments of the various provinces, even the federal government, seem to have found acceptable and viable and worth having, many, many examples of private surgical facilities in the country right now.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, there will be three members' statements today, and we'll begin them a few seconds from now.

#### Francophone Secretariat

MR. DUCHARME: M. le Président, l'an dernier à ce même temps je me levais devant cette Assemblée pour annoncer l'établissement par notre province du Secrétariat Francophone. C'était le début de l'Année Canadienne de la Francophonie, et pour démontrer son appui à la communauté Francophone, notre gouvernement avait décidé de donner à la communauté Franco-Albertaine un porte-parole à l'intérieur du gouvernement par la création du Secrétariat Francophone.

A cause de ce développement majeur l'année 1999 s'inscrit comme une année importante dans les annales de l'histoire des Francophones de l'Alberta. Au cours de l'année les représentants de la communauté m'ont souvent répété combien ce geste a été apprécié et continue d'être apprécié par la communauté. Aussi, je dois faire remarquer que notre gouvernement a reçu des éloges et des félicitations de plusieurs ministres du gouvernement fédéral et de presque tous les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux pour ce geste important.

Depuis quelques années nous marquons partout au Canada la Semaine des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. C'est une initiative pan-Canadienne qui vise à mettre l'accent sur la contribution des Francophones à notre beau pays, le Canada.

Aujourd'hui, à l'invitation du Président de cette Assemblée, nous avons accueilli la communauté Francophone et étions heureux de célébrer avec eux, à la ronde, les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie et le premier anniversaire de l'établissement du Secrétariat Francophone.

Je voudrais terminer en remerciant les deux ministres qui ont été responsables du Secrétariat Francophone au cours de la première année de son existence, le Ministre de Justice, qui a établi le secrétariat, et le Ministre du Développement Communautaire, présentement responsable pour ce secrétariat, de leur appui et de leur support dans mon travail comme président du secrétariat.

[Translation] A year ago at this time I was happy to stand before this Assembly to speak on the occasion of the establishment of the Francophone Secretariat. It was the beginning of the Canadian Year of the Francophonie, a year dedicated to the celebration of our French-Canadian heritage, and our government had agreed to give our Franco-Albertan community a voice within government through the creation of a Francophone Secretariat.

Due to this major development 1999 will be remembered as an important year in the history of our Francophone community. During the course of the year Francophone leaders have often expressed their appreciation for this important government action. Also, it is of importance to note that numerous congratulatory letters were received from many federal ministers as well as from almost all the provincial and territorial governments.

In the last few years, at this time in March celebrations are held to mark the contribution of French-Canadians to our great country, Canada. To mark the week's celebration and on the Speaker of the House's invitation, we hosted today in the rotunda the leaders of the Francophone community and celebrated with them the first anniversary of the establishment of the Francophone Secretariat.

To conclude, I would like to thank the two ministers responsible for the Francophone Secretariat in its first year of existence, the hon. Minister of Justice, who was responsible for the establishment of the secretariat, and the present minister responsible for the secretariat, the hon. Minister of Community Development, for their support in my work as chair of the Francophone Secretariat. [as submitted]

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

2:50      **International Day for the Elimination  
of Racial Discrimination**

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Today, March 21, is the UN day to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. In the community a number of events have taken place: a team of teenagers from Canmore traveled across the country with their message on racism and met up with other national and international teams, a kickoff at city hall in Edmonton with guest speaker Stephen Lewis, the annual Harmony breakfast sponsored by the Canadian Multiculturalism Educational Foundation that I and my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie attended on Sunday, and a wonderful citizenship court presided over by Judge Bhatia, which featured Mehreen Rashid from Holy Trinity school reading her award-winning essay on discrimination and tolerance.

But this morning for me was the most inspiring event. I attended a special racism event at McDougall school sponsored by the Edmonton Viets Association, the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, and the Department of Canadian Heritage. It was the most inspiring because it set the best example for us to follow.

Racism is not genetic. It is learned behaviour. The kids from McDougall supported by students from neighbouring St. Catherines did some wonderful skits on racism and, more than that, on how to break that learned behaviour and turn it into tolerance. Students also presented essays and posters.

All of these events are worthy and needed to bring people together and to acknowledge the continuation of racism in Alberta and how to eliminate it. We don't have an Alberta advantage on this issue. The government has seen fit to offer to screen legislation for gender-neutral language. But what can we as legislators, as leaders be doing to eliminate all forms of discrimination in Alberta and not just on this day but on all days? We could learn a lot from the kids, from Mehreen, and from the kids at McDougall and St. Catherines. That in my opinion would be an Alberta advantage.

Thank you.

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

**International Day for the Elimination  
of Racial Discrimination**

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day serves to remind us that racism continues to exist in the year 2000. It remains as real as life itself. Today it is up to each one of us to do our best to ensure that it is eliminated. For most of us racism is something we only read about or see on the television news. For many others it is something they experience daily in their own lives.

I know we remember the racial ideology that led to the massive destruction during the Second World War. More recently we can also remember the apartheid of the government of South Africa. This was a way of life supported by that government. Not long ago in our own country many citizens' rights that we take for granted today were denied to many Canadian pioneers because they belonged to a certain race. When a person cannot achieve his full potential simply because of the colour of his skin, we as a society suffer a tremendous loss as well.

As chair of the Alberta Advisory Committee on the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund I am encouraged to see that the number of racism complaints filed with the Human Rights Commission has declined steadily over the past few years. This proves that our proactive approach to combat this problem is working. We need to emphasize the importance of educating our society in order to reduce the need for disciplinary action by the Human Rights Commission. I am confident that with all your support we can achieve a prosperous Alberta that is free of discrimination not only during our time but for all generations to come as well.

Thank you.

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

**Point of Order  
Offensive Language**

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose during question period today during a preamble to a question by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I rose under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) and under *Beauchesne* 485 and 487 as well as the provisions of the memorandum which you sent to Members of the Legislative Assembly on February 11. In a general sense the preambles to questions are becoming more and more offensive to our parliamentary tradition, and the preamble to this particular question was particularly offensive to our parliamentary tradition.

One of the general rules, which I didn't quote, from *Beauchesne's* indicates – I think it's 409 – that questions should not provoke debate, and when you lace a preamble to a question with such coloured language, with the clear intent to impugn the integrity of a member, that cannot but provoke debate. So in a general sense those preambles, Mr. Speaker, and this preamble in particular should be ruled out of order, and the member should be asked to apologize.

I would take it a little bit further, and I don't have the benefit of the Blues, so I would look to your guidance in this. I believe the word dishonest was used, and in your memorandum on page D of the schedule it particularly indicates that the words dishonest and dishonesty are unparliamentary.

In addition, the member referred to hiding information with respect to West Edmonton Mall and an Auditor General's report. The Auditor General is an officer of this Legislature and did look into the West Edmonton Mall matter and made a report, and in that

report he clearly indicated that the Premier had not done anything wrong. So the member should be asked to withdraw his remarks from that perspective.

The member also, however, I believe, made allegations against another member and imputed false and unavowed motives to another member under 23(h) and (i) and did so by asking a question – I’m paraphrasing because I don’t have the Blues – of the nature of: is it your intention to hide or be dishonest to members of the public with respect to Bill 11, as you were with West Edmonton Mall?

Now, first of all, clearly that question is out of order because it provokes debate, because it requires a response, and I think a lengthy response should have been given indicating that the member is absolutely wrong about the question of dishonesty entirely. So it provokes debate from that perspective, but it also makes an allegation of dishonesty, which is not correct and is totally improper to levy against an hon. member in this House, and it also imputes false or unavowed motives, suggesting that the Premier was trying to hide something or be dishonest to Albertans when nothing could be more honest than to send out the exact wording of a bill that’s going to be discussed in the House and ask Albertans for their response to it. Nothing dishonest about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, we’ve come to expect that kind of slugging in debate in this House. It’s inappropriate, but we’ve come to expect it. We really should be listening to your advice in this House to deal with the issues above and beyond the personalities and take that emotional rhetoric out of it. I think it’s time to call a halt to this. I think it’s time to ask the member to rise and apologize. I think it’s time to bring us back to parliamentary tradition, talking about issues in this House in an appropriate and respectful manner and not bringing in false and unavowed allegations, not slanging people’s personal characters, not denigrating hon. members of this House, not trying to denigrate the Premier, who’s doing an honest and wonderful job for this province. If they have a problem with issues that we’re discussing, that’s what this Legislature is about. But it’s inappropriate for that hon. member and for any of those hon. members opposite to raise in preambles to questions or at any other time such inappropriate descriptions of the personalities of members or the intentions or integrity of members.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I must confess I got a little lost in terms of following my friend’s submission in terms of understanding precisely what he is focusing on. I took his general observation that he’s unhappy with the overall demeanor of question period and the questions asked, but this is a matter that you have addressed on past occasions. Specifically, let me try and deal with the things that I think have been raised that would appropriately warrant a response.

Firstly, I didn’t hear my colleague use the word dishonest. Now, I don’t have *Hansard* in front of me. I’ve had the benefit of reading some notes that my colleague used in asking the question. The word dishonest is not there. Hopefully with the benefit of *Hansard* we can resolve that. I’m further advised by my colleague that his recollection is that he did not use the word dishonest.

3:00

Now, the Government House Leader spoke of the Auditor General’s report, and this takes us in a field we’ve already plowed, Mr. Speaker. I think it’s well known and it’s certainly in the *Hansard* record of this Assembly that the Auditor General found, and I paraphrase, no evidence of any inappropriate government involvement, but that is circumscribed by all of the limitations of the

study. He didn’t talk to Elmer Leahy, I understand. He didn’t take sworn evidence from Elmer Leahy. There’s a list of areas that were not reviewed by the Auditor General, so this Government House Leader . . .

THE SPEAKER: Get to your point.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I tried to preface my comments by saying that the Government House Leader in my view wandered a circuitous route, and I’m trying to address the points that I took from it. So I don’t know where you’re going to go with it.

Let me sum up by saying that I didn’t hear the word dishonest being used. The Auditor General’s report did not sanitize everything that happened, as the Government House Leader wished it might have and the Premier wished it might have. It is bound and circumscribed by the limitations in the terms of reference and the limitations in the scope of the investigation, and that record speaks for itself.

The one other item I would say is this. I note there was reference to a document that wasn’t tabled, and I have from my colleague the memorandum he referred to. That quite properly should have been tabled, and I think in the excitement of the question-and-answer exchange it was not. I have the requisite number of copies of the document that was referred to, so I’d table that now, Mr. Speaker.

Those are the comments I’d make. We could spend a long time talking generally about what happens in question period and about answers that are provocative and provoke debate, but I’m not sure this is the appropriate forum to do that.

Thank you, sir.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I’m not going to go through a whole series of readings from *Beauchesne* with respect to this matter but simply draw to hon. members’ attention those sections of *Beauchesne*. There are many, many sections, but there certainly are some sections dealing with unparliamentary language. There’s certainly 485 in *Beauchesne*, and 486(1) indicates that “much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking.” *Beauchesne* 487 has got a really interesting series of clauses.

- (1) Threatening language is unparliamentary.
- (2) Words may not be used hypothetically or conditionally, if they are plainly intended to convey a direct imputation. Putting a hypothetical case is not the way to evade what would be in itself disorderly.

Now, what we’ve got here today is a situation – and I will quote from the Blues, because we do have the Blues. This is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

When it comes to Bill 11, Mr. Speaker, this Premier has quite a track record of talking about the truth yet still managing to avoid it. Now, the Premier thinks that he can trick Albertans with a propaganda campaign on health care just like he thinks he fooled Albertans about his role in orchestrating the West Edmonton Mall refinancing. Handwritten notes on a February 15, 1994, memo from the Premier to a certain Jim and a certain Ken provide ample evidence of his personal involvement. My questions are to the Premier. How can Albertans believe the Premier about Bill 11 when he didn’t come clean about the February 15, 1994, memo, which reveals that he was orchestrating the West Edmonton Mall refinancing right out of his . . . office?

Perhaps I could go back to 487(2) again. “Words may not be used hypothetically or conditionally, if they are plainly intended to convey a direct imputation.”

Now, I’ve got a series of scribbled notes from my table officers, who are very good and listen very attentively, just as attentively as

me. Their comments with respect to this question in particular ranged from: the question potentially is out of order and not really seeking factual information but really tied to how can we trust, the preamble and the question really weren't proper, a chance to make a statement about something not really linked, and on and on it goes with respect to other questions in terms of preambles not linked to actual questions.

We've had quite a series of these kinds of discussions lately with respect to these points of order, and I do not like the demeanour, and I do not like the tone. It seems to me that there's one way to solve all of this, and I'm going to suggest this to all members of the House, and it's something that the House itself might want to consider. The basic rules that we have in this Assembly call for brevity, brevity in terms of question and brevity in terms of answer. As each day comes and each day goes, there is a rather long list of members who haven't had an opportunity to raise a question or to seek the information that's so important. The purpose of question period is to seek, basically, urgent information with respect to pressing public matters.

Because we cannot define what the term brevity means in terms of a question and because we cannot define what brevity means in terms of an answer and because we tend to come and go on a daily basis, perhaps it might be better, hand in hand with what we want to do, if we carefully look to see what the rule is in the Canadian House of Commons. The Canadian House of Commons has struggled with this matter for years and years and years and has come to this conclusion. They've now adopted time limits for the question and time limits for the answer. The time limit is 35 seconds for the question and 35 seconds for the answer.

Now, that is a wonderful conclusion to a lot of problems. It seems that many of the points of order that are raised have to deal with the types of questions, and many of the points of order raised on another side have to deal with the types of answers. Well, the longer we have to participate, I guess, and with the dialogue that we have, the greater the chances and the greater the opportunities are for us to find the hole and just simply dig deeper into the hole. So perhaps brevity might best be dealt with in terms of a time factor.

It works very simply: 35 seconds to ask the question and 35 seconds to give the response, and your mike is immediately turned off. It seems to have done a great deal of service in terms of eliminating a lot of points of order on a daily basis. But, secondly, it has one other great objective and service that it provides. It allows for a greater number of questions, and it allows for a greater number of members to participate in doing the job that they were elected to do, to seek information.

I've got notes flying around here, and I sent a whole series of notes advising certain members that they might want to read *Hansard*, page 480, when I ruled on a point of order, allegations against a member and using names of outside people, dealt with that. Other notes here with respect to violations and probably *Beauchesne* 409(8), exactly the same question as another member had already asked, and again constant numbers of notes about not tying preambles with the ultimate question.

I think the comments are made. All hon. members can stand up and ask the question that they feel they are entitled to ask, and I will do everything possible to make sure that they have the benefit of all doubt with respect to it, because I believe very, very strongly that private members must have an opportunity to ask questions that they have. But it seems to me that if the bottom line of the question is, and I quote, we do not trust that person, why doesn't the question just come out and say, you know, "How can we trust you" or something else? There's a lot of unrelated preamble which has nothing to do with the question and violates the fundamental rules of the House and doesn't appear to be in the best interests of any

hon. member unless the major theme of the day is a certain thing, and it's not my right to know what that theme is, nor am I desiring to know what that theme is.

I just really believe fundamentally that decorum is very, very, very important. Decorum is important. There's a way of seeking the information one wants, and there's a way of making a political point. This question period is not supposed to be histrionics and not supposed to be theatrics. It's actually supposed to be serving the people of Alberta in ascertaining an answer for a pressing public matter. If it's Stampede Wrestling, well, so be it. It's entertainment for some, but the citizens of Alberta know what's going on. They know. They call my office. They give all kinds of comments. Not one of our best days. The point is made.

3:10

head: Orders of the Day

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

head: Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

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

### Bill 205

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

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

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'd like to make a few comments about this very good bill, Bill 205, Emblems of Alberta (Alberta Dress Tartan) Amendment Act, 2000, at this Committee of the Whole stage. I would remind members that this bill will provide yet another way in which Albertans may express their pride in the province of Alberta and that the Alberta dress tartan was an idea that came forward from two Calgarians, Gail Danysek and Ashley Stowkowy, who designed the Alberta dress tartan in conjunction with Fiona Hall, who is a tartan designer in England with Locharron of Scotland.

There was one point that was raised with me by a colleague that I would like to address. They sent me a note during a debate that said that in reading the bill, they noticed that the weave of the Alberta dress tartan, in particular the first block of the weave, is dominated by white and that clearly discriminates against green. It was their concern that this discrimination was clearly at a most basic level.

I must say that I would like to congratulate this hon. member, to start with, because they clearly read the bill carefully, and in fact they're very correct. The first block has 96 threads, and all but 12 of those threads are white. The other 12 are green. I would point out to the hon. member that that type of differential does however explain why this first block is known as the white block rather than the green block. I would also point out to this hon. member that there is a second block of weave as part of the Alberta dress tartan and that it contains 136 threads, 16 of which are green. So this hon. member should take some comfort in the fact that there is green reflected not only in the first block but also in the second block.

The other point I would like to make. I would refer all members to the explanatory notes that form part of Bill 205, which refer to the weave of the existing Alberta tartan, and in particular I would point out that it, too, has two blocks. In this particular case the first block of the Alberta tartan consists of 48 threads, all of which are green,

none of which are white, and accordingly there is clear discrimination in favour of the green thread. All in all, I think that if one takes into account the fact that there is green thread both in the first and second block of the Alberta dress tartan and a clear discrimination in the first block of the Alberta tartan in favour of green, there is a certain balance here.

It's also important to remember what these colours represent in the Alberta dress tartan. The addition of the field of white coloured stripes represents something that is not reflected currently in the Alberta tartan, and that of course is Alberta's clean, bright, snowy days, which are something that is known throughout the province, including, I believe, down in the Medicine Hat/Cypress area.

The dress tartan remains true to the original colour scheme that we have in our Alberta tartan, with the green of our forests being represented, the gold of our wheat fields, the blue of our clear skies and sparkling lakes, the pink of our wild rose, and the black of our coal and petroleum.

Once again, Madam Chairman, I would recommend to all members that they support this particular bill and the weave as currently outlined. I would particularly ask for the support of the hon. member who sent me that note, because I believe that I have clearly indicated that greens are well represented in the Alberta dress tartan.

Thank you very much.

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

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I rise today to enter into the debate on Bill 205, the Emblems of Alberta (Alberta Dress Tartan) Amendment Act, 2000. I think it's important for the Assembly to understand the origins of tartans.

Every isle differs from each other in their fancy making plads, as to the stripes and Breadth and Colours. This Humour is as different thro the . . . land of the Highlands in-so-far that they who have seen those places, are able, at the first view of a man's plad, to guess the place of his residence.

So said Martin Martin, writing in 1703, making the first documented reference to tartan as a means of identification. Since that time, the spirit of the idea has grown to the extent that we have come to believe that the pattern of woven coloured stripe has become an important part of our cultural identity.

Now, it is generally accepted that clan tartans were established and named towards the end of the 18th century. Prior to that time, while clan, district, and tartan were often closely associated, the idea of a single uniform clan tartan had not yet emerged. It would be wrong, however, to assume that the tartan patterns were created at that time. William Wilson, the foremost weaving manufacturer, took a great interest in reproducing perfectly genuine patterns and engaged in extensive correspondence with his Highland agent to gather information and actual samples of the cloth woven in the clan districts.

The natural development and the art of tartan manufacturing in the Highlands had been completely curtailed for over 50 years. The battle of Culloden in 1746 was still within living memory, and the disarming acts which followed included the ban of Highland dress, which was repealed in 1782. Tartan manufacture survived only in the hands of the military and their Lowlands suppliers.

3:20

Madam Chairman, I think it's important to understand where tartans come from and why we're bringing this forward. References to tartans occur in various historical documents, paintings, illustrations. A charter granted to Hector MacLean of Duart in 1587 for the

lands in Islay details cloth of white, black, and green colours, the colours of the Hunting MacLean of Duart tartan, and an eyewitness account of the battle. Many references support the role of tartans within the country and with different sectors. New tartans accredited by the Scottish Tartans Society must have the approval of the chief.

Dress tartans are designed by altering one of the background colours of the formal sett to white. Originally, tartans had two main colours. Madam Chairman, today we have before us Bill 205, Albertans' own tartan, and we are looking at seven colours of thread.

Bill 205 joins nine other official emblems in this province, and I am proud to be part of the debate.

Madam Chairman, some 27 short years ago I was married in a full Scottish wedding; yes, bagpipes, kilts, the full works. My family's history also shows that we have our own tartan.

I congratulate the Member for Calgary-Glenmore and encourage all members of the Assembly to support Bill 205.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to say a couple of words in support of Bill 205 with respect to Alberta emblems and the symbols that we hold dear in the name of and in the symbol of our province. Of course, I can't imagine that anyone would speak against this bill, but I'd like to note a couple of things that perhaps people do not know about the weave of the tartan, and we can think about it when we do look at this symbol in the future.

It's understood that when we think of the tartan now, most of us think of a very colourful pattern of the cloth of the Scottish Highlands. It's evident in the tartan that we currently use to symbolize the province of Alberta and certainly in the tartan that is being proposed through this bill to symbolize the tartan of Alberta for the future. Originally, the word tartan described the way a thread was woven to make the cloth. Each thread passed over two threads, then under two threads, and so on. Hence we have the name tartan.

It's also interesting to know that the oldest known piece of tartan is one that was found buried in the ground near Falkirk. It was found in a pot filled with over 1,900 silver Roman coins and was thought to be about 1,700 years old. It's quite different from many of the colourful tartans that we all know today. Again, that's why I would like to commend the tartan that is proposed here in Bill 205, because it is lighter and it is brighter in colour and it certainly speaks to what we see as our role and what we want to have as our symbol for this new century.

As I say, the oldest piece of tartan was found in a pot with the Roman coins. It's quite different from many of the tartans that we know today, and it's believed that it was made from the undyed wool, dark brown and light brownish green, of the Soay sheep, which once inhabited Scotland and which still can be found on the island of St. Kilda.

Just a little bit of history of how the Scottish people found the original tartan and hence have carried that symbol forward.

So in recognition of what we are signifying and symbolizing today and in the year 2000 in the province of Alberta, I think it's very fitting that we endorse and unanimously support Bill 205, as we look, I would say, to a brighter, a lighter, a more colourful symbol for our province so that it can be displayed, it can be worn, and it can show forth the colours of our province.

With those remarks, Madam Chairman, I would like to call the question in support of this bill and ask everyone in this Assembly now present to vote in support of Bill 205.

[The clauses of Bill 205 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

The chair would have you note that most of the speakers on this particular bill happen to be of Scottish heritage.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I am not of Scottish ancestry, but I have a keen affinity for the game of golf, which is of Scottish origin, and on behalf of my constituent Jim McLean I want to just officially say that I support the official tartan bill that we just discussed.

However, on other matters I would now move that this committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports Bill 205.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

The chair is going to call a one-minute recess.

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:29 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.]

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

#### **Citizens' Commission on the Future of Education**

504. Mrs. MacBeth moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to create an Alberta citizens' commission on the future of education which would set goals and direction for education, acknowledging its fundamental importance to the prosperity and well-being of all Albertans and defining a clear vision for its future.

[Debate adjourned March 14: Dr. Massey speaking]

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

DR. MASSEY: Thanks, Madam Speaker. When I left off talking about Motion 504 last time, I had spent a few minutes talking about the need for the commission and how this commission differed from previous commissions in the way it was going to be operating in terms of having citizens in control of the agenda. I'd also spent a little time looking at some of the changes that have occurred in the province and in education since the last commission, the Worth commission, deliberated in the late '60s and the early '70s. I thought I would take the few remaining minutes that I have to look

at some of the other changes that I think a commission would want to look at and evaluate.

There have been some tremendous changes, particularly in the role of technology. We've seen, since that last commission was reported, the advent of computers, and none of us, I think, at that time ever dreamed they would take over our schools, our classrooms, and in fact our lives. So I think a commission would want to spend some time looking at those developments, again assessing where we may be going in the future and setting out maybe a vision for technology and the role that technology might play in learning in the future.

The role of schools has changed dramatically. Community use is now taken for granted. I remember running for school trustee in 1974, running at that time on a platform of more community use of our schools, and being labeled by the opposition to that motion as the booze and bingo candidate. Some of the people running at that time thought that opening up schools for community use would invite all kinds of vices and that community life would certainly be hurt if those school gymnasiums were opened any time after 4 o'clock for community use. We've changed a great deal on how we view our community buildings, our school buildings.

The role of school boards has changed, and many of us think that that role has changed for the worse. There is a court case now that's going to adjudicate that. School boards, in terms of their ability to respond to local issues, I think have been weakened. Is that really what we want in the province? What kind of value do we place on local control?

The Department of Learning has changed. It's being collapsed into two departments: basic education and advanced education. Is that a good thing? Is that what Albertans want? Are they being well served by this new configuration?

There are changes in terms of our funding. Many of us in this province who come from humble beginnings have been blessed with being able to access the best education in the world. We were able to do that even though our parents had rather limited or no means that would have helped us had that public education not been there and not been tax supported so that there was no charge to the family.

That's gradually changed over the last 10 years. Instructional fees and parents out funding-raising for a lot of the things that happen in our schools have gradually taken over. If you walk into the gymnasiums of our local high schools, you'll see the signs of local contractors and electrical firms adorning gymnasium walls. The whole role of paying, parents' role, and who should support public education – should it be supported totally from the public purse? Are these other incursions the wave of the future? I think those are some of the questions, some of the issues that the Alberta citizens' commission would examine.

If you look at school programs, there have been dramatic changes in the kinds of school programs that are being offered in the province. I look at the number of alternative programs that now accommodate a much wider range of student interests and capabilities and parent interest than were available previously: the heritage language programs in this city where Ukrainian, Cree, and a variety of languages have been made available to students. I look at the international baccalaureate program, a program for talented high school students where they can have their talents tested and their intellectual capabilities challenged. I look at the incorporation under the umbrella of the local school board of the first Christian school, the Logos school. I look at the involvement of business as huge changes in the public school system. I think it's timely that a commission sit down and look at those changes and say: is this the way we want to go in public education? Are these the kinds of changes that strengthen the system and further the kind of vision that many have for a truly public school system?

If you look at postsecondary education, there's a tremendous worry about the balance at postsecondary institutions between the sciences and the technical fields and the humanities and the social sciences. Is that balance the correct one? Are we supporting social sciences and humanities in a way that will benefit the community? What about the role that the universities play in social criticism? What's happened to that role?

We've seen huge changes in tuition and tuition policy. I'm one of those fortunate few who on entering university had my tuition paid, and I was the recipient of a bursary of a small amount but a very important amount of money at the time to help me further my education. We've moved a long way from that kind of public support of students to an almost unending debate in our institutions about tuition. It's one of the things that I think a commission could look at and help make some judgments about, could talk to Albertans to find out how they feel about access to our postsecondary institutions and how that access should be either furthered or curtailed.

The role of research has again changed, a great deal of focus recently on what's been called gizmo research, research that pays off in the marketplace at some fairly near time frame. Again, questions have been raised about what that does in terms of research, more basic research, research where ideas are explored without any thought of the implications of that for commercialization.

We've seen a growing role for private schools in the province. Does that meet with the general approval of the citizens? The Alberta citizens' commission could examine that and maybe plot out for us a future and some guidelines in terms of the development of private schools and their role in the education system of the province.

There have been some vast changes in teacher education. When the Worth report was tabled in the province, most of the elementary teachers in the province had one or two years of teacher education in the early '70s, and the Lougheed government in a rather brave move said that we were going to increase the amount of education that teachers had until we got to the point where they all had at least one university degree.

3:40

I remember the kind of public debate at the time, the gloom and doom warnings that if they moved to that kind of a system, where teachers had to have at least one university degree to teach, first of all the system wouldn't be able to afford all of those teachers with degrees. It would bankrupt the government. There were cries about not having enough teachers, that there would be a teacher shortage if they tried to move to everyone having at least a university degree. Lo and behold here we are 30 years later and the system is in place. All teachers in the province have at least one university degree, many of them two, and some three or more university degrees, something that would have been unheard of 30 years ago. It took some visionaries to make it happen.

We also have seen some changing patterns in terms of the teacher education that's offered. We have the University of Lethbridge where you have to have a minimum of 5 years before you're credentialed to go into the classroom, the University of Alberta where you can still take a four-year pattern, and then the differences at the University of Calgary. So across the province the degree-granting institutions have changed their requirements and, again, at a rate and with content that we wouldn't have expected a number of years ago. I think this is an area that the citizens' commission would be most interested in looking at. The previous commission and the Cameron commission before that had some solid statements about teacher education at that time.

So with those comments, Madam Speaker, I would urge passage of the Alberta citizens' commission . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. member. The time for this particular item has now expired, and I must put the question to you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

### Advisory Council on Women's Health

505. Mrs. Fritz moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish an advisory council on women's health to support education and research promoting women's health and to address issues relating to the prevention and treatment of diseases including osteoporosis, eating disorders, heart disease, and breast cancer as well as diseases to which women are becoming increasingly susceptible such as lung cancer and autoimmune diseases.

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

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This has been a long time coming. As you know, it was before the Legislature previously as a bill, and I'm just pleased that it's back here as a motion and that it is before the Assembly today.

I'd like to note that this important proposal would not have been brought before the House without the support, guidance, and influence of many people. I'm thankful to all that it was created, revised, and completed with the ideas and assistance of Alberta Health, Community Development, our caucus research, my office, regional health authorities, women's groups, organizations, and associations, and the public at large. The wise counsel of my colleagues and friends, many of whom are here today, added to the insight that resulted in this proposal, which I believe will ultimately lead to Alberta women living their lives more fully because they'll have a deeper understanding of the health of their bodies.

Madam Speaker, Motion 505 will assist in creating new models for women's wellness. It will offer support in the areas of education and research that will help women to gain, regain, and maintain their health. The motion will also assist our government and its affiliates as well as health care practitioners with necessary constant learning processes.

An advisory council would provide a forum for promoting awareness of women's health issues, and it would enable health organizations to submit information and recommendations to the government. It would also gather research and synthesize the information and ensure that it is ultimately made available to those that would benefit from it. Women, health care professionals, and government officials must work together to make women's health a top priority.

Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge that the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has demonstrated in Budget 2000 a commitment to health initiatives and programs, and I thank you, hon. minister, for this being in Budget 2000 this year. It's very welcome. You've added \$4.7 million for the implementation of a cervical cancer screening program, and that would include the Pap smear, which is the most effective screening test known to modern medicine. Also, \$2.3 million has been added for the breast cancer screening program, which will assist in diagnosing breast cancer in its earliest stages. Hopefully, Mr. Minister, these funds will be used for a provincewide program to target those in the 50- to 69-year-old age group through a holistic woman-centred approach. Knowing your commitment to women's health issues, I'm sure that that's what will be happening in that area.

These welcome funds will add to vital preventative screening



programs that I believe will ultimately save lives. The outcome would also lead to good, solid, up-to-date information that an advisory council could use to assist women in improving their health. Madam Speaker, it is no small task to address the vast issues of women's health and wellness, which is why this motion advocates an advisory council.

The council is anticipated to have 10 appointed board members, with a Member of the Legislative Assembly to act as chairman, and at least one member would be appointed from the following: the Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Alberta health care association, the Alberta Medical Association, a university as defined in the Universities Act, the Alberta Cancer Board, and the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses. The four remaining members hopefully would be from the public at large. I realize that there are those here who will ask why half the council is comprised of members with an explicit medical focus. I happen to believe that the importance of their expertise and guidance should not be underestimated and, in fact, should be highly valued. The medical advice and dynamics that this group will offer to the committee is essential to the discussion which will ultimately point us in the direction that we need to go.

Women need to be able to make informed, responsible decisions regarding their health and lifestyles, and to do this they must have access to accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive, and user-friendly information. The council would assist in the management of women's health services and lead to a coherent long-term health strategy. It would also assist in the promotion of awareness and understanding of women's health issues, the risks they face and the treatments that are available. Madam Speaker, over the past decade we have seen some of these diseases increase at an alarming rate. I'm thinking of HIV and the AIDS virus, which is on the increase for women. As well, the statistics relating to eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and other addictive disorders speak for themselves.

When you consider the purposes of the advisory council, you will notice that concepts such as advise, foster, report, encourage public discussion, review, analyze, consult, and make recommendations will all offer a wide range of processes to access and distribute information. I know that for some here today it will be a leap of faith to accept that these concepts are necessary for the health and wellness of women. Well, Madam Speaker, in order to explore the discomforts, diseases, and dysfunctions of female organs and systems and to give medical suggestions and advice on how to heal them, it is a must to buy into the very purposes of this motion.

I have had the question asked, "How do women's health needs differ from those of others?" which is, of course, addressing the fundamental question of why we need a women's health advisory council. In acknowledging this question and providing answers, it is necessary to provide you with a list of a few – and I stress "a few," although it will seem long to you – physical, psychological, and emotional illnesses that predominantly affect women. Autoimmune disease, which, simply stated, occurs when an organ attacks itself, affects women far more frequently than it does men. These diseases include systemic lupus erythematosus; 90 percent of those affected are women. Myasthenia gravis: 85 percent affected are women. Autoimmune thyroid disease: 80 percent are women. Rheumatoid arthritis: 75 percent are women. And 70 percent of those afflicted with multiple sclerosis are women.

3:50

Menses is a basic cycle for females, and during this cycle as many as 60 percent of those affected suffer from abdominal discomfort which is known as dysmenorrhea. As well, at least 60 percent of

females suffer from premenstrual syndrome. PMS is most likely to occur in the 30-year-old age group and, sadly, often occurs at the same time as dysmenorrhea. Complications that relate to the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus are far too vast to mention here today, and each organ is intimately connected to the next.

Endometriosis is a disease experienced by women in which the tissue normally growing inside the uterus actually grows in other parts of the body and causes a great deal of pain. Uterine fibroid tumors, ovarian cysts, and cancer are all devastating and can lead to chronic pelvic pain, infertility, and even death. Madam Speaker, the list continues and includes disorders such as urinary tract infections, incontinence, fibrocystic breast disease, childbirth complications, and symptoms related to menopause.

I'd like to take a moment to highlight other significant health issues and point out the potential impact that each one may have on Alberta women and on Albertans as a whole. Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease that is characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to bone fragility and an increased susceptibility to fractures of the hip, the spine, and the wrist. This is a disease that can be prevented and treated. Chances of developing osteoporosis are greater if you are a woman. They have less bone tissue and lose bone more rapidly than men because of the changes involved in menopause. One in four Canadian women over the age of 50 has osteo. It is often called the silent disease because bone loss occurs without any symptoms. They may not know they have this disease until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump, or fall causes a hip fracture or a vertebra to collapse.

Females may be surprised to discover that there is a 20 percent mortality rate within the first six months following a hip fracture, and about 50 percent of those who suffer one will need help walking the rest of their lives. In fact, the lifetime risk of death due to hip fracture is comparable to the risk of death from breast cancer. The rate of hip fractures related to osteoporosis is two to three times higher in women than men. A woman's risk of hip fracture is equal to her combined risk of breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer, and, Madam Speaker, 75 percent of women aged 45 to 75 have never even talked to a doctor about osteo.

Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in women over the age of 50 in Canada. Heart disease is also the second leading medical condition that limits the activities and independence of females. Although it is often characterized as a man's disease, Madam Speaker, shockingly, more women than men die from cardiovascular disease. Yet virtually all randomized controlled trials, risk, and treatment have focused on men, and the majority of cardiovascular procedures are conducted on men. Heart disease in women often goes undetected and untreated until the disease has become severe. Regrettably, 44 percent of those who have heart attacks die within one year as compared to 27 percent of men.

Madam Speaker, there's an obvious male bias in medical research and treatment related to heart disease in Canada. Once we recognize the need for a more balanced approach, we can work toward addressing the health issues that have previously been ignored or underappreciated, especially those that affect women.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in women, after heart disease and stroke, and approximately 11 percent will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Each day in our own province at least four women are diagnosed with or die from this disease; that's each day. The risk of breast cancer increases with age, with approximately 75 percent of breast cancer diagnosed found in those over the age of 50. Today lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death in females. There are no screening tests for lung cancer, and it can be very difficult to diagnose. Nearly 90 percent of patients diagnosed

with lung cancer do not receive care until it is too late to be cured.

Increased education and communication about these diseases, their risk factors, and their treatment will save women's lives. I said that I would name only a few, which is why I will stop here. The point is, Madam Speaker, these conditions predominantly affect women, which is why this advisory council is so necessary. Women make three-quarters of the health care decisions in households, and more than 61 percent of physician visits are made by females. Fifty-nine percent of prescription drugs are purchased by them, and 75 percent of nursing home residents over the age of 75 are women. Their health has been ignored for far too long, and they are uniquely affected and, I believe, should be uniquely addressed.

Madam Speaker, implementing Motion 505 will allow us to keep our finger on the pulse of women's health care in a much broader and more diverse way than ever before. The intent of the council will be to assist in providing information and research data on how nutrients, hormonal supplements, herbs, exercise, drugs, prescribed medications, surgery, acupuncture, emotional support, and many, many other ways of delivering health care will optimally create healthier conditions for women.

Madam Speaker, the benefits to be derived from implementing Motion 505 could be achieved for approximately 1 percent of what our province spends in one day on health care. That is so minimal. Think about it. It's 1 percent of what we spend in one day on health care.

To conclude, I'm urging the Assembly to recognize the unique nature of women's bodies, their symptoms, and the issues that surround their overall health. An advisory council on women's health will allow us to promote and address these issues in a proactive, accountable, and cost-effective manner.

Madam Speaker, I ask that the members of the Assembly make a commitment to the health and wellness of all women in the province by voting to support Motion 505. Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to commend the Member for Calgary-Cross for her tenacity in following through on this idea, in that it was presented as Bill 213 in the 1999 spring session but died on the Order Paper. So the same idea but coming back as a motion.

Secondly, I have to admit that I am really torn about this motion. I think a large part of that is my frustration with a sort of piecemeal approach that's being taken. Many of the members here were in this same Chamber, including the Member for Calgary-Cross I think, when the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues was disbanded. The budget was taken away, and that was the end of it. That was a very useful organization and from my point of view had a more holistic approach to women's health because it dealt with all aspects of women's lives: the economic factors, the legal factors, the social health factors.

So I'm very frustrated when I look at what's being proposed in this motion and see that it's a very tiny piece of what women's lives are all about. We cannot continue to take a chunk, a piece of a person's life and say, "Well, if we deal with this, then all things will be cared for," because we know that that is not the truth. You cannot deal with women's health without looking at issues of poverty, of stress – the list is very long. I'll try and come back and address some of that, but the economic and legal factors that affect women's lives in this day and age obviously affect their health.

4:00

I listened carefully to the Member for Calgary-Cross and what she

was proposing, and it sounds very similar to what was in Bill 213. So it is based on the advisory council on women's health act but, again, is only taking a little section of it out.

I think one of the things that is most important to me about a council – if I have to accept a council that is restricted to women's health, I will do so, begrudgingly. I will do so, because I think anything that the women in Alberta can get out of this government is a great thing, because it's been pretty tough in the past.

One of the most important things is the representation of the people who are appointed to the council. Where the Advisory Council on Women's Issues was really successful was in bringing together a great diversity of representation. They were women from all different geographic areas in the province. They covered different kinds of work. Some were in the workforce. Some were at home or students, with different kinds of family backgrounds, different kinds of educational attainments. It was a real diversity of representation, and I had the privilege of working with that council for five years, so I know of what I speak. I think I go down in history now as the only executive director for that organization in its 10 years, and I was there for almost five.

MRS. SOETAERT: And a good job you did.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you.

That diversity of representation also gave that council a real close connection to the women in the community. For example, at one point we were approached about mobile breast screening units. The idea was presented to the council members, who then fanned out back into their communities, held coffee parties, talked to people in supermarket lineups, whatever they did to connect with the women in their communities, and together brought all that information back. They really picked up some good stuff from approaching women in a very realistic way and just listening to what their genuine response was to the proposal. I think we have a better mobile breast screening program now as a result of that.

The council also had a very strong research component. Frankly, a lot of the budget money was put into that research, and it was very good value for the money. As I mentioned before, we did research under three areas: legal, economic, and social health. The drawback for that advisory council – and perhaps this is a warning for possible barriers to overcome with the suggestion of this council – was the appointment of people. I think it has to be done in a way where people are coming to serve the best interests of the council, and it shouldn't be about the best interests of any given political ideology.

One of our constant struggles with the old advisory council was budget. It was a way for government to control the activities of the council. There needs to be a reasonable budget. It's not a lot. I mean, I think the member has already pointed out that all things considered, it's a minuscule amount. But the budget should not be used as a way of controlling the council. It's very good value for money.

The last thing was the will of the government to implement the recommendations that were brought forward from the council. Recommendations in my time were brought forward on a very wide variety of issues affecting women in Alberta, and the government did not have the will to implement them. I think today we can look back on some of them and dearly wish that the government had.

The Member for Calgary-Cross had listed off the organizations that she was suggesting representatives be sought from to sit on this council. She anticipated me saying that those are all representatives of the medical/clinical model, and indeed that is my point. Once again we're taking a little slice, a little organ out of women and saying: okay, this is all we're going to deal with; this is the one little

piece. I think it's really important, if you are going to have a council on women's health, that you have wider representation than just the medical/clinical model. I really feel strongly about that.

To the member's credit, she has now included that there would be representatives from the public on the council, and that was a flaw identified in the bill that was presented last year, in that it listed all of the medical organizations from whom representatives would be pulled and said that there could be 10 members in total but didn't sort of fill in the blanks and say that the rest of those members will be from the public. She's now said that, which I think is a good thing.

When the member talks about, you know, women needing good factual medical information, yes, they do, but they also need other information that's about what happens in their lives. We're more than a walking component of body organs. We exist in society. We exist in families. We have stresses on our lives. We have religious faiths we follow. There are a lot of other things that are affecting women and that affect their health.

As a small example of only getting information from medical personnel, let's look at the hormone therapy debate. You can line up as many doctors on one side of the room as you want that are pro hormone replacement therapy and line up just as many on the other side of the room. Well, if women can't get access to some other information, all we have is a battle of medical information that's not moving the issue forward.

The member talked about it being holistic. I think she and I are going to have to agree to disagree on our definition of what holistic is, because I'm looking for other factors besides a medical/clinical model of women's health. I would like to see spots set aside for representatives from alternative health, public health, mental health, social services, and other organizations that are dealing specifically with women. There's a wonderful osteoporosis mature women's health clinic at the Grey Nuns.

Another issue is that there is primarily a research function for this council, but there seems to only be one representative from a research institution, and I think that needs to be looked at as well. You probably want more academic research that's available there.

Now let me talk about some of the things I'd referred to earlier. Where will the issues of poverty be discussed as they impact on women's health? Or employment issues? For instance, if you're a part-time person or a seasonal worker, whether you get benefits or don't get benefits, whether you have a pension or don't have a pension, that affects you very much.

Where are the legal/judicial issues about access? I mean, if you want to see women in stress, look at some of the family courts and the people going in and out of those doors. That's one of the most stressful things in their lives. You think that doesn't impact their health and the health of their families?

What about the social issues? Drug and alcohol abuse, gambling issues, what kind of housing they have available. Can they afford to live in a safe neighbourhood? All of those issues, once again, really affect women's health.

What are the other issues affecting women? Well, what about availability of home care and the range of home care services that are actually available, or even the expectation that women will be the home care, the one and only home care? If you don't think that affects every woman sitting in this Chamber and elsewhere, you've got another thing coming. We've got a sandwiched generation of women who have elderly parents they're caring for and still have children that may be at home or very near to home. They are the primary caregivers for both sets of people, and they're sandwiched. I think that affects women's health.

Where have we gotten with midwifery? That was a recommenda-

tion that was brought forward, a very concrete one, with three points to the recommendation. The government has only accomplished two of those points. They still have not covered midwifery services under health care. Oh, get a move on.

4:10

We have issues like respite care, palliative care. You see, I think there's an assumption still that women will step in and take over all these caregiving duties, particularly around the issues of health. I don't think people are looking around at women and the age that they are today. You know, all the women in this House are working. It's not as though we could drop everything and run to provide that kind of specialized care for somebody. Most of the women are working because they have to work and because they want to work, and there's nothing wrong with that.

MRS. SOETAERT: For pay. Every woman works.

MS BLAKEMAN: For pay, yeah. I mean, every woman works, but many of them are working outside of the home for money, and that's because they have to.

You know, this is all about treatment that I'm hearing, and the list the member sort of ran off at the end of her remarks were all treatments, acupuncture and a number of other things. Again I react by saying: where's the prevention? A dollar in prevention is worth a million bucks in cure, and when do I get this government to understand that? It's true, and it's always after the fact. It's always money going in after the fact. We have the knowledge, we have the research to understand these issues from the beginning.

Another question: how would this council fit within the Alberta health care population health strategies? I think there are a lot of issues to be raised there.

The member didn't talk about adequate funding for the council. I spoke of it a bit, but I also think the other thing that needs to be considered here is remuneration of the directors that are appointed to the council. I think there's been an assumption here for the representatives that the medical agencies they would be pulled from would be paying their salary for the day they're at the meeting. But that really makes it difficult to get the public representatives, if they have to be giving up a day's work. Why isn't this a concern? Why am I not seeing some effort being put into acknowledging this fact? Not all women have jobs where they can take a day off without having their pay taken away. Most women work on a wage basis, on an hourly basis. If they don't work, they don't get paid. So that issue of not remunerating the directors for a council is one that I think you have to look at very carefully. I would encourage the member to pursue it, because I think you're going to preclude having representatives of the public on the council because they simply cannot afford to give up the earnings. It would cost them too much.

The other thing I would like to see and have not heard the member mention is: will there be gender parity on this council? From everything I saw in the previous bill that was introduced and in anything the member has said now, this could be a council of 10 men. I'm reminded of that little cartoon that you see resurface every now and then where there's an entire, great, huge board table full of men all the way around it. The chairperson calls the committee of women's issues to order, and there isn't a woman at the table. So I would like to see something worked into this that actually acknowledged . . . [interjections]

Oh, I see people are a little sensitive about the thought of gender parity. You cannot be serious that you would want a women's health council with all men on it. No, no. You're not serious. I know you're not.

I think the member should look to incorporating something like that. I would suggest a 60-40 amendment that says: no more than 60 or less than 40 of either gender. Of course, for this purpose I would prefer to see that 60 percent of the representatives were women. That only makes sense to me.

I'm glad the member brought forward the bill and now the motion. It does show some sensitivity to how women's lives are different than men's, but I think there are a lot of other things that could have been done with this. I think the whole idea of narrowing women to just that collection of organs and bone and skin walking around is a very narrow view of women, and I would really like to see it expanded to a better understanding of women's lives. There are a lot of ways that the suggestion in the motion brought forward by Calgary-Cross could be improved so we could have a much stronger idea here. I do commend her for the work that she's done. I can tell by the remarks she made today that she's done more work, a lot of work, on research into some of the identified medical problems that women have, but I urge her to cast the net a little wider so that we can start understanding the social impact of the world that women really live in and how that affects their health.

I appreciate having the time to speak to the motion. As I said, I will support it, but you know, with the resources this government has, it could have been so much better. It really could have.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. STEVENS: Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to say a few words regarding Motion 505, the very excellent motion from the Member for Calgary-Cross to establish an Alberta advisory council on women's health.

Madam Speaker, women's health is a growing concern for all Albertans. There are few of us in this Assembly today who have not been affected in some way by this issue. We all know sisters or daughters or mothers or aunts or nieces or wives that have at some point been affected by the health issues outlined by the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross. Currently I have the good fortune to serve as chair of the standing policy committee on learning, and I would like to focus my comments this afternoon on the educational and informational advantages that an advisory committee on women's health would have for Alberta women and indeed for all Albertans.

I believe that phenomenal strides can be made in educating and informing all Albertans on the health issues that affect women within our province. We can and should do more to improve the health prospects of Alberta women. Madam Speaker, the creation of an advisory council would provide women with current and up-to-date information on new treatment regimes that are coming on-line in Alberta, experimental initiatives that are in the planning process, and contact information for locally based expert or support organizations. An advisory council would act as the conduit through which the government could consult with women's groups on the overall health planning process within Alberta.

In these many ways the creation of a council would give women's organizations the opportunity to assess essential information in a timely manner with a relative amount of ease. A good example of how this council could play this valuable role is in the area of drug and alcohol abuse. More and more women in Alberta are being affected either directly or indirectly by drug and alcohol abuse. As things stand right now, Madam Speaker, I believe that there is far too little knowledge shared on the part of health professionals both on the role they can play in treating this disease and also on the effect it has on women themselves and their bodies. An advisory council on women's health could assist in educating Alberta women

in this critical area and help decrease the number of women suffering from the effects of drug and alcohol abuse.

Madam Speaker, the effects of alcohol and other drug abuse on women's health is considerable. Statistically, each year Canadian hospitals treat women for an average of 11,000 alcohol-related problems. The physiological consequences of alcohol and drug abuse common in women include increased risk of tuberculosis, hypertension, and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV infection and infertility. There can also be effects to unborn children, namely fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect, two completely preventable afflictions that have a permanent impact on the lives of Albertans. Moreover, health experts and scientists are beginning to find that women with alcohol and other drug problems are more likely to have mental disorders than men. Clinical research reveals that depressive and anxiety disorders as well as low self-esteem are more frequently found in female addicts.

4:20

Another special problem for women is the effect of tobacco use. The mortality rate of lung cancer in women has surpassed that of breast cancer as the most common cause of death from cancer in North America. Women are not only susceptible to the smoking-related diseases commonly seen in males; women are also vulnerable to special risks related to the female reproductive system and pregnancy. Despite these risks, the prevalence of smoking among women has remained steady since the 1960s, whereas smoking rates for men have been continually dropping.

Madam Speaker, today there are more female new smokers than male new smokers, a phenomenon that certainly has significant implications. According to the 1996 statistics 48 percent of Alberta females aged 15 to 24 are smokers. In fact, teenage girls are now more likely to smoke than their male counterparts. The Alberta Tobacco Reduction Alliance recently estimated that in 1992 the cost to Alberta's economy of tobacco use was approximately \$728 million. Of this total, approximately \$215 million can be directly attributed to costs on the health care system, while the remaining \$508 million can be attributed to productivity losses due to illness or premature death.

This new wave of smokers bodes poorly for the health of Alberta's women in the future. Greater knowledge and effort are required to successfully reach women about the negative health impacts of smoking and to lower the numbers of female smokers. In spite of all the warnings on cigarette packages, many young women may not realize that the risks to their own health may not be that far down the road. Pregnant women who smoke increase the risk of complications to their baby such as miscarriage, premature delivery, low birth weight, stillbirth, eye defects, and sudden infant death syndrome. Women and adolescent girls who smoke and use birth control pills are 10 to 20 times more likely to have heart attacks or strokes than women who do not smoke. Smokers are also at increased risk of cervical cancer.

Substance abuse and addiction is a field in which research that is specifically oriented on the impact it has on women's health is sorely lacking. Clearly this research gap and lack of baseline data is something that needs to be urgently addressed and corrected because it is absolutely crucial to our future and to maintaining a healthy population. The most critical research needed in this area is the examination of what can be termed as women at risk. These women are generally described as young, involved in pressure to drink and smoke from peer groups, having a heavy-drinking spouse, depressed, experiencing a life crisis or loss, and frequently drinking or using substances to escape daily problems.

Research of this group is critical because women are no more

homogeneous a group than men. Women with substance problems differ in terms of age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, occupational and marital status, and other demographic factors, just as men do. Identifying groups of women at high risk may lead to early intervention strategies targeted specifically at these groups of women. These strategies could range from substance-specific programs aimed at women at high risk to nonspecific programs aimed towards improving women's mental health. Consciousness-raising groups, awareness workshops, sports and exercise, job counseling, and parenting skill training are just a few examples of such programs.

Physical activity by women has also been identified as a problem. Women of all ages do not engage sufficiently in physical activity despite its many positive effects on health. The health system must learn how to encourage healthy behaviour in women in developing approaches that take into account their values, lifestyles, and roles.

Madam Speaker, it's all too clear that many women are not adequately aware of current prevention strategies that can dramatically improve their health. We must educate these women if we hope to help them, and the establishment of an advisory council on women's health can help co-ordinate this effort. Women's health is also impacted by life circumstances, and often these circumstances contribute to the amount of motivation a woman has to take preventative measures to safeguard her health. A good example of this fact is invasive cervical cancer. Invasive cervical cancer is commonly found in those women who have never been screened or who are not screened regularly. Aboriginal women fall into this category, and statistically they are overrepresented in cervical cancer statistics.

An advisory council on women's health could help develop programs for aboriginal women, a group for which special measures must be taken to improve the use of known preventative measures. It could also play a valuable role in raising awareness about cervical cancer and the fact that early detection makes all the difference in the treatment of the disease. An advisory council on women's health, that would provide information and education on women's health issues, is crucial because of the disturbing phenomenon of women continuing to die from preventable diseases.

Madam Speaker, women continue to die from largely preventable conditions such as cervical cancer. Unprecedented numbers are now dying from lung cancer, which is, again, another largely preventable disease. As mentioned previously, in 1994 for the first time lung cancer surpassed breast cancer as the leading cancer killer of women. Women themselves, when asked what illness puts them at greatest risk of death, will usually identify breast cancer without realizing that cardiovascular disease carries greater risks.

To make smart, responsible decisions regarding their health and lifestyles, women must have access to accurate, comprehensive, and intelligent information. It's for this reason that I support Motion 505 and the creation of an advisory council on women's health.

To conclude, I urge the Assembly to recognize the unique nature of women's health and the issues that surround it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I realize I only have a short moment before we change the business of the day.

It's interesting. I remember a few years ago when the women's advisory council was scrapped by this government a year before it should have been, before the sunset clause that was stated for it. That advisory council did some really good work, and there were

good people on that from all over the province. I'm really glad this is before us, and I will be supporting it, but it goes to show that there's just no vision on that side of the House about where we need to be with women's issues, certainly one of the weaker points of this government.

When we talk about the need for a women's health advisory committee, the reality is that women's health is different. So often tests are done on male subjects rather than . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the time limit for consideration of this item today has now expired.

4:30

#### head: Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will call the committee to order.

#### head: Main Estimates 2000-2001

#### Executive Council

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Treasurer.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. It's an honour to appear before the committee on behalf of the Premier to conclude discussion on Executive Council's 2000-2003 business plan and estimates. I hope to be able to answer a number of the questions that were asked by the members at the committee's last session. That would have been the evening of Wednesday, March 8.

There was a question from one of the members asking for an explanation on the increase to the Executive Council budget. This was actually discussed in previous sessions. Just to do a recap for the member, the bureau's budget actually shows an increase of approximately \$1 million in 2001-2002 to complete the *Revised Statutes of Alberta* project, an exciting project. I know there's probably not a lineup at the theatres to see it, but it is an important work that was done. Revenue from the new project is projected to offset that additional spending. The balance of that budget increase for the bureau works out to approximately \$100,000 to allow for salary increases for staff, and there are also the same increases that will be seen across government in this year's estimates.

An increase of approximately \$1.8 million is also showing under Executive Council for the Alberta Corporate Service Centre. I'm sure the member is familiar with some of the projected work to be done there. Members of the committee should note that the centre is also going to generate revenue because it will charge back its costs to ministries, and that will result in actually no net spending increase. Members also may be aware that the Alberta Corporate Service Centre is a new program that will be consolidating and providing administrative services to ministries so that they can focus on the delivery of programs and services to Albertans. So you'll see the effect of some of that in a positive way.

[Mr. Renner in the chair]

There was also a question, Mr. Chairman, from one member of the committee who wanted to know what kind of courses are included in the bureau's in-house training program. There are actually a variety of courses that are offered to help staff improve their specialized and general professional skills. Some of those would include courses about the latest developments in computer software and other technologies, sessions to help staff upgrade their writing

and editing skills, and other general topics such as consulting and leadership. So a variety of skills upgrading and courses being offered there.

Then there was a question related to improving access to the RITE telephone system. Due to the consolidation of these centres, the result of that has actually been a higher volume in calls, which would make sense. The call volumes through the RITE telephone system have increased every year over the last three years, with more people moving into the province and provincial programs being of higher interest. So there has been that increase.

Just to give members some idea of the increase, the system logged a total of some 4.8 million calls in '97-98. A year later that number rose to a total of 5.9 million calls. That was an increase of 21 percent, an increase of more than a million calls from the previous year, from '97-98 to '98-99. As far as we can tell from the projections, the total volume for '99-2000 will probably reach some 6.2 million calls. That would be an estimated increase of approximately 6 percent, so very significant business being generated there. We are trying to make information easily available to our citizens and to broadcast that out to them, and we're certainly seeing that in the response.

Members of the committee should also note that consolidating to two RITE centres from six centres has resulted in improved service levels. The extended hours are something that we're getting positive feedback on in terms of the hours of service that are available to Albertans. Albertans can use that toll-free provincewide service to reach Alberta government offices weekdays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. That's better than bankers' hours. The new system also allows callers to reach government offices after hours by the direct-dialing option and the voice messaging service. Certainly this may be unparalleled in the country. I'm not sure what other provinces offer, but I understand that the level of service that's being offered is very significant.

The '98-99 performance measures for the RITE system showed a 97 percent satisfaction rating among the surveyed RITE system callers. They were called back and surveys done. A 97 percent satisfaction rate with that service is phenomenal, and to all of the operators and the people involved in delivering that service our congratulations should go out.

Another question dealt with the cost of the Premier's annual TV address to Albertans. This year's broadcast was on January 31. I know the members can remember that because I'm sure they were glued to their TV sets, as were we. The cost was approximately \$75,000. That works out to less than 3 cents per Albertan. If there is any difficulty with that from any of the members across, I've got a nickel for each one of you. That would give you 2 cents change, and it wouldn't have cost you a thing. Three cents. What price communication, Mr. Chairman? What price truth? Three cents per Albertan. Actually, it's interesting to note that this year's address cost the same as the Premier's address last year.

One member also asked about the process that's used to tender and award government advertising contracts. I can tell you that the Public Affairs Bureau has a very comprehensive policy in place, and that's to ensure that advertising agencies are dealt with and contracts are awarded in a fair and open manner. This particular process was actually created hand in hand with advice from the advertising community in conjunction with the Advertising Agency Association of Alberta. It was a very open process, not just in the contracting itself but in the process of developing the process. So there was open process on the process. It has resulted in a very satisfactory ability for agencies to get those bids in on those contracts. This whole process continues to be replicated, either in whole or in part, by other jurisdictions, so clearly this is a system that not only works

well but is seen as working well, and that's very important.

Basically, it goes like this. Anyone who's listed on the Alberta government's registry of qualified advertising agencies gets notified of competitions as these competitions come forward, and the agencies then compete for the various advertising jobs. Submissions are received from agencies. They're evaluated by a cross-departmental committee that's created for each particular competition. It's important to note also that all through this process the Public Affairs Bureau serves in a consultative role. It does not vote on the agency choice, and any contracts are negotiated between the client department and the selected agency. The service is very direct there.

Members of the committee also should note that each of the 26 agencies included in the government's registry of eligible agencies was required to demonstrate that they had financial solvency and had to have professional credentials before being added to the list. There is a sense of comfort there that the agencies that are on that list have the capability to handle the contract should they indeed receive the award of the contract. By keeping this registry of qualified agencies, combined with a competitive tendering process, that all works to ensure that quality work will be delivered and at the same time offers that open and fair competition process for everyone involved.

Also, a member of the committee asked for information on what steps government takes to ensure that Albertans' priorities are reflected in its plans. Well, I can tell you that we have always maintained a very firm commitment in this particular approach to ensure that Albertans not only have the ability but know that they have the ability for full and meaningful input into the plans and priorities of the government. We realize totally that when all is said and done, we work for the Alberta taxpayer. The taxpayers are our bosses. Albertans have every right to see their needs and priorities reflected in the work that we do on their behalf. The most important thing we can do, I believe, Mr. Chairman, is to ensure that Albertans' priorities are reflected in government programs. That means we need to provide the people we serve with a variety of opportunities to voice their opinions.

4:40

Just to give some examples of major public involvement initiatives in the past year, they include the Children's Forum, the health summit, the justice summit, and the aging summit. I know that members opposite, many of whom attended any number of these summits, know full well the degree of openness and inclusiveness that went into the preparation of these particular summits, the incredible amount of input that was received and validated before reports were made. So extreme care is taken to make sure that a good and healthy cross-section of Albertans' views are involved in all of our policy development. Also, the information and the feedback options are there for everybody to see, as you know, when the reports are printed. All the attendees, who had input, and what was done and what was said are all reported to Albertans.

Last year's summary of government public involvement initiatives is very significant, and I know that members opposite would want to congratulate the government on just how widespread these were. The report shows that more than 800,000 Albertans participated in at least one of these consultation events with the government. Eight hundred thousand Albertans. I'll just say that one more time, because I don't know if the full impact of that was significantly noted by members opposite. That was 800,000 Albertans who participated in any number of these events. I don't think there's another province that could match that in terms of participatory democracy and citizen initiative in terms of policymaking.

That would break down into some 30,000 Albertans who attended nearly 1,200 meetings, hearings, and workshops and another 116,000

oral and written submissions that were provided at public hearings and meetings. Last year some 770,000 Albertans also used government information lines to express their opinions. Think of that.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. DAY: I'm glad you asked how many. Hon. member, 770,000 Albertans used government information lines to express their opinions. That is almost three-quarters of a million people using the access to those lines.

Of course, there are other ways in which public consultation happens. That's listed in the report, including public meetings held around the province to hear what Albertans had to say about a variety of issues, including taxes. We listened to what they had to say and acted on that feedback. The result, of course, is the new tax plan, backed by a firm commitment to keeping Alberta's taxes low, something that's near and dear to my heart and, I know, to the hearts of all my colleagues.

If you look at last year's public consultation report, you can see that these opportunities offered to Albertans dealt with a wide range of topics from several ministries across government. You can see that those public consultation opportunities spanned the province geographically, from one end of the province to the other, east to west, north to south, with roundtables and consultations in every corner of this province.

The stats for '99 will be available around the coming fiscal year-end, and I'm sure members of the committee will see continued opportunities for public consultation as well as the continued high levels of participation across the province. Albertans know what they want, they know how to get their views across, they know how to speak to their government, and those opportunities are made available. I think that's why we continue to be seen as having one of the most open processes of policy development in government, as one of the most responsive governments if not the most responsive government in the country. That's all a trademark of how the Premier listens and involves Albertans in these processes and insists that these processes be open.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope that I've been able to answer many of the members' questions.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. At this time in the Committee of Supply on Executive Council I have just a few questions. I have three specifically.

Mr. Chairman, I have, like others, very grave concerns regarding the government's plan to outsource many of the jobs in the public service, whether it be in technology, finance, human resources. I'm talking about the Alberta Corporate Service Centre and what's going to happen here. I've been given assurances that there are going to be no layoffs, but at this present time I'm not buying that.

I have specifically these questions. The first one is: what is the current cost to the Alberta government of providing the transactions that have occurred to date for the Alberta Corporate Service Centre? The cost savings target, I understand, is 20 percent over three years, but what exactly is the amount of money that is determined to be saved here? What amount of taxpayers' money is being saved?

Mr. Chairman, my second question is: will outsourced contracts with service providers be publicly tendered to ensure that they will be awarded in a selection process that is independent? If that question could be addressed, I would be grateful.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

My third question is: how much public money was spent on the Pricewaterhouse consulting fee for the Alberta Corporate Service Centre, and what recommendations will be implemented as a result of the funds spent?

At this time, Madam Chairman, that is the extent of my questioning, but I believe they're very important questions for not only the stability but also the future of Alberta's public service.

I shall cede the floor to my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, who has many questions to ask. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. First of all, I want to thank the Treasurer for being with us, because I know that he has some other things on his mind. It's good of him to be here when the Premier couldn't be. I also want to thank him for reading those notes.

A couple of comments, first of all, on the Treasurer's response to the earlier part of this budget examination process. He talked about the million dollar increase in the budget, most of it going to the *Revised Statutes of Alberta* project, and we did talk about that before. Some of that is for salary increases. I'm curious to know how much of that is for out-of-scope positions versus union positions. I've had some comments from some folks in the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees who tell me that they're being treated relatively unfairly compared to their non-union bosses and managers, so I'd just be curious to know what's going on in the department of Executive Council.

Before I go much further, Madam Chairman, I'd like to acknowledge as well the presence in the gallery of so many of the staff of Executive Council, from the deputy minister on down. They were here with us the other night as well, and we appreciated their presence there. It's nice to know that at least somebody is listening in the galleries, taking the notes so that we can get some responses to some of our questions.

The point made about the 3 cents per Albertan for the television broadcast is a curious one. I'm aware of a public broadcaster that reaches just about every home in Alberta and would have provided that broadcast for zero cents per Albertan. While the Treasurer was making the point about what democracy costs and isn't that an affordable rate, I know this Treasurer's penchant for squeezing a penny. I know that what he would want to do is not spend any more of Alberta taxpayers' money than they've already contributed through their federal taxes to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

If we were really looking at the most cost-efficient way for Albertans to hear from their Premier through the medium of television, of course it would have been using that public broadcaster. I can only suggest that the reason why the government would choose to spend tax money as opposed to taking advantage of the money that Albertans have already contributed to the CBC is, of course, because of the CBC's policy of giving equal time to other political parties. That's really a shame, particularly in context of the Treasurer's comments that this was all in the name of democracy. It seems to me that the most democratic thing to do would have been to go for these equal-time broadcasts. But, Madam Chairman, water under the bridge. These arguments have been raised before, and of course the government, despite its protestations that it's open and listens, absolutely turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to these matters.

4:50

Now, the access to the RITE system. I have to say that I've used the RITE system many times. I find it to be a pretty reliable system. I think some good-quality decisions have been made in terms of the technology that's in place and the way it's being managed. It is an impressive track record that they have in terms of call volume. The projection of dealing with over 6 million calls in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000, is staggering when you think about the number of calls per day that that would boil down to. My question, though, to the Premier through the Treasurer is: how many of the volume of calls have to do with people calling in to express a particular concern about a government initiative versus how many are calls that are simply trying to get the telephone number to a registry agent in their community or something to that effect? It seems to me that to make those numbers more meaningful, we'd have to make a distinction between those calls which are coming in commenting on government policy versus those calls which are seeking information about access to a government service.

While we're talking about government policy, I do note that the Treasurer spent some portion of his comments talking about the consultation process which involved Albertans in summits and talked about that being a hallmark of how open and accountable this government is and how it's willing to receive input. My concern about that is that many of these events are highly controlled, highly orchestrated. In many of the events panelists are handpicked. The presentations are choreographed down to the last minute. Even the guest list and who it's open to is often highly massaged, and then the opportunities for discussion and debate around ideas that aren't scripted are curtailed. So I would like to know if this is in fact something that's happening out of Executive Council or if it's happening through Community Development.

I'm a little bit confused. I know that in this latest round of meetings dealing with Bill 11, the meetings held by what the Premier dubbed truth squads, it seems that there are professional facilitators who have been engaged to run these meetings. My understanding is that these facilitators come from the Department of Community Development. I would like to know whether or not Executive Council is a client of Community Development or the other way around and exactly who it is that's paying for these professional meeting managers at these so-called truth squad sessions. My report back from the latest one in St. Albert is chilling to me because it really talked about a meeting that was so tightly orchestrated that people apparently weren't even allowed to hold the microphone on their own, that there was some facilitator who would hold the microphone up to somebody. I guess if they said the wrong word, the microphone would just be yanked away. Of course, that's a really chilling experience.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, the chair would like to ask what this has to do with the reporting of Executive Council.

MR. SAPERS: Well, I think you could check the Blues to understand the connection with the question I raised, which is: is Community Development a client of Executive Council or the other way around? With these facilitators that go to these meetings – I was using that one as an example. So I think it's a pretty clear direction.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let's move on.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you for your advice.

Now, these facilitators of course do a very good job, and I'm not for a minute suggesting that they don't. In fact, I'm so impressed by

the job that these paid public employees do, I would like to ask the Treasurer to ask the Premier on my behalf whether or not Executive Council would be willing to make a budget available to any Member of the Legislative Assembly so that they could use the same services of the same government employees doing facilitation at public meetings.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Use your own budget.

MR. SAPERS: The Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations just said – and I'm sure she meant to say it through the chair – to use your own budget.

Well, the point is, of course, that this is a departmental budget, which is the budget of a government department which is supposed to act on behalf of all Albertans, all taxpayers, versus caucus or party budgets, which do caucus or party business. So if the government of Alberta is paying for private members such as the Member for St. Albert to have these paid facilitators organize their meetings, then of course they should make the same budget and the same paid facilitators available to any private member if they need them to organize their meetings. I would like to know whether or not those dollars are built into this budget.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the chair would think that that type of discussion is for Public Accounts. You're now talking about current. Right now we are dealing with what is in this document here as far as reporting.

Now, let's move on.

MR. SAPERS: Do these interruptions come off my time? I would hope they don't.

Another number that the Treasurer used had to do with 770,000 Albertans, over three-quarters of a million, who provided input to the government on, I believe he said, policy matters or matters of public concern. Now, I don't know whether in fact it's 770,000 different Albertans or 77,000 calling in a thousand times or what it was in terms of his numbers. What I'd like is some clarification from the Treasurer as to the breakdown of that number of 770,000. On what matters did Albertans contact Executive Council or the Premier's office? Were they providing advice, and if they were, was the advice tabulated in some way? Is there a record or a logbook someplace that the government has which says that this many Albertans phoned in and provided us this advice? For example, on Bill 11 or on any other matter of public policy we've had 770,000 telephone calls, and this is how many said that they liked it and this is how many said that they don't.

If the Treasurer is going to use numbers like 770,000 Albertans calling in and providing advice, I think he has a responsibility to tell us what that number means, to put it into context. Otherwise it becomes very much an irrelevancy, and I know that the Treasurer does not want to be irrelevant to the provincial Legislature. Well, then again, Madam Chairman, maybe he does.

Now, during the earlier discussion on Executive Council I raised a number of questions to the Premier that had to do with performance measures, and not one of those questions was answered. I asked some questions about the form of the performance measures in his business plan. Not one of those questions was answered. I asked some questions about some new performance measures on satisfaction to do with correspondence, and his response was: well, that hon. member doesn't understand the volume of correspondence that we receive. Well, I would argue with the Premier. I think that I do. Not only would my comments from the last time we were dealing with this department reflect that understanding, but also



most Albertans of course tend to copy members of the opposition when they're writing letters of concern to the Premier. I think we have a pretty fair idea of the volume, but the measure wasn't one to describe volume. The measure was one to describe satisfaction. Albertans really don't like getting back those rather limited form letters that say: thank you for your letter; I'll advise the Premier. When Albertans sit down and take the time to provide their analysis to the government, they expect a little fairer treatment than that.

The second measure that I asked about was compliance with freedom of information requests. Not a peep from the government in terms of a response in terms of developing a performance measure from Executive Council along those lines.

I had also asked about a measure that would determine the degree to which the government has been successful in defending public institutions such as our advanced education system, our K to 12 public education system, our public health care system, our judicial system, our criminal justice process, and in fact this Legislative Assembly, specific performance measures that would look at what the government has done or not done to protect these public institutions. Of course, no response to that measure whatsoever. This is particularly troubling, because today we heard that the Premier said the truth about Bill 11 is in the law, yet we know that when laws become inconvenient, this government simply changes them. We had the example most recently with the Fiscal Responsibility Act, where the government recognized that they had made a huge error, so they simply rewrote the law to suit them at the time.

5:00

Now it also asks for the Executive Council to develop a performance measure dealing with truth and accuracy or a truth and accuracy scale in terms of their advertising. I had used the example of a newspaper ad, and I think it was at that point, Madam Chairman, that I got cut off. I had run out of time. You know, this was an ad in the *Edmonton Examiner* from the middle of February, and it talked about a number of issues including health care and taxation, and it would lead Albertans to believe that many things had in fact become law that hadn't been, whether it had to do with the \$500 million endowment for the science and engineering foundation or it had to do with Bill 11 or it had to do with the flat tax strategy. So I'm very concerned when the government pays for advertising using tax dollars and the ads are misleading and false, because the ads are to bring you to a conclusion that something has happened that hasn't.

The word for that kind of advertising is propaganda, and I don't think the taxpayers should be forced to pay for what would be clearly seen as political partisan propaganda. If the Progressive Conservative Party wants to put out their propaganda, let them, and let them pay for it with their own funds. I don't think taxpayers should have to pay for that propaganda.

Another issue that the Treasurer did mention. He talked about the planning and priorities of government and the good track record they have. I guess I won't reread into the record all of the comments that I have made at other times about the Auditor General's concern about the mismatch in the business plans between performance measures and outcomes or tying outcomes to dollars spent, et cetera, but I will note that this government does not have a great track record when it comes to meeting its own performance measures. Remember, I'm not talking about performance measures that were imposed by any outside authority. I'm talking about performance measures developed by government departments, many of the performance measures very superficial, and even at that, I believe that last year this government missed over 120 of their own performance measures. So I don't think that's anything to brag about, and I was kind of surprised to hear the Treasurer raise it.

A couple of other thoughts that I have that I wish the Treasurer

would reflect on. Where exactly in this Executive Council budget, particularly when it relates to the Public Affairs Bureau, or perhaps it's in the Corporate Service Centre, are we going to find the money for the continuing campaign around Bill 11? For example, we know that Learning has given up some of its time so that a debate can be televised on Bill 11, and the Premier announced today that that debate was going to be on April 4. So I'm assuming that's going to be Tuesday night, April 4, and I understand it's a three-hour chunk of time. Now, since that time was already paid for by Learning, does that mean it's never going to show up in the accounting of all the money that was spent on the government's campaign to try to sell Bill 11? I would like to know, for example, where the continuing newspaper ad campaign is going to be paid from, out of what budget.

The Premier has also said that he's anticipating many amendments, and in fact I believe some of these amendments are going to be introduced by the government right off the bat, probably when second reading commences. So this means the government has already come to the conclusion that the bill is deeply flawed and must be rescued by some amendments. I'd be curious to know which sections of the bill the government has already found are flawed. I think Albertans would like to know that as well.

More importantly, you know, this householder that went out even with the typo to a million households apparently – at least that's what the government has claimed – are they going to send out another million with the corrections, with the amendments? [Mr. Sapers' speaking time expired.] I'll come back and finish my thoughts later, Madam Chairman.

MR. DAY: I'll be brief, Madam Chairman. There were a number of questions that were asked, and we will follow up on those, as is the habit of this government to respond to the questions. To the member for way out there in Edmonton-Gold Bar, just a comment you made in terms of the shared services and our corporate services. The goal and the aim there is to achieve the administrative efficiencies, and as the member quite rightly noted, there hasn't been a stated goal to reduce jobs.

But I do want to say something. The member reflects a view which, of course, is not necessarily shared by those who understand the principles of limited government. When you stand up and demand that all jobs be preserved, it shows a line of thinking actually from another century. If you want to see jobs preserved, you create opportunities. You don't blindly stand and say: jobs will be preserved in this one particular area. Now, I'm saying and I'm making it very clear: the goal of the corporate registries and shared services is not to reduce personnel; it's to achieve and maximize efficiencies.

I would remind the member that since 1993 the goal of this government has been to create opportunities for all citizens, and here we are with record-low unemployment rates, the lowest ever seen. I can't remember in Edmonton-Gold Bar where the member has ever seen unemployment rates as low as they are right now. That's because we pursue a policy of creating opportunities outside of government, opportunities to which the rest of the country is responding by moving here. Even the opportunities that have been created are so incredible that the huge migration from other provinces is in fact being absorbed. I'd like the member to keep that in mind when he just blindly is ideologically spouting forth a 19th century view. We've left the 20th century. We're into the 21st, and we're showing how we care for people: by creating opportunities. People respond, and we will continue to have the lowest unemployment rate if we continue to follow those very valid policies.

On the issue related to the consultations. Again, it must be difficult for the members across to absorb good news, because the

huge level of involvement by Albertans in the consultation process that has been set up and guided by the Public Affairs Bureau and others – I just have to take issue with the comments that these meetings are somehow scripted and there are certain registered lists. I'm sure the member has attended. I have attended and watched the development in the health summits, certainly the Children's Forum, and the reports around the province and consultation on issues related to seniors and the aging. I have attended those, and I have seen citizens walk up, register, and take part in very significant discussion, and they do not leave those meetings saying these were scripted. So I want to congratulate the different areas of government, the Public Affairs Bureau and others, who have organized these meetings and made sure that everybody has input. They are not scripted. I can tell you there's a good diversity of views, and I want to make that very clear.

I would also like clarification from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, because I was listening very carefully, and I heard him reflect that caucus budgets are used for caucus business and party business. I would ask him just to check *Hansard* because that, of course, would be quite a violation of fiscal policy, and that should just be included.

So, again, to the members opposite, we always value their input. Certainly their response is not scripted, and we do take it into account very carefully. The criticisms that we get we are open to because good criticism makes for even better processes. Our commitment through the Public Affairs Bureau and the other groups and organizations within government that seek the opinion of Albertans is to continue to maintain the highest standards in this nation for policy development and public involvement, and we will do so, taking in the valid criticisms that we have heard from members opposite.

That concludes my remarks today, Madam Chairman.

5:10

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: According to practice and precedent, I will now call the question. [interjection] Excuse me, hon. member. Please sit down. [interjection] Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Norwood, please sit down. [interjections] I said: according to practice. [interjection] Sit down. Sit down.

According to what has been done to date in dealing with Committee of Supply and reporting, this is what we are doing. We have a letter, that we have been using for the last several reporting sessions, that was signed by House leaders, and this is what the chair . . .

MR. SAPERS: Not on reporting.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, hon. member, it is on reporting.

MR. DICKSON: Point of order, Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Point of Order

#### Explanation of Chairman's Ruling

MR. DICKSON: This would be in the nature of an item under Standing Order 13(2) probably. So that we're sure we're talking about the same agreement, I've got copies of House leader agreements here. Perhaps you'd be good enough to reference the particular one you're referring to dealing with the report back and the time limits.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The one I am referring to: the subject

is Committee of Supply reporting. The date is May 6, 1997. It was between the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, the then leader of the New Democrats, and the Government House Leader was the hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MR. DICKSON: Madam Chairman, if I might. If you'd indulge me on this one, I don't have a copy of the agreement. Would it be possible just to briefly read the reference that refers to the report back? I don't have that copy with me.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'll tell you what, hon. member. Since I am in the chair, I'm going to call the question. I will make a copy of this and then you can look at it after and you can deal with the appropriate House leaders. All right?

MR. DICKSON: Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the chair has made a decision here. [interjections] Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, this is what we have been following to date, and this is what this chair as well as the Chairman of Committees has been following to date without incident.

MR. DICKSON: Madam Chairman, just further to 13(2) then. I want to be clear whether this is stipulated in the agreement you cited or whether we're referring to what you understand to be the practice.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is the practice, hon. member.

MR. DICKSON: It's not, I take it then, pursuant to the terms of an agreement which is subsisting and in effect right now. Is that accurate, Madam Chairman?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is basically the agreement that the people of the day, not the time, agreed to. We have nothing else except what is in Standing Orders, but we have been using this.

MR. SAPERS: But three years ago – it doesn't carry through.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, we used this last year. [interjections]

It is the chair's understanding that Standing Orders still prevail. The chair and the Chairman of Committees have been following this particular letter, but in essence Standing Orders do prevail. According to the practice we've been using last year and have been using recently, this is what we have been going on. You can ignore this under Standing Orders, and you continue to speak if you so desire.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Debate Continued

MR. SAPERS: Thanks very much, Madam Chairman. I appreciate that. The questions that I have are actually just a couple. I wanted to finish off with the point I was making before I ran out of time during my first round. With the government now moving the debate ahead – as I was saying, we're going to be looking at April 4 – what are the government's plans for communicating with Albertans about the amendments? Will that be found in the Public Affairs Bureau budget, or where else are we going to be seeing the expenses recorded for that, if at all?

What's going to happen in terms of the feedback that the provincial government has been receiving? Will there be a report that will be prepared for all Albertans that will reflect the number of those pamphlets that have been returned with the return to sender message on them or the number of e-mails or other messages? I'm assuming that's all work that's going to come in the coming fiscal year. Where are we going to see that expenditure listed? How will we know whether in fact the government has made adequate plans to accommodate this volume of correspondence and feedback they're receiving from Albertans?

I think we should get some answers to these questions, Madam Chairman, prior to any request that we vote on the estimates for Executive Council. Again, I would have to say that this whole process, as evidenced from this last little go-round that we just went through, is a flawed process in terms of examining the government's budget estimates.

I don't think we can rely on agreements that were particular to a point in time in the life of this Assembly without ensuring that they are revisited at every opportunity. The way this process works is that it's based on the fact that the opposition has every opportunity to ask every question it has regarding government's plans to spend taxpayers' dollars. I don't think that's asking too much, to use our time in this Assembly so that we can all together, all 83 of us, account to the taxpayers who sent us here to represent their best interests.

I'm looking forward to responses from the government before we are asked to provide our final approval for these spending estimates, and I will now yield the floor to any other member that has some questions on Executive Council.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just have a couple of questions in relation to this. I note that the hon. Treasurer spoke about the outsourcing of some 400 or 500 administrative service folks for the shared services program and that he is looking for efficiencies.

You know, we've discussed the Public Affairs Bureau a lot during this particular session, and it comes to mind, Mr. Treasurer, that you have millions of dollars going into that. The Public Affairs Bureau is not playing the role they should be playing. In fact, I'm wondering when it is that you're going to go to outsourcing in the Public Affairs Bureau and maybe come back with some nonpartisan type contracts for those people in higher levels within the Premier's office and those kinds of things.

You know, for the most part the folks I know do a very good job, but to talk about the Public Affairs Bureau as being a nonpartisan or unbiased group of people – they're doing a job where as far as I'm concerned they should be focusing on government issues, not political issues. Often they're told exactly the opposite, and we know that from folks we know who work in the Public Affairs Bureau.

5:20

I'm just interested, Mr. Treasurer, if there is a plan to outsource all of those folks too. Or are you going to keep them? And what about the Community Development people who do all these functions? You know, they were at the function that the hon. Member for St. Albert had last night. There they were doing their job at what essentially is a political function. So my question is: why are those people there? Why are they being drawn into the politics? If you're looking at outsourcing, are you going to get rid of those folks? They're at every summit you have.

When are you going to stop, Mr. Treasurer? When are you going to decide that – you get rid of all your employees, and you've reached your efficiencies, and nobody can do the job. You know, people are already overworked within this organization. Outsourcing more people is not the answer. It's not the answer, Mr. Treasurer. It's looking for efficiencies within, being cost-effective within. It's not getting rid of a bunch of folks that know the jobs they're doing. How is that going to impact – I guess that's my question. By outsourcing all these folks, how is that going to impact your new images boondoggle, the program that's cost this government way more money than it should have?

Those are the very folks that do the inputting on that program. Those are the very folks that you have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars training, Mr. Treasurer. How are you going to recoup those costs? Who's going to do the work required under that program? If you're looking for efficiencies, explain that to me if you could. Explain to me why it's okay for one area to be outsourced, but it isn't okay to outsource the other that seems to serve the purpose of the government. Where's the equality in that?

Those are my questions. I'd be interested in hearing back from the Treasurer.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Seeing no speakers, the chair will now call the question. We are dealing with Executive Council. After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Executive Council, are you ready for the vote.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Agreed to:	
Operating Expense	\$15,298,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$250,000

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Opposed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried.

MR. DAY: I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, for the following department.

Executive Council: operating expense, \$15,298,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$250,000.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.  
The Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the hour I move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn and then reconvene this evening at 8 in Committee of Supply.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, does the Assembly agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Opposed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Carried. We stand adjourned until 8 o'clock tonight, when we'll reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]