

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 4, 2000**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 00/04/04

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Our Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings for our province and ourselves. We ask You to ensure to us Your guidance and the will to follow it. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, we have a long list of hon. members who have advised me today that they would like to participate in this point in the Routine, as we have long lists for other aspects of the Routine. So let us be patient as we move forward.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to present a petition signed by 7,500 people. The petition reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to . . . introduce legislation requiring a minimum of two people on shifts from dark to daylight. Employers must be responsible for their employees' safety! We are asking the Legislature of Alberta to pass a "Tara McDonald Law" to protect employees' lives.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition here from a number of young people in St. Albert and area who are in support of Bill 11.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today signed by 100 Albertans from Leduc to High Prairie and a great many in north-central Edmonton. They do petition and "urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private healthcare and undermining public healthcare," sir.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These petitions just keep rolling in regardless of the damage control the Premier tries to do. I have more than a hundred here signed by people throughout Edmonton, St. Albert, Leduc, and Spruce Grove who are urging "the government 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. With your permission I would like to table a petition signed by 247 Albertans from Edson, Robb, Carrot Creek, Grande Cache, Wildwood, Hinton, St. Paul, and Smoky Lake. This petition is urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 369 people from the Edmonton, Stony Plain, Carvel, Sangudo, Spruce Grove, Seba Beach, Evansburg, Wabamun, and Sherwood Park areas, and they are petitioning "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-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions to present this afternoon. The first is a petition signed from citizens in Calgary and Edson urging

the Government to increase funding of children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

The second is a petition signed by 352 citizens from Edmonton, Leduc, Ardrossan, and Sherwood Park urging "the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system]."

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I have two petitions to present today. The first is signed by 185 people from Edmonton, Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Calgary, and Devon. This is on the issue of mature and aging women and asks that the government take an enlightened, preventative approach and add medications and therapies to the Alberta drug list.

The second petition is signed by 125 people from a variety of locations in northern and central Alberta. They are asking that the government "stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table petitions signed by citizens from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Beaumont, Legal, Carvel, Fort Saskatchewan, and Alberta Beach asking "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining [our] public health care [system]." At the end of today's tablings we will have tabled 5,033 names, bringing the total to date to 38,426 concerned Albertans.

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

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to also table a petition. It is signed by 495 Albertans who reside in Edmonton, Gibbons, Redwater, Ardrossan, Sherwood Park, and St. Albert. They are asking the Legislative Assembly "to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining [our] public health care [system]."

Thank you.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling petitions with 155 names of Albertans from Edson, Robb, Carrot Creek, Wildwood, Gainford, Boyle, Smoky Lake, Lamont, and Bonnyville urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system]."

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to present a petition to the Assembly. This is signed by 291 Calgaryans, including those living in a number of the southwest Calgary constituencies like Calgary-Glenmore. They are petitioning this Assembly to "urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present to the Assembly a petition signed by 215 Albertans. They reside in Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Morinville, Vegreville, and Fort Saskatchewan, and the petition to which they've added their names reads as follows:

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-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" in the province. This is signed by 332 Albertans from Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, Ponoka, Stettler, Vermilion, Smoky Lake, St. Paul, New Dayton, Warspite, Cold Lake, Vilna, and especially Edson.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions to present today. The first one is signed by 265 Albertans from Peace River, St. Isidore, Fairview, Grimshaw, Grande Prairie, McLennan, La Crete, Nampa, and Falher. Their petition states:

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 second petition that I have today, Mr. Speaker, states:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to stop promoting private healthcare and undermining public healthcare.

It is signed by 154 citizens of this province from Edmonton, Millet, Stony Plain, Gibbons, and Sherwood Park.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to the Assembly. It's signed by 439 Albertans from Red Deer, Lacombe, Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Cold Lake, Rimbey, Bluffton, Ponoka, Smoky Lake, Leduc, Spruce Grove, Eckville, Rimbey, Wetaskiwin, Stettler, Mulhurst, St. Albert, Grande Prairie, Fort Saskatchewan, Lethbridge, Raymond, and Cardston. 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, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table a petition signed by 1,055 Albertans from Grande Prairie, Beaverlodge, Wembley, Sexsmith, Calgary, Rimbey, Marwayne, Morinville, Canmore, Banff, Blackfalds, Medicine Hat, Fort Saskatchewan,

Leduc, Stettler, Valleyview, Red Deer, Bashaw, Bluffton, Winfield, Edmonton, Darwell, Lethbridge, Fox Creek, Carvel, Barrhead, and Fallis. This brings the total number signing this petition to 9,464. The petitioners request the 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

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the petition standing in my name on the Order Paper be read for a first time.

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-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition which I recently tabled with this Assembly urging the government to stop its move towards privatizing 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.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise and request that the petition I tabled recently be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to protect, support, and enhance public health care in Alberta and to ban for-profit, private hospitals from receiving public dollars.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that at this point the petition with respect to concern about erosion of our public health care system be now read and received please.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure this afternoon that I ask that the petition I presented the other day now be read and received. It's the one dealing with stopping private health care in this province.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to stop promoting private healthcare and undermining public healthcare.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled the other week be now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

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

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request that the petition I presented yesterday and, if possible, the petition I presented on March 23 be read and received.

Thank you.

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.

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

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to ask that the petition filed on the 22nd of March and another one on the 3rd of April be now read and received. They are regarding the privatization of health care in the province.

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.

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-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented in this Assembly on March 23 regarding the underfunding of public health care now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask now that the petitions I filed in the Assembly on March 23 and April 3 now be 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.

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 Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented regarding the undermining of public health care and the concerns about it 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-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would request that the petition I presented on March 23 urging the government to stop privatizing the 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 Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented against for-profit health care on March 23 be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented on behalf of 114 Edmonton and area residents requesting that the promotion of private health care and the undermining of public health care be stopped be now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, request that the petition I presented on March 23 signed by 287 Albertans requesting that the promotion of private health care and the undermining of public health care be stopped be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the

petitions in respect to support for public health care that I introduced on March 23 and yesterday, April 3, 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.

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**head: Notices of Motions**

**THE SPEAKER:** The 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 do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 7, 8, and 10.

I'm also giving oral notice today that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 13, 14, 15, 16, and 24.

**head: Tabling Returns and Reports**

**MR. KLEIN:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table five copies of a letter I sent to the Prime Minister confirming the discussions that took place in Calgary on March 23. This letter alludes to the Prime Minister and myself agreeing that there would be a review of all legislation across the country by various provincial jurisdictions as it pertains to contracting out medical services.

It alludes to an agreement between the Prime Minister and myself that we would uphold the five principles of the Canada Health Act, that these principles are paramount, and we agreed to work together to defend those principles. We agreed that "Canada should not allow a two-tier, for-profit health system to develop." The letter states that we agreed that "the status quo in health care is not working and we agreed to work together in developing a new system that is economically sustainable" but still operates within the parameters of the Canada Health Act. It points out to the Prime Minister that the Prime Minister "raised no objection to the passage of Bill Eleven."

1:50

**DR. WEST:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table responses to written questions 218, 219, 220, 226, and 227.

**MRS. McCLELLAN:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file with the Assembly today a news release entitled No NAFTA Implications for Bill 11. Accompanying this is a legal review by Shawna Vogel, an international business lawyer with an Edmonton firm, Cruickshank Karvellas.

**MR. JONSON:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to table five copies of a document entitled Restoring Federal Funding Support for Alberta's Health System.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. PASZKOWSKI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and table a statement in recognition of Building Safety

Week, being held April 2 through to the 8th. In recognition of this week I invite all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the importance of building safety, construction, and building codes and the dedicated building officials who administer these codes.

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

**MR. PHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table five copies of a letter I signed today in response to the letter dated March 21, 2000, from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I would like to quote two sentences in my letter. If she

would like a thorough debate on Bill 11 with full record and in an environment representative and open to all Albertans, there is no better place than the Legislature. If this challenge is just a cheap political ploy to attract attention, please don't waste my time.

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

**DR. PANNU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table several letters from concerned Albertans from Fort McMurray, Calgary, and Edmonton who are opposed to Bill 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. DICKSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings this afternoon. Let's start off with a letter from Michael Dobbin, a very prominent Calgarian, expressing his opposition to Bill 11.

Next, a commentary which appeared in the April/May 2000 issue of *LawNow* by the editor, an analysis of Bill 11 and where it takes us.

The next one is a program from the groundbreaking for the Calgary Centre of Hope, a wonderful new facility by the Salvation Army in that city.

Next, a report on homelessness. Now, this is a summary of federal government initiatives dealing with homelessness dated January 21, 2000.

The next one is a summary of national activities prepared by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities providing a perspective on housing with a bigger focus on how we provide safe, affordable housing to every citizen.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the most voluminous document I've got is a report from the government of Canada and the Hon. Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for homelessness, that inventories, catalogues some of the programs that deal with homelessness across the country, including this province.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SAPERS:** Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have several tablings this afternoon as well. The first tabling that I have is a letter from Mrs. Anderson from Edmonton, who has asked that a copy of this be tabled in the Assembly. She has herself faxed a copy of her correspondence to every Member of the Legislative Assembly, and it is imploring the government to scrap Bill 11.

The second tabling I have is from Monica Hughes, a constituent of Edmonton-Glenora, who writes the Premier and suggests that Bill 11 should not be passed and that there is no justification for supporting this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I also have five copies of the cover page of several copies of the government's householder that are being sent back to

the Premier, including statements saying: "I am absolutely opposed to this Bill"; the Premier and "his band of 'truth squad' bandits"; just say no; and say no to Bill 11.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table five copies of an Alberta Liberal caucus news release dated April 4, 2000. I'm taking the unusual stand of tabling a news release in the Assembly because of the importance of the issue. The news release says that despite the Acting Provincial Treasurer, the Alberta Liberals will oppose the imposition of a sales tax in the province of Alberta.

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

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a number of tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter from Dr. David Bond, who is president of the Alberta Medical Association, wherein he outlines his understanding of the meeting that was held between himself and the Premier. He indicates that he anticipates the proposed amendments to Bill 11 by mid-April, whereby they will be assessed each on its own merit and that this may not necessarily translate into support from the AMA for the legislation.

The second is a letter from Darlene Konduc from Sherwood Park, wherein she indicates that there is a place for free enterprise and business for profit in our society, but as a tax payer, a voter, and a businessperson she does not want any of her tax dollars to support health care for profit.

The third is a paper that has been put forward by Dr. Laura Shanner. She is with the J. Dossetor Health Ethics Centre and department of public health sciences at the University of Alberta, and she indicates that Bill 11 should be removed entirely and a new approach to actual reform of health care undertaken. Increasing surgical facilities will do extremely little to reduce costs and improve health care for Albertans. The paper is entitled Ethical Concerns about Bill 11.

The other tabling that I have is from Dr. Kathrine Peters, who is associate professor of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. She indicates that the Premier appears "to have no regard to the constituents" that he serves, and it appears that he has "been starving the public health care system to prepare the way for a private system."

My last tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of a speech entitled The Immorality of Bill 11 given by Reverend Dr. Bruce Miller that indicates:

Besides being dishonest and deceptive, with the name "Health Care Protection Act," Bill 11 undermines the moral foundation of our health care system, and puts in jeopardy the very values which we treasure, such as compassion, universality and accessibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is a response from the Alberta Partnership for Health in regards to Bill 11.

MS LEBOVICI: Not endorsing it.

MR. WICKMAN: Not endorsing it by any means. No, no, no, no, no.

MS LEBOVICI: Sixty-eight associations.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, yes, all 68.

My second one, Mr. Speaker, is from a constituent, Mr. Don

Dickson from Edmonton-Rutherford, who wishes it known that he is strongly opposed to Bill 11.

2:00

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today, the first of which is from a very prominent Edmontonian, a gentleman and long-term educator in the province of Alberta, a fantastic soccer coach and football coach. He is now a councillor in the city of Edmonton. His name is Bryan Anderson. He has written a letter to the Hon. Halvar Jonson decrying the discrepancies between the cataract surgery at the Royal Alex hospital and that which is in Lamont at the Archer memorial hospital. He decries the difference between the service there and the service here and that the foldable single lenses are provided free of charge there, where they're \$250 here, sir.

The second tabling is from a resident of Banff, Alberta, Yvonne May. She's writing the Premier with regards to the Genesis Land Development Corp., the heli-skiing operation, and four-seasons resort plan for the Spray Valley. She asks that the Premier immediately halt this development.

The third is also of the same subject matter, sir, and will not be repeated, save and except the person that wrote this letter to the Premier is Bruce Bembridge from Exshaw, Alberta.

The fourth is the same sort of letter to the Hon. Ralph Klein, again that the Genesis Land Development Corp. stop the development immediately and is from Pascal Beaurais from Canmore, Alberta, sir.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings. The first tabling is a letter to the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board signed by 22 people who live just northeast of Edmonton who are opposed to the drilling activity in the vicinity in which they live for a variety of reasons which are outlined in the letter.

The second set of tablings I have is three letters, one from Lisa Hauser of Calgary, Laura Downing of Calgary, and Lisa Downing of Canmore. These three people have written in opposition to the Genesis Land Development proposed development of the Kananaskis Valley, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies signed by six different Albertans. They are Annie Larrivee, Philippe Gauthier, Phil Villeneuve, Terry Burstrom, Darrell Skinner, and Carrie Skinner. These letters are all opposed to the Genesis Land Development Corp. proposal to develop a heli-skiing operation and four-seasons resort in the Spray Valley.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've just brought a small sample of some of the correspondence that have come to my office from Cathryn Furtak, Geoff Collinge, Carl Scullion, R.L. Sylvester, Karl Kolm, and Patricia Henderson, all expressing grave concerns about Bill 11.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a letter from Jennifer Chipman, a very thoughtful letter urging all MLAs to support the integration of the midwifery services evaluation project and, further, to support the funding of midwifery services under Alberta health care.

Thank you.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to table the appropriate copies of two separate letters from constituents of Edmonton-Manning, Abe Fehr and Marie Fehr, and they're CC'd to just about everybody. The gist of the letter starting off is:

The Alberta Government, under Premier Ralph Klein is once again proving that they are totally irresponsible to the people of Alberta by attempting to privatize our hospitals.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to table a report. In fact, it's a study prepared by Dr. Donna Wilson, professor of nursing at the University of Alberta. This very valid and reliable study talks about the shift away from hospital use by terminally ill and dying patients.

Thank you.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling this afternoon on behalf of a constituent, Rita Talen. She is on the board of directors of the Rehoboth Christian ministries, a nonprofit organization serving Albertans who are mentally challenged.

Thank you.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how to handle this, but obviously there are some games being played here relative to tablings. I have just in the past few days received maybe 300, 400 letters in support of Bill 11. I could read every one today and table them, but we'd be here until 6 or 7 o'clock this evening. I'm just serving warning. I'm just going to table a couple today.

The first one is addressed to the Leader of the Official Opposition. It says, "Dear Madam: I am totally disappointed listening to you and your socialist followers trying to scare me and my family into believing Bill 11 is all wrong." Another letter here says:

Congratulations! Bill 11 is a masterpiece. In my view the bill:

1. is a victory for democracy; we citizens have been consulted prior to the legislation. That is a first.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just file one more.

Last week I spent an afternoon with a cup of tea and Bill 11. I had heard so much about Alberta's Health Care Protection Act in the media that I wanted to read the document to gain a better understanding of the contents and what it means to Albertans.

I expected to read a much more radical bill than the one put forward. This legislation is a common-sense approach to help solve our health care problems. You and your government should be congratulated, not condemned, for your initiative in this bill.

And it goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, I'm serving notice today that if this nonsense by the opposition on the other side continues, I will make sure that we pull out every single letter in support. It will take us until midnight each and every day to table all of the letters that we have, if they want to continue.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Forestry.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies in response to a letter that was tabled by the Member for Edmonton-Norwood. This letter, of course, is in response to debate. I've asked in writing for the member to identify what some of the policies are of their government in rural Alberta, and I'll just read one little part of it. The last policy we heard was in '91, of course, when the Liberal leader at the time said: what it means is that instead of building hospitals in every rinky-dink town in Alberta, we start saying no. That is why I'd like to know what their policies are.

It also goes on to say . . . [interjections] This is very short. For the amount of time you take, this is short. The leader also goes on to say: what it means is that instead of building curling rinks in every town, we say no. He also indicated that they would say no to recreation centres, shelters, and roads: all important issues to rural Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see their response in writing.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a constituent of mine in Edmonton-Whitemud, Mrs. Armelle Bridgeman. She's seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that she please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour for me today to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly some 19 grade 12 students from St. Matthew high school in Rocky Mountain House. They're accompanied by their teacher, Darren Brick, and parent Mrs. Darlene Levitt. I believe they're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

2:10

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Legislature 16 distinguished visitors, and 13 of those are very progressive, dedicated students from Mimiw Sakahikan at Pigeon Lake. It's really a pleasure to have them here today. They're accompanied by Richard Espinoza, Michael Toohey, and Elizabeth Rowan. I would ask that they now rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 29 bright, enthusiastic grade 6 students from Clive school in Clive, Alberta, accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Rob MacKinnon, who is one of my favourite teachers; parent-helpers Mrs. Gloria Friesen, Mrs. Wanda Grose, Mr. Verle Lang, Mrs. Bev Northcott, Mr. Neil Ronald, Mrs. Margaret Ronald, Mr. Allan Rowley, Mrs. Wanda Wagner, Mrs. Margaret Westergreen, Mr. Mark Westling; and bus driver Mr. Jerome Wildeman.

They're seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 11 students that are here in the public gallery. They are with NorQuest College. NorQuest College is very good about having tours through the Legislative Assembly. This group today is accompanied by their group leader, Mr. Cap Tiege. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a great group of students to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly. I've been in their grade 10 classroom, and they had great questions to ask. There are 18 of them here. They are here with their teacher, Miss Dunn. They're from Sturgeon composite, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point this afternoon I'm delighted to be able to introduce to you and through you to all of our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly five individuals who have been very effective and very strong advocates for a strong public health care system. I spot them in the public gallery opposite: Dr. Harold Swanson, Verna Milligan, Dr. Malcolm McPhee, Jane Walker, and Wilma Kassian. I'd invite each of our guests to stand and receive the customary warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with a great deal of pride and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a distinguished Canadian who is accompanied by a very, very special Albertan and Edmontonian. The distinguished Canadian is none other than Shirley Douglas, a woman of remarkable talent, dedication, and principle. She is currently the spokesperson for the Canadian Health Coalition and a noted actress. For several years now Ms Douglas has been speaking out across the country about the problems facing the universal public health care system, and as my colleagues have perhaps already guessed, she is the daughter of Tommy Douglas, the former CCF/NDP Premier of Saskatchewan and the man who pioneered medicare in that province. The very special Albertan is none other than my wife, Swinder Pannu. Both of these guests, Mr. Speaker, are seated in your gallery. I will now request them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you a constituent of Edmonton-Glengarry, Bev Dockrill. She is seated in the public gallery, and with your permission I'd ask that she now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

head: Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I've received notices from 21 hon. members who indicated to me that they wish to raise a question in question period today. I've never had such length of a list. There are 21, so I ask for brevity in questions and brevity in answers today so all hon. members will have an opportunity.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. First main question.

### Private Health Services

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 8 in this Legislative Assembly the Premier said the following about his private hospitals policy: "If we had something to hide, if we had something to be afraid of, we would have kept this from the public." Yesterday the Official Opposition released a secret report funded by this government, by the Department of Health and Wellness. The government has held on to this rather damaging report and thus chosen to hide it from Albertans, I guess because it told the truth, not the misinformation being spread by the government's million dollar propaganda campaign. My questions are to the Premier. Why was this report kept hidden from Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness supplement, but since the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition has alluded to hiding things, I would like to table a letter dated December 16, 1994, and it says:

Dear Nancy:

We have recently been approached by the Department of Health with respect to your records as the former Minister responsible for that department. They would like to transfer the material to the Provincial Archives of Alberta. We would like to accept the material.

As ministerial records are currently considered the private property of the respective ministers, your approval will be required to effect the deposit.

According to my information, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has not replied to this particular memo, and I understand that there are some 155 boxes of records that were compiled when she was Minister of Health that she now refuses to release to the public.

### Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

THE SPEAKER: Hon. leader, please. As the hon. Government House Leader has already risen on a point of order that will be dealt with at the conclusion of question period, I can only anticipate that the point of order that the hon. Government House Leader would probably want to raise with the House would have to do with pertinence, relevancy, anticipation of a debate that would go on tonight. I want to make it very clear that yesterday the chair did rise with respect to this matter and did indicate that questions dealing with Bill 11 would not be dealt with today as there is a scheduled debate tonight and it's on the Order Paper. However, that does not preclude questions respecting policy of the government on various matters. So my only plea to anyone who's raising questions today is: be very skillful in the words of your questions so the chair will not have to intervene again.

### Private Health Services (continued)

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier has talked over the last few months about the importance of debate, about providing Albertans with all of the information about his health care policy, about the importance of being open and accountable, how

can he justify hiding from Albertans one of the few Alberta-specific reports that are available on private health care policy?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the report to which the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition alludes was prepared autonomously by the University of Alberta, yes, I understand, at the request of the Department of Health and Wellness, and I'll have the hon. minister respond.

2:20

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition's portrayal of the status of this report is false. The study by the Institute of Health Economics, which is an independent and very reputable agency at the University of Alberta – and, yes, it is funded by an unconditional grant of \$250,000 a year, and there are at least a dozen other agencies or companies or institutions that provide funding to that institute as well.

Mr. Speaker, the document that was alluded to in this Assembly yesterday is an early draft of the report. It still has to undergo further work and also, as is traditional with the institute, peer review. This document is not a final document. It is independent of government, and the funding that we provide to the institute is on an ongoing basis with no strings attached in terms of the whole assistance that we're providing.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that yesterday his minister said that there's very little, if any, evidence in Alberta dealing with private health care, is the Premier keeping his study hidden because it contradicts his private hospital policy and his minister of health?

MR. KLEIN: It's not my study, Mr. Speaker, but since she referred to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, I'll have him respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the final report. As I said, the institute has been of considerable assistance to Alberta Health and Wellness and to the health care system in general in terms of providing independent and learned reviews of a number of issues and policy matters as far as the health care system is concerned. I would suspect that the final report, which the hon. member should have enough courtesy to recognize and acknowledge is what anybody should be quoting from, I'm sure will be fair and balanced and constructive as far as the health care system is concerned.

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

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why did the Premier tell Albertans on March 14 that there was evidence to support his private hospitals policy when his own report, hidden until yesterday, says that there is no evidence to show that the public health care system is not efficient? Why would he misinform Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this government has never, not now, will never, have a private hospital policy, so when the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition alludes to a private hospital policy, she asks a question that is absolutely totally irrelevant.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier tell Albertans on December 10 of 1999 that private hospitals are more cost-effective when his own report, hidden until yesterday, says that there is no proof of this claim? Why would he misinform Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I've never alluded to private hospitals.

It is not in the language of this caucus. There is nothing being considered by this government that includes private hospitals. As a matter of fact, the opposite, the absolute opposite is true.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, in fact, it talks about private hospitals in this funded study from the government of Alberta.

Why did the Premier tell Albertans on March 14 that under his private hospitals policy there would be no queue-jumping when his own report, hidden until yesterday, says that enhanced services and faster access to care will be available for those able to pay, at least according to this government-funded report?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that's what a University of Alberta report might or might not say. I understand that it's only in draft stage and has not been subjected to a peer review.

Relative to the report itself I'll again have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all indicate and repeat that this study is being done by the Institute of Health Economics, which is a respected independent agency of the University of Alberta. That is the first misstatement that has been made across the way.

Secondly, it is my opinion that the hon. member is misquoting or selectively quoting from this particular report. Some might call it paraphrasing, but they have a curious way of paraphrasing. However, Mr. Speaker, I think the important thing here is that the report is in the development stages. I would think that any responsible person across the way would want to wait until the final report is completed before quoting it as a set of final findings.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, if this report is an interim report, then why wouldn't the government pull its private hospitals policy statements and discussions and await the final report before proceeding further with their policy, which has caused so much concern amongst Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is no private hospital policy statement; therefore the question is irrelevant.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier tell Albertans on November 16, 1999, that under his private hospital policy there would be no two-tier medicine in Alberta when his own report, which has been hidden from Albertans until yesterday, says that his private hospital policy could lead to two-tiered health care. Why would he misinform Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again there is nothing to allude to a so-called private hospital policy, so that question is irrelevant. It's quite clear that any policy being developed by this government does not allow a two-tier, for-profit health system to develop, unlike the policy of the Liberal Party, where the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition said: if there is a place for private hospitals in the system, let them operate. She is the only person who has alluded to private hospitals.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that the issue is in fact extremely relevant to the people of this province, why did the Premier tell Albertans on March 10 that there was evidence that contracting out surgeries was more cost-effective when his own report, hidden until yesterday, says that no comparative studies to back up the Premier's claim exist. Why would he misinform the people of this province on such an important debate on public policy?



MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the only person misinforming the people of this province is the leader of the Liberal opposition and her devoted group of loyal followers; namely, the Liberals, who have been on a very intensified campaign of spreading vicious and malicious misinformation.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public opposition to the government scheme to legalize private, for-profit hospitals under a slightly different name has been growing steadily since last November. All of the government's expensive PR spin-doctoring has only deepened and solidified public opposition. My questions are to the Premier. Why does the Premier persist in shoving down the throats of Albertans something that they clearly – clearly – do not want?

2:30

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure that that is the case. I can allude to the policy of the NDs, obviously not the bill. The policy is quite clear and is against what virtually every doctor, even the AMA, has told us. The policy of the NDs is to eliminate all surgical clinics whatsoever, including therapeutic abortion clinics, including cataract clinics. The policy of the NDs – and this hon. member can clarify it – is to immediately close all surgical clinics that are contracted to regional health authorities. In other words, the policy is no contracting out whatsoever. Everything must be done within the confines of the bricks and mortar of a full-scale hospital. That is their policy.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Premier for explaining my party's policy to Albertans. He should leave it to me to do it. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to proceed.

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. member, I gave you my permission, and you proceeded to give a statement and a preamble. When you throw it out in this House, you've got to expect to get it back.

If you have a question, I'll recognize you. Proceed.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier again: why won't the Premier admit that his expensive PR spin-doctoring has failed for the simple reason that Albertans don't support his privatization scheme no matter how it is packaged?

MR. KLEIN: No spin-doctoring here. No privatization here, Mr. Speaker. The only people who have been guilty of spin-doctoring: well, certainly the Canadian Union of Public Employees, who have probably spent millions on this campaign; the Liberals in particular, who won't tell us how much they've spent on their campaign; and the Friends of Medicare, backed by the Alberta Federation of Labour. That's been the only spin-doctoring.

Mr. Speaker, all we have sent out is a copy of a bill that purports to become law, and as I've said, nothing can be more truthful than the law.

DR. PANNU: I hope he listens to the AMA, if not to the AFL.

Mr. Speaker, my last question to the Premier: why doesn't the Premier understand that when Albertans say no, they mean no when it comes to the privatization of health care?

MR. KLEIN: I find it so very, very strange that this member in particular would be asking those kinds of questions: the great defender of medicare. Yet he fails to question in any way, shape, or

form the legislation that was passed in Saskatchewan, the birthplace of medicare. The daughter of the late hon. Tommy Douglas is here in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. That piece of legislation, passed in 1996, is an act respecting health facilities. Our act is very, very similar to that act passed in Saskatchewan by the NDs, only our act is much stronger. It even puts more fences around contracted-out surgical facilities.

Relative to a comment that was made by the leader of the third party, I'm not trying to explain ND policy on this particular issue, but if he would stand up in this House and explain the policy, I'm sure Albertans would be most appreciative.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Hospital Construction

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Lakeland health authority announced that the Fort Saskatchewan health centre will undergo major fire code upgrades and improvement to the surgical suites. I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure to speak to the reasons the upgrades are needed and what they are expected to accomplish.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recently announced project in the Fort Saskatchewan hospital deals with upgrading much of the fire and the electrical requirements but also adding some additional space for the much-needed surgery that's taking place. Many of the staff are working in small space, especially medical records. We're also concerned with some of the fire regulations, and we'll be looking at some window upgrades and improving the total envelope of that part of the hospital.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Fort health centre is a busy facility and does a great many surgeries and they've been using temporary facilities, temporary additions for several years, I'd like to ask the minister how a future new facility would fit into the ministry's long-range plans.

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, what happens now in the province of Alberta is that individual regional health authorities will be prioritizing projects based on need and also on space requirements and program delivery. That particular list will then come to Alberta Infrastructure, and with the co-operation of the minister of health our department will review those space requirements and prioritize them on a provincewide basis and then make the necessary announcements as per the budget dollars available in that particular year.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to that question, would the future construction of a new Fort Saskatchewan hospital or any other health facility be impacted by health authorities leasing facilities in their community?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, from about '92-93 to '99 the government invested close to a billion dollars in not only new hospitals but renovations, repairs, and upgrading and in bringing in new technology. Over the next three years we'll be rolling out a business plan with a \$324 million investment, again not only preservation of facilities but new facilities and some upgrades. The regional health authorities will look at what strategy gives them the best value for the tax dollar, but we're committed to spend at least \$324 million over the next three years.

### Private Health Services

(continued)

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of discrepancies between what the Premier has been telling Albertans about private health care policy in this province and what is in reports that the government has commissioned and received. I'm wondering for the record this afternoon if the Premier could define for Albertans the difference between a private hospital and an overnight private surgical facility. What is the difference, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's in the policy statement that, of course, led to the bill, which will be introduced for second reading later today. If the hon. member is confused as to what a hospital is, I would reiterate the challenge that I made and ask her to go and visit the Royal Alex or University hospital or Misericordia or Grey Nuns. If she wants to know what a surgical clinic is, whether it's a day clinic – first of all, there are no overnight clinics that I know of in the province other than, I think, HRG, which contracts to WCB and British Columbia for some services. I know of no overnight surgical clinics, but I would suspect that an overnight surgical clinic would be an extension of the kind of clinics that now operate on a day basis. There are 140 of them operating in Alberta as I speak.

So if the hon. member wants to first of all go to a hospital, like the Royal Alex or the Grey Nuns or Misericordia or University hospital, if she doesn't know what a hospital looks like, then I would invite her to go down and have a look at one of those. If she wants to know what a surgical clinic looks like, then I would invite her to go down and have a look at one of the local therapeutic abortion clinics or cataract surgery clinics.

### Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, all hon. members have been circulated the document called Bill 11, the Health Care Protection Act.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, if you'd like the chair to assist, Definitions, section 29 in the act, defines what a designated surgical facility is. There are also sections in here about what public hospital means.

2:40

We indicated yesterday that as the debate has been established and scheduled to start tonight on second reading, there'll be ample opportunity for it, and the question period should not be used in terms of talking about things that are clearly before all members of the House. Now, there have been great liberties taken with some of the questions already this afternoon. I would like to refer all members to *Beauchesne* 409(11), dealing with government policy.

Hon. member, would you continue, please, but remember what the chair has said.

### Private Health Services

(continued)

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Premier. Why did the Premier tell Albertans on November 24, '99, that under his private hospital policy no one would get faster service because they have a credit card or cheque book when his own government report, hidden until yesterday, says that there could be receipt of different enhanced services for Albertans according to the ability to pay? Were you not concerned this would mislead Albertans, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Before answering the question, I stand to be corrected, Mr. Speaker. I talked about 140 clinics. I mean there are 140 procedures being done in 52 clinics, and I'm sure that some of those clinics exist here in Edmonton. I reiterate that if the hon. member wants to see the difference between a surgical clinic and a hospital, go down and see for herself.

Mr. Speaker, I'll answer the question. Since this government has never alluded to private hospitals – only the Liberals have alluded to private hospitals – since the government has never alluded to a private hospitals policy, I consider the question to be irrelevant.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier tell Albertans on November 16, 1999, that there would be no two-tiered, American style health care in Alberta when the government's report, hidden until yesterday, says that sources of revenue other than that from RHAs may be needed for private hospitals to survive financially? Were you not concerned that this would mislead Albertans, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to the question of two-tier, for-profit, again, this government has never alluded to allowing a two-tier, for-profit health care system to develop. As a matter of fact, I will reiterate the agreement made between the Prime Minister and myself where we agreed that Canada should not ever allow a two-tier, for-profit health system to develop. It's as simple as that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

### Organized Crime

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you my questions this afternoon have absolutely nothing to do with health policy or Bill 11. My questions this afternoon are to the hon. Minister of Justice and the hon. Minister of Infrastructure. Albertans are encouraged that the government has committed itself to combating organized and gang crime, but many are concerned with recent media reports of a new courtroom under construction in Edmonton. My first question is to the Minister of Justice. Apart from spending 1 and a half million dollars on a new courthouse in Edmonton, what exactly has the minister done to stem the increase in gang-related activities in this province?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Organized crime is a very serious concern of this government and indeed of all governments across the country. That's why when I attended a meeting with attorneys general in December – December 5, I believe it was – in Vancouver, we spent a good half day hearing from RCMP and other police forces across the country about the nature and extent of organized crime, the nature and extent of gangs in the country, what is happening with respect to them, what we need to do, and speaking as well about how we can co-ordinate our processes and our information to best combat organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, organized crime does not respect boundaries, so the fact that we police on a municipal basis or on a provincial basis is a bit of an inhibitor in the war against organized crime, and therefore it's absolutely essential that justice departments across the country, attorneys general across the country, work together to make sure that there's a good sharing of information and good co-operation between our police services. For example, I would point out that there was a conference, organized not by the Attorney General's office but by police forces themselves, in Banff this last weekend talking about gangs and particularly focusing on aboriginal gangs.

So there's been a lot of effort. I've referenced in the House before the \$8 million which we allocated in November of 1998 to the sharing of information and the Criminal Intelligence Service of Alberta, which again co-ordinates and helps the police forces across this province co-ordinate their efforts on organized crime. One significant result of that was the very significant bust last September where some 30 individuals were arrested and charged with gang-related activities.

Of course, that brings us to the need for a courtroom, not a new courthouse but a courtroom which is of the size and magnitude to allow us to prosecute large groups as may come before us with these arrests on organized crime issues.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister please explain just exactly why a special courtroom is required to try gang members? Can't they use the same courtrooms as everyone else?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is essential, as part of our battle against organized crime, that we have in place the resources necessary to deal with the second stage. The police of course have the obligation to investigate and to arrest and to bring to justice the people who are involved in organized crime and gangs, but we then have to provide the infrastructure necessary to deal with those charges in court. When you have gang-related charges, it's necessary to have all of those who are charged on an associated basis in court at the same time, thus the need for a large courtroom.

But I would indicate again that we're not building a specialized courthouse as has been done in other provinces. Rather, we're renovating some space in the basement of the existing courthouse in Edmonton to provide for a larger courtroom which will be used for prosecution of gang type offences like this and for many other uses within the province.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Given that the minister is responsible for constructing this courtroom, can he advise if other alternatives were considered prior to this costly construction?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, our department, in co-operation with the Department of Justice, looked at a number of alternative locations. One was the base at Nmao. However, logistics and some of the security provisions would have been considerable. So we again looked at the courthouse in the city of Edmonton, knowing quite well that the level we're looking at, the basement level, hasn't been renovated since 1980. There are some much-needed code upgrades as well. We also consulted with the three levels of court that had assured us they will be using these court facilities in the future. As a result, we decided to get the best value for the taxpayer dollar and do the renovations, knowing quite well that these courtrooms will be used in the future as well.

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

#### **Private Health Services** (continued)

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Alberta Liberals released a government-funded report that this government suppressed. The report confirmed that this government's push for private hospitals will lead to higher costs to taxpayers, longer waiting lists in the public health care system, two-tiered medicine, and queue jumping. My questions are to the minister of health.

Albertans would like to know, Mr. Minister, which branch of the government commissioned this study and when. Was it Health and Wellness? The Premier's office? Public Affairs Bureau? Which one was it?

2:50

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the funding, as I indicated I think at least twice this afternoon in answer to other inquiries, is provided to the Institute of Health Economics by Alberta Health and Wellness. I also previously in the Assembly during question period named the amount, \$250,000 annually, and that relationship or agreement has been in place since 1995. The institute has an oversight board which is made up of very well qualified people, both in the area of policy development and academia. The institute reviews issues with Alberta Health and Wellness and with others in the health care sector each year and decides on what their agenda as far as studies and policy development and recommendations will be. They operate quite independently. They are a very credible group, and I think they are a group that we get value from in terms of the studies and the recommendations and the findings they provide for the overall direction and management of the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that has to be emphasized here is that once again the status of this report is being very much misstated. The members across the way know very well that it is in one of its earlier drafts. There still has to be work done. There still has to be the standard procedure of a peer review of the report done before it is released and before anybody is going to be expected to consider its recommendations.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that this is an interim report. It's not a draft report. It's an interim report, so it's valid as it stands. It's not a draft. Mr. Minister, my question to you is: did your department specifically request this report? Did you, your department, commission this report?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I just indicated in my previous answer, the Department of Health and Wellness, other institutions such as our universities, and other parts of the health care sector discuss with the administration and the board of the institute topics that could be well investigated as far as their agenda is concerned as an institute. However, we did not commission that particular study. You know, if she wants to check with the institute as to how they go about their business and how much money we pay them – if they don't believe that we pay them \$250,000, well, fine, because it is the case. It's not anything unusual or out of the way.

I think we have received over the years good value from this particular institute or agency, Mr. Speaker. It is valuable because they do independent work, and we look forward to their final report. If the hon. member had any courtesy or reasonableness at all, they would want the final and complete report, with the peer review, before they comment or reach conclusions that are not valid.

MS OLSEN: Well, I find it difficult to understand why reputable professors at an institution would release this without standing behind it, and it was released to your office, Mr. Minister. So now that you've read it, can you tell us if you agree with the summary of findings in it?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've not read the report or received it, of course.

THE SPEAKER: And seeking opinions is totally inappropriate for the question period.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, I'm counting on you.

### Turner's Syndrome

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two separate families in my constituency have children who've been diagnosed with Turner's syndrome. It's a growth disorder that affects one in 2,500 female births. In both those situations the drug Humatrope has been prescribed at a cost of approximately \$1,000 a month, even though it is not approved for funding by Alberta Health and Wellness for the treatment of Turner's syndrome because, as I understand it, Alberta Health and Wellness deems it to be ineffective for the treatment of Turner's syndrome. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: how does the policy of Alberta Health and Wellness compare to other jurisdictions in Canada regarding the approval of payment for Humatrope in the treatment of Turner's syndrome?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to clarify that the pharmaceutical product referred to, Humatrope, has been approved on a limited basis in Alberta for an area of treatment where our expert drug committee deems it to be effective according to scientific evidence, and that is with respect to adults which are at a certain stage in this disease or condition.

Mr. Speaker, the only province in Canada that I am aware of that covers Humatrope at this time is Manitoba. There may have been some more recent developments in other provinces, but that is the best information I have at the present time.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister of Health and Wellness tell me what the professional qualifications of the Alberta Expert Committee on Drug Quality and Therapeutics is? That's the body that decides which drugs are covered by Alberta Health.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the expert committee is, I think one would agree, a very prestigious committee in terms of their qualifications. It is made up of physicians, pharmacists, people who are very knowledgeable in the whole area of drugs themselves. There are socioeconomic experts with respect to the effectiveness and the long-term efficacy of having certain drugs approved. I think the list of individuals that are part of that committee is an indication of a very well qualified group of people, both in terms of practical experience and also in terms of scientific knowledge and its application.

MR. MARZ: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the same minister: would the minister inquire into why Alberta doctors would be prescribing medications that are not considered to be effective treatment?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the process in Canada is that once a pharmaceutical product, a drug, is approved by Health Canada's approval agency, then it is legal for a physician to prescribe that particular drug for treatment. However, across Canada each of the provinces has a process of reviewing the scientific evidence, the value of treatment, and the effectiveness of treatment in terms of what should and should not be covered under their respective drug payment programs. Therefore, it is not uncommon for a physician to prescribe a particular pharmaceutical product to an individual case without there being coverage by the province's drug program.

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

### Private Health Services

(continued)

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are serious issues and questions raised regarding the Alberta experience with private provisions of a publicly funded service, issues and questions which should be investigated by a government considering further extensions of private provisions of insured services. Not my words, but words primarily from the report of the Institute of Health Economics paid for by this government. My questions are to the minister of health. Will the government continue to support a policy of further health care privatization when this report claims there is trouble with what we already have?

3:00

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will reiterate that in another circumstance the hon. member across the way would be criticizing anyone who was quoting from a report that is not finished. It has some distance to go in terms of finalizing its findings, but it is convenient and it is in keeping with their pattern across the way to quote from partially completed documents and those that may change in the future and so forth.

With respect to the draft document that the hon. member is referring to, I will take the view that when that report is complete, it is certainly something that Alberta Health and Wellness will review very carefully and consider in terms of its findings. But the point here, as the Premier has well stated many times today and previously, is that we are not contemplating a bill that has a provision which deals with establishing a two-tier health care system in this province. We are not contemplating at all establishing private full-service hospitals. No, Mr. Speaker. Those decisions are already made, from the government standpoint, in terms of what should be in the legislation. It is in the legislation. It is in Bill 11. So to keep bringing forward what I regard as irrelevant comment is inappropriate.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Did the minister investigate current privatization efforts before moving ahead with his private health care policy?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do not have any private health care policy. We have brought forward and reported many factors relevant to why we are establishing a very protective piece of legislation. We're moving forward with that, and that is because we want to protect the public health care system and adhere to the principles of the Canada Health Act. No one has been able to indicate any way that we are not adhering to the principles of the Canada Health Act, so this innuendo and implication and false assertions are not relevant or constructive with respect to the matters before the Assembly.

DR. MASSEY: Mr. Speaker, my third question is to the same minister. What are those other private provisions that the government is considering that are mentioned in the report?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure what he's alluding to in terms of private provisions. We are not, in Bill 11, developing a private hospital system or a private health care system. We are developing a public health care system, one which is for the public, one where they will not have to worry about queue jumping, one where they will not have to worry about being charged extra for insured services.

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

### Child Health Benefit

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has taken many good steps and developed programs to encourage the families who rely on social services alone to become more self-reliant and proud working families, my question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. What do those programs entail?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, in this government we try to provide assistance to those people who need our assistance. Many of them, of course, are not able to work, but there are people amongst our citizens that, while they are working, still do need some assistance. So we have programs that can top up earnings, but I think the more important one would be identified as the national child benefit, and in this particular case we've been able to use funding in partnership with the federal government to provide for some medical benefits. To list them, it provides coverage for prescription drugs, for dental and optical services, for emergency ambulance service, and for essential diabetic supplies, again, for children in low-income working families. It's my understanding that this year the child health benefit program will be helping more than 50,000 children.

MR. CAO: Mr. Speaker, my second supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that postsecondary education costs are rising and postsecondary students have made a commitment to learning and have the skills and knowledge to become productive workers in the future, why doesn't the government provide health care benefits to their children? Some of them are married students.

MR. DUNFORD: When we were initially investigating this matter, Mr. Speaker, representatives of student groups said, "No, we don't want to be in that program; we want to make the decision ourselves," so we went ahead. What has happened since that time is that we have heard from students within the system, so now we have changed our policy to cover them, and we expect that 6,500 children will be covered by that benefit now.

MR. CAO: My last supplemental question is also to the same minister. How will the students get coverage for their children?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, it's a matter of applying for the coverage, Mr. Speaker. I can read into *Hansard* a phone number they can call here in Edmonton, 427-6848, or certainly from anywhere in Alberta they can dial 310-0000 and of course ask to be referred. We can provide them, then, with the information they will need.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I will call on the one member who will participate in Members' Statements today.

### Calgary Centre of Hope

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether this means I get six minutes instead of two.

On April 1, 2000, I had the opportunity to attend a wonderful event in downtown Calgary. This was the groundbreaking for the Calgary Centre of Hope. The Centre of Hope is a new facility being built by the Salvation Army in the city I'm from. It's going to provide 119 transitional housing beds plus 116 emergency beds for men. There's going to be a new separate program with 32 beds for a women's emergency residence. The addictions rehab unit will be increased to serve 46 clients. Significantly, because some 30 percent

of the homeless people in downtown Calgary present with a range of mental health issues, there will be a mental health diversion crisis stabilization unit with 30 beds.

Mr. Speaker, what's so significant about this is that we've seen a recent report which estimates that in the city of Calgary on any given evening we may have as many as 5,000 men, women, and children who are in some form or another of housing crisis. There may be somewhere in the order of another 10,000 or 12,000 Calgarians who are one slim paycheque away from the street.

I think what we've seen in the city of Calgary is a leadership not by any level of government but by the community. We see an amazing leadership not just from the Salvation Army but from churches. The in-from-the-cold program developed by the city of Calgary is a wonderful example, and we've seen support from a range of nonprofit organizations, the work done by CUPS and organizations like that.

In connection with that, on March 24 and 25 I attended a homeless in Calgary Future Search conference. The Member for Calgary-Bow attended that session as well, and you saw the energy of people in the Calgary community coming together to identify what progress has been made since the last Future Search conference two years ago and what more has to be done.

I just want to salute all of the men and women working hard in terms of this process to solve the homelessness problem in Calgary. Thank you.

3:10

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the hon. Government House Leader has advised of two points of order. Hon. Official Opposition House Leader, did you advise of a point of order? I heard you say something.

MR. DICKSON: No, I did not, sir. No. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Government House Leader, on your first point of order.

### Point of Order Preambles

MR. HANCOCK: Actually, Mr. Speaker, there were three points of order, but the first two related to the preamble in the hon. Leader of the Opposition's questions, so perhaps I could deal with both of those as one.

Under Standing Order 23(e), anticipation, and 23(j) as well as 409 and virtually every other rule in *Beauchesne*, the hon. Leader of the Opposition started off the proceedings today firstly by breaching your admonition yesterday not to raise questions which clearly dealt with a matter which is on the Order Paper. You, I think, dealt with that earlier during question period.

As well, we've seen a continuation of a practice which has become unfortunate in this House, of the Leader of the Opposition and her minions raising in preamble matters which use "abusive and insulting language . . . likely to create disorder," encouraging debate. I refer specifically to the reference to private hospital bills and private hospital policies when it's clear that there is no such thing and we have before the House Bill 11, which is not called the private hospital act. It is in fact labeled the Health Care Protection Act. So it is argumentative and it is abusive language and it is encouraging debate to continue to use question period to misinform Albertans about the nature of the policy and the nature of the bill.

The rest of her preamble and many of the other preambles, I might say, were argumentative in that they referred to a study for which the minister of health has quite clearly indicated the source of that

preliminary report and who paid for it. Ignoring those clearly stated answers as to the source and the preparation of that report, they continued to refer to that report as a government-commissioned report, as a government paid for study, as your report, all of which were argumentative and in the nature of debate rather than appropriate questions, which, if I can go back to 409, "must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate."

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd make this observation. I would have expected the Government House Leader to be more specific in terms of the concern and more precise in his use of language.

Sir, I'd refer the Government House Leader to November 7, 1994, when actually this very issue of anticipation was dealt with if not exhaustively then most thoroughly by your predecessor. In fact, we have virtually an entire column on the page of *Hansard* – for the Government House Leader's reference, it's page 2854 – and if I could just go to a quote that the then Speaker made. I think it was Speaker Schumacher, and he was referring to previous rulings of the House. He was referring to a ruling on June 15, 1989, which he quoted with approval. That was the Reverend David Carter, and I might quote this.

Questions can be developed and not ruled out of order if a Bill has been introduced in the Assembly. Once the Bills reach second reading stage, then they're going to be ruled out of order in terms of question period. Questions developed after a Bill's introduction should not be detailed and should relate to the general policy rather than a clause-by-clause examination of the Bill.

Now, I listened as carefully as I could and had the benefit, in fact, of seeing some text before the questions were asked, and each one of the questions specifically talked about the policy of the government of the province of Alberta. You, sir, will recall that the government, with much hullabaloo and fanfare, produced a policy statement in November, and that dealt with a range of facilities. It is very clear that there was a policy statement, and I'd say, with respect, that we are entitled in this House to ask questions about that policy statement, what the government means by it, and to explore the nuances and the vagueness and the gaps in that policy statement.

Never at any time was reference made in any one of the questions to Bill 11 because we are mindful, sir, not only of your admonition yesterday but the direction of the House since at least Dr. Carter's comments on June 15, 1989. If the Government House Leader is suggesting that that eliminates any question about policy of the government of the day, then that's completely, absolutely at variance with all of the precedent of this Assembly.

Now, he goes on to raise a second matter. He's concerned that we persist in talking about private hospitals and private facilities when he professes innocence and says that the government is doing no such thing. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the evidence has been very clear. Most recently an interim published report, not a draft report, said that the accredited private surgical facility that this government is talking about would, in the minds of 10 out of 10 Albertans, be a private hospital. I think Albertans are smart enough to understand that this government can under their policy create a facility as big and as sophisticated as the Foothills hospital in Calgary, and as long as it does not do emergency services, that would not be a private hospital. In the minds of the government perhaps, but in the minds of Albertans without question that is a private hospital.

So we're perhaps parsing and mincing words in terms of nuances and definition. [interjection] I received some good advice, as I always do, from our friend from Calgary-Varsity. I don't want to spend most of my energy this afternoon when we'll get a chance to debate the bill at length tonight, but I just did want to make that

observation that an interim report is something that in fact has been published. It's entitled to be talked about and discussed, and it is clear that the government has funded the report. Now, did they do it by a direct requisition? Did they do it by indirectly paying the institute that has done it? I read the report, and it says that it was commissioned by the Department of Health and Wellness. To me the linkage is clear and irrefutable.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, there were certain interjections this afternoon by the chair with respect to this matter, and the chair did make a statement in the House yesterday with respect to anticipation. The hon. Opposition House Leader is absolutely correct about the rulings that were given by previous Speakers with respect to this and the traditions of parliaments with respect to this whole matter.

If I listened, though, very carefully to the Government House Leader, he was as much concerned about the tone of words and the usage of words as he was about the type of direction with respect to the question. It's on that point that I'll make these brief comments.

I do quote from the Blues. It says:

Mrs. MacBeth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 8 in this Legislative Assembly the Premier said the following about his private hospitals policy: "If we had something to hide, if we had something to be afraid of, we would have kept this from the public." Yesterday the Official Opposition released a secret report funded by this government and funded by the Department of Health and Wellness. The government has held on to this rather damaging report and thus chosen to hide it from Albertans, I guess because it told the truth, not the misinformation being spread by the government's million dollar propaganda campaign. My questions, Mr. Speaker, are to the Premier. Why was this report kept hidden from Albertans?

It certainly makes rather pointed allegations with respect to a member, and while there's no doubt at all that the chair and, I do believe, a great number of other members would feel that the tone of the question might be rather aggressive and might be rather harsh and could be deplored, I suppose, by some as horrendously unparliamentary to a certain degree, the chair would have to really reach, though, to see if it violates any provisions of sections of Standing Order 23, because it has to be taken within the context of the whole thing.

However, that having been said, the chair is confused. I know that the chair is not supposed to be getting involved in any of the debate in this Assembly, but the Leader of the Official Opposition said, "Yesterday the Official Opposition released a secret report funded by this government." Then the chair heard – and he's positive about this – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood say that an institute released such a report. There has to be consistency with respect to the whole thing. If one hon. member stands up and says, "Well, we have a report," and another hon. member stands up and says, "Well, no, it's not a report; it's an interim report, and it's not funded directly by the government," there is a point in time where you're going to have two absolutely conflicting views of the whole thing. Presumably, that has to do with a further debate that should really not be taking place in question period.

3:20

Again and again and again I want to remind all hon. members of what the purpose of question period is. The bottom line today was that after indicating there were 21 members who were on the list, I do believe we arrived at no greater than eight members having an opportunity.

Now, hon. Government House Leader, a second point.

**Point of Order  
Decorum**

MR. HANCOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I won't pursue it in any great detail, because it's sum and substance the same point of order as the last one. I simply want to make the point again for the House and to ask for your more active control of the House under section 13(1) of Standing Orders in that we do have members in this House who seek to ask questions for information. Unfortunately, most of the members of the opposition seem to want to ask questions for the purposes of allowing lengthy, argumentative preambles which twist the realities that we know to be existent in Alberta. It's those irrelevant, irresponsible, unnecessary, and under our rules illegal preambles which create the responses that come, which are necessary to set the record straight.

As a result, we don't have in this House a question period, as is the great parliamentary tradition, where private members of this House get to examine members of Executive Council, members of the government, on the policy and direction of the government. Rather, we have positioning by members of the opposition with totally inappropriate preambles, and we see again and again and again in this House posturing for the cameras. We want to have Albertans see what's happening in this Legislature.

It would be my fondest personal dream that we would broadcast all the proceedings of this House someday. We can't do that, I don't believe, if the result is going to be the animal acts that we see during question period, with a great twisting of the truth that comes in these obnoxious preambles. I think, Mr. Speaker, it's time to start ruling them out of order and asking members of the opposition and members on the government side, if necessary, to make their preambles relevant to the question, to make them short, succinct, and in accordance with the rules.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, another one of these free-flowing points of order. The only thing that's clear to me is the frustration of the Government House Leader, but need I remind him and you, sir, that there's an opposition and there's a government. Each of us has different roles to play. Each of us has different perspectives on many of the issues of the day. The Government House Leader can talk all he wishes about pointed questions that he thinks are argumentative. I can point out to the same extent responses that are not forthright, are not candid, that avoid being provocative and argumentative.

So where are we left? If the Government House Leader wishes to use Westminster as the standard and to suggest that the questions in some fashion fall short, let me retort that if he watches question period in the House of Commons in Westminster, he will find that responses are at a much higher level and set a very different standard than anything we see day after day in this Assembly.

So the Government House Leader is frustrated. Well, let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, that members of the opposition are equally frustrated, if not more so, with a government that refuses to accept responsibility for things they do. We will continue to try and hold the government accountable. If the Government House Leader chooses not to like the tone of the questions, then he should work with his colleagues to be more forthcoming and provide us with snappy, pithy, direct, responsive responses instead of the nonsense we hear day after day from the front bench of this government.

THE SPEAKER: I honestly do believe we enjoy this. I honestly believe that at the conclusion of the question period every day this little exchange is better than a coffee break for a lot of people. I really, truly believe that. It just gets us going.

Okay. Well, the hon. Government House Leader has referred to section 13(1), "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum and shall decide questions of order." Yes, that's very correct, and the Speaker would love to make sure that we would preserve the order and the decorum according to everybody's interpretation of what order and decorum is all about. But as there are 82 individuals in this House in addition to the chair, we all have our own subjective decision and interpretation of what decorum really means. So I guess I'll have to explain what mine is again, just so that everybody really understands.

We have two groups of players in this Assembly. We have one group called the government, and we have another group called the opposition, but part of the government is also private members. The purpose of the question period is to basically allow all private members in the Assembly to bring the government to account, which means that they have great latitude and a wide-ranging opportunity to raise questions of members of Executive Council. Now, we've tended over time to basically say that it is only to members of Executive Council. We've also said that the questions should be brief and should be to the point and that the answers should also be brief.

We also have other rules that talk about argumentative things and opinion and representative and undebatable things, and we all know that on almost a daily basis these things are all being violated by virtually everyone, because we tend to evolve in terms of what these words mean and how things are.

We also know that we have something called television, and somehow people believe that this is a good thing. Today not too much got on television, because I do believe that we didn't really start the question period until about 2:17, and by that time most people have already walked away and gone to do their grocery shopping or are out doing their yards or what have you. So that caused a little problem with some other things in terms of decorum.

The chair today was actually going to stand up and start really, really being quite aggressive with tablings, and the first person who tabled was the leader of the government, who then proceeded to read from a letter, which sort of shot that little argument out of the way because if it was good for one, it had to be good for everyone else. So 25 minutes later we're into this. Maybe one of these days all members will recall that the Speaker several weeks ago indicated in a letter to them that one day he actually foresees – I'm sure it will come to pass – that we will be here at 5:30 and will still be into tablings. There will be no question period that day, and that sort of thing will happen.

Preambles and relevancy are really important. I'll appeal to you once again. The hon. Opposition House Leader referred to Westminster, and he basically then said that questions are a certain type and answers are a certain type. But the hon. Opposition House Leader basically forgot to give to the House by way of information that it has been to a great degree a long-standing tradition in Westminster that those who want to raise questions actually send the question to the minister in advance. The minister can anticipate, knows what the question is, and then when he comes to stand up, he does provide an answer. If the hon. Opposition House Leader is basically saying that we want to establish that tradition in the parliament of Alberta, that's something the House leaders might want to rediscover for themselves in advance. If we want to start tomorrow, then henceforth by 11 o'clock in the morning the questions should be sent to the members of Executive Council, who would know what the questions are. I'm sure they'll have a chance to stand up and respond, and I'm sure we'll have brevity.

You know, these tete-a-tetes on a regular basis basically do cause some problems for hon. private members. Now, the chair is going to end this, and we're going to proceed.

head: Orders of the Day

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

head: Third Reading

### **Bill 205**

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

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

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the opportunity to speak for a moment, I would like to thank all who have participated, including the Calgarians who had this idea.

At this time I would like to move third reading of Bill 205 and call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a third time]

3:30

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

#### **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 which women are becoming increasingly susceptible to such as lung cancer and autoimmune diseases.

[Debate adjourned March 21: Mrs. Soetaert speaking]

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe I had just started to speak on this motion, which I am pleased to be able to support.

Some people may not remember back a few years ago to when a women's advisory council ended before its time. It was mandated to go for another year, yet it was shut down by this government. I remember voting against that at the time and in fact asked questions about it in the Legislature.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It was a pity that that was ended, because you know what? Those women on that council did some very good work from across this province. You know what else? That was a neat aspect of that advisory council, because there were women from right across this province. We talk about the differences and we celebrate those differences, but certainly women in isolated rural communities have different needs than women in cities, to some respect. Some are all the same; some are different.

Now, the motion on this women's health council. Women's health is the same across this province, with the same issues: the fact that we have women in their childbearing years, that we have women with breast cancer, osteoporosis, AIDS, endometritis, all kinds of things that affect women regardless of where they live. So I think this council is a good idea. I am hoping, though, that we will have women from across the province on this council. I've been to some farm women's conferences, some women's wellness conferences across the province.

In fact, I will be speaking at another wellness conference. I'm glad nobody over there is questioning, but they'd be welcome to come and feel well for an hour. Just imagine how well this Assembly must feel sometimes when I'm done speaking. In fact, stress is a factor that many women and men deal with, and that, I'm sure, will be covered. We all deal with things differently.

Certainly on the issue of women's health, as I was mentioning before, rural women have issues of isolation that often we don't understand. They don't have the same ability to access health care that others do that live in bigger cities. The real issue, too, is that if you have to come to the city for treatments, you don't just plan two hours of child care. You may plan two days or may have the expense of a hotel room or hope that you find a relative that lives in the city that will help you out. So those realities for women in rural Alberta and their health and wellness I hope will be addressed by this council. That is one of the things that I would really like to see on this council: people from across the province.

I would also love to see a native woman on this council. The chief at Alexander First Nation in my riding is Victoria Arcand. She's a remarkable woman, and she has also worked with health care within her own reserve and with others across the province. They have issues, too, that are different, that relate to their community differently. I would love to see a representative from that community, because I truly respect the work they have done and the balance they could bring to that council.

I would hope that one of the focuses of this council is, of course, preventative medicine for women. One of the things that I know is supported by this government and that I hope will not be changed is the whole fetal alcohol syndrome program, which of course affects women. A totally preventable disease yet totally incurable. I have a nephew who has fetal alcohol syndrome, and the heartache that his family has gone through and that he has gone through – if only people could know what drinking when you're pregnant does to you. I think there's a lot of work to be done in preventative medicine, and certainly this advisory council could have a powerful, powerful role in that and could put very positive resolutions through to this Assembly that, with commitment, could be acted upon. That is my hope for this council.

So I will be supporting the motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the remaining time I have left, I want to rise today in this Assembly and lend my support for Motion 505.

Before I continue, I want to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Cross for her well-respected expertise in this Assembly. We are very fortunate to have the member in this Assembly. She often stands on relevant issues and legislation to do with health care, and I thank her for her previous professional status and her professional opinion that she brings to this Assembly often. We've indeed been very lucky to have her, and I can say on the public record that I do believe she would have been an excellent nurse, a very caring caregiver, as she certainly in the Assembly brings forward timely health issues and legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much that can be said for this particular motion. I think everyone in this House would agree that it is something that needs to be done and put in place.

Something I think was interesting. I do know that in British Columbia, for instance – I don't know whether they're still utilizing it, but they used to – they would equip vans and buses with all the necessary equipment to allow women to come to the van or bus for



mammograms. They took this specially equipped vehicle out so that the mammograms went to the people instead of the people coming to them. I thought this was a very innovative approach, and I know that often in downtown Vancouver you could see a van or a bus parked there on a Saturday allowing women, as they did their grocery shopping or other shopping, to come in and have this very worthwhile test.

I don't have a lot of time to expand upon this, but I think we can see certain things in the health care field that we could look at to be innovative and work towards early prevention and early diagnosis and early treatment to do with women and women's health issues.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, but under Standing Order 8(4) I must put all questions to conclude debate on the motion under consideration.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried unanimously]

### Support for Stay-at-home Parents

506. Mr. MacDonald moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to demonstrate its recognition of the contribution made by parents who stay at home to care for their children by providing support equal to that received by parents choosing other child care options.

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

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to bring this motion before the Assembly. There was a similar motion, by the hon. Member for Wainwright, dealt with earlier in this 24th Legislature, and we have, I believe, seen progress with this issue since that motion was first discussed in this Assembly. As the discussion on this motion progresses, I look forward to the comments from other members of the Assembly.

3:40

Well, we look at this motion and have to recognize that the most important job in society is raising the next generation. A motion such as this gives parents simply one more choice or one more option in raising their families. Now, this motion comes before the Assembly at a time when one of the most well-recognized public figures perhaps in the western world, the Prime Minister of Britain, and his wife are expecting their fourth child. This is a debate that goes beyond the province, because of course how are the Prime Minister and his family in England going to deal with this? It's going to be interesting to see how that unfolds, and it could also be in a small way some direction for us.

Now, when I first talked about this motion with many people across the province, I have to give credit to many people who brought this issue forward before. They would be the Kids First Parent Association, and I've read also information from the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, the Alberta/Northwest Territories Network of Immigrant Women Association, the Calgary home educators, or CHEERS, the Catholic Women's League from Calgary, and the National Foundation for Family Research and Education. All of these groups have developed ideas and policies regarding this issue.

In 1998 a Calgarian, Beverley Smith, a former schoolteacher, decided to raise her four children in her home. Mr. Speaker, you would almost have to withdraw the phrase "stay-at-home parent" and

say: a parent who works in the home. Certainly it is work, and it is hard work. It is work that I think should be recognized by all hon. members of the Assembly. Beverley Smith brought this issue into the national spotlight by challenging our federal government to treat families in which one parent chooses to stay at home or to work at home to care for the children the same as families in which both parents are working outside the home. Beverley Smith believes that stay-at-home mothers or fathers, but mothers in particular, are discriminated against both socially and by our current tax system. She went so far as to make a formal complaint to the United Nations about our federal government's treatment of stay-at-home parents.

Now, hon. members are correct in asking: well, what's he talking about with the federal government? An idea has to start somewhere. Earlier, when the hon. Member for Wainwright brought this issue forward – and I will get to that in my remarks in a minute – there were some positive things that came about, and I think with this motion there can again be positive results, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke earlier about the Kids First Parent Association of Canada, but they have gone national with their concerns and their ideas on this issue. We should look carefully at what they have to say, and I assure all hon. members that later on in my remarks we will. I would appreciate it if everyone in the Assembly, all hon. members, would have a look at this motion and consider supporting it, because we must value equally parents who want to stay in their home and work and raise their families that way. We must respect that choice.

The volunteer care sector of the economy is made up of many of these individuals, and their work cannot be taken for granted. We all know that it makes a large economic contribution to society, whether it's in the service clubs, whether it's in the schools. These are the volunteers who help out teachers. Many of our teachers are overworked. There are a lot of students in each classroom. I'm not going to get into that, Mr. Speaker. These individuals – and it doesn't matter whether it's a mother or father – are picking up a lot of the slack, whether it be with Boy Scouts, whether it be with church groups, or whether it be with schools, all service organizations. It is a factor that we have to consider in this debate.

Now, this government's flat tax proposal will not completely fix the problem, even though it does remove the inequity between single- and dual-income families. That was an issue in our tax policy that I believe was long overdue for correction, and I would commend the hon. members from across the way for incorporating that into the provincial tax regime. But I think the spousal tax exemption must be increased further to achieve equality.

Whenever I talk about spousal tax exemption, I am not just referring to the stay-at-home mother. Mr. Speaker, in the last 40 years women have been entering the workforce in larger numbers. In some couples it would be the woman who would have the greatest earning power. If a couple wants to make that choice of staying in the home and working in the home and raising their own children, if this decision is going to be based on who can make the most amount of money in the workforce, in some cases it would be the father that would remain in the home, not the mother. I don't want all hon. members of this Assembly to get confused about that issue, because in some circumstances it could be the father that's staying home.

Now, we all know that parents who work in the home take a financial hit. They are giving up an income in order to raise their children themselves. It is not only working parents who incur more expenses to raise their children, and this is an issue that I would also remind hon. colleagues about. I said before that the term "stay-at-home parent" is very misleading. These parents are not simply staying at home. They are working in their homes raising the next generation, and in many cases they are putting in longer workdays than employed people and spending much of their time outside the

home going to appointments, whether it's to the doctor or to the dentist, wherever, or they're simply running errands. Sometimes these errands are on behalf of the schools.

I think at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to incorporate into my remarks some of the remarks and some of the concerns that were brought forward by the Kids First Parent Association of Canada, which is based in Airdrie. They have studied and written extensively on this issue. Here's what the Kids First Parent Association of Canada has to say regarding current tax policy. It is their view that tax policy has changed significantly in the past 50 years.

3:50

We have moved away from a system that held true to the traditional principle of ability to pay - one which recognised that taxation should reflect not only the level of income but the number of people dependent upon it - to one that sees children as just another individual expenditure. As a consequence, the parental caring of children is seen as a waste of an adult's time and talent and, for women, a significant barrier to equality and fulfillment.

This devaluation of parental care through tax policy . . . occurs at the same time as an ever expanding body of research is confirming what common sense has always told us - parents are critical to a child's optimal well-being. It is parents who have the greatest potential and ability, the intrinsic motivation due to their immense love and instinctual bond, to . . . meet the needs of their children.

What children need to thrive and develop positively is massive quantities of time with their parents.

Children themselves call this quality time with dad or mom.

Yet families today are deprived of the vital time they need together to bond and to nurture with "unhurried patience". The logical solution would be to remove the disincentives and barriers to parental care, to give families the opportunity and flexibility to decide what is best to meet their individual family's needs.

This is the choice that I believe Motion 506 would provide to all Alberta families.

Family life is not static but dynamic. The combination of work and family varies significantly . . . depending on each family's circumstances. A family may have a parent at home full-time during the preschool years, with that parent gradually re-entering the paid labourforce once children are in school. Circumstances such as illness or disability, job promotion or loss, separation or divorce and relocation may mean a change in work and family patterns. Policies [of all governments] must recognize the dynamics of family life and support families, not frustrate them, in moving through transitions.

The intense care demands of young children [move forward all the time.] A family of two or three children, spaced two or three years apart, means full-time parenthood for ten or twelve years at the most. It should surely be possible to plan for this short-segment of the lifecycle, which represents less time than most able-bodied people spend in retirement, for which increasingly lavish provision is made. Some of the thought, planning and finance that now goes into the construction of pension schemes and student loans needs to go towards the re-creation of tax policies that will support parents at the most heavily loaded point in the lifecycle.

Those are the comments by the Kids First Parent Association of Canada regarding our current tax policies in this country.

What about the issue of making the decision to work in the home or being given that choice, whether it be the father or the mother?

One of the biggest myths surrounding the issue of at-home parenting is that families need two incomes to make ends meet, while single income families can afford the choice to have a parent at home. This inaccurate perception is what fuels current discriminatory policy that rewards dual earner families and penalises those with a parent [working] at home.

Statistically, low family income is more common among single-earner families, especially young families. The average income of one earner families is \$26,000 less than that of dual-

earner families. In the majority of families, the decision to have two wage earners is not based solely on economics but takes into account factors of lifestyle and values. If two incomes are really necessary to "make ends meet", we would expect to find a much higher proportion of working spouses (full- and part-time) in families whose head had a lower income. In fact, the percentages of double income families is virtually equal . . .

And this is quite interesting.

. . . across all income levels.

This fact was acknowledged in the Sub-Committee on Tax Equity for Canadian Families with Dependent Children's report [called] For the Benefit of Our Children: Improving Tax Fairness. The report found that the decisions on how to combine work and family "are largely independent of the financial position of the families . . . no matter what the income level of families, roughly the same proportion of families have both parents working full-time all year. Looked at in a different way, the probability that a mother would choose to work full-time in the labour force is, for the most part, independent of the income of the father. This point was confirmed by Status of Women Canada when they stated that "Fathers' income does not have a large effect on mothers' employment status."

The temptation might be, therefore, to argue that since economics are obviously not the dominant factor in how families combine work and family the current tax system, despite inequities, is not influencing a family's decision . . . Since factors of lifestyle and values are more influential in terms of affecting decisions, it could appear that the status quo is fine. This, however [I believe] is misguided. Although economics is not the prime factor in a family's decision regarding whether to have two parents in the paid labour force or a parent at home, the tax system has a powerful impact on shaping social attitudes with respect to how it values certain choices. Modern society places much emphasis on money; value is equated with monetary gain or the amount of wealth generated. This combined with rampant consumerism and materialism feeds the social pressures that families experience, heavily influencing both parents to continue participating in the paid labour force regardless of the negative impact it may have on their own and their families' physical and emotional health. Money is viewed as more important to a child's well-being than parental time, material possessions are given priority over family time. Despite the research to the contrary, these attitudes continue. While tax reform can't address the whole problem it can, by eliminating tax inequity, send a powerful message to parents that their presence and time is important and that parental care is a valuable contribution to society.

That is the view that the Kids First Parent Association presented regarding the decisions and choice to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Now, I find that very, very interesting, and it is an accurate reflection of our entire province as far as our ability to have the choice of whether we want to stay at home with our children or whether we want to see them placed in day care and continue in the workforce. Any changes and all changes must treat all families and all parents fairly and equitably.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I shall sit down and anxiously await the comments of my hon. colleagues.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to enter into the debate on Motion 506, sponsored by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. The family unit and its well-being are extremely important to me as I feel that no other bond ties the society of this country together more than strong, vibrant families. The family is an important institution to all Albertans. I believe that we

as politicians have a responsibility to ensure that we do everything possible to foster environments in which to raise loved, secure, healthy children and strengthen the family. A healthy family means strong communities and a strong country.

4:00

While I respect the intent of the hon. member's motion, I am unable to support it for reasons which I will explain. The Canadian family is undergoing a transition, as it has been increasingly for decades. I believe we have come to a point where we need to revisit the role of the state and the development of the family unit. Our government has been committed to the family throughout its mandate and has focused on ensuring its strength in a world that increasingly poses challenges to the nature and the role of the family.

One of the ways in which families have faced an uphill battle is with respect to the financial penalties suffered by one-income families in which one parent stays at home to care for children relative to two-income families where both parents work. For example, a one-earner family with two children currently pays approximately \$4,394 in personal income taxes. However, a dual-earner family earning the same gross wage would pay \$3,332, or almost \$1,000 less. Obviously, this type of differential tax scheme has a clear financial effect on one-earner families as they put less money in their pockets at the end of the year.

It also has a negative psychological effect, essentially telling one-earner families that we do not value the role of the stay-at-home parent as much as the wage-earning parent. The lower dependent spouse exemption rate particularly sends this message. We have been implicitly influencing the choice for many families instead of leveling the playing field so that they are free to weigh all the factors and make this decision for themselves.

I appreciate that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar shares this concern and wishes to ensure that one-income families are not penalized financially for making the sacrifice to one's career or to that of a new car or to a greater vacation in order to focus on the health and well-being of the children in that family. Indeed, I think we would all appreciate that the workday of the stay-at-home parent is from 8 a.m. one day to 8 a.m. the next day.

The financial penalization of single-income families is a problem that has long concerned this government and has been addressed in a clear and significant manner with the introduction of the new flat tax regime, which will come into effect next year. Starting next January 1, the tax system will be leveled for one-income and two-income families where incomes are equal. First and most importantly, the personal and spousal exemption rates will increase substantially and will also be equalized. In other words, a two-income family earning \$50,000 a year will pay the same amount of provincial income tax as a single-earner family earning \$50,000.

In 1998 the Alberta Tax Review Committee was established to review personal income taxes in our province. The committee listened to the views of Albertans through a consultation process and a number of background papers. The committee heard arguments on both sides of the issue of differential tax treatment between single- and dual-earner families. Two positions essentially emerged from this debate. One view expressed was that the differential between dual- and single-income families earning the same gross wage was too large, placing an unfair burden on single-income families. This camp also argued that incentives for child care services encouraged nonparental rather than parental child care. This position made up the majority of views heard by the Tax Review Committee.

However, I must cover the other side of the debate. They had less of a problem with this taxation differential, arguing that this

differential is more than offset by the increased costs of child care expenses when both parents work as well as the increased transportation, wardrobe, and other costs that come with the dual-earner lifestyle. Their position is essentially that there is value in dual-income families, including the increased independence of each spouse should anything happen to the family unit and the ability to contribute to pension plans and, further, that society should not discourage highly skilled spouses from entering the workforce.

Eventually the committee recommended that Alberta move to a new flat tax system, wherein individual and spousal exemptions would now be the same. This goes a great way to leveling the playing field for single- and dual-income families.

Another significant benefit of the new tax plan is that it leaves more money in the hands of families and individuals to make their own choices and handle their money as they see fit. Albertans will see their taxes drop by \$852 million per year by 2001, a benefit which all Albertans will experience regardless of their levels of income.

Another exciting aspect of the new tax system is the benefit which low-income Albertans and their families will experience. In effect, about 132,000 low-income Albertans will be exempt from paying any provincial income tax, and the rest will see their taxes reduced. A two-parent family, whether single- or dual-income, earning less than \$31,000 per year will pay no provincial income tax at all.

I will be extremely pleased to see Bill 18, which will enshrine the initiatives I've just described into law, pass in this House and come into force in time for the new year.

We also need to remember that in terms of support, such as subsidies or deductions for child care, stay-at-home parents do not incur such costs and thus don't need to be compensated for child care.

A proposal to essentially pay parents to remain at home, though, is not the answer. First, who is to pay such a wage, Mr. Speaker? It seems that it would be robbing Peter to pay Paul, as inevitably such a scheme would penalize Albertans who work outside the home at the expense of those who work within the home. To compensate stay-at-home parents with an amount that would be fair is extremely difficult as well. Who can value the cost of a parent's love and nurturing? I also question whether there would be any net benefit from this or whether it would be a purely symbolic move, which would simply add much bureaucracy without much else, as the old family allowance plan used to do.

In 1997 the Provincial Treasurer introduced the Alberta family employment tax credit, the result of extensive public consultation and consideration. The end result of that: \$35 million were put back in the pockets of Albertans who need it most, working families with children. This program has two objectives: to support children in low-income and middle-income families and to provide an incentive for the parents of these children to work. The Alberta family employment tax credit supports families both financially and through encouraging healthy values and stability. It provides tax credits to approximately 130,000 Alberta families annually. Under the program a family may receive \$250 per child up to a maximum of \$500. In order to qualify for the program, the family's working income must exceed \$6,500.

We need to establish a level playing field, Mr. Speaker, and ensure that the choices are open to parents, regardless of whether one parent chooses to stay home to look after the children or both are involved in the workforce full-time. I think the family employment tax credit is a great initiative that helps families, an initiative that does not discriminate between single-earner families and dual-earner families. A family with a net income of less than \$26,000 can receive all the service I mentioned absolutely free for as many as four children.

Mr. Speaker, the government offers another program to low-income families. The Alberta children's health benefit is a premium-free health benefit plan that provides dental, optical, emergency ambulance, essential diabetic supplies, and prescription drug coverage for children living in families who have low incomes.

It is important to note these things as we debate this motion, because it's so easy to get caught up in the negativity. Like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar we all want more for our children. On that point I'm sure we are all in agreement, and I guess here I would like to include the word grandchildren.

It's important to note some of the positive initiatives that have been happening in this province for years and that essentially make this motion redundant. We must recognize that our government has taken significant steps towards helping single-earner families in this province. Budget 2000 is a tremendous milestone for the province and a great benefit to the working poor. That's why I can't support this motion. I imagine that when the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was considering this motion idea, Budget 2000 still hadn't been tabled. Given the flat tax proposal included in this latest budget and some of the initiatives this government currently has in place, Motion 506 seems particularly unnecessary.

4:10

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today in this House to speak to Motion 506. I think the intent of the motion is well meaning, and certainly this is a situation that needed to be looked at. However, I truly believe that our government has made some significant steps toward addressing this situation and helping those working families that need it most.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add that the new tax regime is very timely. This economy is moving at a great pace, and Albertans are benefitting. The economy is more diverse now than it ever has been in our history. The plan outlined in Budget 2000 provides a platform from which Albertans can maximize their benefit from this new Alberta economy. We need all hands on deck in order to ensure we keep moving in the right direction. Tax laws that keep people at home against their better judgment should be done away with. Likewise, tax laws that keep people working against their better judgment should be eliminated. We need to foster an environment of choice in Alberta, an atmosphere that attracts the best and brightest from other provinces and countries, and we want them to bring their children.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, while I commend the spirit behind the motion from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I am unable to support Motion 506 for the reasons I have stated. Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to take the opportunity to speak for a minute or two about Motion 506. I'd like to read the motion so that people get it clear exactly what the intent is.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to demonstrate its recognition of the contribution made by parents who stay at home to care for their children by providing support equal to that received by parents choosing other child care options.

Now, that is not asking for a wage for stay-at-home parents. I see it as asking to have tax exemptions and tax considerations based on fairness. I like to look at all issues on the issue of fairness.

You know, it's interesting. As a woman who had young kids in the early – of course, they're still young, and so am I. [interjections] I knew I'd wake some of them up. I had preschool children in the late '70s, early '80s. It was interesting what people would say to

you. You know, they would say, "Are you just at home?" "No. I'm raising my children at home." For a while there I was working full-time.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I wouldn't want to be at home with you.

MRS. SOETAERT: Who doesn't want to be at home with me? Ah, the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. He's afraid to be at home with me, but I serve a mean cup of coffee. Come on over, and we'll have a little discussion about policy.

AN HON. MEMBER: Serious mistake.

MRS. SOETAERT: A serious mistake on his part.

On the motion, through the chair, as always, Mr. Speaker. Where was I?

You know, when you're an at-home mom, people come up to you and say, "Oh, you're just at home," belittling that role. Then for a while I was working full-time with preschoolers. "Oh, you're working full-time?" Now you're a neglectful mother. Then you try working part-time. "Oh, trying to be everything for everybody; are you?" You know, for a while there a woman couldn't win. It didn't matter if you were at home, if you were part-time, if you were full-time. You were criticized by society, not by all society but certainly by some, by many.

I would like to think, now that we're in the new millennium, that people are more accepting. [interjections] I can hardly wait to hear their debate.

MS BLAKEMAN: Why is it that it's all the men that are heckling?

MRS. SOETAERT: It's all the men that are heckling me, which is rather interesting in itself; isn't it? Where was I? It's so seldom I lose my train of thought. I was inviting people over for coffee. Cancel that. I'm too busy this week but maybe once session is out.

Society I think, I hope, is being more accepting of all the roles that women play. Parenting, being a mother and being a father, everyone in here agrees, those of us who have children, that that's the most important thing in our lives. Nothing comes before that. But the reality of the world is that some choose to stay home, some have the ability to stay home, some don't have the choice, some choose to work. That is the reality of our world. I'd like to think that it's more accepted now that those are choices that we give not just men but women in our society.

In fact, you know, when I go to talk to some of the school groups, we talk about the number of women in the Legislature. [interjection] Well, half of our caucus is women but generally in the whole Assembly it certainly isn't equal numbers of women.

I say: why aren't more women in politics? I'm not going to give you some of their answers because that would start a debate in itself. It's always lively. One of the things I ask too: do you think the role of men as parents, as child care providers, as nurturers is changing? I think it is. If you ask those students, "How many of your dads cook," you know, lots of them put up their hands. If you say, "How many of them clean," there are a few less that put up their hands, but nonetheless there's a good portion. Now, here's the cruncher though. Here's the real test: how many of your dads do laundry? Oh, the hands go down. Regretfully, the hands go down considerably. It's fine for the men. I guess maybe it's good for the dry cleaners down the road. I don't know.

MS CARLSON: Peter does laundry.

MRS. SOETAERT: I'm glad the Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne

does laundry. That's why he has two different coloured socks on, I guess, sometimes. I'm almost short of wind over here, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the motion. The point I was trying to make is that I think this new generation of dads is far more nurturing and far more involved in their families than my dad was. [interjection] Oh, we see; Calgary-Montrose is hoping to be a father. Maybe there's news that could be announced in the Assembly someday. I don't know. We're hoping for you. We'll make him a little Liberal.

MS CARLSON: Now he's changed his mind.

MRS. SOETAERT: Now he doesn't want children. Oh, dear.

This is a serious motion that, believe it or not, I'm trying to support despite the banter from the floor. I do believe I've raised some good issues in the reality that many men are doing much more of the nurturing. Many men are choosing to stay home. So this is a motion about families, and those that have the ability or have chosen to stay home just want fairness when it comes to tax exemptions.

I think it is a motion, too, about families, whether you're at home or whether you're working full-time or whether there are two incomes or one income. I know all of us value family and any definition therein of it. We have many single-parent families. We have grandparents raising children. Within all of that we make time for our families, and I think that's key. Time with families is very precious. I know many people in here might not make Sunday commitments in their constituencies because Sunday is a very important family day. I know I try to do that because that's the one time when even my extended family gathers. So the whole concept of time when you're raising children is very important.

4:20

I guess I'll end my comments, but I hope I've expressed that this is about fairness, about those who are stay-at-home parents deserving the same tax exemptions as people who aren't at home, whether that be by choice or whether it be out of necessity. People are making lifestyle choices, and it's just an issue of fairness for everyone. I also recognize that society is becoming more accepting of all the lifestyle choices that we choose: the way we choose to raise our families, whether people work part-time, full-time, dual income, one income. I think we all accept that what works for each family works for them. It may not work for me, but it may work for you, and I think we've learned to respect that. I think we've made great strides from when I had preschool children, and I'm glad to see that.

I will be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker, and I'm hoping that other members will as well. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to enter the debate on Motion 506, introduced by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I believe the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's intention is fair in moving to equalize the tax bill of single- and double-income families, but I believe the hon. member has failed to recognize the innovative and groundbreaking initiative undertaken in the recent provincial budget.

On February 24, 2000, the hon. Provincial Treasurer announced a new and groundbreaking tax system that will become effective on January 1, 2001, a system that will unlink the province of Alberta from the old federal/provincial income tax system. The personal income tax system is where the tax inequity between single- and dual-income families exists. This new system that will be put in place will all but eliminate any tax discrimination that exists between single- and double-income families. This new tax regime will make

Alberta the most people-friendly province in the country.

Under the new system both types of families will see their taxes go down, but the single-income family, which includes single parents, will see their taxes go down even more. Mr. Speaker, this initiative lightened the load of all Albertans. The indirect benefactors in all of these changes are the people whom we all here hold dear, and that is the children of Alberta. This initiative may well provide another child care option for many Alberta families, an option that many may not have been able to consider before, and this is good news for Albertans.

Many of us had the benefit of being raised at least in our early years by one parent who stayed at home. I don't want to date myself, but that's the way it was for many of us here. Many of us in this Assembly may believe that it is the best way to bring a child into the world. There are statistics and studies that indicate that there may be truth to this hypothesis. Parent advocacy groups across North America have been very active in promoting early childhood involvement by both parents, particularly since dual-income households have increased in prominence. Their position is supported by many commonly accepted beliefs that children whose parents take an active role in their early development are more socially adjusted.

Even further arguments have been made regarding the need for fathers to be as active in early parenting as mothers. Among others, Dr. Paul Amato of the University of Nebraska demonstrated a direct relationship between children's behaviour and the amount of time and support provided by not just mothers but fathers as well. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are volumes of social science research that address the issues of early childhood development and the effect of a young child's environment on how that child will function in society as he or she grows up. The findings of these studies are consistent, indicating that the quality of care vis-a-vis a child's development psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually is consistently better when that care is from a parent as opposed to a paid caregiver. No matter what the facility there is no equal for parental care in the child's formative years.

The president of the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Dr. Elliott Barker, has argued that nothing is more important in the world today than the nurturing that children receive in the first three years of life, for it is in these earliest years that the capacity for trust, empathy, and affection originate, and if the emotional needs of the child are not met during these years, permanent emotional damage can occur.

So what is the role of the government of Alberta in all of this? I'm sure that those of us who are parents wish we could spend more time with our children to teach them what we know. Unfortunately, this is a luxury few can afford. Therefore, we must be very careful. The economy of today is dramatically different than it was 30 or more years ago. Dual-income families have arrived in a big way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not a child care specialist, but I do know that it is important to spend as much time as allowed with my children, but I have to provide for them as well, just like every parent in Alberta should be trying to do, just as many Alberta parents do day to day, and that is part of our Alberta advantage. I think we need to be very clear that those parents choosing to work outside the home or having to work outside the home are recognized for their contribution to the economy. Alberta benefits through everyone who participates in the workforce. We have to ensure that parents know that. Regardless of being single- or double-income families, they are a valuable asset to this province, and of equal importance as employees, small businesspeople, and professionals is a stay-at-home child caregiver.

Mr. Speaker, in 1992 it was the Premier who began building the

policy framework for a caring yet unintrusive government. This framework has led to unlimited opportunities for Albertans. It has also allowed our present status as one of the most vibrant jurisdictions in the world. Albertans pride themselves on that. They also pride themselves on being a fair province.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has now concluded.

4:30

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

### Bill 7

#### Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act, 2000

[Adjourned debate March 14: Mrs. Soetaert]

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to have an opportunity to put my comments on the record on Bill 7, the Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act, 2000. In general, I think I am in support of this bill as it stands right now, but we do have a few issues and some questions that I would like to speak to as I go through my comments here.

First of all, I just want to ensure that I'm understanding what happens with this amendment act, and I'm hoping that they can be clarified before we get to committee in terms of ensuring that I'm on the right track. What I think happens here, Mr. Speaker – right now we've got the authority that's a provincial agency that ensures that science policy corresponds to the Ministry of Innovation and Science business plans. As a result of the reorganization that happened back in the spring of '99, new agencies were added to that ministry, and they have to report to ASRA. Bill 7, as I see it, ensures that these new groups also report back through the authority.

As I'm understanding what I read in here, the old agencies that now move within the ministry are the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, that is now known as the energy research institute. The mandate of this new institute is wider, dealing not only with oil sands, as it did formerly, but with other energy-related research. The old research fund, the oil sands technology and research fund, is gone, and the assets are transferred to ASRA. Then there are changes made to the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, now to be known just as the agricultural institute, and that was moved from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. As we understand it, it will continue to compile and assess and distribute information on aspects of the science and engineering and technology side that relate to agriculture. As I see it, the last change is that the Alberta Forest Research Advisory Council becomes the Alberta forestry research institute, and the forest development research trust fund is transferred to ASRA from the environmental protection and enhancement fund.

All generally good moves as we can see it. Particularly what I like about it is that although the members of these institutes will be appointed by the minister, the board chairs will be elected by members of the Legislature. This is a new idea as we see it and quite welcome. I'm hoping that this opens up the process and that we see some interesting and innovative changes come about. Of course, even better would be elected members or some other forum for the members of the institutes to be put in place rather than simply being appointed by the minister. That always has the appearance of

political heavy-handedness in it, so that is always a concern to us.

I would ask a question about that process in terms of how the minister intends to make those allocations. Is there going to be some kind of an open process where the minister calls on related industries in the community for names to be put forward and then in some sort of open and transparent process those people will then be appointed? That would be also very welcomed by this side of the House, if we could see that kind of a process implemented, and would set a precedent that would, I think, be important to the people of the province and altogether supported by all of those who are interested in this process. So if the minister then looks for a wider range of names through which to make the appointments, that would be good.

The minister could take a suggestion from us in terms of going to independent consulting or headhunter companies to get the names of experts in addition to a process where industry members and other related interest groups could put forward names. The appearance and the smell of political patronage is in all cases something that we want to avoid in this Legislature, and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that hasn't always been the case in the past, so we would look firmly for some sort of independence in this review process as we move forward with these revisions to the bill.

We think that bringing the research funding together under one organization could lead to a number of efficiencies and clear direction with respect to accountability. That's particularly important, because we've undergone a phase in this province with the reorganizations that were done last spring that led to a case of a number of inefficiencies and definitely a lack of direction in terms of accountability and authority.

Over the past year we've heard numerous concerns and complaints from people who work within the various departments about them not knowing who they report to, who they are accountable to, who is to give them direction. Some people have two or three ministers that they're reporting to in the reorganization process, and in fact that's still occurring. So in this case that's also a concern, one that starts to be solved by this process, where we see the research funding coming under one organization.

Hopefully the lines of direction will be clear, and the lines of responsibility and authority will be very clear and will assist those people working within these departments. We would like an update on that at some point, Mr. Speaker, to find out how the process is going and what kinds of improvements they still need to make. That update could come in an interim report. It could be incorporated into the budget planning process with the business plans, where we could see consistent monitoring and benchmarking being done and a degree of detail there that would provide the kind of information that those not intimately involved in the organization would be able to evaluate it by. So what I'm speaking about here is a little more detail than we currently get in the business plans. Once again, this would be an excellent place to explore that opportunity and test out some more valuable and in-depth ways of monitoring efficiencies, direction, and accountability.

We also see where doing this, putting all the research funding under one organization, can lead to greater consistency in fulfilling the goals for research and technology as set out in the business plans. It's been a little bumpy ride to this point. Progress is being made, but definitely there are a couple of areas that we need to take a look at. If you can provide a framework for consistency in fulfilling goals in a research environment, then the research environment itself can thrive. It can focus on what their job is, and that's doing research, and they don't have to worry to such a great extent about the kinds of accountability problems or consistency problems that have happened in the past. What we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that all areas of research and development in this province can focus

completely on their goals and not have to worry about management and organizational practices. So we hope that those are the things that will happen with this, and we look forward to watching them and monitoring the progress.

But we do have a few questions about the progress and the process, Mr. Speaker, and I'll speak to them for a little while. We're wondering to what extent ASRA and the institutes complement businesses and to what extent they will be competitive with business. This is an old problem for this government, where they were previously in the business of being in business and were in direct competition with other producers within the province. We saw how flawed that process was, and this province paid a very high price for doing that.

We take a look at the boondoggles of the past. Let's talk about Swan Hills for a minute. There's a great example, that's still existing, where because of government involvement, because of government underwriting that process in terms of putting in capital dollars to develop the plant and the lands around them, they've given that company an unfair competitive advantage as compared to other competitive companies in not just Alberta but in Canada itself. So what happens is that when industry can see that government is interfering in the process, when they are coming into direct competition with the business sector, then they stop the flow of research and development dollars, Mr. Speaker, and what that does is retard the growth in the province and retard future investment and development, and that can be a real problem. We've seen that.

4:40

We had an opportunity a few years ago in this province to leap ahead in terms of the environmental research and development that we were doing, something that clearly falls within the framework of this bill, and because of the kinds of interference the government had in the process at that time, corporations just dried up the dollars and they said: "We're not going there. We're not going to risk placing ourselves into a competitive market where our main competitor is the government, who has unlimited access to resource dollars and doesn't always make the best business decisions based on competitive markets." That isn't any kind of hearsay. We've seen that happen in this province, Mr. Speaker, and everyone in here has been a witness to that process.

The problem, then, in a province like ours, that is so heavily dependent on fossil fuels and other primary kinds of development, like trees and oil and gas, is that we don't see a process developing where we see significant value added, and that becomes a problem in a resource-based economy when the market and the prices fall, and we've seen that. We go through these boom-and-bust cycles all the time, Mr. Speaker. You'd think that after 30 to 50 years of having done that, the governments of the day would have learned, but they haven't seemed to.

This is particularly important when you talk about the research and development side. Here we are moving to a stage where we're consolidating these under one ministry and taking some steps in the right direction, but the past history of this government has the very people, the business sector, concerned about it in terms of what the government is going to do tomorrow. Are they going to be in direct competition, or are they going to keep their research and development side quite different and separate from what business is doing? That becomes very important in terms of value added. We see right now that the biggest concern coming to us from industry is: what is this government doing to support value-added products and the building of value-added products when we are in a boom time period? Now is the time that we have the dollars to spend, that we have the time to sit back and in a visionary kind of process take a

look at the long-term research and development aspects of value added.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We can support industry at this stage by creating an environment for value-added products to flourish, and this is the time to do it, when we have the money, not two or three or four years down the road when the cycle bottoms out and we once again do not have the kind of cash flow to support basic programming in this province let alone the research and development side. So now the government has a real opportunity, a window of opportunity, to move forward in this regard and ensure that the practices that they're putting in place with the amendments to this bill really take us a step further than we ever have been before in this province.

I know that this opportunity can be exploited to the fullest possible extent, but we haven't seen that happening so far, Mr. Speaker. We see the framework being built, but we don't see the fleshing out of that framework happening. I take this from two conversations I've had in the past month with businesspeople in this province, businesspeople who are self-professed Conservatives who in most regards support this government on all sides, except they see that this government doesn't get it in terms of the necessity to support the building of value-added products at this time.

It isn't good enough to just put the framework in place for the research and development. They have to ensure that they're going to provide an environment where that research and development can really take off. One of the ways that they can do that is by reassuring the business community that they will not be in competition with them. So that's a real problem.

In the past ASRA has definitely been seen as a competitor as they focus more on commercial operations rather than policy. The focus of this organization should be facilitating research and as a funding agency to facilitate research. So once they focus on the commercial operations side rather than policy, we get into trouble. That's a basic policy decision that this government has made in the past that needs to be addressed, and this bill would be an opportunity to address that policy decision and to give some clear direction on where the government intends to go. So I am expecting sometime during this debate that we will have the sponsor of this bill and perhaps some of the ministers who have a direct interest in terms of their portfolios stand up and address that.

The business community needs to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they will not be competing with this government on commercial operations at any point in time. They need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is a policy-focused institute that facilitates research and provides the funding for that research, nothing more and nothing less, and that they give wholehearted support to funding and facilitating research with a focus on value-added products, which is the basic framework. Well, let's put the meat on the bones here and put some confidence into the business community so that they will come up with matching dollars and support projects and know that in the coming years they can operate in a free market environment without any interference.

That, I think, is a critical issue that needs to be addressed, and I'm hoping that we will see some responses to that soon. Certainly if we haven't seen any responses to this by the time we get to committee, I will be coming back on this topic and will be discussing it, because it's critical to the long-term growth of this province and to us being global competitors. If we don't spend more time facilitating research and industry and helping fund research, we will not be globally competitive, and in fact I think in a number of industries we are

already losing the competitive edge that we formerly had. So I hope those questions can be addressed.

Next, I would like to talk about the needs of agricultural research. Are they being met, and will they be met with the amendments under this bill? We know that there's a lot of concern right now that the new institute may be less sensitive to the different regional requirements, and with agriculture it's very important to retain links with the community.

MRS. SOETAERT: Agriculture, that really concerns me too.

MS CARLSON: Well, I'm sure that it really concerns you. It should concern all of us. Agriculture is part of the backbone of the economy in this province, and we have a history of supporting agriculture and agriculture-based families. We need to ensure that they will have the kind of support that they need.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: It's our future, not our past.

MS CARLSON: Well, that's a very good comment, and I'm glad that the minister made it. It's only our future if we help to facilitate research and development in that sector; right?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I agree with that.

MS CARLSON: He agrees with me. That's great. Mr. Speaker, that doesn't happen too often, but I'm glad to see that we have a meeting of the minds on agriculture from both sides of the House.

Agriculture is a great part of our future, and we need to support it, and we need to ensure that research is supported here in terms of facilitating that and these organizations being funding agencies. So in terms of that, I'm sure that this minister will help address my concern, which is that the new institute may be less sensitive to different regional requirements.

We know the kinds of problems that happen, the sensitivities that there are in those north/south, east/west splits and the sensitivities there are in terms of different agricultural sectors. We need to know and the agricultural community needs to know that they are not going to have any kind of influence by the government that treats different sectors or different regions differently. We want to ensure that fair treatment is available for everybody.

When I travel in northern Alberta, I know that they have a great number of concerns that they may not always get the same kind of focus as sectors in southern Alberta. We see that happening all the time in tourism. Those people from that sector have a very valid concern, so I'm hoping that the same thing doesn't happen in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be back.

4:50

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak at second reading to Bill 7, the Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act, 2000. I have read this bill and was listening to my colleague speak about it. It's an interesting bill. On the surface of it it's actually about something pretty straightforward in that the three agencies that operated under separate umbrellas are now being brought together; that is, the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute – now, that one gets a new name out of this too, becoming the agricultural institute – and the Alberta forest research council, which

becomes the Alberta forestry research institute, are all being brought under this Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act.

I take it that this is to help co-ordinate the government's policy and assistance to these research sectors of agriculture, forestry, and energy but also to revamp the reporting structures. Yes, these agencies are given direction by the minister, but the reporting for it will also come back through it. That I always find really interesting.

As some of the members know, I sit on the Public Accounts Committee. While I wish that we weren't examining public accounts that were quite so far behind us, nonetheless it's a very interesting experience. One of the issues that the Auditor General has repeatedly raised is the reporting of agencies, boards and commissions, and delegated administrative organizations. In a lot of cases the government has made choices to download responsibilities onto, particularly, delegated administrative organizations, and then there seems to be a bit of a problem in the accountability factor coming back. Some of that criticism can also be placed on the agencies, boards, and committees. I'm not sure how these institutes would be classified, either as a DAO or one of the agencies, I suppose. But the point is that if there's taxpayer money going into an entity, there should be strong governance that is set up, responsible governance, and there should be a very clear direction of policy, what they're following, a good evaluation process.

There needs to be accountability that is brought right back through to the Legislature and therefore to the people of Alberta on how the money is spent and what it's being used for and that this is good value for money for Albertans. I know that this has been a struggle for the government, to create a good system that works, and I hope that what's being proposed through this legislation will assist in that and that we will have strong accountability, because there can be a lot of money in research, particularly around information technology. It seems to be a growing field.

A couple of other things that I had a few questions about as I went through it. It's sort of done in three parts that are all more or less the same: one for the agricultural institute, one for forestry, and one for energy. In each case "the Minister must designate a member who is a member of the Legislative Assembly" as the chairperson of the institute. Then someone else from the board becomes the vice-chair. I think this is worth noting. I guess the questions that I'm asking to the minister responsible for the act are: then I take it that this person is also paid an additional sum of money as the chairperson of this committee, and will the money for the payment of that salary be coming out of the institute's budget? I know that a number of members chair committees and I think are paid – it's set out in the Standing Orders – an additional \$15,000 or something a year, and I'm wondering if that's what's happening here.

Second to that, the minister is appointing no fewer than three and no more than 11 members to these institutes. I'd like to hear back from the minister whether the PAO directive that was established and in fact brought forward by the Premier in 1992 is being followed in the recruitment, selection, and training of members of the public or of related industry being appointed to this board. I think it's really important that there is good representation and that we have the most qualified people available that we're able to recruit as essentially volunteers.

There is a designation in the bill that institute members would be reimbursed for travel expenses and I think a per diem. Yeah, they're paid remuneration and receive reasonable traveling expenses, but for many of these people the per diem is not equivalent to what they'd be earning in their real lives or in their professional lives. So in some ways I suppose we could consider them volunteers, but I think it's important that we do get those that are most highly qualified. I



for one would not want to see the government in a position where they were being accused of using these as patronage posts. I dearly hope that wouldn't happen here, seeing as we're sort of starting over with the designations about how the minister appoints people to the boards, and we do have the PAO directive that is available. I'm hoping that's going to be followed, and perhaps the sponsor of the bill could speak to that.

I did have one question in that I note – and I'm sure there's a very simple explanation for this – that in each case it's mentioning that the Regulations Act does not apply to the bylaws that are put together for the individual institutes, and I'm wondering what the reason is behind that. I would just appreciate the minister explaining that one.

I've talked about the fact that these three agencies are coming together, in some cases getting reconfigured a bit, to sit under the Alberta science, research, and technology department. I'm also wondering about the limitations or the restrictions or perhaps the criteria of the research that's being done. It's quite clear in the bill that each of these institutes is responsible for – oh, there's a bunch of typical language here, and I don't want to get specific about it because we are in second reading of the bill – assessing and compiling information on science, engineering, or technology specific to energy or forestry or agriculture, those being the three institutes under this bill now.

I'm wondering. When you talk technology, is there an anticipation or a vision that that includes technology or – what's the other word that's being used right now? Intellectual knowledge I think it's called.

MRS. SOETAERT: Property.

MS BLAKEMAN: Property. Thank you.

As an Albertan I appreciate and I really value research, and I'm glad to see that there is a very strong proponent for research and technology on the bench opposite. I think we're way past time where we needed to be putting some real money into these areas, because it is the future for us. But I'm also a little worried that we are driving down a road that says for development of gizmos only. It's a very narrow focus. The expectation is that these institutes would come up with research or would invent very specific little products. I guess that's part of what's meant by value added these days. My concern is: where is the balance for this? Was the minister anticipating in the wording of putting these institutes together that research in the social sciences or humanities or even the fine arts would be incorporated as part of these? In the language that I'm reading, it doesn't seem to be the case. I'm just looking for clarification on that, because if it is that narrowly focused, I have a concern.

5:00

You know, there's been a very good argument put forward by those in our academic institutions – and that's what they're to do after all – that we need to value our general arts and our social science academics and the research and the thinking, the new thinking that they bring forward. Certainly I think most of us are familiar with the arguments that, you know, everyone had to have a very specific kind of MBA. Everybody had to have an MBA, and that's the only way that you were ever going to be successful in the business world. In fact, what we know now is that large companies and even small ones are coming back into the universities looking for someone that has a better mix, that they have perhaps a general arts degree and some management training as well or perhaps even accounting because that wider training, that wider realization of what's out there in the world brings you a better product in the end.

So I guess I am looking for that definition of how narrowly focused each of these institutes is, and if it is to be that narrowly focused, then I am urging the minister to broaden their horizons and think a little bigger. I think it's of more benefit to us in Alberta to bring in all the possibilities, and that does include the thinking and research and exploration that's happened in the humanities and social sciences, for example. Certainly those are the areas where we've had the most leaps forward in understanding institutional change, and that's also part of what we're grappling with here. How do we redesign these groups or agencies, the style of management, the way we've done research for so long? It's not working for us anymore. So how do we redesign it to take us forward? I think it's important to pull from those areas that do specialize in that sort of organizational thinking to bring their expertise into it.

Part of that is also language. If we're looking at a global economy – yes, English is very widely used, but it is not the only language in the world – and if we are really trying to compete in a global marketplace, then language becomes very important. I'm wondering, in all of this thinking and reconfiguring of these institutes, where that sort of component could be found or where the encouragement of that would be found.

So I've talked about my concerns around the appointments process to the different institutes. I don't know if I have a concern that the chairperson is always going to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly. I suppose that could be a very reasonable thing, but it certainly does narrow us if we're looking for leadership in a particular field. Otherwise, it just sounds like we're going to appoint whichever MLA has sought or found favour with the minister to head up these institutes and without any particular background or interest or ability that they're bringing to that very specific institute. So I have some hesitations around that. As well, I was asking about the budget to pay for that person. Will there be the typical \$15,000 plus change taken out of the budgets to pay for the top-up to the MLA's salary on that?

Those are the questions that I really wanted to bring forward to have answered. I think overall I'm very supportive of the direction that the government is taking with research. I have made the points that I think research needs to be more widely defined and certainly should not be leaving humanities and social sciences and fine arts out in the cold. I don't think that's going to serve any of us very well. So if the minister is not going to pursue that, I'd be interested in hearing whether there are any initiatives on the government side to be upholding and strengthening research and development in those areas, either in partnership with universities and colleges or outside of those.

So with those comments and observations and questions, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the bill. At this point I believe that I'm going to be supporting it, and I certainly do commend the Minister of Innovation and Science and technology for his enthusiasm in helping this government come into the 21st century.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, sir. This is one of those bills that I really do like. There are not many that come through this House that would jar me to my feet to support the government on this particular matter. I have to again compliment the minister for his energy which he has put into this ministry and for his newfound ways of spending some of the government's money very wisely.

We will remember that in this House in 1993 that particular member, a private member at the time, sat in the back. I don't think they called them the Nix Six, but they might well have been because

they were not overly complimentary about anybody's performance in the Legislature. That particular member was most adamant that the government should not spend any money on virtually anything. He has found a place where investment is warranted, and he has done it well.

This particular bill, with the amalgamation and bringing under one roof the direct research in some fundamental areas of science in the province of Alberta, is more than welcome. I suspect it will give some better focus to some research in the areas that are outlined in the bill and will provide, hopefully, a co-ordination of those overlapping areas. They're all engineering and science related obviously, but sometimes they slide from one area of technology into another, and the co-ordination there is most rewarding when it is done in a fashion that fosters all the growth in the areas.

Now, there are some concerns in the pure scientific community that this agency may – I wouldn't expect that it would, but it may – focus so much upon the commercialization, on that end of technology, that it loses sight of the fundamental research. In my particular area of expertise in engineering there has been a great deal of research recently in the nature of materials. That has to be done in test labs and at universities and is in fact done in the universities, but there is the application of the science that goes from that to a commercialization. This agency or the agencies under this particular act will hopefully facilitate a lot of that.

Now we turn to some of the areas that seem to be and hopefully will be managed rather well. I've noted that there's a gentleman by the name of Darwin Park, I believe. I don't want to insult the man, but I can't recall the name of the firm that he's with. He is a principal in the firm, and his job is to interview and to find throughout the province of Alberta and perhaps beyond – I'm not sure what the mandate is – board members. He has written to all members to search for those. I've responded with some suggestions, and I'm sure he will find those Albertans that are interested in this area and have a great deal of expertise in the area, having grown in their business through this province and through the wealth of this province and in the hinterland, on the edge of new technologies all the time. We recognize that the science of oil sands was entirely invented right here in Alberta.

5:10

You'll note that a great deal of the innovations in downhole drilling are grown right here. You'll note that today there is still the higher end technology of oil recovery shipped all over the world from points just south of here. Nisku is a noted example of shipping that kind of technology everywhere. Well, that kind of technology is fostered, yes, by economic activity but often needs a bit of a catalyst at times to explore the areas and push that envelope of knowledge just that much further, and there is some risk. There's no question about risk, that oftentimes a channel of thought or a potential innovation just simply doesn't work. But if you don't take that step to find that, then you're forever held back at a level that is status quo. Certainly that hasn't been the history of Alberta, and it certainly hasn't been the history of those that are involved in science and technology in this province.

This province has one of the stronger engineering societies, and they're always looking for innovation and trying to foster that growth within their membership. They do a great deal of work in the foundations trying to get young people interested in the sciences, and through I think it's Mr. Gray from Calgary, that started an institute that does precisely that, they disseminate that interest in the sciences at the grade 8, grade 9 levels, where students are starting to look beyond just that which is being taught in their curriculum and to find out what areas they do have a little more interest in than others and

a little better knowledge. They start pushing that, pushing their teachers, and finding that actually they are not that far away from research capabilities, and that of course goes through high school. Then, of course, we get to universities, in which we have an abundance of really good talent in this province.

I don't want to digress much from the research, but one of the problems I've always had with the funding of universities in this province is that element of research. It was not and is not in the criteria for funding. It was, yes, included, but a small element, and in order to qualify for the grants programs and for the additional moneys to continue these programs, it was publish, publish, publish. Well, having spent a little time in the field myself, I find that publishing, while it may be a gauge for some, certainly is not in the hard sciences, where you're dealing with basic research, where you're dealing with the nature of matter and trying to build from the microelement into an action and reaction on a much larger scale.

Well, if that elementary/basic research is not done, then the building blocks are simply not there for different end research that is being more applied. You'll note that the geophysics and geology in this province have led the world in deep hole exploration and drilling. That all comes from two universities that have very, very qualified staff in these areas, not only in teaching, but they do a lot of research too. That's where the fundamental science comes in. Having a testing ground close at hand and having co-ordination bodies through industry certainly makes the discovery in these areas of science much, much easier.

The transition between the base research at the university and the application of the research has always been a bit difficult in this province. The ARC, Alberta Research Council, has been in that business for a long time, but they have a limited resource. When they strike out to advance in an area, it takes a great deal of time to build that area. Once built, it's logical to continue that. Well, those areas have to be limited.

AOSTRA was a great vehicle for furthering knowledge in oil sands, but it didn't do and hasn't done a lot of that transition work from the fundamental science to application science in other areas of energy, notably natural gas discovery and separation and natural gas measurement. You'll recognize that one of the big difficulties with shipping natural gas is to measure it, because it's all measured in cfm, or cubic metres. That's a measurement difficulty, to measure the quantities of solution gas and higher level gas. That's been a recent innovation right here in Alberta using fundamental science, using some venturi principles and some other higher end gauging. Well, those are the kinds of things that would not and could not be marketed throughout the world if there wasn't a vehicle to fund these areas. That appears to be what the intent of this bill is, and that's in fact what the minister is saying it is.

Agriculture research. Being a city fellow, I guess there are a number of things I don't know about that area, but I do know some. I do know that durum wheat basically built the whole of western Canada by extending the growth in a shorter period of time and by producing that very, very hard wheat that is marketable and is some of if not the best in the entire world for both nutrition and for working in the hammer mill.

The advances in oilseeds are second to none in the world. Between Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta you find the best of science in those areas, and it has changed a great deal of the production in the province of Alberta. I know there are a number of experts in this House that know a great deal about the production of oilseed, because they have in fact been in the business at different times.

The forestry industry has had a major boom since about 1980. The research there, particularly boreal forest research, is most

necessary and should be ongoing. The innovations in pulping have expanded the extent of the potential harvest in this province far beyond what anyone would have expected in the '60s and '70s or even the early '80s. It has been a boon to a lot of good industry in this province.

There are, of course, some areas that I'm a little concerned with. There's a portion of the bill that speaks of ownership, that all of the ownership of the discoveries in whatever form – patent, copyright, technology, and the like – will and shall be owned by the Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority.

5:20

There's another portion, too, that talks about an agreement between those that are doing the inventing, if you will, and the authority. Well, that has some difficulties, because a great deal of the work has to be contracted, of course, and if there is no agreement in place to share the proceeds, as it were, then the incentive for the science agency that is putting out this work – it would be darn difficult to attract them. Hopefully the government is not in the business of being in this business except to foster growth, so that there is, yes, a reasonable royalty on some discovery of science that can in fact be marketed, but here's hoping that the authority will not hamper the growth of science simply by looking to have the hand out to have some kind of payback.

This member believes that this piece of legislation is a good investment. There's painfully little that is returned in the way of royalties or patent rights or the like. That would be just fine with this member and would allow the industry to fully take hold of the possibilities allowed in this bill and really work with it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that the oil sands operators had with the research funds being shared with the entire energy sector was that they would be shortchanged. Well, I don't believe that to be the case. Quite frankly, they are all substantive operators. There are a number of them in the business now. It's not like the early days of the Great Canadian Oil Sands and those that had a tough time scratching out a dollar or two. Recently they have been doing exceptionally fine, being able to produce a barrel for in the order of \$14 to \$15 and get it to market at that rate, and with plus 20 dollar a barrel oil they are doing really, really quite well.

The innovation in oil sands is heavy field work, because in fact it is all cost-related. It does not have a lot to do with innovation and science. It has more to do with the economics of production and not with the oil sands. So I have a little difficulty with their arguments, particularly in the energy sector, from wind to solar right through all the oils and all the gases and through the further production. That's where research is required. That's where there has to be innovation.

In summary, I'd like to again say that this piece of legislation, if enacted properly and instituted as it seems it shall be under the guidance of the minister and the energy of the minister, can be an exceptionally fine example of how government can be a catalyst for long-term growth in this province. Quite frankly, I'm quite happy to speak to it and speak in favour of it.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate on the matter at present.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

