

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 20, 2000**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 00/04/20

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Our Father, give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, a little patience, please. We have quite a list today.

The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today signed by my constituents and the surrounding area in support of reinstating front licence plates.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and table a petition signed by 272 citizens residing in the communities of Devon, Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, Ardrossan, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Leduc, and Edmonton. These citizens are urging "the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to present a petition on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Calder.

It is a petition signed by 276 residents of Alberta from Wabamun, Vegreville, Sherwood Park, Morinville, St. Albert, Beaumont, and Edmonton. It petitions "the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Mr. Speaker, on my own behalf and on behalf of 274 citizens of Red Deer, Carvel, Vimy, Stony Plain, Morinville, St. Paul, Sherwood Park, and Edmonton I would like to present a petition which 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.

Thank you.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present petitions by Albertans who are concerned about this government's promotion of private health care and undermining of public health care. The petitions tabled today will bring the total to 64,000.

Thank you.

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

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present this afternoon. They're from Spruce Grove, Edmonton, Calgary. We've got petitions from just about every corner in Alberta. They are urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care."

Thank you.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by 269 Albertans from various communities in northern Alberta including Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, Drayton Valley, Carvel, Vegreville, Vermilion, St. Albert, Stony Plain, and Edmonton. They're urging "the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition signed by 235 concerned citizens of Sherwood Park, Leduc, St. Albert, Edmonton, Calmar, New Sarepta, and Fort Saskatchewan. They are urging "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 very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I have a petition signed by 265 people from Tofield, St. Albert, Stettler, Sherwood Park, and Edmonton. They are urging "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. With permission I'd present a petition signed by 219 citizens from St. Albert, Devon, Gibbons, Stony Plain, Red Deer, and Edmonton urging "the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure this afternoon to present a petition signed by 255 Albertans from Spruce Grove, Sherwood Park, Edmonton, St. Albert, and Westlock urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care." Now, I'll note as well that these are even signed on the back.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two petitions to present. The first is signed by 1,800 people from the Banff-Canmore-Calgary region. This petition urges the government to

- (1) maintain Kananaskis Country in a natural state that provides high quality wildlife habitat and nature-based recreational activities;
- (2) deny development approval to any intensive recreational developments, including Mount Shark Resort, Mount Sparrowhawk Heli-skiing, Alpine Village Resort, and Buffalo Nations Cultural Society; and
- (3) create a Wildland Provincial Park that protects the Kananaskis and Spray River Valleys and is bounded by Banff National Park, Wind Valley Natural Area, Bow Valley Provincial Park, the Elbow-Sheep Wildland Provincial Park, and Peter Lougheed Provincial Park.

The second petition I have today is signed by 276 residents of Boyle, Sherwood Park, Innisfail, Andrew, Ardrossan, Red Deer, Calmar, Leduc, and Edmonton. It is urging “the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care” in this province.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition to present to the Assembly that 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.

It is signed by 276 Albertans from Sherwood Park, Beaumont, Millet, Spruce Grove, Bruderheim, St. Albert, and Edmonton.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to present to the Assembly another health care petition signed by 218 Albertans from Viking, Airdrie, Westlock, Clyde, St. Albert, Red Deer, Spruce Grove, and Edmonton. This petition reads:

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.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions to present this afternoon. The first one is from 133 people in each of the four quadrants of the city of Calgary and urges “the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.”

The second petition with identical wording is from 212 Albertans living in St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Edmonton, Calmar, Spruce Grove, and Bon Accord.

Thank you.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition signed by 1,020 Albertans from Banff, Canmore, Cochrane, Calgary, Edmonton, Bruce, Vegreville, Hairy Hill, Holden, Innisfree, Ranfurly, Mundare, Nanton, Sylvan Lake, Camrose, Westmore, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Sherwood Park, Bluffton, Rimbey, Millarville, Airdrie, Bloomsbury, Barrhead, Clyde, Gunn, Lone Pine, Vimy, Picardville, Rochester, Cherhill, Alberta Beach, Camp Creek, Neerlandia, Okotoks, and Onoway. The petition asks the Legislative 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.

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

THE SPEAKER: Before calling on the hon. member, I'd just like to make a brief comment with respect to Presenting Petitions. When we have Reading and Receiving Petitions, that is actually when the petition is read. Standing Order 82(2) indicates that there should be brevity in terms of presenting the petition, so it's not required that when presenting the petition, it actually be read. Now is the time at which it will be read.

1:40

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday signed by 280 people on private health care be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition I presented yesterday now be 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 Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented regarding private health care be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented from 109 Albertans 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 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 earlier this week now be 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-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented April 19 signed by 188 Albertans 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-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday, April 19 I presented two petitions to the Legislative Assembly. I now ask that the petition from 224 Hinton residents and the also petition from 2,187 Albertans regarding the minimum of two people on a shift from dark to daylight be now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

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

The second petition was not in order to be read and received.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and request that the petition I tabled yesterday in this Assembly be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I would request that the petition I tabled in this Assembly on April 19 signed by 319 residents of Fort McMurray urging the government to stop their promotion of private health care now be 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. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition standing in my name on the Order Paper 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-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give me great pleasure this afternoon to ask that the petition I presented the other day now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

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

THE CLERK:

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

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to table five copies of the 1999 annual report of the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal as required by statute.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. First, the appropriate copies of a letter that we sent out on the Day of Mourning for April 28, 2000, and also the 1999 annual report for the Alberta Society of Engineering Technologists.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, this Assembly will reconvene on May 1, and on that day I'll ask hon. members to observe a moment of silence to commemorate the National Day of Mourning.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today copies of responses to questions raised during reporting estimates for International and Intergovernmental Relations on March 22, 2000. These have also been transmitted to the hon. members who asked the questions.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table the requisite copies of information regarding the sale of the Gainers property in Edmonton, including the environmental and market assessments. I only have one copy here; the balance were tabled directly in the Clerk's office.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four letters to table today. All the letters express opposition to Bill 11. The first two are from Edmonton, one from Hannah Noerenberg, a long four-page letter, and the second is from Dennis Rusinak.

The other two letters are from Calgary, including one from a physician, Dr. Robert Lee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table two letters, both expressing concerns on the Snowshoe Creek clear-cutting of old growth forest. One of them is signed by David Greenshield of Lethbridge. The second is signed by Amanda Vollmer, also of Lethbridge.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my tabling is from Monika Schaefer, who is the chair of the Jasper Environmental Association. On behalf of that association she is writing to the Premier about her concerns with regard to the importing of wastes for treatment by Bovar at the Swan Hills waste treatment facility.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of a letter sent to the Member for St. Albert from Elke Blodgett, who is expressing her concern about how she was treated Tuesday night here in the Assembly and the rude reception she receives when she phones the Premier's office and the minister of health's office.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. The first is addressed to the Minister of Health and Wellness, and it is a listing of the questions that remain outstanding in the estimates of the Health and Wellness budget.

The second tabling, from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, is Standards for Non-hospital Surgical Facilities.

The third is an ad in the *Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune* indicating: For Rent, Operating Room.

Thank you.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have appropriate copies of a resolution or motion that was passed by the Edmonton city council requesting "the Government of Alberta to withdraw Bill 11."

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, I have one tabling today. It's a letter to myself dated April 17, 2000, from Sian Barraclough. Sian suffers from avascular necrosis, AVN, and it's a chronic ailment. She details her experiences with the health system and passes some comment on Bill 11.

Thank you.

1:50

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three letters to table today in regards to the Genesis Land Development Corp. proposal for the Spray Lakes. All three of these letters express the concerns of citizens Lena Shellian, Shirley Mushey, and Leigh Sifton with respect to their concerns and opposition to the Spray Lakes development.

Thank you.

head: Ministerial Statements

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

### Anniversary of Taber High School Shooting

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 28, 1999, two students on their way to class at Taber's W.R. Myers high school were shot. One of these students, 17-year-old Jason Lang, died. In the tumultuous days that followed this tragedy, Albertans watched the television coverage and read the stories in the newspaper. We saw headlines like Terror in Taber, and we saw the images: students consoling one another, flowers and mementos stacked around the walls of the school. There were extraordinarily moving and often disturbing scenes set against the familiar backdrop of small-town Alberta. This tragedy shook our province. We were disturbed and deeply saddened by it.

Today, almost a year later, we are still trying to understand and come to terms with what happened that day. As we near the one-year mark since the shootings, I know a lot of Albertans are looking back and revisiting this tragedy. Many are still mourning the loss of Jason. April 28 is not going to be an easy day, but I think we owe it to ourselves and to Jason's memory to approach it in a spirit of hope and understanding. The past year has after all been a time of profound healing and learning. Albertans have really come together. They've rallied around the people of Taber. Their hearts and prayers have been with Jason's family and friends. The people of this province have resolved to make something positive grow from this tragedy.

Over the course of the past year parents, students, teachers, social workers, law enforcement professionals, and other concerned Albertans have sat down with one another to talk openly and tackle the difficult issues surrounding school safety. Jason's father, the Reverend Dale Lang, has been instrumental in these efforts, and I applaud him for his courage and dedication. Together, I believe, Albertans are making some very valuable changes.

We all have a role to play in ensuring that our province's schools and communities are safe and caring places. On April 28 I would encourage Albertans to take a few moments to think about their individual roles and how we can come together with our neighbours from across the province to improve the quality of life for all of us, especially our children.

As Minister of Learning, a parent, and a citizen of this province I am personally committed to doing my part to continue to build this great province.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month marks the anniversary of two high school tragedies. Today we mourn with our neighbours to the south the loss of life at Columbine high school, and next week we will turn to our own grief at the loss of Jason Lang in a shooting at Taber's W.R. Myers high school.

Since those young lives were lost, we have asked ourselves over and over again: how could it have been prevented? We have grieved, we have prayed, we have tried to take precautions against a recurrence, and we have suffered the frustration such untimely deaths leave.

Albertans will pause on April 28. They will interrupt their everyday tasks, their telephone conversations, their meetings, and their family dinners to remember Jason and the Lang family. The remembrance will be difficult. We have come to know that Jason was a fun-loving, talented, compassionate, and committed young man. The remembrance will be difficult. We have had shaken our

belief that the most trusted of our institutions, our schools, are always a safe haven for our children. The remembrance will be difficult.

In the next few months many in this Assembly will be looking into young faces much like Jason's as we speak at graduating classes across the province. Let us tell them in those speeches and everywhere we meet those young Jasons how much they are loved, how much they are valued, and how much it hurts when we lose one of them.

Thank you.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you. I'd like to say welcome to the Legislature to 56 constituents from the Whitecourt area. There are 46 students from St. Joseph Catholic school accompanied by 10 adults, two teachers and parents. Awhile ago I met with the students, and we had a good discussion over a long, long time. I think it was two hours. They asked me a number of questions about the Legislature, and a question they were most concerned about was: how does question period work? I went on to explain. In the end I had to tell them the truth. I said to the students: if you acted the same way as some of our members act in this House, you would be sent to the principal's office very quickly. Mr. Speaker, we look to you as the principal of this Assembly to keep law and order. They are seated in the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly 59 very bright and interested visitors from St. Anthony school in Drayton Valley. They are accompanied here today by two teachers, Mrs. Patricia Molzan and Mr. Gerald Perry, and parents and helpers Miss Jody Birney, Mrs. Louise Mikulin, Mrs. Brenda Chermisnok, and Mrs. Danuta Thesen. I would ask them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly five members of the organ and tissue donation awareness committee. I would ask them to rise as I introduce them. First, Kathy Tachynski – she is the chair of the committee and also happens to be my niece – Karen Ashby, Howard Guse, Gurpreet Dulai, and Marla Rohde. They're seated in the members' gallery. I would ask everyone to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

In my second introduction, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a Rotary International exchange student from Belgium, Pierre Brennecke. Pierre is being hosted by the Morinville Rotarians and has been here since August 1999. He is accompanied by his sister, Laurence Brennecke, who is visiting from Belgium. They are here with one of Pierre's hosts, Connie Lewis. I will ask them to rise from their seats in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure of introducing to you and to all members of the Assembly a very special guest today, Mimi Williams. She's a social activist and a longtime New Democrat. She's a single mother of two sons. The younger of the two, Alex, celebrates his sixth birthday today. Mimi Williams is also a graduate student at the university. I would ask her to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two people who are joining us today who have worked very hard to preserve the wildlife and the landscape in this province and work on behalf of the people of the province in doing that. They are Dave Poulton, the conservation director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society for the Calgary and Banff chapter, and Dieter Gade, the wilderness campaigner, who is located in Bragg Creek, Alberta. They are in the members' gallery. I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

2:00

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you Syrena Courtorielle. Syrena grew up in Slave Lake, Alberta, moved to Edmonton six years ago, and is residing in northeast Edmonton. She is employed by the Royal Bank of Canada and is very interested in politics. Would Syrena please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege today to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly someone described as a great friend of the PC youth of Alberta, a constituent and a resident of Sherwood Park, Mr. Jack Nickerson, who is seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that he stand and receive the accolades of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege today to introduce to you and through you a lady who has been working in my communications department for the past two months. She is a student at Mount Royal College. Her name is Anika Woycechowsky. She's been a great help to us. I would ask Anika to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head: Statement by the Speaker

#### Brevity in Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before recognizing the first speaker today, I would like to make a brief comment. Some time ago I provided to the three House leaders in this Assembly a book called *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, and I would like to quote some lines from a certain text in that book. They amplify what I've said in this House on numerous occasions.

There is a statement made by the then Speaker of the day, Speaker Bosley, who said:

Mr. Speaker Jerome, in his statement 11 years ago, put his view with

regard to the first principle of brevity so well that I would merely quote it:

There can be no doubt that the greatest enemy of the Question Period is the Member who offends this most important principle. In putting the original question on any subject, a Member may require an explanatory remark, but there is no reason for such a preamble to exceed one, carefully drawn sentence.

It is my proposal to ask all Hon. Members to pay close attention to this admonition and to bring them to order if they fail to do so. It bears repeating that the long preamble or long question takes an unfair share of the time, and invariably, in provoking the same kind of response, only compounds the difficulty.

And I further quote:

I agree with these comments and would add that such comments obviously also apply to answers by Ministers. I would also endorse Mr. Speaker Jerome's view that supplementary questions should need no preambles; they should flow from the Minister's response and be put in precise and direct terms without any prior statement or argument. It is the Chair's view that it equally follows from the first principle, that time is scarce, that Members should seek to avoid merely repeating questions that have already been asked. I do not mean that other questions on the same subject should not be asked – as apparently I have been interpreted – just that subsequent questions should be other than ones already asked.

For similar reasons it has always been a fundamental rule of questioning Ministers that the subject matter of the question must fall within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibility of one of its Ministers. This is the only basis upon which Ministers can be expected to answer questions.

I further quote:

These two statements, along with some of the guidelines adopted by the House [of Commons] in 1965, are used today by the Speaker as a reference in managing the Question Period. In summary, when recognized in Question Period, a Member should

- ask a question;
- be brief;
- seek information;
- ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or the individual Minister addressed.

Furthermore, a question should not

- be a statement, representation, argument or an expression of opinion.

Yesterday in dealing with the question period, at the conclusion of the question period when there were points of order and points of privilege, the chair further indicated that brevity would be the key of the order in terms of the question and brevity would be the key of the order in terms of the response. It appears that a great number of members heard what the chair said yesterday. Today is the longest list of questions that I have been advised hon. members would like to ask since I have been in the chair of the Speaker.

It's my intent to see if we can move this question period on the basis of a brief question and a brief response so that I can actually work in the 19 additional private members, in addition to the two leaders of the two parties, who have indicated that they want to ask a question today.

head: Oral Question Period

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

### Bill 11 Protests

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fifty years

ago Supreme Court Justice J. Abbott said that "the right of free expression of opinion and of criticism" were "essential to the working of a parliamentary democracy." Given that nearly 1,500 seniors, children, moms and dads, and health workers peacefully gathered at the Legislature Building and McDougall Centre in Calgary last night, will the Premier explain his rather inflammatory labeling of these citizens of Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I've always said that protest is the essence of democracy, and I mean that. I deny no one's right to protest. I've been in this business now for 20 years, and I've undergone my share of protests when I was Minister of Environment and certainly as Premier, when I was the mayor of Calgary. I know what protests are all about. I certainly don't deny anyone the right to protest.

What offends me and I think what offends Albertans is misbehavior that destroys property and misbehavior that results in one case in an assault on one of our security people, the kind of misbehavior that saw a handle being ripped off the Legislature door. It's that kind of behaviour that I object to and that I believe Albertans object to.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier join me and speak to the citizens who are peacefully assembling at our Legislature Building?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the citizens are being heard, and although the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition characterizes all of those who are protesting as peaceful people, seniors and so on, I have been advised by our security people that within the crowd there are people who have the potential of being violent. I don't want to expose myself to that, and I don't think the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition would like me to be exposed to that.

MRS. MacBETH: Given that Premier Hamm of Nova Scotia had the respect yesterday to go out and face those citizens of Nova Scotia who were concerned about education cuts in their province, will this Premier show the same respect to our citizens?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I explained before, I have been in this business for 20 years, and I've been through a lot of protests. Some of those experiences have not been very pleasant. I'll recall – and I'm sure the leader of the Liberal opposition will know of this because she was in cabinet at the time – when I went to a protest rally in Calgary then concerned over some environmental moves that were being made, especially with respect to the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill, which was supported by this government at that particular time, having dead fish and dirty water thrown at me and on Christmas Eve having a coffin put on my front lawn and people chanting and yelling outside my house.

Mr. Speaker, I respect people's right to protest, but I don't any longer do protests.

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

### Private Health Services

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are still waiting for the Premier to present one shred of evidence that shows that private hospitals or approved surgical facilities achieve anything other than higher costs and longer wait lists. The latest annual report of the Calgary regional health authority makes reference to a number of studies comparing the costs of acute care facilities and private

facilities. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier table any studies that might be helpful to Albertans in understanding the dynamics and the evidence on this very important issue?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will allude to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, but I'm sure there are plenty of studies that do demonstrate that surgical clinics – and they are nothing new at all. They've been operating for years. As a matter of fact, all ophthalmology services in Calgary are operated by surgical clinics under contract to the regional health authority.

2:10

Now, I understand that some 6,000 procedures are allowed in Calgary per year. It only stands to reason, Mr. Speaker, that if you were to put all those procedures back into full-scale hospitals, it would put tremendous strain and pressure back on the system, and what we want to do through our policy is to provide options where people can get faster access to the surgical procedure that is required and take pressure off the system so the system can accommodate more complex and more serious procedures.

MRS. MacBETH: Will the Premier confirm that the Calgary regional health authority study shows that there is no evidence to support the Premier's claim to Albertans that the private facilities are less costly than public hospitals?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that may or may not be true, but relative to future contracting and what is proposed in putting fences around the operation of these, they will have to show beyond a doubt that there will be cost-effectiveness and that it will reduce waiting lists.

I would hope that the evidence is in the law that will make those requirements. Right now there are no requirements for surgical clinics that operate in this province and have been operating for years and years. There are no rules or regulations relative to the operation of these clinics relative to contracting with RHAs. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, recognition was given to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. The floor then was given to the hon. Premier to respond, so there's no need for interjections from other people to incite debate in this Assembly.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the Calgary regional health authority receives 850 million taxpayer dollars, will this Premier instruct the authority to release all of their studies and evidence on the cost-benefit analysis of contracting out surgical services?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that they have good reason now to contract a number of surgical services. I would like to point out – and this is not speaking to the bill – that right now there are I believe 52 or maybe 53 surgical facilities operating in the province of Alberta. All of those surgical facilities have contracts with various RHAs. I understand that they perform some 152 different minor surgeries, and I understand about 20,000 procedures are done per year.

MRS. SOETAERT: Cost-benefit analysis.

MR. KLEIN: Well, the analysis – and you don't need to be a brain surgeon . . .

THE SPEAKER: Please, there is a response there to an interjection from the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, and if it happens one more time, I'm going to invite her to take an early Easter break.

### Queen Elizabeth II Hospital

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, three operating theatres sit empty and idle at the Queen Elizabeth II hospital in Grande Prairie because of staff shortages, yet another symptom of this government's mismanagement of public health care. As of March 1 of this year almost 1,100 patients are on the wait list of the QE II, a 100 percent increase over this time two years ago. People in Grande Prairie don't want their tax dollars siphoned off to investor-owned surgical clinics; rather, they want the money used to open up the public operating rooms that are already there and waiting. And the debate goes on in Grande Prairie. My questions are to the Premier. Why is this government spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on advertising agencies and media consultants instead of using that money to open up operating theatres in the Grande Prairie QE II hospital?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond to this issue, because indeed this is one of the issues we plan to address in our six-point plan, of which the policy relative to contracting out and putting rules and regulations around surgical clinics is one component.

Certainly there are problems relative to waiting lists, not only at QE II but in other hospitals. As a matter of fact, I'll take the leader of the Liberal opposition back to 1990, when she was the minister of health. This is what she said then, and she's alluding to heart surgery in this particular case: waiting lists for heart surgery are the price Albertans pay for a universal health care system, says health minister Nancy Betkowski.

She goes on to say: at times for certain procedures waiting lists are part of the universal system; Betkowski said solving the waiting list problem is not just a matter of pouring in more dollars; if you're going to allocate more resources, where are you going to find the resources?

Mr. Speaker, I simply put it back to her.

THE SPEAKER: We'll ask for a tabling of that document if it's not already been tabled.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier agree with his chairman of the Mistahia health region that the solution is to rent out the operating rooms already paid for by the taxpayers?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness heard the question, so I'll let him answer.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two points that need to be made with respect to this situation. First of all, in the budget recently passed by this Assembly we have provided very significant additional dollars to the Mistahia region specifically for expansion and improvement of secondary services at the Queen E hospital.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I will not elaborate here, but there is an issue of management and administration and scheduling and co-operation with respect to the physician component up there, and we have been providing assistance with respect to resolving those difficulties.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the situation, and we are directing resources towards it.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, does this government, either the Premier or the minister of health, agree with its own appointed chairman who says that the solution to the Queen E II operating room problem is to rent public operating rooms out to the private sector?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in my previous answer I clearly indicated the action we are taking to resolve the difficulties facing the Queen E hospital. That is our answer. That is our approach. The chairman of the board may have expressed that particular view. It is not the view of the minister or, as far as I know, of the overall board collectively, and I've outlined the action that is being taken.

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

### Opposition to Bill 11

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday evening over a thousand citizens of all ages and walks of life held a peaceful rally on the front steps of this Legislature. Over 400 citizens held a similar rally in Calgary in front of the McDougall Centre. All participants at the rally in Edmonton were peaceful and respectful of persons and property. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier please reciprocate and start listening to the heartfelt concerns of the citizens with respect?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we are listening to citizens. Yes, last night there was – I think the fellow was quoted in the paper today – a Conservative supporter who was out there, and he was out there because he was frustrated. His wife unfortunately had just been diagnosed with a very serious ailment, and in his mind she couldn't get timely treatment. That had nothing to do with the issue at hand, Bill 11. It had something to do with what we're trying to address through the other six points, and that is timely access for people with serious ailments to the full-scale institutions that we have today. That has something to do with business plans that call for the hiring of more nurses and more doctors and more equipment such as MRIs, and the fellow admitted that.

Those are the kinds of things where we would like to sit down with people like that and say: "Lookit; this has nothing to do with your concern over a particular bill. This has something to do with the long-term sustainability of health care." This has something to do also with the health ministers from across this country working with their federal counterpart to find a way to make sure the health care system is sustainable.

His concern had nothing to do with Bill 11, if I can mention that bill. It had something to do with his frustration with another component of the system.

2:20

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier also listen to the Alberta Medical Association, the Alberta College of Family Physicians, Alberta's registered nurses, the Catholic Health Association, grassroots Conservatives, all of whom say no to the government's health privatization scheme?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, we will listen to the AMA. As a matter of fact, I would point out that the AMA was reasonably pleased with the treatment of the amendments that they proposed. I have spoken to Dr. Bond, the president of the AMA, and I have said that we would pursue with the AMA concerns that they have

that do not relate to Bill 11, concerns that relate to some of the underlying causes for strain on the system. How do we approach hiring more frontline staff, doctors and nurses and LPNs? How do we go about putting in place sustainable funding for capital costs? How do we address a multitude, a myriad of issues that pertain to the sustainability of health care?

I would be willing to talk to all of the associations that were mentioned about those particular issues, because we need their help. We need their positive input to help us deal with these issues that go far beyond the simple issue of putting rules and regulations around the contracting out of certain surgical procedures.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why does the Premier continue to insist that only he is right and that doctors, nurses, seniors, families, clergy, grassroots Tories, and hundreds of thousands of Alberta citizens are all wrong?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is not the case at all. That is not the case at all. If people have reasonable comment such as the AMA have on Bill 11, we will address those particular issues, and we have.

Bill 11 does not address some of those other issues, Mr. Speaker. Those are contained in the other five points of our plan. We would welcome the associations to which the hon. member alludes to sit down with our Minister of Health and Wellness, myself, our officials to find ways and design ways to address these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I guess when it comes to dealing with the issue that has caused so much controversy, my frustration comes again. Well, I have in my hand a document from the Liberal web site.

THE SPEAKER: With all respect, brevity please. Thank you very much. Let's move on.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

### Economic Outlook

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier. A Swiss-based institute for management released a study yesterday on the economic competitiveness of countries. The study notes Canada as slipping in its competitiveness, falling behind resurgent north European countries. Will the Premier tell us how Alberta's competitiveness through our fiscal policy of balanced budgets, debt pay-down, and low taxes is affected by Canada's competitiveness?

MR. KLEIN: Well, it's quite obvious, Mr. Speaker, that if Canada is not competitive, it greatly diminishes the opportunity for Alberta to be competitive. It's not good news for Alberta that Canada's competitiveness is slipping. Many financial analysts have alluded to this. This has been cited as one of the causes for the brain drain. So it's not good news for any Canadian province or territory.

The member is correct that the institute for management ranked Canada 11th for competitiveness, down from 10th in the previous two years. Meanwhile countries like Ireland and Sweden have jumped ahead of us, and that is wrong. We are trying to do the best we possibly can in this province to maintain within Confederation our competitive edge. I'm not just saying that, Mr. Speaker. We've got the proof to back it up. The Dominion Bond Rating Service has now upgraded our short-term debt credit rating to R-1. This shows that those in the business of measuring economic competitiveness recognize Alberta as a leader.

MR. DOERKSEN: Again to the Premier: can the Premier tell us how this rating measures up against other provinces?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, Alberta is given the highest rating mark of any jurisdiction in Canada, and it has pushed us to top spot ahead of Ontario and British Columbia. Now, I know that the Liberals don't like to hear that because it is good news. This is what the people who are not protesting like to hear. This is what the people like to hear, the people who have a tremendous amount of pride in our province and the people who are concerned about maintaining our economic sustainability and the tremendous prosperity that we have created in this province. That's what the majority of Albertans want to hear about.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, while Dominion is just one of several major rating agencies, can the Premier tell us where Alberta ranks with the other agencies as well?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, all the major bond-rating agencies have recognized our fiscal strength. Not only did the Dominion Bond Rating Service just upgrade us; Moody's has also put us on notice as a possible upgrade. In fact, they were in town, I understand from the Provincial Treasurer, just this week meeting with the Acting Provincial Treasurer and department officials.

As a matter of fact, I had the opportunity of listening to the *Rutherford Show* for a short while today, and a fellow by the name of Mr. MacBeth was on the radio praising not the Liberal Party but praising Alberta. As his company pointed out: another day in paradise.

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

#### **Bill 11 Publicity**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, when the Premier says that Albertans like to hear good news, I think he's right, but I think Albertans also want accurate information on how their tax dollars are spent, and they want that information in a timely way. Yesterday the Official Opposition tabled an additional invoice, bringing the total cost of its campaign to protect medicare to \$29,340.78. In the meanwhile, the Premier's \$8 million Public Affairs Bureau and the gigantic Health and Wellness department continue to put out deliberate misinformation, claiming that the cost of the propaganda campaign of the government is only \$1.2 million. Nobody believes that, Mr. Speaker. So my question to the hon. Premier would be this: will the Premier promise to release all of the invoices, all of the receipts, copies of all of the relevant contracts and to do that today so Albertans can find out precisely how much of their money, their tax dollars, is being spent to privatize health care in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that will all be compiled and reported in detail in the public accounts.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member for Calgary-Buffalo in that Albertans do indeed want honest information for their tax dollar, and that takes me back to the web site publication of the Official Opposition, where it says: Understanding Bill 11 The Private Hospital Act. That is wrong. That is misleading. That is fraudulent. There is no bill, no piece of legislation before this Legislature called the private hospital act, yet they deliberately go out and publish at taxpayers' expense Understanding Bill 11 The Private Hospital Act, a bill, a piece of legislation that simply does not exist. That is misinformation.

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

THE SPEAKER: Somehow in the exchange it seems that there was a lot of yelling and bantering, and I distinctly looked at the eyes of

the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who was expressing something which I did not hear. Did you want me recognize you?

2:30

MR. SAPERS: No. I'd like question period to continue.

THE SPEAKER: Well, stand up. If you stand up, you can be recognized. If you don't want to stand up, you will not be recognized.

#### **Bill 11 Publicity**

*(continued)*

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, given that my question must not have been clear to the Premier, will the Premier promise to release today copies of all the receipts, all the invoices, all the contracts representing the cost to Alberta taxpayers to spin, sell, promote the private health care agenda of this government?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we have spent nothing on promoting what the hon. member alludes to as a private health care agenda. Yes, we have spent some money on distributing a bill relative to the protection of health care in Alberta, the Health Care Protection Act.

What is false, what is wrong, and what is misleading is this publication. I want to table five copies of this publication. It says: Understanding Bill 11 The Private Hospital Act. That is fraudulent. It is wrong. It is misleading. Not to my knowledge, not to the knowledge of anyone in this caucus is there any such bill called the private hospital act. They have used taxpayer's dollars – I don't know how much – to put out this deliberate, malicious, and absolutely false information. That is a misuse of taxpayers' dollars.

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

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, when the hon. leader of the government was responding to that question, there was a very sharp interjection that the chair did hear from the hon. Minister of Gaming. The tradition in this House is that members do face the chair; they do not turn their backs to the chair. It seems that the reason for the provocation of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora perhaps a few minutes before was that the hon. Minister of Gaming in fact did turn his back to the chair and did utter something. That is totally inappropriate.

#### **Bill 11 Publicity**

*(continued)*

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier can't seem to find anyone in his 128-person, \$8 million Public Affairs Bureau to do the math, will he confirm that the estimate the Official Opposition put forward yesterday, which suggested that the cost of the taxpayer-funded propaganda campaign will likely exceed \$2.2 million, is accurate?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there was no propaganda campaign. There was a mail-out of a document that had the contents of legislation in it. That was not propaganda. That was something that purports to become law. There is nothing more truthful and nothing more basic in a democratic society than a law. Moreover, there is nothing more fundamental and nothing more basic in a democratic society, where all Albertans have an opportunity to provide input into a law, reasonable input.

The only thing that is disgraceful and dishonest is this publication put out by the Liberals at taxpayers' expense that alludes to the

private hospital act, an act that doesn't exist, an act that has never existed, an act that never will exist as long as this government is in power. So that is false, and it's misleading, and it's an absolute misuse of taxpayers' dollars.

THE SPEAKER: That series of questions, hon. members, took seven minutes. We're now behind schedule.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### **Liquor Sales**

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Gaming. Please tell the Assembly if the AGLC review on exclusivity and inducement is complete, and if so, what are the results?

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me apologize for inadvertently turning my chair earlier and say that, yes, the AGLC, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, has completed its review related to exclusive sale of product and using cash to induce selling of alcoholic spirits. There's been a solution to the violation of the program brought forward by industry. Fines have been levied on the appropriate parties, and new regulations are prepared to go forward. I believe they're already in process.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. What effect will these changes have on consumers and small licensees?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, this new set of regulations will induce some market discipline. It'll induce regulatory discipline, which was asked for by industry, to industry. It will level the playing field so that all people involved in the sale of alcoholic spirits in Alberta will be able to compete on a level playing field. There will be no volume discounts. All sizes and types of licensees will be able to participate, and all regulations are directed towards consumer benefit.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. Can the minister tell the Assembly any penalties or fines that have been assessed to licensees for action related to product exclusivity or inducements?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, all licensees who were involved in the activities were being reviewed by the board of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, which runs as a regulatory board, and they are prosecuted or subject to penalties under the act. They're within the purview of the commission. The process is to inform the violators. Then there's an appeal process. The board may hear the appeal, and then the fines and all the information are posted on the AGLC web site.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, by the way, both hon. members, that was just excellent in terms of brevity.

### **Magnetic Resonance Imaging**

MRS. SLOAN: On the eve of a federal government investigation into the inaccessibility of MRIs in Alberta, the province announces that they will purchase four new machines while many in the province remain underutilized because of cash shortages. My questions are to the Premier. Just how exactly, Mr. Premier, are you going to explain to the federal government how Alberta has allowed private, for-profit MRIs to proliferate while public MRI machines have remained underfunded and understaffed?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of striking the right balance. If the hon. member thinks it's wrong to provide more MRIs for the public system, then stand up and say so. I mean, she seems to have a problem with this. If she thinks it's wrong and it's not the right thing to do, then stand up and say so.

Relative to the operation of MRIs generally, yes, when I alluded earlier to the overall problem of sustainability, not only of MRIs but any other component of the medical system, this has to be a national effort, and we would encourage and welcome the participation of Mr. Rock to find solutions. I know that in our six-point plan we will be allocating resources to bring into the stream as quickly as we possibly can the technicians that are required to operate those MRIs.

I'll have the hon. minister expand even further.

THE SPEAKER: We're going to keep going with our process of brevity as much as we can.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier explain what economic sense it makes to buy four new machines when the MRI at the Grey Nuns hospital in Mill Woods sits unutilized because there are no staff to operate it?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, you know, again it is so frustrating. [interjections] No. It is. The Liberal opposition seems to want to read only what they want to read, and they want to be negative on the points where they either don't know the information, haven't taken the time to research the information, or want to ignore the information.

I take the Liberal opposition and you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues in the House to an announcement that was made I believe it was in January, and I'm going to have the hon. minister supplement. It says, "To address the increasing demand for MRI technicians, Alberta Learning announced in January, an increase of 26 post-secondary spaces to train MRI technicians." Now, that was a public news release, and it amazes me that they wouldn't have the honesty, if they had read this, to allude to it.

I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

2:40

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will say that we are even going one step further in that our access fund for this coming year will be aimed solely at health professionals, with MRI technicians being right at the top of the list.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, isn't this situation just further evidence of this government's unrelenting pursuit to privatize health care services regardless of the delays in procedures for citizens in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, how could anyone, even with an imagination as wild as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview's, construe that buying four MRIs for the public system is playing into the hands of the private operators? I mean, this is beyond comprehension. To explain exactly what we intend to do and how they'll be used, I'll have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness supplement.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Minister of Learning has indicated the commitment to add to the current complement of people being trained as MRI technicians.

Secondly, the four MRIs, plus those I've announced previously for the regional centres, will be in the public system, Mr. Speaker, and

the end result will be a per capita capacity in this province for MRI scans which ranks right at the top of the provinces in this country.

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

### **Workers' Compensation Board**

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few months ago the Minister of Human Resources and Employment ordered an MLA WCB service review as well as a WCB appeal system review. As a member of the MLA WCB service review committee, I'm finding that many injured workers still have no knowledge that the process is taking place and, in fact, is well under way. So my question today is for the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Can the minister explain his communication plan and how he is informing the WCB injured workers that these reviews are in fact taking place and that their input is required in order to effect meaningful change?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to make sure that all members realize and appreciate that the main service review is under way by the WCB. Now, what we've done with the MLA input committee is provided another way and perhaps a more streamlined way for members of this House to be able to provide input, then, to that main service committee. So to that end we have been utilizing that in our correspondence, and of course a press release was released yesterday.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that yesterday's press release announcing the extension to May 15 for submissions has, to my understanding, not been published in any daily newspapers, will the minister ensure that injured workers are aware of the process by placing advertisements in the daily or weekly newspapers?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, we did provide a press release yesterday, and yes, it's true that there's another issue here in the House that is perhaps using up all of the ink on the part of the media. I did not see any communication on our press release in today's clippings, so it puts me in the situation of indicating to the hon. member that we're going to have to go back and take a look at what it is that we are doing. Certainly the Workers' Compensation Board itself has been advertising the times and places where injured workers can have the input. I have not provided the MLA input committee with a budget for any advertising at this particular point in time and am not currently contemplating doing that.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the hon. minister. Given that he's indicated that there won't be any further advertising at this point due to budgetary constraints, will he then agree to take other steps to ensure that injured workers are informed that the reviews are ongoing?

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, we will have to do that, Mr. Speaker, because it's very, very important, when you set up a review mechanism, that in fact you do get the input. Part of the rationale behind not only convincing the Workers' Compensation Board to do their system review but in putting together the MLA input committee was that I believe MLAs are in a great position to know and understand what is going on inside of their constituencies. So I would put out the call right now that if any MLA here in the Assembly feels there is inadequate information that is being provided to their constituents,

they join me in using some of their budgets to get that information out.

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

### **Medical Laboratories**

MR. SAPERS: On Tuesday in the Legislature I quoted from the government's document entitled Laboratory Restructuring Proposal, which states in part:

To ensure that provincially funded facilities do not have a price advantage over investor owned laboratories, regional boards will no longer have access to provincial funding for capital equipment.

My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that this policy is the reason that public laboratory facilities in Calgary are underfunded and lineups and wait times are as long as they've ever been for simple tests?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that to be true, and quite frankly I simply don't have the information on that situation. Perhaps the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness does.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the laboratory system in Calgary, as I think you're referring to, is a very effective one. It's a partnership between the regional health authority and the private firm that is involved in providing the service. They have very good equipment and very good procedures. They have been improving their turnaround times in terms of providing test results. Yes, I am aware that at the sites, with respect to gathering material or specimens for testing, there have been lineups at certain peak periods. People go to these locations, which are often close to a shopping centre and so on, and concentrate at certain times of the day, but the system seems to be working very effectively in Calgary.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Premier, is the government's underfunding of public labs a result of a deliberate plan to create a favourable market condition for the private sector?

MR. KLEIN: I take exception to that, Mr. Speaker, because we have increased funding by 40 percent over the past four or five years. We're planning to put about another billion dollars in the health care system, and that will take our spending to well over \$5 billion annually, over \$15 million a day. For every dollar that was taken out of the health care system, we put \$3 back in.

Relative to the specific situation as it concerns, I believe, diagnostic services in Calgary, I'll have the hon. minister reply.

MR. JONSON: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, what the members across the way – and I could expect this type of position being taken by the leader of the NDs. The fact of the matter is that our health care system has benefited from having the private sector involved in laboratory and diagnostic testing for years and years and years. That has been perfectly legal and appropriate according to the Canada Health Act. It exists in other provinces, and this is a very effective part of our health care system. It's a mixture of public and private, and private has been there for a long time, stayed there, complied with the Canada Health Act, and continues to contribute to the health and well-being of Albertans.

MR. SAPERS: Given the population growth in Calgary and the long lineups that Calgarians are experiencing today, will the Minister of Health and Wellness please advise the House what specific steps he has taken that will alleviate those problems in the immediate future?

2:50

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, there have been a very few number of times that it has been brought to my attention that there has been a lineup which has caused some concern. However, it was the regional health authority that contacted me indicating that they recognized they had this particular problem on a particular day and advised on what they were doing in terms of rescheduling and opening new capacity.

They do respond to the difficulties they face in terms of these gathering centres, Mr. Speaker, but overall my information is that the waiting times for tests on average are shorter than they used to be when they had the previous system and approach.

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

### **Workplace Health and Safety**

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgary-Fort constituency covers a large industrial area in Calgary. Recently there have been quite a number of industrial accidents, resulting in fatalities, injuries, and property damage. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Could the minister update the Assembly on the statistics of industrial accidents in Alberta?

MR. DUNFORD: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. It certainly is timely in the sense that next week we will be observing the Day of Mourning for Injured Workers, and this might be an opportunity, then, for me to just stand in my place and to express our sincere sympathies to all of the families that have been affected by workplace injury or incident over the past period of time.

I also have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have all of the statistics for the year we're now in. We have not started out very well, I have to admit to you, but I guess we'll just have to see what develops through the rest of the year.

We do have preliminary numbers, though, in terms of injury in the workplace in Alberta. As a matter of fact, in the year 1999 we did drop to an all-time low of 3.2 lost-time claims per thousand person-years worked, and of course I want to thank all of the previous ministers that were in place at that time for their care during their particular watch. I would indicate that in Alberta we're on a downward trend, and of course maintaining that trend will be a priority of this ministry.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplement is also to the same minister. What is the enforcement program to monitor the safety compliance of companies and to penalize those who fail to protect workers?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that I advise all members of the House that in workplace health and safety we think it is very prudent and very wise to be educators rather than enforcers, and I believe that I've tried to bring that message through to this Assembly on more than one previous occasion. Having said that, of course we have workplace health and safety officers that do investigate every incident and respond to any question or any concern we get regarding workplace health and safety.

When we see a trend start to develop, then we would assess the particular industry or company, and if we feel there's a problem there, then of course we will target that industry or that specific company for more frequent inspections. I must say that we also ask for and direct our workplace health and safety officers to do so-

called cold calls and do unannounced inspections of work sites, and if we have willful noncompliance, we will enforce the act.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental question is also to the same minister. What is the proactive preventive program, and how is it carried out?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, we're extremely proud in Alberta of the partnerships program that we have in health and safety. This works very, very effectively. It's based on a co-operative joint approach, and this involves workers, involves the companies and the industry associations. We strive to achieve practical solutions to work site safety issues. We believe in this program and will continue to support it.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before the Clerk rises and calls Members' Statements, please join with me in acknowledging that today, April 20, is the anniversary of the Member for Calgary-McCall, who was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in a by-election on April 20, 1995.

Following Members' Statements, I'll also be making a statement on the question of privilege that was dealt with yesterday.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

### **Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week**

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week takes place next week, April 23 to April 30, 2000. Organ and tissue donations save lives, restore health, and give hope for new beginnings. Unfortunately, the need for organs and tissues for transplantation is far greater than the available supply. Last year in Alberta 22 people died waiting for donations.

Everyone should consider themselves a potential organ and tissue donor regardless of their age. It is the health of the individual, not the age, which is the deciding factor. One critical reason why waiting lists are so long is that the family does not know the wishes of the potential organ donor. This is critical, because in Alberta it is the family that makes the final decision regarding donations. Less than 50 percent of Canadians are aware of their family members' wishes regarding donation.

The green ribbon you were all given today symbolizes the promise of lives that may be saved or improved through organ and tissue donation. The Canadian Transplant Association, the Kidney Foundation of Canada, and the HOPE program have been promoting public awareness of donation through the distribution of green ribbons across Canada since 1997. We hope all Albertans will wear it proudly, especially during donor awareness week, April 23 to 30, and talk to their families to show their support for the greatest gift of all, the gift of life.

Remember, transplants work. Between 80 and 95 percent of recipients are doing great one year after surgery. Please make a lifesaving decision for the nearly 3,000 Canadians waiting. The five members of the organ and tissue awareness committee I introduced earlier today are transplant recipients, and their quality of life has improved immensely.

Thank you.

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

### **Bill 11 Protests**

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with pride that I rise today to note that the citizens' democratic spirit is fully

alive once again in Alberta. Where the people of this province once felt they had no voice because the government didn't listen, we now see a citizenry galvanized, energized, and determined to make their voices heard. The recent protest rallies have been truly breathtaking events of democratic, peaceful power.

One significant result of recent protests is that it reaffirms overwhelming opposition to Bill 11. This is a fact that has long been known to us. Poll after poll has shown overwhelming opposition to Bill 11. However, the larger and infinitely more important point, Mr. Speaker, is that people of this province are feeling empowered. They are seizing their inherent rights to free speech, free assembly, and political participation. Albertans have rediscovered and recovered their voice, and they know in their hearts that with persistence, passion, and clarity they will be heard and they will carry the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### 3:00 Anniversary of Taber High School Shooting

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Learning and the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods have already mentioned that almost a year ago a young teen walked into W.R. Myers high school armed with a .22-calibre rifle and opened fire. In the aftermath 17-year-old Jason Lang would die of his wounds, and another student was seriously injured, a tragedy that touched all Albertans.

April 28 marks the first anniversary of this tragedy. W.R. Myers high school held a memorial service on Tuesday, April 18, with a theme of Hope, Remember, and Challenge. W.R. Myers students, teachers, and parents gathered to sing songs, pray, and listen to a speech from Reverend Dale Lang, Jason's father. The service was held 10 days early because the anniversary falls during the school's Easter break. The town of Taber will also be holding a memorial prayer evening service on April 27.

Mr. Speaker, it has been almost a year of healing for the community of Taber, especially those whose lives have been personally affected by this tragedy. I would like to recognize the personal commitment and contributions of certain individuals that were first at the scene and have continued to provide support and counseling for the staff and students of W.R. Myers. Their efforts have reassured the parents and students that their school is a safe place to be. A special thanks to Reverend Dale Lang for his personal contribution and for demonstrating the power of forgiveness.

Thank you.

### head: Projected Government Business

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 7(5), for those of us who cannot wait to get back into the Assembly on May 1, I wonder if the Government House Leader would tell us what treats he has in store for us for the week of May 1 to May 4.

Thank you.

MR. HANCOCK: There likely being few in that category, maybe I should just send you a note.

However, on Monday, May 1, under Government Bills and Orders for second reading we would anticipate discussion on bills 13, 14, and 15 to the extent that we don't complete that today; in Committee of the Whole, bills 3, 7, and 11; and as per the Order Paper. Monday at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders, subject to completion of the earlier agenda, second reading on bills 16, 17, 18, and 19; Committee of the Whole on Bill 11; and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, May 2, at 4:30 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading, bills 22 and 23, and, time permitting, Committee of the Whole on Bill 11, and as per the Order Paper. Tuesday at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading, bills 22, 23, and 20; Committee of the Whole on Bill 11; and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, May 3, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of the Whole, bills 10, 13, 14, 15, 11; and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, May 4, under Government Bills and Orders for second reading, bills 20 and 23; for third reading, Bill 5; and thereafter as per the Order Paper.

### Privilege MLA Access to the Chamber

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, yesterday, April 19, the leader of the third party rose on a purported question of privilege under Standing Order 15. The chair would note that proper notice of this matter was provided in accordance with Standing Order 15(2). The purported question of privilege concerns the ability of the member to access the Legislature Building on the evening of Tuesday, April 18.

At the outset the chair would like to state that there is no doubt that Tuesday night was an out-of-the-ordinary evening for the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta. The chair would also like to emphasize to all members that obstructing a member from attending the House is a very grave matter and in most circumstances would give rise to a prima facie case of privilege. The chair wants to assure all members that this matter is taken very, very seriously.

The events on Tuesday night and the week in general bring to the forefront some of the most fundamental issues in a parliamentary democracy. It is fundamental to any parliament based on the Westminster model that members have unimpeded access to the Assembly. To emphasize this principle, the chair wants to quote from page 176 of Joseph Maingot's text *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, the second edition:

No impediment should be placed on the Member in going about his [or her] parliamentary business, whether in the House, on his [or her] way to the House, or while on his [or her] way home. On the contrary, Members are "to have free and unimpeded access to the Parliament buildings."

The Assembly is the forum where democratically elected members represent the views of their constituents. No function is more sacred. In order for a member to discharge his or her parliamentary duties, that member should not be obstructed or intimidated in speaking or attending.

Several members indicated during yesterday's discussion on the purported question of privilege that they felt intimidated by the demonstrations in the building on Monday night. While there were no violent confrontations that night, it could have deteriorated into a most regrettable situation. The events on Monday night led to the implementation of Tuesday's security measures in order to protect the ability of members to represent the views of their constituents. However, as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General intimated, events unfolded rather quickly, and the security service had to put a program in place quickly, without knowing what circumstances would be encountered.

The hon. leader of the third party was aware of the general approach on Tuesday afternoon at the House leaders' meeting in the Speaker's office. As the chair emphasized yesterday, it is most regrettable that the member was not advised of the specifics of the security measures, but it seems clear that other members were

escorted in or went through the pedway to gain access to the building. The hon. member volunteered that he did not have his security card with him.

The chair would also like to point out to members that it is a well-accepted principle that members of the public, as opposed to members, do not have access to Legislative Assemblies as a right. This principle was established in 1904 in the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Payson versus Hubert*. It is very interesting that a case from Nova Scotia that was decided just before Alberta became a province could have so much relevance to the life of a Legislature in the next millennium. Mr. Justice Davies said this at pages 212 and 213:

The true rule which must guide the Speaker and the offices of the House in the exercise of their duty of preserving order and decorum is, in my judgment, that the public have access to the Legislative Chamber and to the precincts of the House as a matter of privilege only, and under either express or tacit license, which can at any time be withdrawn or revoked when in the interest of order and decorum it is judged to be necessary.

This 1904 case was referred to and cited with approval by the majority of the Supreme Court of Canada in their 1993 decision in *New Brunswick Broadcasting versus Speaker of the Nova Scotia Assembly*, which established that the inherent privileges of Assemblies enjoy constitutional status. One of those privileges is the ability to exclude strangers. Of course – and the chair wants to stress this – the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has attempted to ensure the greatest possible access to the galleries consistent with the security of members, staff, and the preservation of order.

It is most regrettable that the member was delayed in attending the Assembly on Tuesday evening. In the chair's view, a delay in accessing the building does not constitute a denial, especially in this case where the member indicated that he was without his security card and he did not point to anyone who specifically denied him access. Accordingly, there is no *prima facie* question of privilege.

The chair would note that in the Canadian House of Commons on May 25, 1970, Speaker Lamoureux found that a delay in accessing the Parliament buildings did not give rise to a *prima facie* question of privilege.

The chair certainly wants to encourage a practice of giving all members adequate notice of any security measures in a timely fashion so that this matter does not arise again. The Sergeant-at-Arms has worked closely with Justice staff to ensure that members have access to the building while preserving the safety of members and staff, and that procedure and process will be continued.

Thank you.

3:10

head: Orders of the Day

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Third Reading

## **Bill 21 Appropriation Act, 2000**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Treasurer it's my pleasure to move Bill 21 for third reading.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government's appropriation act, of course, is to seek the authority for the spending of all supply for all departments. In this case it will amount to in excess of just \$15 billion. That's the amount net of

lottery fund transfers. Almost all of that is for operating expenses across various government departments.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, for the most part, the Official Opposition doesn't have a lot of question or quibble with individual initiatives of individual departments. We have some initiatives going on in Justice or Children's Services or Human Resources that are quite supportable. The difficulty is that when you're dealing with an appropriation bill such as Bill 21 and you're asked sort of a yes or no question, it's all or nothing, and this is often the position that the Official Opposition find themselves in.

The Premier and other members of Executive Council will often accuse Liberals and others who oppose the government on specific issues of always just criticizing and complaining, of never being supportive. Today, in fact, there was a question that was clearly a setup kind of a question or what probably should have been a ministerial statement about the financial affairs of the province and the credit rating of the province. I think the Premier during that exchange made some comment that they, referring to the Official Opposition, "don't like to hear that because it is good news." Well, I don't know any member of the Official Opposition that doesn't like to hear good news about the province of Alberta. We are proud Albertans, and we are proud of the men and women who make this province work. Those men and women are the ones to be congratulated on the state of the economy.

But you have to understand, Mr. Speaker, that the fact that some Albertans are enjoying prosperity does not mean that all Albertans are enjoying prosperity. We believe that the role of government should be, to the extent possible, to help everybody have some equal opportunity to participate in that prosperity. A government that loses sight of that and simply wants to rest on the laurels of others is a government that I think is clearly out of touch.

When we come to look at the appropriation bill, I have many concerns about the government's priorities when it comes to spending. Those concerns may in and of themselves be enough to tempt me to vote against this appropriation act. Now, if I were to stand up and say, "No, I am in opposition to supporting the appropriation of nearly \$15 billion worth of taxpayers' money for operating expenses or the transfer of nearly a billion dollars of the lottery fund to meet the commitments that have been made through that fund," then I know full well what would happen. Members of the government would stand up and say, "Oh, well, that hon. member is against providing funding for long-term care centres," or "That hon. member is against road construction on this dangerous highway," or some other nonsense like that, Mr. Speaker. Of course, that's what it would be. It would be nonsense.

As a member of this Legislature and as a member of the Official Opposition what I want to do is make sure that the government exercises its responsibility carefully, after due consideration, when it comes to spending plans. While this government brags that its budget, which this appropriation bill reflects, sets new high-water marks when it comes to funding for public education or funding for public health care, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that's just simply not the case. It's simply not the case. The money put into this budget for education, for example, doesn't even bring us back to where we were before the massive budget cuts began. It doesn't in any way account for inflation. It doesn't account for population growth. It doesn't really help us get to the place where we can have even national averages when it comes to pupil/teacher ratios.

When the Minister of Learning was asked, "Will this guarantee the hiring of X number of new teachers?" he said: well, no; that

would be a local school board decision. Those same local school boards have to weigh the priorities against hiring new instructional staff, new maintenance staff, and putting money into the crumbling infrastructure. There are schools all over the province that really don't provide very safe or sound places of learning. In my own constituency there are schools where I've been taken on tours where the windows are so loose in the frames because the frames are rotting that a good push would pop the windows out, where doors don't close, where furnaces or boilers haven't been properly inspected. So, Mr. Speaker, saying that we've solved the problem in public education because we've put some new money into it is really underestimating the problem.

There are still parents and students all over this province that go door-to-door selling goods and services for the purposes of providing textbook sets for their schools. There are children that go door-to-door around this province soliciting funds so that they can upgrade their schoolrooms to accept computer installations. There are children that literally go begging saying, "Please buy these chocolates or these cookies," so that the schools can have some discretionary funds to provide some services or some programs that are readily available in other jurisdictions. So, Mr. Speaker, when I say that I'm not in favour of this government's spending priorities, those are the kinds of things that I'm thinking of.

When I turn my attention to public health care and I see the extent to which this government is going to sell its private health plans, it just makes me wonder what the government priorities truly are. You know, the Premier has said as early as today in question period – I believe he said it today in question period; you know, these last few days have been a little compressed, but it's certainly been this week – that the government has no private health care plans.

MR. BRODA: It's true.

MR. SAPERS: I hear an hon. member, I think the Member for Redwater, barking out, "It's true". Well, Bill 11 is a private health care plan. It's called the Alberta Health Care Protection Act, but the purpose of the Alberta Health Care Protection Act is to allow the minister of health through the regional health authorities to contract . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, do you want to explain to the government members about appropriation debate, or may I just continue and ignore their interjections?

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First of all, hon. member, if someone does interject when they're not supposed to, then making reference to them and about them only encourages more of the same, and you wouldn't want to do that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is perfectly right that this is an appropriation bill, and the appropriations do cover health care in all of its ramifications, as it covers everything that government does. To that extent, then, it's part of debate. People may or may not appreciate the comments of the hon. member, but it is right to make them.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, while the government may protest that they have no private health care plan, the heart of Bill 11 is to provide authority for the expansion of contracts through regional health authorities to private surgical facilities. That's what it's all about.

So, you know, whether we call the bill one name or another name, the purpose of the bill is to enlarge private care, to see the provision of more private care in the province of Alberta.

When I take a look at the appropriation and I hear the government say, "Look at all the new money we're spending in health," then I realize, based on the research that's been brought to my attention, my own research into the issue of the provision of private care, the comparisons in terms of cost-efficiency in the public sector versus cost-efficiency in the private sector, when I look at the experiences in the United States, in the United Kingdom, in Australia, in New Zealand, when I look at all of that and I understand all the additional expenses that come into play when you increase the delivery of surgical services and hospital services through the private sector, when I look at those additional overhead costs, the administrative costs, the legal costs, the monitoring costs, the standard-setting costs, the negotiating costs, all of those other costs and I understand that those services provided in the private sector cost more, that it's not as efficient as doing the same services in the public sector, then I begin to understand why this government is putting more money into health care. They are going to have to send more money to the regional health authorities simply to meet the additional expense, the additional cost, that is going to come along with the provision of care in private clinics.

3:20

So we're not going to see that additional money go into reducing pain and suffering, which was the claim of the government. We're not going to see that additional money going into hiring more frontline staff. We're not going to see that additional money going into shortening waiting lists. We're going to see that additional money going into advertising and legal fees and all of the guaranteed profits to the private providers. That's where the additional money is going to go, Mr. Speaker.

So when I take a look at the government's appropriation bill and I say that I'm not happy with the amount of money that's being spent on health care, I know what the government is going to say. They're going to say: ah, there's another one of those tax-and-spend Liberals who just wants to solve all the world's problems by throwing more money at it. I'm saying that nothing is further from the truth. It's these tax-and-spend Tories that are creating the problem. They know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. They want to throw more money at the private sector, and they want to see taxpayers subsidize that private sector, the very same government that ran an election and said: we're out of the business of being in business. I think they're back in business, Mr. Speaker. They're back in business.

Again I find it difficult. I may very well find somewhere in the budget something that I like. I may find, for example, that I am entirely in favour of the plans to allocate \$500 million to a new foundation to support basic science and engineering research. I'm happy to see that, but then my joy turns to dismay as I move from the estimates of Innovation and Science to the estimates of Learning. I look at the estimates of Learning and I see that there is still this 30 percent legislated cap; tuition fees are still rising through the roof. I see that there is still not adequate funding so that library collections in Alberta's advanced education institutions can come up to par. I see that there is still not enough money to attract scholars at the world-class level throughout all faculties, not just science and engineering. What about the arts and the humanities? I see that there is no commitment to ensure that we are going to be world leaders in cultural pursuits.

I can find something to support in the budget. I can say that this innovation and science foundation is a good thing and something

that will be of benefit to the people of Alberta. But then I think to myself: why can't this government understand the concept of balance? Why can't they get that right? Why can they only do one thing at a time? It's like that old joke about not being able to walk and chew gum at the same time. Why can't they support business, economic prosperity, and the generation of wealth at the same time that they're supporting the continuation of Canadian cultural pursuits, at the same time that they are supporting the voluntary sector, at the same time that they're supporting advanced education and the creation of knowledge for the sake of the creation of knowledge?

Why can't they support the public institutions that Albertans rely on? Why is it that so many of our public institutions are under siege? Why is it that police organizations and the courts and our correctional system and our public education institutions and our hospitals and all of our public institutions are so constrained or still feeling the burdensome effects of those budget constraints even though we had the Premier and the Treasurer trumpet from the hilltops, "The deficit is over. We're past that debate, and we're into bold new plans. We're into reinvesting, and we're into making this a wonderful place"? Well, why is it that those public institutions are still feeling the burden? Why is it that those public institutions are still being told that they have to continue to tighten their belts and there's not enough money to go around, that we don't have enough money to hire enough men and women to get rid of the waiting lines, that we don't have enough money to hire the teachers that we need so that our children have access to the best education? We could afford the best education in this province.

Why is it that we have reports coming out of fatality inquiries that say we don't have enough people doing child welfare and child protection work? Why is it that we don't have enough men and women providing community-based correctional services? Why is it that we don't have enough money in this province to make sure that those nongovernment organizations that work in partnership with government can pay their staff a fair wage when they're doing that work on behalf of the government for the benefit of the people of Alberta?

Mr. Speaker, these questions have not been addressed in the budget or in the appropriation bill. I think the government needs to take its blinkers off and it needs to understand that a real balance sheet, when it comes to governance, is not just about dollars and cents. A real balance sheet is about quality of life, and a real balance sheet includes things that you can't find in an auditor's report.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to maybe stop thinking so much about GDP measurements and start talking about something that's perhaps called a GPI, a genuine progress indicator, that has been suggested by some. The difference between the two, if I can just use an example – when you only measure things based on dollars and cents, you have a situation where you add up all of the benefits of economic activity, but you don't necessarily subtract any of the difficulties that that economic activity may have resulted from. So the GDP sometimes is not a very good indicator. A GPI, on the other hand, would be able to do a net gain kind of an analysis. For example, last year we had the worst forest fire season, I believe, in Alberta's history. [interjection] I've been corrected. The last two years have been worse and worse.

MRS. SOETAERT: Point of order. That's not proper English.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, that's precisely the thing I was talking about just a few moments ago. Once you start

engaging one another in debate, then it degenerates from there. So that's why the centuries old tradition of speaking to the Speaker or the chair, whichever the appropriate case may be, is the best way to go. If you could adhere to that.

While I'm up on my feet, I might mention to the three or four gigglers in the back that sometimes your voices come very clearly over the PA system, so if you could suppress your levity for the period of time that your colleague is speaking, that would be helpful.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you're right. Of course, the only reason for those interjections is that I was having fun at the expense of the English language, and I'm sorry.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. SAPERS: We've had two horrible forest fire seasons in Alberta. Extra money has had to go into the suppression of these fires and into reforestation and the cleanup.

Now, if you just look at the traditional way of measuring economic activity and GDP, what happens is that all of that extra money that's spent dealing with forest fires is part of the economic activity. It's part of the measure of the growth of the economic activity in the province, so it's seen as a positive thing.

Now, forest fires aren't a positive thing. Forest fires are a negative thing. They are a bad thing. We don't want to see our standing timber burnt out in that way. We don't want to see the loss of property or the threat. We don't want to see that. So that's a negative.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the balance sheet, it all gets added up. All that economic activity is seen as a positive. All those transactions, all those men and women that were put on the payroll temporarily to go into fire suppression crews, all of the money that was spent on the temporary lodging, and all of the money that was spent on the transportation is all seen as good economic activity. So, you see, simple measures don't really tell the true picture.

3:30

We could say the same thing about how the government does its budget. As long as they see themselves in a simple way saying, "Well, here's how much money we're going to use to address the problem," they think they've done what's required of them. But often what we see when we look through the plans of the government is that when it comes to their spending priorities, there hasn't been any analysis, there hasn't been any rationale, and there hasn't been any connection made to the performance measures and the outcomes. We haven't seen any true measure of value, and we haven't seen any big picture or long-term review of what the spending plans have wrought.

When we consider that, Mr. Speaker, all we have to do, once again, is look at our health care system. Over the last seven years we've seen the continual erosion of that system. It's brought us to the point where we are now, where the government believes the only way to save the system is to further privatize it. I don't think that serves the public good, and that's why I have difficulty in supporting the Appropriation Act. I think it reflects a government that is devoid of long-term vision and hasn't been able to see beyond its rather blinkered view of the world.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to participate in this debate. Bill 21 is sort of like an old

friend that we haven't seen for a bit. It's been around, but it seems like so much has happened since we had a chance to offer commentary at second reading, and it's important to come back and recognize that what drives the provincial government over and above their privatization agenda is the budget.

This is really our last opportunity to reflect before we vote what is a very large sum of money. It's an opportunity to reflect a little bit in terms of what it tells us in terms of the spending priorities of the government of the day. As my colleague for Edmonton-Glenora had said before, it's really a question of reflecting on this in terms of what it tells us about the priorities that the 64 members in the government caucus and the members of the cabinet think are appropriate for the province. We've certainly had a chance through the estimates process, leading up to the appropriation bill, and now in debate on the appropriation bill to identify some of the areas that we think government has missed.

Some specific examples. You might take, for example, the funding for the DARE program, the driving and alcohol education program that's been so successful. We're talking about a very small, a very modest number of dollars in a budget the size of the one for this province. But it's one of those things you look at and you say: there's really no substantial public support for a program that makes a difference in terms of making (a) our roads safer and (b) ensuring that hopefully young people aren't drinking and driving. Sometimes I think it's so easy to get lost in the magnitude. You talk about \$17 billion of spending. Sometimes what we lose sight of are the individual trees in the forest, and it's important that we identify some of those trees and identify some of the areas where we're not meeting the needs that have to be met. Certainly the DARE program is one of those examples I've heard my colleagues speak of so often, and one would expect we'd see some action there.

You know, once again, the budget is not just an academic matter, Mr. Speaker. It's something that affects real Albertans in terms of their real lives. You might take as an example the Jordan Quinney inquiry report. This was a child in care of the province who died while a charge of the province, and there were a host of thoughtful recommendations that came as a result of the fatality inquiry.

You know, the notion of a fatality inquiry, particularly when a child dies who is in the care of the province of Alberta . . .

MRS. SLOAN: He was known to them. He wasn't exactly in care when he died, but he was known to them.

MR. DICKSON: Okay. I don't want to misrepresent the situation. I understand that it's inaccurate to say that the late Jordan Quinney was in the care of the province, but he was certainly a child identified as being a child at risk and receiving monitoring from the child welfare authorities in the province.

When we're voting a budget, sometimes we should sit down and take a look at the specific recommendations that were made by the learned Provincial Court judge who heard that fatality inquiry. What the Provincial Court judge identified, I think it's fair to say, was a lack of independent checking. There were issues of supervision that didn't happen. There were probation officers who perhaps didn't do as much investigation, weren't perhaps as diligent as they should have been. I'm sure those workers were probably committed professionals working as hard as they could. As I know from my encounter with social workers working for government in Calgary, caseloads are huge, stresses are enormous, and supports often aren't there. So what you've got are significant problems. It's all laid out. This is only a nine-page report from the Jordan Quinney fatality inquiry.

You have to ask yourself: are there answers in this budget to

ensure that another child isn't going to die as Jordan Quinney did? Is this budget going to make a material difference in the lives of other children who are identified as being at risk, known to the province? Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that I can say with any degree of confidence that that's the case with this budget.

We might turn to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Goodness knows, it's not because he has not had a tough spring session. I don't want to be accused of piling on in any way, because he's a minister who works very hard. But I look at this budget, and I hear the announcements about the additional amount of money going into health care. Somewhere along the way government seems to have forgotten what I and my colleagues in this Chamber from the city of Calgary know, that since this government got elected in 1993, 116,000 new people have made their home in the city of Calgary. That's a staggering statistic. It is to me, anyway. You can say that this is wonderful because it shows confidence in the province and in the city, and there's certainly an element of that. Doesn't it also follow that that means that there were huge additional needs to be met?

When the Calgary regional health authority yesterday released their local budget for 2000-2001, it's right here on page 9 where they note: we've gone from "1,748 staffed hospital beds [in '94-95]. Today there are 1,818." Well, Mr. Speaker, that's less than 100 new hospital beds. I must say and the Minister of Health and Wellness knows that the number of beds that existed in Calgary before – in fact, this is in dispute, but the point is that even if you take the CRHA's number, you've got significantly less than 100 new hospital beds, but you've got 116,000 new people. So when we hear government in a sort of corporate way beating its chest and saying, you know, "We're just doing such a darned good job in this province," we have to say: where's the recognition of the growth? You can put in significant additional amounts of money, but it doesn't mean a net improvement, a net enhancement of the quality of service for people requiring health care.

In fact, what else is instructive, if you read the Calgary regional health authority report that was released on behalf of the chairman by Dr. Kabir Jivraj yesterday at their 11:30 CRHA advance briefing, they're talking about provisioning a second operating room at the Foothills medical centre, opening one more operating room at the Peter Lougheed centre. You want to ask: why wouldn't we be pursuing that, and why haven't we been pursuing that instead of this nonsense around creating more opportunities for a private hospital? It's those niggling questions that still cause me distress even as we're about to vote this budget.

3:40

As a Calgary MLA one of the things I always look forward to – and I expect my colleagues on the government side also look at it – is a wonderful publication that's produced every year. It's called *Health of the Calgary Region*. I must say that as critical as I have been about different decisions made by the provincial government, I also, to be fair, have to acknowledge that there has been some excellent work done by the health regions, certainly the Calgary and Capital regions in particular, because I'm most familiar with those, in terms of trying to look at a systemwide analysis. In Calgary's case we've got – what is it? – about 924,000 people in the Calgary health region. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I didn't mean to try and invite debate from government members. I just hope for answers. It's been a positive thing to gather that information, but then my question is trying to relate the statistics in here to the budget we've got in front of us.

You know, you go through here and you look at some of the key indicators, *Health Status at a Glance*, and you look at some of the

statistics in terms of economic influences. In the Calgary region you can go through and identify issues like husband/wife families below the poverty line, and you see a trend that's increasing from the last census. You see women with children below the poverty line. You see a decrease there, but it's not as big as you want it to be. You look at some of the gaps in income, the households that run out of money, parents with no dental coverage, seniors' households who run out of money. I mean, you can go through the list – and I won't bore you with all the individual numbers – and what it identifies is this big, wealthy, prosperous province that has such an abundance of natural resources and clever people and strong, creative entrepreneurs, and we still have an unacceptable rate of teen suicide. We still have an unacceptable rate of single mothers struggling with a couple of young children. We still have really major problems with access to mental health services.

You know, the minister of health or somebody may get up and say: why is the opposition always with the doom and gloom scenario? I think it's part of our responsibility, because I don't hear the acknowledgment from government that these problems exist, and if we can be accused of taking too dark a view of the province, then surely the government can be accused of continuing to never take off the rose-coloured lenses. The hope would be that if we were to acknowledge some of the things that really work in this province and if the government would reciprocate by not trying to deny the reality that we have a lot of needs that aren't being adequately addressed in this province in April of 2000, then maybe we'd be able to come up with some of the concrete solutions to make things work.

One of the other areas that's of huge concern in downtown Calgary is access to mental health services. When the health plan done by the Calgary region did some consultations, one of the major things they identified as being a problem was mental health. In fact, at page 10 of the CRHA budget plan for 2000-2001 they say, "Mental Health care emerged as one of the single most important issues in the Health Plan consultations."

What we have are huge problems. It's partly a question of money, but it's also partly a question of leadership and clear direction. We have some excellent, excellent people working at the service delivery level. What seems to be lacking is the kind of co-ordinated focus and leadership at the cabinet level, at the highest levels of decision-making. That continues to be a significant concern, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the other things that I'd like to see addressed in terms of how we make this region and how we make the entire province of Alberta a more terrific place in which to live and raise families – we would go through this thing, and we'd be working through the statistics. Maybe what we should really do as a companion to the budget is highlight some of the statistics of children at risk that are done on a provincewide basis.

You know, the Associate Minister of Health and Wellness devoted a good part of the last year to deal with persons with developmental disabilities, and I think the associate minister, to his credit, did a good job of listening to what those groups said and produced a report that identified some of the needs for flexibility in terms of program criteria, in terms of funding support, identified a need to provide agencies that provide support to people with developmental disabilities, that there's a need for that too.

We don't sort of always see enough awareness of those kinds of issues on the part of government, and it always seems to be groups after the fact coming and looking for assistance in key ways and a government that too often isn't prepared to recognize that if you spend a dollar on prevention and early intervention, you may save spending \$6 or \$7 later, when the problem becomes more severe at a later stage in the process.

There are currently between 3,000 and 4,000 people who are homeless on any given night in the city of Calgary, arguably the

most prosperous city in Canada right now, and you've got 3,000 to 4,000 people homeless. There's been an analysis done by the city of Calgary, not by the Liberal opposition but by the city of Calgary. The Member for Calgary-Bow would certainly be able to confirm this. They estimate that there could be 30,000 to 40,000 additional people in Calgary who are one slim paycheque away from the street.

When you go to some of those consultations like they have in Calgary where you see all these agencies working together, what you find is that it's the same problem that comes up time and time again. By having the lowest minimum wage in the country, by having supports for independence rates that don't take into recognition the high-rent areas like the city of Calgary and Grande Prairie and Brooks and places like that, you create enormous problems for people. By not adjusting the income thresholds for seniors with the Alberta seniors' benefit plan, what you're left with are too many seniors that still have to choose between paying the rent and buying medication. You know, that's part of this province too. I'm not sure we see the kind of focus by the provincial government that's going to address that. We're doing a little better in some areas, but when you look at some of those key indicators like homelessness, like suicide rates, like access to mental health, what you see are ongoing problems.

We have a large percentage of people in the Calgary region who do not have sufficient money all the time to buy food. In 1999 the number of seniors reporting that they didn't have sufficient money to buy food in Calgary dropped, which is good news, but it's still significant. In 1999 we had 21 percent of people over 65 years of age who reported they didn't have sufficient money all the time to buy food.

What you've got is a huge gap between income of the highest and lowest quintile in our society in Calgary. It's an important measure of social cohesion, and that's increasing. You know, if you want safe, stable communities, what you have to do is ensure that you don't have this enormous and growing disparity between the wealthiest people in the community and the poorest.

3:50

Just so many concerns, more than I'm going to be able to list in the time available to us, but I did want to make those observations. We ask this time after time, and I know I've had the chance to speak to previous budgets. You know, before we get to the appropriation thing, we go into the consideration of the estimates. As opposition MLAs we go in with long lists of questions, and I'm often told by government members: "Why do you have all those questions? Why do you just have all those things? Why are you trying so hard to point out the things government isn't doing?" Well, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is that nothing would make me happier than to be able to go into one of those committees reviewing the budget for the department that deals with children, Children's Services, or dealing with mental health and not have anything but praise to deliver. I'm still waiting for that opportunity.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

### Bill 13

#### Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2000

[Adjourned debate March 20: Mr. Hancock]

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to be speaking to Bill 13, the Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2000. Finally in this Legislature this session we have a good-news bill. Certainly, from all aspects this particular bill is an improvement on the system that we had before, and from an environmental perspective we are very happy with the progress on this bill. The expansion of the orphan well program as outlined in the bill is now going to include the abandonment and reclamation of upstream oil and gas related facilities, including pipelines, and it deals with many of the concerns expressed by us as the Official Opposition and other stakeholders back in 1994, when the original amendments to the Oil and Gas Conservation Act were brought forward. We're very happy to see the government incorporate these concerns in legislation, and certainly this is a step forward.

The orphan well program, Mr. Speaker, is a unique example in this province of how a joint industry/government regulator consultation process and partnership can lead to the development of reasonable and prudent criteria for dealing with a particular issue. We could only hope that the government would take the same action on Bill 11 when we come back from our spring break in terms of dealing with that legislation as well.

So with those few words I commend the government on their actions on this particular bill, look forward to them using this model with other legislation, and I will conclude my remarks.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View to conclude debate.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments from across the floor. I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

#### Bill 14

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

[Adjourned debate March 20: Mrs. Nelson]

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise and speak to Bill 14, the Alberta Treasury Branches Amendment Act. We certainly support the changes that are proposed by this bill. It changes the fiscal year of the Alberta Treasury Branches and the establishment of policies and procedures relating to the treatment and disbursement of unclaimed balances. These changes are necessary to bring the operations of the Alberta Treasury Branches in line with the standards and processes established by private-sector financial institutions such as Canadian chartered banks.

We also believe that changing the fiscal year-end of the Alberta Treasury Branches from its current March 31 to October 31 in accordance with the year-end of chartered banks is a positive step that will permit more effective benchmarking of performance against comparable financial institutions in Canada and the U.S.A. in Alberta Treasury Branches' annual report. Currently, Mr. Speaker, the March 31 year-end makes it difficult to compare Alberta Treasury Branches' performance versus other comparable financial institutions which operate on an October 31 year-end.

Currently the ATB uses the following performance measures to

benchmark itself against comparable financial institutions: operating revenue growth, net interest margin, net interest spread on average earning assets, other income to operating revenue, return on assets, operating expense growth, net impaired loans to total growth loans, credit losses to total loans, loan growth, deposit growth, and asset growth. We are hopeful that with the change in the fiscal year-end, the ATB will expand its performance benchmarking versus other comparable financial institutions to include such key performance indicators of profitability, liquidity, credit quality, and productivity used by private-sector financial institutions such as average assets as a percentage of average equity, operating profit as a percentage of average total equity, operating expenses as a percentage of average total assets, loan loss provisions as a percentage of operating profit, gross impaired loans as a percentage of total equity, and operating expenses as a percentage of operating revenues.

Establishing policies and procedures relating to the treatment and disposition of unclaimed balances is long overdue. In fact, it was mentioned as a concern of ATB management as far back as the Flynn report in December 1994.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly urge all members to support Bill 14 at second reading. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to adjourn debate on Bill 14.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 15

##### Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2000

[Adjourned debate March 20: Mr. Hancock]

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to provide some comments with respect to Bill 15 at second reading. The Official Opposition is supporting the amendments that are being made to remove section 42 from the Business Corporations Act because it makes good business sense. The government has received input from lawyers, accountants, from businesses who have been impacted by this section of the act, and these parties have indicated that it has been restrictive and cumbersome and unworkable for them as businesses to comply with the section's requirements.

It's important to stress that the changes proposed still offer protection to parties that are involved. It certainly continues to provide and protect shareholder and creditor protection. So we are pleased this afternoon to support this amendment.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to adjourn debate on Bill 15.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:00

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Acting Government House Leader.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very long week, and there's an Easter weekend coming up when members want to be with families and friends. Therefore pursuant to Government Motion 7, agreed to by the Assembly on March 7, I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Monday, May 1, at 1:30 p.m.

[Pursuant to Government Motion 7 the Assembly adjourned at 4:02 p.m.]

