

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, November 23, 2000**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 00/11/23

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O divine Father, as we conclude our work and prepare to return to our constituencies, help us to draw strength from the opportunities to renew our friendships and acquaintances with the people we were elected to serve. Guide us to reflect upon Thy bounty so that we may more deeply appreciate how fortunate we are to live in and to serve in Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, I'm pleased to acknowledge that today, November 23, is the 13th anniversary of the hon. Member for Drumheller-Chinook, the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. She was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in the by-election of November 23, 1987.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly Jeanette Fuhr, Bruce Fuhr, Murray Kulak, and Gerry Levasseur. These four generous individuals participated in an auction to raise funds in support of Team Canada and their preparations for the 2000 Culinary Olympics. Thanks in part to the support from good people like our guests today, Team Canada had an excellent showing at the Olympics held recently in Erfurt, Germany. The team placed fourth overall and came home with one grand gold, three gold, and one silver medal in the various competitions. Our visitors contributed to the team's efforts by bidding on lunch with the Premier, and I'm very pleased to be able to welcome them here today. Earlier I had the opportunity of sharing a meal with them. They're seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I ask you to please join me in offering them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed truly a real honour and pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly two very special people from the constituency of Vegreville-Viking seated in your gallery, a former MLA that served in this Legislature from 1971-86, Mr. John Batiuk and his wife, Rose. Mr. Batiuk and his very supportive wife, Rose, set the very high standard of work ethic and dedication to constituents in the former constituency of Vegreville, which now forms the larger constituency of Vegreville-Viking. I wish them all the best and good health. I know they have risen in the Assembly to accept the warm response, but please give them another hearty support.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly members of the Northern Alberta Development Council that are seated in your gallery as well. The NADC covers 60 percent of the geographical mass of this province and yet has a population of only 10 percent of our province. The members of the public that represent the NADC

are here today. I would ask them to stand as I call their names. Representing Fort McMurray we have Art Avery. We have Doris Courtoreille from Kinuso; Berkley Ferguson from Boyle; Gerald McIvor, vice-chair of the NADC, from Whitecourt; Pete Merlo from Grande Prairie; Mike Procter from Peace River; and Al Toews from Fort Vermilion. Also here today from the NADC based in Peace River are Pat Nelson, Audrey DeWit, and Brad Bishop from our staff. They bring a wealth of experience, and I ask them all to stand to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented on osteoporosis and mature women's health on November 22 be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Alberta Government to take an enlightened preventative approach and add the newer and more effective medications and therapies to the Alberta Drug List to ensure the health of an aging society.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had tabled a petition yesterday with respect to a relocation of patients at unit 47 of the Foothills hospital. I'd ask that that now be read and received, please.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Calgary Regional Health Authority (CRHA) to reconsider the relocation of Unit 47 of the Foothills Hospital.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition which I presented to this Assembly on November 22, 2000, requesting that the provincial government stop promoting private health care now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

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

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I tabled yesterday be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce amendments to the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act to allow Alberta health professionals to opt out of those medical procedures that offend a tenet of their religion, or their belief that human life is sacred.

head: Introduction of Bills

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Bill 30**Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)**

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 30, the Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2). This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will enable us to deliver the tax rebate to Albertans, some \$690 million in two cheques of \$150, the first of which is going out today. This bill defines the eligibility for that. It is required in order that the federal government will use their list of tax filers to deliver this out of Winnipeg. I'd be pleased to say that that involves 2.3 million people in the deliverance of these cheques.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

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

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise and table the appropriate number of copies of three reports: our response to recommendations of the Auditor General; the outline of the process and initiatives for addressing the child welfare caseload growth report, Connecting the Dots; and, finally, our response for notice of implementation for the contract wage enhancement amount announced earlier this month.

Thank you.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. One is the CFB West Master Plan supporting information document outlining the historic dedication for the military base in Calgary.

The second tabling I have, Mr. Speaker, is the minutes of the meeting of July 18, 2000, of the Citizen's Advisory Roundtable outlining the outstanding issues with respect to base development and community input.

1:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table some more monthly bill comparisons which have been supplied by ATCO Electric in their hearing on the regulated rate option before the EUB comparing the proposed price schedule for a consumer of 600 to 1,500 to 13,000 kilowatt hours of electricity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got three documents to table. The first tabling is a document called Boyle McCauley Health Centre Annual Review. This community-owned health centre responds to the unique needs of Edmonton's inner-city residents through a wide range of holistic and accessible services in an effective and compassionate manner.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of a letter to the Premier from Sylvia Campbell, president of the Southern Alberta

Environmental Group. This group is asking the Premier to commission a public review of the environmental, health, and social consequences and impact of factory farming and industrial livestock operations in Alberta.

The third and final document, Mr. Speaker, is a letter from Wayne Magnuson of Calgary requesting me to point out to the Premier that the provincial prosperity is passing by hungry children of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings, and I'll proceed as quickly as I can.

Firstly, a set of amendments that the opposition puts forward in the spirit of constructive opposition to Bill 29, the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Amendment Act, 2000.

Secondly, a copy of the Duty Counsel Manual that's produced by the Legal Aid Society of Alberta.

Next, a series of articles with respect to the Lougheed Building and the importance of the Lougheed Building being preserved. Firstly, an editorial from the *Calgary Herald*, May 29, 1999. Next, an excerpt from *Legacy* magazine, November 19, '99, entitled Time for a Change: The Alberta Historical Resources Act. Next, a *Calgary Herald* editorial, February 2, 1999, Historic Deal: Saving the Lougheed Would Set a Valuable Precedent. Next, an excerpt from *Alberta Views* magazine entitled Please Save the Grand/Lougheed. Next, an article which appeared in *Legacy* magazine, February 2000, entitled Time for a Change. Next, an opinion piece by Professor Donald B. Smith, department of history, University of Calgary, entitled Spare the Lougheed. Further, an editorial, *Calgary Herald*, November 5, 1999: Razing the Lougheed Building Demolishes a Part of Us All. And finally, an excerpt from a book entitled *Calgary's Century: Calgary in the Twentieth Century* from the vantage point of one of Alberta's most historic buildings.

Finally, Mr. Speaker – and thank you very much for your patience – the results of the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency questionnaire conducted in October 2000 and submitted on behalf of my colleague for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I have four separate tablings. The first tabling is particularly significant as today the Premier and the Treasurer announced a survey for Albertans. Well, I have just completed a survey of the constituents of Edmonton-Glenora. I'd like to table the results of that survey. It clearly shows that the priorities are targeting spending on priority programs, the elimination of health care premiums, and the reduction of postsecondary tuition fees.

Mr. Speaker, the second tabling I have is correspondence from Chantelle McNichol, the director of the International Adoption Families Association, which represents over 200 families in Alberta. They're asking for the speedy passage of Bill 209 and hoping that it will be passed in this session and the debate won't be truncated through some process.

The third tabling is a document entitled There is an Alternative. This is a policy document published by the Alberta New Democrats, and what it demonstrates is that their tax policy calls for a tax increase of some \$500 million, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, an article written by the former leader of the New

Democratic Party in Alberta, Pam Barrett. The article is entitled Canada Needs Flat Tax System. That's the New Democrat policy.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to our efforts to increase suicide awareness I have three tablings today. The first is Suicide Surveillance – 1999, completed by the Chinook health region and prepared by Population Health Information.

The second is A Summary of the Alberta Suicide Data Report, compiled by Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, Suicide Information and Education Centre, Alberta Health and Wellness, and Health Canada.

And my final tabling today, Mr. Speaker, is copies of the Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program, a most comprehensive program, with credit to the Drayton Valley and Crossroads mental health and health care centres.

Thank you.

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

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consistent with the undertaking that I gave in response to a question by the hon. Edmonton-Strathcona member at page 2049, I am tabling the requisite number of copies of the response to him, a letter to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. The hon. member knows that podiatry services provided in this provincial facility are not insured and therefore do not require approval under the Health Care Protection Act.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings this afternoon. The first is from Jack Fife, the school council chairperson at J. Percy Page high school. The letter outlines the parents' concerns about the overcrowded conditions at their school.

The second is from Rhonda Brazeau, a parent with a child attending Sakaw elementary school, who is also concerned about funding for education in Alberta.

The next tabling is from CPAWS supporting the government's commitment to creating the new provincial park in Spray Valley.

The next tabling is from Doug Beaton, who is the principal at Crawford Plains school, and students Kevin Fox and Jessica who support Read-in Week, Mr. Speaker.

The final tabling is a letter from Coleen Taylor and Craig Harris outlining their concerns as parents of a child with type 1 diabetes.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to make three tablings today. The first is a letter to the Premier and the minister of human resources from an Alberta injured worker. In this letter they outline numerous instances where the minister and the Premier have indicated their support for the speedy implementation of recommendations from the two reports prepared by WCB. Also in this letter they ask when the steering committee will be named and whether there will be representation from injured workers on that committee.

The second is an article that appeared in the November issue of *Alberta Venture* magazine, and again it's a quote that was brought to our attention that the minister seems to think that the WCB is working on all cylinders and only requires fine-tuning.

The third is another article on WCB from *Alberta Report*, and in here it's outlined by injured workers that they feel that under the present system they are "guilty until proven innocent" and that they are "suspended without pay."

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is a copy of the minutes of November 7, 2000, from the council meeting of the county of Warner, and at this they passed the following notice of motion. That

the County of Warner lobby the Provincial Government and Alberta Infrastructure to realign Highway 4 east of Milk River . . . [due to] safety concerns, projected cost savings, accessibility and less disruptions to fewer homesteads.

The second tabling is from CAUS. That is the Council of Alberta University Students. They have a very good brief that they've presented to all MLAs. In it they talk about tuition and fees, student loans, and learner assistance. If they haven't got you yet, they certainly will make their presentation to you, too, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two letters today, both of them concerning funding of the arts. The first is from George Fenwick of Calgary, who's urging the government to recognize the tremendous benefit the arts bring to Alberta and to increase funding to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and to the arts groups.

The second letter is from Dianne Johnstone, who's the president of the Alberta Music Festival Association, which is the umbrella group for the Kiwanis festivals, which is very well known to all of us. They also are urging the government to increase funding to the arts, in particular to look at the funding of this particular festival.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three documents to table this afternoon. All of them are documents I have received through freedom of information from the Department of Municipal Affairs. The first document is a memo sheet received in the Alberta department of labour September 11, 1998, from the Alberta new home warranty program. The Alberta new home warranty program is concerned with the treated pine shakes. They're not even sure they comply to the Alberta building code.

The second tabling I have this afternoon is a summary from September 29, 1998, of Alberta area roofers. Roofers have very little confidence in the use of the treated pine shake.

The third document is a handwritten note, document 001148. It's addressed simply "Murray," and it is talking about the rotting pine shakes in Calgary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

DR. WEST: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly 52 students from the Innisfree school and their guests. They've traveled here today to witness this Assembly, and I must say that of significance is Innisfree's strong community leadership, which has produced more Rutherford scholarships on a per capita basis than I've ever seen in other schools in my constituency. As well, this school has fought hard in a community that's not as large as others to stay open, and one of the comments made by the people downstairs that were touring them was: I've never seen a better disciplined group of students from grades 6, 7, 8, and 9 that's traveled here. So I'd like to introduce them and have them stand along with their teachers, Mr. Leonard Grabas and Mr. Real Hryhchuk, and parents and helpers Mrs. Donna Saskiw, Mrs. Susan Cannan, and Mrs. Marianne Berg. Would they stand in the members' gallery to receive the warm welcome of this House.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Chairman of Committees.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you. On your behalf, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 14 young Albertans from Holy Trinity Academy in Okotoks. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Mark Buckley. I'm pleased that they are able to see you in the Speaker's chair today. I would ask them to now rise in the members' gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to introduce an awesome group of students from Ormsby school in the constituency of Edmonton-McClung. The students were very glad to be among the first classes to view the latest portrait of His Honour Bud Olson, a former Lieutenant Governor of our province, and were delighted to be here at that time. There are 50 students along with their teachers in the public gallery. They are accompanied by Mrs. Linda Vanjoff; Mrs. Linda John, the teacher assistant; Miss Andrea Oikawa; and Miss Cynthia Scott, student teacher. I would ask all the students to please rise and receive a very warm welcome from the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two very bright young university students. The first is Lanny Westersund. Lanny is a student in Calgary, a long-time supporter of Calgary-North Hill, and well known on this side of the House. The second young gentleman has traveled all the way from Acadia University in the Maritimes. In conversation with him there's no doubt in my mind that he's going to do very well in the future, because he states that he is a huge fan of our Premier. I would ask that Paul Barnes and Lanny Westersund stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'm pleased to introduce to you and other members of the Assembly the

Feeg family from my constituency of Calgary-Lougheed. Visiting are mom and dad, Corinne and Curtis, and sons Matthew, 14, Nathan, 11, and Jordan, 4. These boys are all receiving their education in nontraditional ways. The youngest, Nathan, is being home schooled by his mother this year, and the older two boys are going to school electronically over the Internet. The whole family has a real interest in the way government operates at every level. They've been to city hall, and now they've traveled here to see how our Legislature operates. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly two community leaders from my constituency of Medicine Hat. They've joined us today to participate in the unveiling of the portrait on the third floor of another constituent of mine, His Honour the Honourable Bud Olson, the past Lieutenant Governor. I would like to introduce to you the mayor of Medicine Hat, His Worship Mayor Ted Grimm, as well as the president of the Medicine Hat College, Mr. Ralph Weeks. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them to rise and ask all members to recognize them.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Dunvegan I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you to the members of this Assembly five of his constituents from Fairview: Michel Buitendyk, Josh Zylstra, Miriam Buitendyk, Jennifer Buitendyk, and Jakie Weenink. They will be visiting the museum later on today. They are seated in the public gallery. I request that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 54 students from Sir Alexander Mackenzie school, which is located in the constituency of St. Albert. They are accompanied by Mr. Roger Bouthillier and Mrs. Janet Hurley. These are teachers who have year after year brought their grade 6 students here and have done a remarkable job of informing these students of the workings of the Legislature. They're also accompanied today by Mr. Paul Pringle, a teaching assistant. They are, I believe, seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake – and I'm not sure if the group has come into the House yet, but I think it worthy that they be introduced anyway. He has 24 students and seven adults from John Wilson elementary school in his constituency, and they are accompanied here today by their teacher, Mrs. Linda Pederson, and six parents and helpers: Mrs. Leila Sehn, Denise Cartier, Leah Wile, Darcy Ramsell, Gloria Creighton, and Teresa Howard. I would ask that if they are in the galleries, they rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

2:00

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me today to stand and introduce one of the three people that keep my office in Lethbridge running on, I hope, a fairly consistent basis in support of the people in Lethbridge-East. I'd ask Inga Jesswein to rise. She was actually one of the candidates who ran against me in the 1997 election for the New Democratic Party, but she's joined our office now in the fight for the opposition to private health care and the support of the people in need. I'd ask Inga to rise and receive the warm welcome.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two very important people in my life: my husband, Bob, and my son Jeremy. They are here today to witness my maiden speech. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly five students who are participating in the home schooling program and reside in various Edmonton constituencies. They are Lauren Hucal from Edmonton-Castle Downs, Alexander Forsyth from Edmonton-Mill Creek, Miranda Pilipchuk from Edmonton-Mill Woods, Nicole McKenzie from Edmonton-Mill Woods, and Heather MacLean from Edmonton-Whitemud, the constituency which I have the honour to represent. With the students are parent helpers Teresa Cox, Debbie Forsyth, Della Marko, Sheila MacLean, and Pat Cox. The students have taken a tour of the Legislature, have participated in a mock legislature, and they're here today to observe question period. I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce them to you and to the members and ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If there are no more introductions of guests, I'd ask unanimous consent to revert to tablings. We scurried on a little too fast, so if we may have your consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports
(*reversion*)

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a very important letter from the Industrial Association of Southern Alberta. These are heavy users of electricity in the southern part of our province, and they just yesterday authored a note to the market surveillance chairman asking for a formal investigation into the noncompetitive pricing practices of some of the marketers in the province of Alberta. It seems that the marketers are requiring long-term contracts in the sale of assets . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's a tabling, not a speech. You don't have to read the whole contents. I think you've made your point.

head: Oral Question Period

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Imported Power Costs

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Alberta consumers, as we know, are facing skyrocketing electricity bills because the wholesale price of electricity in Alberta has increased from \$14 on average per megawatt hour to over \$118 per megawatt hour so far in 2000 under the Premier's electricity deregulation scheme, the KEP. According to the province's own market surveillance administrator during times of constrained supply in power, importers of power such as B.C. Hydro's subsidiary Powerex can become a pivotal supplier and can affect the wholesale price of electricity on the power pool. The province's market surveillance administrator goes on to say that in April 2000, when the wholesale price of electricity in Alberta was over \$100 per megawatt hour, Powerex was setting the price for 51 percent of the time. Now there are reports that the federal Competition Bureau is investigating price fixing by Powerex to drive up the price. My questions are to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, how long has the government of Alberta been aware of the investigation being undertaken by the Competition Bureau as regards the importation of high-priced electrical power into Alberta from Powerex?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we too read reports of that investigation. It appears that the federal Competition Bureau began an investigation about a year ago. Both the federal Competition Bureau and the market surveillance administrator are independent bodies.

In answer to the question, never mind the silly preamble, but the question, we were not made aware of complaints that they received and were not aware of this investigation. We are concerned, however, about prices and any effort to clarify price concerns for Albertans is a positive thing. Obviously if they think there is something wrong or something that deserves investigation, certainly it's the attitude of this government that that investigation should take place.

I would point out that as with any other case before the bureau we are unable to comment on it while it is before the bureau and under investigation.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta consumers through the Power Pool have paid over \$170 million to Powerex over the past four years in order to import high-priced electrical power to cover Alberta's supply/price crunch . . .

Speaker's Ruling Preambles

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. leader, just so that we're all going with the same set of rules, in question period the first question may contain a brief preamble to set it up, and that's hopefully followed by a brief answer. Then the second and third questions carry no preamble.

Imported Power Costs (*continued*)

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is: has the Premier instructed his market surveillance administrator to undertake a full investigation in conjunction with the federal Competition Bureau?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Resource Development supplement, but as I pointed out, both the federal Competition Bureau and the market surveillance administrator are independent bodies. I think it would be inappropriate for me to direct the market surveillance administrator to do anything.

As to how it all works, just so the leader of the Liberal opposition knows, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The market surveillance administrator, of course, completed a report recently to the Power Pool – and we received a copy of it – with a number of recommendations. The Power Pool itself will be following up on seven of the recommendations. I believe we will be dealing with two recommendations directly.

One of the items that came out of the whole process, of course, is the development of a 10-point action plan that will definitely deal with a number of the issues the opposition leader has identified.

One major . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If we are going to apply the shortness to one side, we should do it to both sides.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, what assurances can the Premier give to Alberta consumers that the possibility of price fixing from power importers will not occur under his KEP, costing Albertans even more in their electricity bills?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the Minister of Government Services supplement this answer, but just to state the case as clearly as we possibly can, the federal Competition Bureau is looking into suspected electricity price fixing by the two corporations that were mentioned by the leader of the Liberal opposition.

The market surveillance administrator cannot – and this is in answer to her previous question – investigate interjurisdictional issues. In such a case, it may refer that type of issue to the federal Competition Bureau. I suspect that's what has happened.

2:10

The federal Competition Bureau has the capability to obtain warrants and has related legal capacities. In other words, they can do all that they possibly can do to collect the evidence and launch a prosecution if necessary. Mr. Speaker, if there is evidence that there was price fixing, I'm sure that the federal Competition Bureau will take the appropriate action. This has nothing to do with the government of Alberta. This has something to do with two corporations who happen to be in the power business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Second main question. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Increased Utility Costs

MRS. MacBETH: Fine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier finally admitted that his government's deregulation scheme is responsible for skyrocketing electricity bills being paid by Albertans, and although the Premier is trying to pass off his rebate scheme as a shield to these skyrocketing prices, it's clear to everyone in Alberta, except perhaps some of the members on the front bench, that the rebate doesn't even begin to cover the increased electricity prices approved under his KEP.

MR. HANCOCK: Point of order.

MRS. MacBETH: For example, the current price for an average user is \$70. The proposed price schedule by ATCO is \$120, a \$30 increase when you include the rebate, so will the Premier confirm that his rebates are a mere drop in the bucket and don't cover the increase?

Speaker's Ruling Preambles

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, if we have a long preamble with all kinds of things in it, then whoever has to answer that question has to untangle all the of the preamble before they can get to the question. One long thing doesn't necessarily deserve another but receives another. Mr. Premier, if you can break your way through this.

Increased Utility Costs (continued)

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, you are absolutely right. You know, the longer the preamble, the longer it's going to take me to untangle the preamble to get to the question, and unfortunately after doing all that untangling, by the time it all takes place, often I forget what the question was, and I'm sure that the leader of the Liberal opposition forgets what the question was.

I did catch one thing in the preamble, and that is that the opposition is alleging the Premier has changed his tune regarding the role of deregulation in electricity supplies and prices. What I said is that when you bring about change, it doesn't matter where that change occurs, whether it's in electricity deregulation or whether it was the privatization of liquor stores, the privatization of registries, whether it was taking the 200 health jurisdictions that existed under the former minister of health, who is now the leader of the Liberal opposition, or taking the 181 school boards, 40 of which had no schools, that existed under the former minister of education, who is also now leader of the Liberal opposition – whenever you bring about dramatic change, Mr. Speaker, there is going to be some degree of uncertainty. That is one of the small reasons, part of the small reasons. There are other reasons as well, and they have been explained.

Mr. Speaker, relative to another comment in the leader of the Liberal opposition's preamble, she alluded to this measly sum. When did \$1.7 billion become a measly sum? When did an average of \$840 per household become a measly sum? It may be measly to the leader of the Liberal opposition because she lives in a totally different environment than the average ordinary Albertan. I don't think it's measly, and Albertans don't think it's measly.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, his rebate doesn't even cover half the increase.

How does the Premier explain the fact that a farm customer served by ATCO will still experience a \$30 per month, or 21 percent, increase in their power bill in 2001 even when his rebate is included?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that application is now before the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

Relative to the regulatory process, and appropriately so, I'll have the hon. Minister of Resource Development respond.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've promised to continue monitoring the pricing situation and make adjustments accordingly in the future.

When it comes to the whole pricing and confidence in the electrical system, one of the issues that keeps popping up from the opposition is the lack of confidence in deregulation by them, and the issue of supply keeps coming up. This is very, very important, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday one of their companies, EPCOR, which is part

of the city of Edmonton, announced that they will be moving forward a new 400 megawatt generating plant at Genesee. Most of those people are residents of Edmonton. They own EPCOR through the city of Edmonton. Their own company has confidence in the deregulation process, confidence that they don't have. Now, they can go talk to their company.

MRS. MacBETH: So, Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: why would this Premier try to take credit for returning the customer's own investment in those plants, especially when he's only paying \$1 out of the \$4 that they're owed?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that statement to be true, nor am I involved in the intricacies of electricity financing. [interjections] I am not. But we do have a minister who's very involved and whose department is very involved, and I'll have him respond.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, this won't be long. One of the things is that it was an open market, an open sale, open auction that was market driven. The opposition, of course, assumed that there should be \$4 billion raised. When you have an auction like that that is open, it is market driven. It happens that \$1.1 billion was raised, which was returned to Albertans. There will be another sale completed at the end of November. Those funds, again, once the formula is completed, will be returned to Albertans.

One of the things I'd like to mention, Mr. Speaker, is that over 85 percent of the residential consumers, residential farms have an option to stay with their existing supplier for up to five years under the regulated system. The residents of Edmonton will also be regulated by their own council, which is thousands of people. They can address that through their council.

Special Waste Treatment Centre

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, Alberta taxpayers paid over \$441 million to support the Premier's Swan Hills waste treatment plant and are on the hook for an additional \$22 million in cleanup costs. That \$441 million would have built a power plant the equivalent of Genesee 1 and could have protected consumers from skyrocketing electricity prices under the Premier's KEP plan. So while the Premier seems determined to wash his hands and his government is working furiously in the back rooms to have a new sweetheart deal to prop up the waste treatment plant, my questions are to the Premier. Since the Premier has been tied to taxpayers dollars flowing to the waste treatment plant since he was environment minister in 1989, how many more millions of taxpayer dollars is he prepared to spend to keep this negotiation hidden past the next election?

2:20

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, along with the hon. Minister of Environment we have had the opportunity to enter into negotiations with two companies that are interested in taking over the plant at this particular time. Interested. Nothing is conclusive at this moment.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it's very interesting how a change in political parties can change the tune. I go to the April 30, 1990, *Hansard*. I read from that *Hansard* an excerpt of the then minister of health waxing eloquently about the Swan Hills waste treatment plant. She was talking about a subject that related directly to her department at that time. I'm going to put her words back to her, because I'm sure she would like to hear them. It says:

Well, again, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a leader across Canada, because we are the first province that was able to be part of the collection of dead drugs, and they are being disposed of by the

Special Waste Management Corporation out in Swan Hills. It's a perfect example of the link between environment and health which . . . speaks to the leadership of Alberta on the issue of the environment and our health.

She loved it then. What's the matter now?

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier would like to hide the sweetheart deal, but let's go back to it. How could the Premier say that there isn't some kind of backroom deal going on to continue the relationship with Bovar when his own department is refusing to disclose the future ownership of the hazardous waste plant in a request under freedom of information to his department. I'll table that refusal.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I understand that there has been a FOIP request to my office. The Liberals have launched other FOIP requests. I'm sure that there are numerous freedom of information requests relative to Swan Hills with the Department of Environment.

To answer the question, quite simply there are no backroom deals taking place. There are none whatsoever.

MRS. MacBETH: Will the Premier guarantee Albertans that not one more penny of taxpayer dollars will be used to prop up the operations of the waste treatment plant after December 31, 2000?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the question comes down to whether there's going to be a handover, and certainly Bovar has indicated that it's going to happen. Do we close the plant down? Do we decommission it? Do we put all those people out of work when there is an opportunity of perhaps having another operator take it over? Do we go to that huge expense? This is what we're trying to determine right now.

Mr. Speaker, relative . . . [interjections] No. You didn't get the answer that you wanted.

What the leader of the Liberal opposition is suggesting is that we put the province . . .

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, I'm at a loss to explain why somebody would ask a question and then continue to interject while an answer is being attempted. I wonder if we could . . . [interjection] Both sides. We have a number of people on the side of the Premier here who are busily talking while the Premier is trying to answer the question, just as there are people over here talking. Why can't we just allow the Premier to answer the question and the hon. members to ask it in some sort of civility.

Hon. Premier, if you can conclude.

Special Waste Treatment Centre (continued)

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've said basically all I'm going to say. It's too bad that the Minister of Environment isn't here, because he's been more involved in the detailed negotiations relative to what is going to be done with that plant.

But there is concern. There's genuine concern about closing the plant down, doing a full decommission, doing the environmental cleanup, and then having someone come along saying, "Hey, this is a plant that we can operate at a profit, and perhaps we can use different marketing methods and so on" and then going to the expense of starting it up again.

Those are all of the kinds of things that are being considered in the

context of the responsibilities and the duties of Executive Council, Mr. Speaker. They are not backroom deals. It's part of the normal business. Yes, it's a problem, and we're going to have to deal with it.

I would remind the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition that when she was minister of health, she was madly in love with this plan. What has happened?

Electric Utilities Deregulation

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, this government's botched electricity deregulation scheme was based on the California model. Electricity deregulation has led to havoc in California. Within the past week there have been numerous emergencies in California as a result of power shortages, and a full-scale consumer revolt is brewing. Power prices have quintupled from what they were last April, and there's growing evidence that power companies are engaging in collusion to drive up prices. To the Minister of Resource Development: why is the government continuing to promote a power deregulation scheme that has led the state of California to the brink of disaster?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to clarify the issue that the deregulation process, which has been in place since 1993 and 1995 legislation and an amendment in the energy and utilities act in 1998 – it is a completely different process. I understand that one of the problems with the California situation, of course, is the high demand for electricity and the ability for the state to be able generate electricity. I understand that during the period of time when Alberta developed over 1,400 megawatts of electricity, the state of California only developed 700 megawatts, and their population is probably 10 times or more greater than Alberta. So it is a completely different situation.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, also to the minister: why has the government put the California Power Exchange, which is responsible for power blackouts and skyrocketing electricity costs in that American state, in charge of the power auction that's scheduled to take place next week in Alberta?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, that whole process with that particular company was done through a public process where they did come up with the best bid and the best plan. They helped design the process, and now they are running the auction. It's straightforward. It's out in the open. Go talk to them.

Again, you know, I have to remind this hon. member that they may not have confidence in the Alberta deregulation process, but your own company does. EPCOR, which they own, which he understands – he was involved with it, Mr. Speaker – is building, they will announce tomorrow, a 400 megawatt plant. Maybe they should be talking to them. Maybe the ND leaders and also the Liberals should be talking to EPCOR, your own company. Maybe you should . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. minister, having been in the House for the same number of years as the chair, you will remember that you address your answers through the chair, and don't engage in lively side conversations.

MR. MASON: Any power company, whether it's public or private, knows when it can make a killing, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister: why does the government continue to defend a deregulation scheme in which there are huge financial incentives for energy companies to engage in price collusion to drive up prices

while there is no one responsible for ensuring reliability of supply or protecting consumer interests?

2:30

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is a very serious allegation here. There has been one allegation which appropriately is being investigated by the Competition Bureau, but for this hon. member to make that kind of allegation in the House and to seek the sanction and protection of this Legislature, I don't think is showing much courage. I would challenge him to go outside and make the same statement and name the companies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

Public Consultation on Future Fiscal Policy

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Premier and the Provincial Treasurer announced a public consultation questionnaire that I have with me that is being sent out to Alberta households next week. My questions today are for the Provincial Treasurer. My question through the chair to the Treasurer is: what is the intent and the purpose of this questionnaire, that's called It's Your Money: Speak Out; We're Listening, and how is this going to impact potential government policy?

DR. WEST: Well, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this is to go to Albertans, whose money it is, now that they have choices and to ask them what they would like to do when the time comes when there is no provincial debt in the province of Alberta. As a result of the cyclical nature of revenues that come in through resource industries, we are going to ask them their choices, what they would like to do with their savings or the overage at that time.

The reason for this, too, is because we've always asked Albertans what they want to do. In '92-93 they told us to set the record straight, to balance our budgets, and to pay off the debt. Albertans knew that debt in the province of Alberta equated to paying high interest costs, which removes the flexibility to provide programming in the province of Alberta. It is a privilege for this government to go to the people, who they have answered to over the last 10 years, and ask them what they should do with their money.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Again, we seem to be livening up the issue of asking questions back and forth, rhetorical and otherwise, while there is one person making a question and there's only one that's being recognized other than in the last exchange with the Provincial Treasurer. Even though this chair's hearing is faulty, he could determine at least 10 or 15 people asking questions or purporting to answer them. Please, let us have one question at a time by that member that's recognized and a minister of the Crown answering one at a time.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

Public Consultation on Future Fiscal Policy (continued)

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental. Of course, we in this Assembly all recognize the importance of what Albertans say in their individual constituencies. My question is to the Treasurer in this way. Who's going to be analyzing the data that we collect on this, and most importantly will the results be reported back to this Assembly?

DR. WEST: In the department of Treasury, Mr. Speaker, we have a statistics unit that is arm's length and works and gives us advice back on such, I guess, focus groups that we're going to have in going forward with this pamphlet. They will report to us approximately by December, and by the end of January we should have compiled that information and then will bring it back in a form so that Albertans will know what they have said.

One of the things that the opposition here doesn't like is talk about this, because it exemplifies the policies of this government which we have had the task of taking forward in the last decade, the ones that Albertans asked us to do almost 10 years ago. They said that we didn't need to make the cuts that we did or restructure this government, that with oil prices and gas prices this would have happened any way. If we'd followed their path in '92-93 and we had just frozen the budget and raised it according to population and inflation, we'd have been \$50 billion in debt today.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Treasurer: when Albertans speak and we collect the data that comes back to Treasury, my question then would be this: is the Provincial Treasurer prepared to act on what Albertans are going to say?

DR. WEST: One of the things that this will do will be to indicate in the strongest way to Albertans that they do have choices. They will give us their assessment of those choices, but they will know that the decisions we make in the future will be prudent decisions based on the revenues of the day.

There is one thing that Albertans know. They know how to cut their coat according to their cloth, because they've had to do that several times over the last two decades. They know that you must be fiscally responsible. So after they have given us their choices, we will measure that against the economy of the day, next year, the year after, what oil revenues are, gas revenues, and then we will apply their wishes prudently to future budgets and plans of this province.

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

Special Waste Treatment Centre

(continued)

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has promised Albertans that electricity prices would go down under his scheme. Now, that promise as of today has been broken. The Premier promised Albertans that his government was finished with the Swan Hills special waste treatment plant. That promise has clearly been broken as well. About the only promise that the Premier can now keep is to put Alberta taxpayers back into the business of hazardous waste treatment through some sort of secret, I guess, cabinet room deal. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that it will cost taxpayers up to \$5 million per year to take over ownership of the Swan Hills plant and to contract with Bovar or some other third party to operate that facility?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I can't confirm that. As I say, we're trying to find a solution to this problem. Clearly, Bovar has said that it wants out of the operation of the plant, and we're exploring other opportunities at this particular time.

Again, I remind the hon. member of the remarks of his leader when she was minister of health. She saw nothing wrong with the

plant then and talked about the plant operating as a utility and the great job that it did to destroy dangerous, dead drugs in this province. I can't figure out what is so wrong with the plant now and what was so right with the plant then.

MR. SAPERS: It's a shame that the Premier's living in the past, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want some answers now.

Will the Premier confirm that it will cost taxpayers a minimum of \$2 million per year to enter into an arrangement where the government would guarantee that certain waste streams will continue to be disposed of at the Swan Hills plant?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I can neither confirm nor deny it at this particular time, because we do not have firm offers from the two companies that are genuinely interested in taking over the plant as to what the operating arrangements might or might not be. Once those details have been worked out and once we set up a proposal – and I don't know if that will come about, but I suspect there might be a request for proposals. Once that has been finalized, then all the details surrounding the deal will come out at that time, but we're nowhere near that stage at this particular point.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. Given that the Premier refuses to confirm the details of the discussions going on between representatives of his government and the plant operators, will he at least agree to table in this Legislative Assembly the cost/benefit analysis that has been prepared by his government on the various options for the continued operation of Swan Hills so taxpayers know what they're on the hook for?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, when that information is available I would be very happy to table it, but we are not yet at that stage. I can confirm that two companies have approached the government. I've been involved in discussions with these two companies. Both are French operations with huge Canadian and American and international connections in the whole business of waste management, generally, but both with tremendous expertise in hazardous waste. We have said to these two companies: "Give us a proposal. Give us a detailed proposal as to how you would want to operate these plants." To my knowledge we have not yet received those proposals.

The Minister of Environment is not with us today, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if his department has received those proposals or not, but once we make a final decision, we'll be glad to share it with the opposition and all Albertans.

2:40

Affordable Housing

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, homelessness is a serious concern in many communities, including my own constituency. Now that we are in the winter season, it is most important that we help these people. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. What is your ministry doing to help these people?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Alberta Community Development is taking the lead role to co-ordinate the government's response to homelessness in our communities, and a number of things are happening.

First of all, I have met in the past few months with the federal

minister responsible for homelessness. We both agree that the solutions are best generated at a community level. As a result of that, I've met with the mayors of cities in the province – the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Calgary, and Edmonton – and they are in the process of doing community plans. Some have been completed that will be acceptable to both the federal government, to the federal people, to access funding and to ourselves. We have also committed to supply \$3 million a year for this year plus another two years to deal with the problem.

MRS. JABLONSKI: My first supplemental is also to the Minister of Community Development. Now that we have communities planning and developing local solutions, how soon can they expect to see these funds?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, I know that Calgary and Edmonton have completed their community plans. We have made an initial installment of \$250,000 to Calgary. That will be followed shortly with the remaining \$750,000. Also, the city of Edmonton will be receiving a million dollars to deal with this problem fairly shortly.

I'd like to point out that there are also a number of other ministries within the government that provide a variety of supports to the less fortunate members of our society. I think Human Resources and Employment, Children's Services, Health and Wellness, AADAC, and the Mental Health Board do a fine job. So we're all working together to ensure that we can do as much as we can for these unfortunate folks.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the Minister of Community Development. Aside from homelessness there is a concern about the lack of affordable housing. Can the minister tell this Assembly what his ministry is doing to help this situation?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Community Development, myself, is also responsible for the other end of it. We have increased the rent supplement program by some \$2.3 million this year. What that will do – and that's part of the supplemental requisitions, which we were criticized for, and it came as an emergency motion – is add 500 more housing units to take some of the pressure off to hopefully accommodate as many people as we possibly can. Some of the funding will also be directed to transitional housing as well as to emergency shelters.

I must stress that our priority is and remains dealing with and helping families and individuals who are most in need, and we'll ensure that they will make it through the winter as best as possible.

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

Treated Pine Shakes

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consumers in this province are sick and tired of the government withholding information from them. My questions are to the Premier. Why did the government withhold test results in 1999 indicating significant noncompliance with the standards referenced in the Alberta building

code for the treated pine shakes? Why was this withheld from Alberta consumers and homeowners?

Thank you.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't take that as factual, that we are withholding information from consumers. Unfortunately, the minister responsible for this particular issue, again, is not with us, but I will take the question under notice. Perhaps the Minister of Government Services can shed some light on this information. I really don't know, but I'll ask her if she cares to supplement.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that this is before the courts, as the hon. member knows. There have been hundreds of requests through freedom of information on data from the government. I presume that anything that can be provided has, in fact, been provided to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Again, any further information will have to come from the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. MacDONALD: Again to the Premier. Given that the treated pine shakes case is not yet before the courts, why did top-level department of labour officials keep test results on the treated pine shakes from the Building Technical Council, which is the organization that's responsible to Alberta homeowners for the Alberta building code?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I understand now that the hon. member is alluding to treated pine shakes as opposed to untreated pine shakes, a subject which is indeed before the courts.

Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, I do not have the answer. I don't know his assertion to be factual, but I will take the question under notice and have the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs address it when he returns.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Excuse me.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have another one?

MR. MacDONALD: Yes, please.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry. I marked you down as having three.

MR. MacDONALD: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Speaker was just a little too eager and marked a third one off, and I apologize.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is also to the Premier. Who in the government instructed the top-level government officials in the department of labour to withhold this vital information from the Building Technical Council, which is responsible for the Alberta building code? Who did it?

Thank you.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know that statement to be factual or true. This is a matter for the appropriate minister to deal with, and I'll take the question under notice and refer it to the appropriate minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, for an answer upon his return.

Thank you.

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

Currie Barracks

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my capacity as the Premier's representative on the intergovernmental liaison committee for the development of CFB Calgary, I'll be meeting with my counterparts on December 1. Further, on December 5 Calgary's city council will be holding its public hearings on the development of the former base. Given that one of the significant issues that is outstanding is the question of public ownership and access to the historic parade square, my questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Will the minister clarify the intent of the historic designation of the parade square to provide an open, publicly accessible area which is vitally linked to ceremony, history, and the memories of a great number of Albertans?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The province has given the Currie barracks the highest level of historic preservation and protection that it can under the legislation. The provincial historic resources designation of the Currie barracks is made up of 10 structures. We also have the parade square designated.

I might stress that a designation does not ensure that a resource will be used for a specific purpose. However, changes to the parade square or any other designated resource can be made only by the approval of the Minister of Community Development.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental: with the designation of public buildings surrounding the parade square is it the intent of the minister to keep the parade square open to the public?

2:50

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Calgary planning department has developed a plan which would see that the large portion of the parade square would become a public park. I have not looked at these plans in detail, but I must stress two things. One, the historic designation does not necessarily make the resource to be used for a specific purpose. At the same time, we do have the authority to ensure that the parameters of the intent are followed.

I'm looking forward to seeing what the city of Calgary comes up with, to seeing if in fact we can ensure that the public does have access to this area.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question. Given that the federal government donated CFB Downsview in the city of Toronto for a parkland, at no cost to the citizens of Toronto, will the minister undertake to pursue a similar donation from the federal government for the remaining two acres, a small two acres not included in the municipal reserve, to complete the historic preservation of the parade square and to allow full public access?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right on. When it comes to eastern Canada, the federal government chooses to give things away willy-nilly. When it comes to western Canada,

it appears that the federal government wants to give all their resources to the Canada Lands Company. The Canada Lands Company is an arm of the federal government, and yes, we will be asking for some co-operation from them. I would hope that they are more benevolent than the federal government, which cut Edmonton and Calgary out of the mix, if you will, in terms of giving us what I think we properly deserve, a large tract of it.

I'm hoping that the city of Calgary, the Canada Lands Company, the community, as well as officials from my department can work out a solution to this. Yes, we will be asking for a little bit of consideration, that I think both Edmonton and Calgary so rightly deserve. We have been so unfairly shut out by the change of these guards.

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

Health Information Legislation

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since October 1, 1995, in this province we've had a law that protects the privacy and protects the confidentiality of information that the government collects about Albertans. We know that privacy is important to Albertans, but since 1995 the government has refused to apply those rules to the most personal of all information, the most sensitive of all information, our health information. My question now is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will he confirm this afternoon that the announced date for proclamation of Bill 40, the Health Information Act, has been scrapped, that in fact the bill will not now be proclaimed on December 15, 2000?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, a number of concerns were raised by groups with respect to the implementation of the Health Information Act. It will precipitate a delay of the proclamation, but that proclamation will proceed early in the new year.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, my follow-up question would be to the hon. minister. Well, why is it that the regional health authorities, that have gone to an enormous amount of time and effort, commitment of resources to prepare for a December 15 start-up date, have been left twisting in the wind and have not been given any certainty in terms of when that act will be rolled out and applied to their operations?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, upon my review of this legislation with various stakeholder groups I think some legitimate concerns were raised with respect to implementation. I've had discussions with the Privacy Commissioner, and we will be proceeding with this legislation. It will come shortly.

However, in order to overcome some of those hurdles expressed by groups like the Alberta Medical Association, the police chiefs, the United Nurses of Alberta, and the College of Pharmacists, a short delay will be required in order that all those groups can also be prepared for the new legislation.

MR. DICKSON: My final question, Mr. Speaker. Given the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision that says that privacy is now a protected right under sections 7 and 8 of the Charter, does the minister anticipate seeking a reference in the Alberta Court of Appeal as to the constitutionality of Bill 40 pursuant to the provisions of the Alberta Judicature Act?

MR. MAR: No, Mr. Speaker.

head: Members' Statements

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We'll have members' statements in 30

seconds, when we'll hear from Edmonton-Ellerslie and Calgary-Currie.

Protection of the Environment

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about the importance of effective government regulations and the importance of enforcing those regulations in protecting Alberta's environment. We have a government that talks about environmental sustainability, but what they mean is sustainability of the economic environment. They are not talking about the importance of protecting the quality of our air and water. They are not talking about forward-thinking ecosystem management for our forests. They are not talking about responsible investment in new energy technologies.

What they are talking about, Mr. Speaker, are business deals that provide economic benefits for a few but do little to ensure the preservation of our habitat and our health. In Alberta the environment has always kept behind business interests.

The regulations regarding intensive livestock operations have been drafted, but the government is ignoring the three years of hard work by the industry, community groups, and environmentalists. They refuse to pass more regulations, regardless of the need. Instead, they choose to do more studies with industry stakeholders. Effective technology exists to treat hazardous waste at the source. But what is this government doing? They ponder how to continue propping up the Swan Hills plant, a plant that may have had a chance at success if major sources of hazardous waste were not excluded by government regulation.

In the ongoing saga of our rivers again we have a warning for children and pregnant women to not eat certain types of fish. In the Cold Lake arsenic hearings monitoring arsenic levels is left to the responsibility of individual well owners.

When will this government take responsibility for ensuring the health and well-being of Albertans and our ecosystem before problems occur? Effective government regulation does not have to mean more regulations. It means eliminating unnecessary and archaic regulations and judiciously putting in place and monitoring regulations that enhance our ability to be sustainable in the long term and to protect the public interest.

The Alberta advantage is being squandered every time the government promotes industrial development without regard for the environment. Let's create a vision where bottom-line profits are not the answer to every question.

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

Alberta Film Commission

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 23 of this year the Alberta Film Commission appointed its new CEO and president, Paul Rayman. I'd like to take this opportunity to take a few minutes and introduce his presence to the film industry to the Chamber. The board of directors is pleased to announce his official appointment.

Mr. Rayman has worked in the film industry and the television industry as a location manager and has worked on a number of feature films including *Honey*, *I Shrunk the Kids*, *Destiny Ridge*, *Alive*, and *Wild America*. He has assumed his position immediately and, in fact, within 48 hours of being appointed was in California meeting with film officials in that state.

3:00

We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Murray Ord for

his leadership over the last four and a half years and the work that he has done to expand the current status of our Film Commission to a full-service, production-oriented commission. Mr. Speaker, he has been instrumental in promoting this province as one of the finest film locations of the nation and as a source of highly skilled technical and talented producers. The commission also became a not-for-profit company in May of 1999 under his leadership.

For the information of this House the total production dollars of activity in Alberta were up to \$272 million in the year 1999, and of that number \$148 million remained in the province.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also bring attention to last weekend. We celebrated the annual 2000 Alberta film industry wrap party. This is the fund-raiser that we use within the industry in order to recognize and honour the work that's been done by the film community and also to support our not-for-profit organization. The proceeds go directly to the Alberta Film Commission in its ongoing marketing efforts to generate more film production in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the board and the Premier's liaison to the Alberta Film Commission I want to welcome Paul Rayman to the Alberta film family and encourage all constituents and all members of the Legislature to contact him and tell him how important the film industry is to their constituency.

Thank you.

head: Projected Government Business

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Actually, I was tempted to say that while we anxiously await the return of the Government House Leader's assistant, I had thought to myself that we should postpone the business of the House until he recovers and safely returns to the House. In any event, we wish him well and good health.

I'd ask the Deputy Government House Leader to advise as to the course of business we will see in this Assembly next week. Thank you very much.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, let me recognize the kind remarks of the hon. member across the way. We've already conveyed our own caucus's feelings and expressions of gratitude to David Gillies for all the work that he has done, and we are wishing him a very speedy recovery. I also sent him a copy of the Order Paper, which he could read in the hospital, because I know that he's missing all the action here very much.

Now, getting back to projected government business. On November 27 in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders we will have third reading of bills 3 and 27. Then we'll go into Committee of the Whole, where we'll deal with bills 29 and 20; then second reading of bills 22 and 30; and then as per the Order Paper. On the evening of November 27 under Government Bills and Orders, Committee of the Whole, bills 29 and 20, then second reading of bills 22 and 30, and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, November 28, Mr. Speaker, later in the afternoon at 4:30 under Government Bills and Orders third reading of bills 29 and 20 and as per the Order Paper. That evening we will have third reading of bills 29 and 20 and then Committee of the Whole on bills 22 and 30.

On Wednesday evening third reading of bills 29, 20, 22, and 30 and as per the Order Paper.

Then on Thursday afternoon we'll have third reading of the remaining third readings and then as per the Order Paper.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair believes there were at least four points of order. The first two were by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, then the Leader of the Opposition, and the fourth one, that the chair caught, was again Calgary-Buffalo.

So, presumably in order, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

MR. DICKSON: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I think it was the first set of questions and the first supplemental question posed by the Leader of the Official Opposition. You will recall, sir, that she said "given that" and then proceeded with her question, and there was an intervention by the Speaker.

Under Standing Order 13(2), Mr. Speaker, I would be mindful of what the Speaker said on February 25, 1998, when he noted that (a) the Leader of the Official Opposition has some additional latitude in the initial set of questions and (b) starting a preamble to a supplementary question with "given that" was quite acceptable. In other words, it's not a preamble, but it's an integral part of the question.

So I just wanted to be clear, Mr. Speaker, with your intervention early on whether that meant we were departing from the direction we got from the Speaker on February 25, 1998, and the *Hansard* reference. It'd be page 556, for the assistance of the table and the Speaker.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From our perspective on this side of the House your ruling was absolutely correct. All too often the opposition structures questions in such a way so as not to offend the technical interpretation of the preamble prohibitions but still offend the spirit of the same. I rely on *Beauchesne* 409(2), where it states very clearly, "A preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence." Then, as you yourself indicated, "A long preamble on a long question takes an unfair share of time and provokes the same sort of reply."

I also refer to *Beauchesne* 410(8): "Preambles to questions should be brief and supplementary questions require no preambles."

I might also like to point out a couple of other issues arising from this discussion. Mr. Speaker, I again refer you to *Beauchesne* 410(8), where it states that "supplementary questions should flow from the answers of Ministers." We know that never happens because, of course, the opposition doesn't listen to the answers, so that's a little tough to comply with.

I'd also like to finally refer to . . . [interjection] Excuse me, hon. member. I do have the floor, and I'd like to continue.

I'd like to refer you also to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 426 and 427, where it states very clearly, "Furthermore, a question should not . . . make a charge by way of a preamble to a question." Unfortunately, every day, day in and day out, the opposition offends that rule, and I think it's about time that the chair admonish the hon. Leader of the Opposition for doing so.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader has brought to attention the second question arising out of the first question. The Speaker would confess that he did not hear the trigger word "given" and thought it might be an idea, since parliamentarians frequently like to have their way when a new person is in the chair,

to try and set a tone that maybe we could be careful on the preambles and careful on the answers. That was the attempt that was put forth.

I'd also remind the House leaders that in April they signed a document, an agreement among the House leaders.

- (4) A Member asking a question shall, in the discretion of the Speaker, be allowed a succinct preamble, a main question and two supplementary questions to which there shall be no preamble. Any Member who, in the discretion of the Speaker, abuses the opportunity to give a preamble shall be called to order.

There was more in that.

If I understood the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, he was asking for an explanation, and that's what I was attempting to do. The hon. member did get part of the second question preamble in nevertheless, but it was trying to set a tone for the rest of the day. How successful that was only others can judge.

Does that answer your explanation question?

MR. DICKSON: Yes. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. The second point of order.

Point of Order

Oral Question Period Rules

MR. DICKSON: The second point of order arose from the second set of questions. The citation, of course, is *Beauchesne* 408(2). Just quickly, the Premier went on at length attacking the use of the word "measly," and that word was never spoken by the Leader of the Official Opposition, so I think it offends 408(2).

Would it be efficient, sir, if I also quickly address my comments to the other points of order now? [interjections] Well, no, no. Then obviously the Government House Leader has a chance to respond. I'm happy to deal with them severally, and you can rule on each one if you wish.

3:10

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Because there were four different interventions, it would be helpful for the chair, anyway, to deal with them individually.

MR. DICKSON: Fine. That's fine.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on the second point of order.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking at 408(2), "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate." The hon. member is suggesting that the Premier's paraphrasing of the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question by using the term "measly" was inappropriate. I believe that when answering questions, ministers and the Premier are certainly entitled to answer in any way they see fit. In fact, the convention and a rule of this House is that they actually don't even have to answer the question. Nevertheless, every day, day in and day out, we do answer those questions to the best of our abilities. So there certainly is no point of order.

While the member is referring to 408(2), "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible," I would like to refer you again to 409(2), "The question must be brief." Then there are comments regarding a preamble not exceeding "one carefully drawn sentence."

So, again, all too often the opposition sets themselves up in the way that they ask the questions, and this is simply another example of that. It really is another example of, I think, the hon. Opposition House Leader doing his best to simply clarify a position as opposed to really having a true point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, if I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, you quote the word “measly,” that was in the answer, and this was not in the question that the Leader of the Opposition had asked.

MR. DICKSON: It was a purported quote, and I’m saying that in fact the word was never used by the Leader of the Opposition.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, it really becomes an awkward thing for the chair to follow every nuance of (a) the questions and (b) the answers. I would look at 409(2), which I think the hon. Deputy Government House Leader mentions, but also if we could look at 417, it reminds us that questions should be short and so should the answers.

I think the more that’s in the preamble begs the more that’s in the question. Sometimes we lose sight of what the question really is and, therefore, what the answer really is. When we have so much in the preamble, that seems to oblige the responding minister to try and answer them all, and if they don’t answer them all, the end question perhaps could be forgiven. If there was one succinct question, as it suggests, then we might have one succinct answer.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

MR. DICKSON: The next one I’ll just speak to briefly on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, if I might, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier at pains in responding to I think it was the third set of questions of the Leader of the Opposition made a purported quote from 1990. It’s the same citation in *Beauchesne*, so you don’t have to look at a different section of the text. I’m referring to the same citation. The issue is the \$100 million expansion of the Swan Hills plant, which, as the record clearly shows, happened long, long after the Leader of the Official Opposition left cabinet and left government. She clearly cannot be tagged with the responsibility in any part for that \$100 million boondoggle, I’d characterize it, which had to do with the expansion of the Swan Hills plant.

That happened long after the Leader of the Opposition had left cabinet. That’s the point I wanted to make on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. HAVELOCK: Again, I appreciate the hon. member’s attempts to defend his leader. That’s part of his job. Nevertheless, a simple point the Premier was making, Mr. Speaker, is that at the time the Swan Hills discussion was taking place and Bovar, generally, the hon. Leader of the Opposition did fully support the project. She fully supported construction of a facility to destroy hazardous waste within this province. That’s the point the Premier was making. It’s accurate. No point of order.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the point really was a point of clarification. The hon. Opposition House Leader has offered a point of view, and the Deputy Government House Leader has offered an opposing point of view, truly a difference between members and, at best, a point of clarification, should it be called that.

We have one more, I think. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Point of Order Exhibits

MR. DICKSON: We do indeed, and this can be dealt with very quickly. The authority is *Beauchesne* 504 and the ruling given by the Speaker on May 6, 1999, at page 1533 in *Hansard*. It has to do

with exhibits. I was struck by two things. In the exchange between Fort McMurray and the Provincial Treasurer, while the TV cameras were running, both questioner and answerer made a point of – a brochure becomes a prop when people stand up in terms of displaying the latest publication. The government has an \$8 million Public Affairs Bureau. They don’t need to use valuable question period time to promote publications of the government of the province.

The other point would be this, Mr. Speaker. If the minister wants to put out a ministerial statement, there’s a different place in the program to do that rather than using part of our 50 minutes in question period.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on the point.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, two points, Mr. Speaker. One, with respect to the hon. member’s last remarks he is implying that the issue that was being discussed is not important. He’s implying that it’s not something that should be raised in question period but that the more appropriate avenue is to use a ministerial statement. That underscores why the hon. member and those other hon. members across the way will never form government, because it is never, never frivolous to seek the input of Albertans. The sooner they learn that, the better off they’ll be.

The other point I’d like to make, Mr. Speaker, is with respect to the use of props. Let’s keep in mind that not too long ago the hon. Leader of the Opposition in this House was standing up with blank papers and representing that they contained something which they did not.

So until we see better behaviour on your side of the House, don’t question what happens over here.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, in reply to the last assertion by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader . . . [interjection] I think, hon. Minister of Innovation and Science, two wrongs do not make anything right. So if it’s wrong for them, it’s also wrong for the other side.

To the extent that people have been using this and stretching it – I think this has happened on a number of occasions – I would say to both sides of the House, whether they’re tabling a calendar or extolling the virtues of one of their publications, that it is not proper. Hopefully all hon. members can honour that, that we don’t use exhibits, however tempting it might be to do so.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Government Motions

Provincial Fiscal Policies

15. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate February 28: Mrs. McClellan]

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give my inaugural address. It’s called a maiden speech; is it? [interjection] That’s why I prefer inaugural.

I’d certainly like to thank the House for setting aside the time for me and the Member for Red Deer-North to speak today.

MR. HAVELOCK: It's really for her, but we have to include you.

MR. MASON: But you had to include me, and I do appreciate the rules sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, on June 12 the residents of Edmonton-Highlands placed their trust in me by electing me as their Member of this Legislative Assembly. I would like to thank everybody who took part in that exercise in democracy, including the people that supported and worked for other candidates. I think that it's a very important part of our democracy, and everybody that participates in an election makes a significant contribution to our democracy.

3:20

It's certainly a privilege to represent Edmonton-Highlands in this Assembly. My family and I have lived in the Edmonton-Highlands constituency for over 20 years. In fact, we have lived in the neighbourhood of Highlands, which is located right at the heart of the provincial riding.

The Edmonton-Highlands constituency is one of the most ethnically diverse constituencies in Alberta. This ethnic diversity contributes immensely to the quality of life and economic well-being of the Highlands community. On the western edge of the riding are the inner-city communities of Boyle Street and McCauley. In recent years there has been a large influx of people from Vietnam, Hong Kong, China, and other countries. These newer Canadians not only reside in these neighbourhoods, but they also contribute to their economic revitalization. One only has to drive up 97th Street north from downtown to see clear evidence of this.

Little Italy is located in the heart of the McCauley neighbourhood. The Member for St. Albert yesterday paid tribute to Frank Spinelli, the owner of the Italian Centre supermarket on 95th Street, who passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. Frank Spinelli was not only a successful business owner. He was also an outstanding member of the Italian community and the McCauley neighbourhood. I, too, pass along my sincere condolences to the Spinelli family.

The river valley community of Riverdale has its own rich history, with its eclectic mixture of residents and strong sense of community. Apparently Riverdale also includes the odd left-wing nut.

Moving east, there are the communities of Parkdale, Cromdale, and Bellevue. These are communities that have been incredibly resilient, especially in having to fight for their very right to exist given the expansion-minded neighbour Edmonton Northlands.

Then there's my home neighbourhood of Highlands, with its tree-lined streets, its proximity to the river valley, and its outstanding schools and recreation facilities. I might be a bit biased here, Mr. Speaker, but I don't think there's any better neighbourhood in Edmonton in which to live and raise a family.

Further north is the Montrose neighbourhood, with its tree-lined streets and mature homes. There are a significant number of residents in these communities of Portuguese, Italian, and other origins. East of 50th Street are the Beacon Heights and Rundle Heights neighbourhoods in Beverly, which have their own rich history starting with coal mining in the early days of this century, and they have also strong Ukrainian and strong Dutch communities in them.

When I contested the Edmonton-Highlands election, I ran on some key issues that matter to my constituents. Statistics Canada data says that the riding of Edmonton-Highlands has on average the second lowest family income in the province, ahead of only the Edmonton-Norwood riding. The Edmonton-Highlands riding has an unemployment rate twice the provincial average and a seniors population that is 60 percent higher than average.

Residents of Edmonton-Highlands are incredibly hardworking people. They may not always be rewarded for their efforts with high incomes, but their ingenuity and resourcefulness are second to none.

Most of my constituents subscribe to the philosophy that government can and does play a useful role in their lives. They see the value in a strong public health care system. They objected in large numbers to Bill 11, which we believe is a blueprint for expanding private, for-profit health care in Alberta. I made a commitment during that by-election to repeal Bill 11. While I was only able to table a bill to repeal Bill 11 this session, it's a promise I intend to keep, even if it has to wait until after the next provincial election, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, being a newly elected MLA in an opposition caucus of two has been a bit of an eye-opener. There are no majority votes in our caucus. They're either unanimous or split. In fact, I begin to wonder whether as a result of Alberta's long history of one-party rule the invaluable role of a political opposition is not fully appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to be able today to quote a Conservative to the members opposite, so I did a little bit of research, and I'd like to quote the words of Conservative Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, who, unlike the members across the way, had the opportunity to see the role of an opposition party from both sides of the House. Mr. Diefenbaker said:

The opposition that fulfills its functions makes as important a contribution to the preservation of the parliamentary system as the government of the day . . . If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution, the opposition must fearlessly perform its functions . . . The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends.

That's the end of the quote.

He also said something else, Mr. Speaker, which I like a little bit more. It's a little shorter. "It's the duty of the opposition to defeat the government." The duty.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very passionate about the need to strengthen and sustain our public health care system. Despite the fact that politicians of all political stripes like to pay lip service to medicare, I remind members of this House that it was the CCF that brought medicare into being in this country, and we believe that it's up to us, that the burden falls on us to be its most outspoken defenders.

During the by-election I promised to do what I could to fight high natural gas and electricity prices. We made that an issue, and we were pleased that shortly after we raised that issue in the Edmonton-Highlands by-election, Mr. Speaker, the government announced its rebate program. Now, that rebate program is certainly not what we were looking for, but we are quite satisfied that it was the issue that we raised in that by-election that convinced the government they needed to appear to do something about high energy prices. It's the prices of gas and power that have more than quadrupled in the past five years while family incomes have stagnated. The government's response of sending rebate cheques only treats the symptoms of this problem and doesn't really deal with the real issue, which is the rising prices themselves.

I campaigned against the government's unfair tax policies, particularly the flax tax. The net result of the government changes is that a proportionately larger share of taxes will be paid by average Albertans, including many of my constituents, and a proportionately smaller share will be paid by those who need tax relief the least. Large, profitable corporations will get a tax cut of 50 percent. High-income earners will get tax cuts of over 20 percent, Mr. Speaker, while many middle-income earners will get cuts of only a few dollars. That's not fair.

We also need, I think, to work to make our labour laws fairer and more equitable. We need to increase the minimum wage to at least

\$7 per hour, with graduated increases thereafter. Government needs to be much more proactive in developing safe and secure affordable housing. We need to give tuition relief to postsecondary students. Yes, while doing all of these things, we still need to be careful with taxpayer dollars, just as my constituents are careful with their household dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take the whole amount of time, but I do want to talk about one of the major issues that convinced me to make the leap from municipal politics into provincial politics. I have and continue to have the utmost respect for the importance of municipal government in our country and in our province. I believe that it's a form of government that is a little more practical than we find here sometimes and which allows people of all political persuasions to work together for the betterment of their constituents.

The issue that I really want to address while I'm here in this House is the question of poverty in our province. Poverty in this province is about 17 percent, according to the figures that I quoted in my speech last night. In Edmonton it's nearly 20 percent, and in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands it is nearly 25 percent, nearly 1 in 4. I believe that this government, like provincial governments across the land, can either take steps to alleviate it and reduce that number or take steps, which they have done, to increase that number. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that even as the economy expands and people are doing better, the number of people living in poverty still is tending to rise. There's something wrong with that.

Mr. Speaker, I deal in my constituency with many people who are dependent on programs from the Alberta government, whether it be social assistance or AISH or WCB or student assistance. They come and seek assistance from me in my constituency office. I can tell you that the rates they are expected to live on are a scandal. They are a scandal. There's no other word for it. These people are forced to live in abject poverty. There's a book that came out about a year ago by Mel Hurtig, a distinguished Edmonton author and publisher, called *Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids*. [interjection] You know, you ought to read his book. The hon. member ought to read that book, because it's a real eye-opener.

3:30

The other thing that I find, Mr. Speaker, is that people, often of limited education, who are dependent on these sorts of government programs are put into a real maze. There are so many catches, catch-22s built into the system. If you're on this program, you can't do this. If you get a little bit of money over here, you're cut off this. It is so complex and so unfair that it really ought to be incumbent on the government to seriously review that entire maze of contradictory regulations, that just traps people in poverty.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

I know, Madam Speaker, that the government wants to get people out of poverty. That's what they say. Yet built into so many of these programs are traps that keep people dependent on government programs, and I really think the government should seriously take a look at that. I know that there are members on the other side, both in cabinet and in the caucus, that do want to do something about this. I will make the undertaking that if the government does do something that actually benefits people who are poor in this province, they will get no criticism from me. They'll get praise from me. I know that there are some people out there of goodwill across the way, and they need to be supported. I'll support them if they're willing to take that issue on. It's very important. I for my part will do what I can to bring these things to the government's attention.

I know that one of the things I've been doing is getting out to

different parts of the province and learning a little bit about other parts of the province and learning, particularly, about the lives of people who don't live in Edmonton, who live in rural areas, and trying to learn a little bit about agriculture. I think it would be of benefit for many members opposite if they want to come on a tour of my riding or sit in my constituency office for an hour and find out what the lives of people are like in the inner city of Edmonton. I think if they did do that . . . [interjection] I'll make that offer specifically, Madam Speaker, to that minister over there to come on a tour with me of Boyle Street and McCauley and sit in my constituency office. I'm quite sure that that minister has not, or he wouldn't be speaking the way he is. It's important. Those are real living and breathing human beings, Madam Speaker, and they deserve a better shake than they've gotten from this government.

In conclusion, I'm very honoured to have been elected in the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. I've suggested that with an election imminent and my by-election just past, perhaps I should get a bye from this next election. I'm informed that that is contrary to the law, but I just don't think it's fair, Madam Speaker. [interjections] I know when not to step into a trap.

With that, I will take my place and thank the Assembly for their kind patience in listening to me.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour to rise in the House today and acknowledge the privilege and responsibility I have been given to represent the constituency of Red Deer-North in this Chamber. My constituents understand the need to make wise and careful decisions. I'm sure that they would be pleased to have this Assembly "approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government."

I am also very pleased and honoured to have this opportunity to present my maiden speech. I am the second person to represent Red Deer-North. I've been told many times that I have big shoes to fill. Madam Speaker, it is my intention to fill those shoes and to leave them one size bigger. Mr. Stockwell Day, now leader of the Canadian Alliance, served his constituents and all Albertans well. As a good servant of Alberta and Canada he has taken his dynamic leadership to the federal level, where he could become the next Prime Minister of Canada. He will show how the Alberta advantage can become the Canadian advantage.

I want to sincerely thank the people of Red Deer-North for giving me the opportunity to serve them as a member of the Alberta Legislature. Their friendly handshakes and warm smiles encouraged and energized me as I went door-to-door to meet them and discuss their concerns. I also want to especially thank the many wonderful volunteers who helped me, including all the members of caucus who took the time to go door-to-door with me. I would also like to thank the members of my family, who had faith and confidence in me, especially my husband, Bob. I would also like to thank two volunteers who were at my side every day and every night throughout the campaign, Cheryl Davis and Darin Doel.

As the representative for Red Deer-North I will serve my constituents to the best of my ability with all that is good and honest. During the past week in the House I have watched and listened carefully. I've heard and seen many things. I have heard a wise and patient Speaker of the House encourage each member to remember that honesty, integrity, and decorum play a major role in the MLA job description. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your wisdom, dedication, and encouragement.

I have watched and listened as our Premier tackled difficult questions in the House. I watched and listened as our Premier took

the time to visit Michener Centre, the first Premier to visit since 1974, and to listen to a resident of Michener tell him that he had done a good job and that he had worked hard. I watched as the Premier talked to him and told him that, yes, he had done a good job. Thank you, Mr. Premier, for listening to these very special people.

I've watched and listened carefully to the ministers as they answer and explain the government's position on health care, energy, education, justice, children's services, labour, infrastructure, et cetera. Thank you for the long hours of dedication that it takes to develop good government policy.

I have watched and listened as the hon. members of the opposition have debated and challenged the government's business plan and fiscal policies. Although some people may think that their sole duty is to criticize the government, I have witnessed at times sincerity and good intentions.

I have witnessed a near miracle when the entire Assembly came together to pass Bill 26, the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. I saw emotion in the faces of my colleagues on both sides of the floor, and I knew that deep down inside we are all concerned about the same things: freedom and democracy. It is only in true democracy that we can achieve true freedom.

Bill 26 reminds us that in one of the world's most horrific genocides, the Jewish people suffered terribly, as did the Ukrainians, the Polish, and many others. I am here today in this beautiful country of Canada because of just such a genocide. It was the first genocide of the 20th century when the Turks massacred the Armenians, and my grandparents were forced to flee to Canada. My grandfather had survived the Armenian massacre only because of the grace of God. He had been awake in the middle of the night and had felt and heard the heavy pounding of horses' hooves in the distance. He climbed to the top of a tree so that he could see what was going on. Before he had a chance to react, the courtyard of his village was filled with Turkish soldiers, who did not waste any time in massacring the entire village of his family and friends. He was the only survivor.

3:40

As my grandfather watched in horror, he saw the soldiers hang his young cousins upside down from trees. He saw the soldiers cut off their kneecaps and then light fires underneath them. I said to my grandmother that my grandfather must have had nightmares for years. She looked at me and said, "He still jumps in the night."

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Despite the horror that was inflicted upon the Armenians by the Turks, my grandparents never taught hatred of the Turkish people. This was because my grandmother's life was saved and she was raised by a Turkish family. They were neighbours and friends, and when it came time for her family to run for their lives, the Turkish friends offered to keep Mariam. She was too little, and she would not be quiet in hiding. They would say that she was their daughter, and when the war was over, her family could come back and get her. My grandmother's family never came back. Her Turkish family raised her with love, and they became her brothers and sisters.

Mr. Speaker, this is a story of hope and love. When we say "never again," we give it real meaning by making our province and our country strong and free. Good business plans and sound fiscal policies will help to keep Alberta strong and free.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you a little bit about Red Deer. I've always said that Red Deer is the best place in the world to live. After all, where else can you find two NHL teams, two CFL teams, two international airports, two Jubilee Auditoriums, spectacular

mountains, and beautiful lakes, all within an hour and a half drive? My husband used to say that a traffic jam in Red Deer was more than 10 cars at a stoplight. Red Deer is growing so fast that the constant flow of traffic on the main road always looks like rush hour.

Red Deer-North is a community of approximately 30,000 people. The small businesses in Red Deer-North serve the oil field, construction companies, manufacturing companies, and farmers. The shopping is expanding beyond our two shopping malls and the downtown areas as major players such as Costco, Staples, Leon's Furniture, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Zellers, where the lowest price is the law, compete for the market share of the people of Red Deer and central Alberta.

Red Deer-North looks forward to the government of Alberta maintaining a strong and vibrant environment to help the people of Alberta to prosper. Red Deer-North has a need for affordable housing. The fast growth of Red Deer and the demand for these homes leaves little supply.

We have a number of single-parent families in Red Deer-North who have told me that it is difficult right now for them to go it alone, and they are thankful for day care and rent subsidies.

Red Deer-North has some very exciting manufacturing plants. Travelaire Canada builds beautiful trailers that compete with American products. Our fibreglass manufacturing company makes many of the FRP exterior parts for these trailers. Superior Emergency builds some of the best fire trucks in North America. We have Parkland Industries, Quinn Pumps, Collicutt Hanover, Washuk manufacturing, and many more. There are also a large number of small business people. These innovative entrepreneurs help to create the jobs that give us security.

The people of Red Deer-North want safe communities, where they can raise their families without fear, and the seniors of Red Deer-North want a safe community as well. Mr. Speaker, the most important building block of any society is the family. We need to make sure that our business plans and fiscal policies help families to be strong and united. We need to encourage respect and love for all members of our families so that we might learn how to respect and help others.

In the last six weeks I have experienced the greatness of our beautiful city of Red Deer. I've had the honour and the privilege of handing out Rutherford scholarships to the students of Lindsay Thurber high school. That evening I watched as over 300 students received awards in many different areas of achievement. I found this to be very exciting. I participated in the hall of fame ceremonies where three internationally renowned former students of Lindsay Thurber were inducted into the hall of fame.

The awards and fame didn't stop there. I attended the Chamber of Commerce awards night as five of our most successful businesses won awards. We also celebrated the achievement of our Chamber of Commerce manager, Jan Fisher, who was awarded the Canadian manager of the year award.

I was so proud of all our award winners that you would have thought I was their mother. Mr. Speaker, the city of Edmonton may be the City of Champions, but Red Deer is the city of winners.

The city of Red Deer keeps growing and growing. I know that the hon. Member for Red Deer-South is as proud as I am of our beautiful city. The Minister of Learning called him a pain in the neck because he persisted until Red Deer College was given a much-needed grant for expansion. Red Deer College was originally designed for 2,500 students. It now serves 5,000 students. All of Red Deer is thankful for the efforts of the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

In the past six weeks I've also attended the Millennium Centre grand opening. This is a beautiful modern office complex in downtown Red Deer. I attended the grand opening of Safety City,

that will serve to teach our children safe habits on the street and on the farm. Hundreds of volunteers gave their time and money to make this project a reality. The province was also a proud contributor to this worthy project. We have just opened the Excel gymnastics club, which is the most modern club in Alberta. The province contributed to this project as well. This club is part of the brand-new Collicutt Centre, where all types of recreational activity will find their home.

The Kerry Wood Nature Centre just opened a new addition so that children of all ages can study, learn, and enjoy the wonders of nature. The Westerner association has added a new midsized building called the harvest centre, and it was not too long ago that the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame was opened on the outskirts of Red Deer on highway 2. Soon we will be developing the top floor of the Red Deer regional hospital, where we will have more beds and nursing care for our people.

Mr. Speaker, these are new and wonderful achievements that help Red Deer to grow. Many of them could not have been accomplished without the tenacious and persistent work of hundreds of volunteers. In fact, Red Deer is called the city of volunteers. Our volunteers contribute to the quality of life in Red Deer. They help to make it a better place to live, as do all our areas of recreation. Our park system is fantastic. The Waskasoo park system has many miles of beautiful biking and hiking trails that link historic and nature sites to parks and other recreation areas.

Every one of these projects is the result of someone's dreams. With hard work, tenacity, innovation, and courageous, persistent fund-raising each one of these dreams became a reality. Red Deer and indeed Alberta are made stronger each time a dream is realized. Without good business plans and solid fiscal policies that create a thriving economy and dynamic environment, these dreams could not come true.

Mr. Speaker, it was just over a year ago that I went to Kobe, Japan, to represent the Pacific Northwest region of International Training in Communication at the international speech contest. In my speech I searched for a hero. In my desperate search I quote Bonnie Tyler's award-winning song *Holding Out for a Hero*, which says:

Where have all the good men gone
And where are all the gods?
Where's the street-wise Hercules
To fight the rising odds?
Isn't there a white knight upon a fiery steed?
Late at night I toss and turn and dream of what
I need
I need a hero.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't find a hero in Bill Clinton, who didn't even know the definition of sex. I couldn't find a hero in Jean Chretien, who had to finish a ski trip and could not attend the funeral of King Hussein of Jordan, one of the greatest Middle East peace-makers in history. I could not find a hero in Boris Yeltsin, who was in and out of hospital for his illnesses and addictions. I could not find a hero in the Olympic Committee, that would allow corruption and greed to control them.

I looked throughout history and around the world to find a hero, and there are many: Abraham Lincoln, Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Sadako Sasaki of Hiroshima, Nelson Mandela. In all these heroes I did not find my hero. But when I looked around, I found that my hero was in that very room. When you take the time to listen to people and their concerns, when you can give them a hug to celebrate their victories or share their sorrows, when you kneel down to wipe a tear from a child's eye, when you comfort the sick, and when you visit the elderly, then you are my hero.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, this room is full of heroes and our communities are full of heroes. The members of this Legislature are heroes when they show concern for our children by providing good education and passing legislation that protects them from predators, when they show their compassion for seniors who need caring support, when they encourage affordable housing for those who need shelter, when they provide a vision that protects our health care for the next generation, when they seek to protect our environment, and when they stand firm on a policy of fiscal responsibility. It takes heroes to make the tough choices to protect the future and it takes heroes to stand on guard for all Albertans.

Where have all the good men and women gone? Well, they're right here among us. I am honoured to be among these heroes of Alberta. I am privileged to represent the people of Red Deer-North. I am proud to be part of the Alberta advantage, and I will serve the people of Red Deer-North and of Alberta to the best of my ability and with all my heart.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. members from Edmonton-Highlands and Red Deer-North may be my political adversaries, but they are also honoured colleagues, and I think we have seen that demonstrated in their maiden addresses to this Assembly. On behalf of the Official Opposition caucus I want to thank them for their heartfelt words.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, as well, to participate in the debate on Motion 15. Motion 15 reads: "Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government." It should come as no surprise to you that I will not be supporting that motion.

The government of Alberta has a responsibility to more than just the bottom line, particularly in the definition of bottom line that this government embraces, which is one of simply dollars and cents. There is little recognition of the social discord, the social disharmony that has happened as a result of this government's rather ruthless pursuit of its more ideologically driven policies.

If you look at the second-quarter fiscal update, which was released on November 14, and you turn to page 1, which is where you would think the government would put the most important information that it wished Albertans to know, in fact under the caption of Highlights, Mr. Speaker, which indicates of course that this is what the government wants people to pay particular attention to, we see that the very first highlighted bullet is that Alberta will be allocating over and above the budget an additional amount "towards repaying Alberta's accumulated debt." Now, I don't take issue with debt repayment. In fact, I think it was irresponsible of the Conservative government to get Albertans into that particular debt load situation to begin with. The whole time I've been in this Legislature, I've been talking about fiscal responsibility and, in fact, insisting that the government live up to its obligations.

I find it curious that a government that talks about people and prosperity would say, as the most important issue to highlight, that what we're going to do with this blessing of riches which we have is accelerate the debt repayment. Now, why do I find that so troubling? Well, I find that troubling because it shows where this government is focusing their attention. You could look at some of the other highlights as well. The second highlight talks about debt repayment. The third highlight talks about tax cuts.

This government seems to have forgotten that it has an obligation to do more than balance the budget. The balanced budget is simply

an achievement that allows you to then do other things. A balanced budget is not the sum total of the reason for a government to pursue fiscal policies. In this province of Alberta, with all of the riches that we have, in one of the most robust economies on the face of the planet, why don't we see a government that actually has a vision that does serve people, that recognizes that what we're talking about is much more than a balanced budget, much more than just a corporate bottom line? Why don't we see in fact some statements by this government that would be truly visionary, some performance measures to accompany those three-year business plans which would be so bold as to propose that there will be no homelessness in Alberta due to shelter allowances not keeping up with rental market conditions? Why isn't that a goal in the business plan of the minister of human resources?

Why is it that we don't see the Minister of Learning have a performance measure that says that in Alberta we will have the most affordable tuition fees in Canada? Why don't we see that as a goal? Why don't we see the Minister of Health and Wellness or his associate put into their business plan that Alberta will boast the shortest wait lists in Canada for surgeries? Why don't we see the minister of environmental protection include a business plan that says that we will have the highest standards in the country for air and water quality? Why don't we see the Minister of Learning talk about a classroom size performance measure that recognizes that a low student/teacher ratio is one of the best ways to guarantee the quality of the educational experience for the students? Why don't we have a performance measure that talks about the lowest student/teacher ratios?

Mr. Speaker, we have a government that seems to recognize the cost of things but doesn't recognize the value of things. We have a government that says that we will put effort into making sure we're ahead of Ontario when it comes to tax reduction, but we won't put any effort into making sure we're ahead of some of the poorest jurisdictions on this continent when it comes to actual dollars spent on classroom resources. Why is that?

Then the government wants us to unanimously endorse their general fiscal policies. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not the job of this Legislature to pat the government on the back. The job of this Legislature is to hold the government accountable. I don't think the government has been doing a very good job of being accountable, and it's not just my opinion.

If we take a look at what the Auditor General has had to say about deficiencies in government financial management practices in just the last couple of years, I think it speaks for itself. Mr. Speaker, for example, the Auditor General has said that feedback from standing policy committees "relating to the content or format of business plans is minimal." Again, the Auditor General:

In the Budget 99 cycle, information on Alberta's economic outlook for factors such as population, unemployment rate, exchange rate, and interest rates were not provided to Ministries until October 1998, several months after some Ministries began their business planning.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said in his '99-2000 annual report:

In Budget 99, core businesses are still defined variously in terms of goals, strategies, activities, or performance criteria. Strategies are sometimes defined as desired results rather than broad actions to achieve them. Goals are sometimes defined in terms of activities rather than end results.

No wonder this government presents a confused policy picture to Albertans. They can't get it straight. They talk a good game about openness and accountability.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

They talk about business planning, but we don't really see the evidence of the benefit of real business plans. In fact, well over 200 performance measures have been missed by this government. Performance measures are changed year to year. Performance measures are not always measured on an annual basis, and performance measures simply disappear when the results are too embarrassing for the government to report. That doesn't show openness or accountability or integrity, and it certainly doesn't show good management.

4:00

Madam Speaker, let me continue to quote the Auditor General:

In our review of the Ministry business plans in Budget 99, we found that over half the Ministries had at least one goal that did not have a performance measure associated with it. Overall, 24% of all goals in Ministry business plans did not have a performance measure. In addition, in many business plans where performance measures were included, the linkage between the goals and the performance measures was not apparent.

Certainly nothing to be proud of and no reason at all why this Legislative Assembly should approve Motion 15.

Madam Speaker, the Auditor General continued in his last report:

Our review of Budget 99 found that 82% of the performance measures had targets. However, two-thirds of Ministries had at least one performance measure that lacked [any] target.

The Auditor General goes on to say:

We have found that the results analyses of most ministries, made public in September 1999, did not discuss the reasons for variances between planned and actual performance and did not integrate financial and non-financial performance.

We can only be left to conclude that the government is either unaware or unwilling to tell the whole story. Now, it could be that they're unaware. It could be that the Auditor General is right. It could be that there is no linkage between the money that's being spent and the outcomes, that the performance measures are either invalid or inappropriate. It could very well be that the government is simply unable to do what it says it set out to do. It could be that they're unaware of the problems. It could be that they are in denial. It could be that they're just old and tired and think that all of this accountability stuff is a bunch of bother and that if they close their eyes and click their heels together, they can make it all go away and they'll end up back at home in their own bed and nobody will be looking over their shoulder.

It could be that this government just simply has ceased to care about being accountable to Albertans, that they somehow believe they have a divine right to govern and that Albertans will tolerate their incompetence because, after all, there is no alternative. Well, that kind of arrogant attitude on the part of the government will not serve them well, and it certainly doesn't serve the people of Alberta very well.

Now, over the years the Liberal Official Opposition in this province have provided many, many, many constructive recommendations to government to improve the budgeting and the accountability process. We've talked about changing the Public Accounts process. Why don't we have a Public Accounts review of the potential impact on the government of Alberta of the diminishing nonrenewable resources? There will come a point in this province when we will no longer be able to rely on the oil sands or on the conventional crude reserves or on natural gas for the billions of dollars that those resources now provide to the Treasury. Why don't we have a committee of this government looking into that and reviewing the implications of that and planning for that all-too-near future? Why don't we have an all-party process in terms of prebudget study, public consultation? Why don't we ever have the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations meet in this province?

The Alberta Liberals believe that what we do here is of importance, and the most important element of what we do here is that it is done in public, that it's done in full view of the taxpayer. We have talked about many initiatives which would open up the process, but instead of an honest review of those suggestions, we've seen the government continue to tighten things up. The former Treasurer, who now wants to be the Prime Minister of this country – when he was House leader, we had him retool the budget process so that subcommittees of supply were struck. The subcommittees of supply would be reviewing multiple departments of government at the very same time, therefore denying individual members of this Assembly the ability to participate fully in the budget debate, because you can't be in two places at once. The government had the audacity to say: oh well, this is going to open up the process. Well, in fact what it did is it made it harder, made it more obscure, made it more difficult for members of this Assembly to hold the government accountable in the budget process.

Madam Speaker, we find it very difficult to match the words of this government with their deeds. We see huge gaps between what they say and what they do. We see hypocrisy in their statements about accountability and fiscal responsibility. We see an indifference to the real concerns of Albertans, probably most dramatically evidenced when Albertans all over this province told the government not to pursue their privatization of health care scheme, to drop Bill 11, and this government's response was to call those Albertans names and dismiss and diminish them.

For all of these reasons, I can't support Motion 15. I would be surprised if most private members really could in their heart of hearts, and I know that no member of the Official Opposition can.

Madam Speaker, my time is running short. I understand that this motion will continue on the Order Paper. I've been asked by the Government House Leader to adjourn debate, and I will do so at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

MR. HAVELOCK: Madam Speaker, what I would like to do, if I could, is rearrange the order this afternoon a little bit and simply go to third reading of Bill 28 at this time.

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading

Bill 28
Appropriation (Supplementary
Supply) Act, 2000 (No. 2)

MR. HAVELOCK: On behalf of the Treasurer I'd like to move third reading of Bill 28.

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thanks, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the supplementary estimates at third reading. The last time I spoke to the supplementary estimates, in Committee of the Whole, I had reviewed the requirements for supplementary estimates as they're laid out in *Beauchesne*. I'd like to return to that theme and look at just three ministries. The reasons for supplementary estimates are outlined by *Beauchesne*, and two of them seem to be applicable to three of the departments that I'd like to talk about: Children's Services, Health and Wellness, and Infrastructure.

Beauchesne says that one of the reasons that you have a supple-

mentary estimate is that there's a need to further grant moneys for an existing service or to add money to a vote for a new service that's being put in place. That's extending the purposes of a vote. It would seem on the surface that that would be the reasons for some of the sums that we see in those three departments, but that kind of superficial look is not really borne out when you look at what the Auditor General has said about those departments.

4:10

I'd like to look at Children's Services first, because we have before us a request for \$46.372 million by the Ministry of Children's Services for budgeted increases in the child welfare caseloads and the handicapped children's services caseloads, to address the recommendations of the Children's Forum and the Task Force on Children at Risk report, program enhancements related to the development of a risk assessment and reduction model, and improved permanency planning for children in the care of the child and family services authorities. Additionally, there are moneys for contracted agencies and service providers to support employee compensation adjustments, employee compensation costs with respect to staff seconded to child and family services authorities, and to assist youth in the transition from government care to independent living.

Those are the reasons for the supplementary supply requisition being in front of us this afternoon, but if you look at what the Auditor General says, the reasons may be more related to inadequate planning than they are to the provision of additional services. I refer the Assembly to page 70. The Auditor General, referring to Children's Services, says:

The Department is responsible to forecast the cost of children's services in order to provide a budget proposal. However, the Department does not have the system it needs to adequately forecast these costs.

In the margin he has made the same comment, and I asked in Public Accounts if any reason had been given for the lack of any forecasting model. The Auditor General said no, that there was no reason given. It makes sense that if the department can't adequately forecast their costs, then this is going to happen year after year. There's no provision in their budgeting process to ascertain what the costs might be. So we could expect with this department, as is the case now with Health and Wellness, that we're going to be back here year after year with requests for supplementary supply, and that isn't consistent with the reasons that are given in *Beauchesne*. It's a result of inadequate planning at the department level.

The Auditor General devotes quite a lot of space to Children's Services in the report and talks about the actual funding formula that's used to allocate resources and talks about it being a "population needs-based model" that is adjusted as the department moves through the year and has experience with programs. Again, it says that that's needed and that the funding formula needs to be enhanced. So two crucial junctures where the department is putting together its budget: the population funding formula and the adjustments they make to that and then the lack of a model for predicting and managing costs. The department is in the unenviable position of not being able to accurately put forward a budget. Again, that's why we're back here with supplementary supply.

The Auditor General also referred to the department not having information on whether the cost of support services is reasonable.

Therefore, the Department is unable to determine whether or not the funds were spent economically.

So the Auditor General points to a series of deficiencies at the budgeting level in the Department of Children's Services that can only lead to the department being here with a request in excess of \$46 million. I think that when those requests come, Madam

Speaker, they should be looked at very seriously, and every effort should be made to make sure that we're not here again next year with another supplementary request because of inadequate planning and not because of changing circumstances.

The second department that I'd like to talk about in terms of the planning – and again the words are not mine but the words of the Auditor General. Health and Wellness has a request for \$293.593 million. On page 132 of the Auditor General's report he talks about the department and the number of supplemental requests, the number of postbudget announcements that that department has made. He says:

While budgeting should accommodate some flexibility, for the past two completed fiscal years the health budget has increased in total more from additional subsequent interim funding than from the annual budgeting process. Between January 1998 and May 2000, more than 25 additional funding decisions were announced that affected health system operations.

Later on the same page he goes on to say:

While subsequent additional funding may provide relief from immediate budget pressures, it is not conducive to good budget management since repetition may create the expectation of continuing amounts in addition to planned annual budget increases.

So the Auditor General is saying that this is going to happen time and time again. They don't plan adequately in the first place, and they come before the Assembly and have to request money time and time again. The record of 25 different announcements seems to be one that should cause some alarm across the way in terms of how effective the budget planning is, a second example in these budget estimates, I think, of where the planning at budget time has not served the government or the people of this province very well.

I have as my third example the Infrastructure department, Madam Speaker. The request there is for \$419 million. The Auditor General again has made comment about that. A couple of things are disturbing in the Auditor General's comments. On page 185 the Auditor General says:

The Ministry also requires information on strategic service delivery options and forecasted needs to develop strategic long-term capital plans. Such information would include strategic policy changes, options, and priorities as well as forecasted needs based on economic analysis and projected demographic data. In the absence of this information, there is a risk that the government will not have the most cost-effective program delivery methods nor will it optimize the allocation of resources to the acquisition, preservation and maintenance of capital assets.

So there's no plan. There's no long-term plan in the Infrastructure department. As a result, you'll continue to see requests for supplementary supply.

In other parts of the report there are even more alarming warnings from the Auditor General. He goes on to say:

In addition, we noted opportunities for improvement in linking the information on strategic education program delivery, as developed by Learning, to the capital plans for school facilities.

So what he was saying was that here they have the Department of Learning setting goals and establishing priorities and the Department of Infrastructure, which is supposed to serve the Learning department and provide facilities that match the priorities of the department, not talking to each other or at least not sharing information to the extent that there's any assurance that the money is being wisely spent.

4:20

I heard a previous speaker from the government side try to explain away the supplementary supply by the fact that there had been windfall resource revenues, that that was what allowed this supply motion to come forward. But if you go back to what the Auditor General said, at least in three departments that seems hard to justify. In fact, if the kind of planning that one might expect would have

been done in those departments, we wouldn't have been here with supply.

With those comments, Madam Speaker, I would conclude. I must admit that I find it difficult to be critical of moneys that I think are needed. I guess my quarrel is with the way in which those moneys are requisitioned from this Legislature.

Thank you very much.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm mindful that it's Thursday afternoon, the second week of session, and the impetus for members to be thinking about other things at this point in the day or perhaps closing their eyelids is pretty strong. So I guess I'm contemplating whether or not I'm going to be able to keep people awake or keep them in their seats at this point.

You know, we're also this afternoon, in the context of discussing this expenditure of money in supplementary supply, on the eve of a federal election. Quite humorously, I woke up the other morning and thought perhaps I'd slept through our own provincial election call. Our provincial Premier was on the radio personally attacking the Prime Minister about a particular issue, and I thought that maybe in fact I'd slept through our own election call and we were in the midst of our own election campaign. I'm not sure I've ever heard a provincial Premier talk so often, make so many public statements in the context of a federal election.

It has been, Madam Speaker, in many other respects a very exciting campaign. I mean, we've even had the perpetually tanned leader of the Reform Party here many times in the province, particularly here in Edmonton, making comments about his vision for the health care system, his vision for the justice system, and many of those visions didn't entirely equate with the reality of things here in Alberta or the history here in Alberta under his leadership.

Now, let me relate these things to supplementary supply this afternoon. We, I think, make it a sport here in Alberta to take some shots at the federal government at least once a week if not every day. In a federal election campaign it seems to be every day. One of the things I think the federal government needs to be commended on is that they really know how to write a budget. They put forward, Madam Speaker, a budget that contains an estimate of what the expenditures will be. Granted there may be areas where people think they should have spent more money or perhaps they should have spent less money, but the budget is there. In contrast, in Alberta we really have two budget processes. We go through the big hoopla in February, generally in February every year, where the Provincial Treasurer has his podium and makes his sermon, or I should say his Budget Address, and that's put forward to the public as being the provincial budget. There's all kinds of media coverage and the rotunda's full of press, but, in reality, as we see here today, there's really a second budget. These supplementary estimates constitute a second budget. We're talking about the expenditure of money. We're being asked to approve \$979 million. To me that's certainly more than a slight underestimation of expenses. It's certainly more than "Oops; I overspent." That's a significant amount of money.

So while the provincial government likes to attempt to point out that the federal government is full of flaws and the leadership is not up to their standard, really, Madam Speaker, here's a perfect example where all is not what meets the eye in Alberta. We have a government that has adopted a process of bringing forward a budget in February, and then from February to November they pretty much spend as they please, whether or not that's within the budget.

In my term of office every year – I believe I'm correct – we've seen supplementary estimates in this same range if not consecutively

higher every year. Why is that? Because the government has had an agenda politically to try and underestimate expenditures, to ratchet down expenditures in this province so that they could profess that we're a trim, lean, deficit/debt-fighting machine, open for business; we're going to give tax cuts. All of that is being done in a manner, Madam Speaker, that really lulls or perhaps may even to some degree mislead Albertans into thinking: okay; what we're spending in February is what we spend. Well, that's not the case.

In large part because of a number of factors, this debate this afternoon and the contents of this bill will most likely not be covered to a large degree, and that's unfortunate. It undermines democracy. It undermines the budget process, because really the money we're talking about this afternoon comes out of the public's pocket in Alberta. It comes out of Albertans' pockets, and they have a right to know that there's a backdoor way of spending in this province that is called supplementary estimates.

That being said, there are some very legitimate expenditures contained within these estimates. But why weren't they included in the budget in February? The caseload growth in child welfare, as an example, was well on its way in February of 2000. Did we incorporate money to fund for sufficient staff and compensation to cover that? No. Similarly, we knew waiting lists in February of 2000 were very much an issue in the public's mind. Why wasn't the money incorporated at that time? There are a number of expenditures that talk about replacing medical equipment and funding additional MRI machines. These are all things, really, which accumulated because the government has not accounted for these types of expenditures in their budgets every year. That's one of the issues that the Auditor General is pointing out. Our budgeting process is becoming less than honest. That's perhaps the best way to frame it without being unparliamentary or inflammatory, Madam Speaker.

I actually find some humour in listening to the federal election campaign and the leader of the Reform Party professing to be this prodigal son of sorts, a tanned one at that, and that somehow Alberta has just got this all figured out. Madam Speaker, as we know, in this province the reality is really quite different.

4:30

I can't imagine budgeting at a federal level in the manner in which we are doing our budgeting here now. We might want to hypothesize a bit about how this government would rally if the federal government took this type of approach to the budgeting process. I somehow think we'd be hearing a lot of voices rising on the other side if that were the case. There are other ways in which this supplementary supply also relates to the whole federal election campaign, and that's through federal programs.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to be talking about several different ministries in my debate at third reading, but one of the things that I was very disappointed was not contained within the Children's Services estimates was provision for the claw-back of the child benefit to be removed. I have spoken about this before in the House, that we have a policy in this government that when a family receives the children's benefit, they subsequently have that same amount clawed back by the provincial government from their welfare payments. There's really no relief in sight, it appears, in that respect.

In a similar vein, we do not see any substantive relief for Albertans who are living on a fixed income with respect to rent relief, and this is something that I've been receiving calls and letters about in my constituency office for at least a year. Again, the official government line appears to be: well, in a growing economy, rent will rise. Along with that, of course, we know electricity is rising and utility costs are rising because of the government's botched deregulation plan. We see our municipal taxes rising because of the government's cuts to municipalities. Really, Madam Speaker, what choice do municipalities have? What choice do Albertans living on

a fixed income have? I'm not entirely submitting that we should be going through this process to this degree at this stage and time, but if we're in the process of allocating additional pockets of money, then why aren't these equally important issues on the table?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We also have heard much over the course of the last two years about the increase in tuition in this province. We hear it from every facet of the province, both undergraduate and graduate students. Alberta now is leading the country, really, in their lack of respect for postsecondary education and their unwillingness to do something about the rate at which tuition has increased in Alberta during their term of office. The average debt, which has been shared with us this week in a series of meetings that CAUS has had with members of the Assembly, is approximately \$18,600. We see very limited avenues for students to access student loans; again, a very limited number of scholarships. All of these additional things that I talked about – electricity increases, utility increases, rent increases – affect students. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, they have to shoulder a very high rate of tuition.

Now, I believe also that we are the only province in the country that has not done something, either freezing or capping or reducing tuition. Every other province in Canada, I believe, has announced that they have in fact heard from students the burden they're incurring through their postsecondary education, and those governments have responded and done something about that. But we certainly don't see anything in supplementary supply that is going to bring any relief in the short term.

Speaking of disrespect, we went through a process again in March of this year of asking a series of questions to a number of departments. All of my colleagues participated in the designated supply subcommittees, asking questions of departments relative to their budget allocations. I sat on a number of those committees. One in particular that I sat on and asked a number of questions about was the department of health. Mr. Speaker, it's funny that we would go through that process of asking those questions and never get a response. It may have been an oversight, but I believe that it's been pointed out, prior to Thursday afternoon on the second week of session, and we still have no replies to those questions. So here we're being asked again to approve the supplementary estimates when in fact those questions that we raised about the legitimacy of the allocations in the initial budget have not been responded to.

That again speaks to this government's definition of respect, their definition of respect when it comes to the Official Opposition, when it comes to the taxpayers. They are of the belief that they own the primary right to communicate to the public of this province, whether it's about tax dollars, budgets, supplementary estimates, or even, Mr. Speaker, about how they should vote in a federal election campaign. That's the sad reality.

So as agonizing as it is, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to restate some of the questions, that I think were very important questions that were raised in March of 2000 in the context of the primary health budget, that were not responded to this afternoon. Some of those questions related to the health surveillance branch Trends report. We have been attempting to obtain an updated copy of that report since the spring at least. I believe the last edition was out in May of '99, and we were told at one point, in fact, that the updated version of the surveillance report would be out sometime around May of 2000.

Now, for the public's interest, the surveillance report is really a series of indicators, where the government was monitoring the health of Alberta from an environmental standpoint, from factors such as the incidence of asthma, the incidence of birth defects, the health of our water, the incidence of teenage pregnancies, of infant mortality,

those types of things. So that would have been very relevant this afternoon, to have been able to look at that and say: well, where we have a high incidence of low birth weight babies – which in fact was the case in 1999; I believe Calgary led the country – what has the government done, what has the department of health done with respect to that in the last year, and what allocations are within the budget to address that? But that report has been withheld, Mr. Speaker. We've not seen it tabled in this Assembly, although it's my understanding it is completed. I believe, pessimistic as it is, it's really so that that information wasn't available to be able to debate during the context of the supplementary supply estimates.

4:40

When we look specifically at some of the allocations under Health and Wellness in the supplementary estimates today, we see \$10 million for the increased cost of drug benefits. Really no explanation to any degree, Mr. Speaker, about what in fact is contained within that increase and what the breakdown was of those costs. It has been predicted, at least in my tenure within the health sector, for some time, several years, that pharmaceutical costs were going to increase in this country as a result of the patent protection that was afforded to name-brand pharmaceutical companies by a prior federal government, a Conservative government in fact, led by Prime Minister Mulroney.

I can't believe that my time is over. I really think the mood is right, Mr. Speaker, that I could get unanimous consent to continue.

[Unanimous consent denied]

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure standing in this Assembly most of the time, but while we're standing up here speaking on this bill, Bill 28, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2000 (No. 2), my question is: would we be back in this fall session if it weren't for this bill? Why are we here? Bill 28.

The Legislative Assembly is being asked to approve an additional \$979.321 million in supplementary supply in the 2000-2001 fiscal year from the general revenue fund. Of the \$979.321 million in new spending being requested as supplementary supply, \$978.276 million is for additional operating and capital expenses for government ministries, with the remaining \$1.045 million in funding for the office of the Auditor General; \$968.994 million is in operating expenses; as well, the remaining \$10.327 million is for capital expenditures.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's called planning on the fly, especially on the eve of the election coming up. It's not enough for this government to miss their budget estimate and their target by very close to a billion dollars. I do believe that if we look back over the last few years, the previous Treasurer, Mr. Day, in 1997-98 was \$474 million under budget. In '98-99 the same past Treasurer was \$429 million out of whack. Last year he was \$1.324 billion out. The effect of this is that now we have a supplementary request for almost a billion dollars again. Since 1992 this government has replayed their spin so often, the spin being overspending by the previous government, overspending by the previous members, and a lot of these same members sit within this government. The thing that I think a lot of the members that are still around really forgot is to keep the "Progressive" in front of the Conservative side of their name. It's interesting that the present Treasurer has done a lot of grandstanding, along with a lot of rhetoric about the accountability and fiscal responsiveness that he has brought to Alberta over the last year since he has become minister. He's gone down a different road, though, in the last year, and that is to spend, spend, spend.

You know, I'll bring up something in *Hansard* from February 28, 1994. This seems to be what happens quite often in the last while, bringing up a past *Hansard*. The now Treasurer, was quoted as saying, "I told people I was fed up with bureaucracy, overspending by governments." And now, guess what? He's back to spend, spend, spend. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm really left scratching my head.

The hon. Minister of Government Services stands up, stating at long length that she sits on the priorities and budget committee. Well, they must always be napping while some planning or budgeting into the next year is being discussed. If I was looking at an agenda saying that another billion dollars was to be brought up to answer for and commit to moneys already handed out and promised, I think I would wake up pretty quickly.

The supplementary requests cover different ministries – Health, Environment, Community Development, Infrastructure, Justice, and Municipal Affairs – and now we're being asked for more money for the Auditor General. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a look at what this means in the context of the overall budget and financial integrity of the provincial government of Alberta. Shall we think of things to look at? Let's take a look at the supplementary supply bill as it relates to the second-quarter fiscal update that the Treasurer just released on November 14, far earlier than it has ever been released before. We can only conclude that the reason why the Treasurer was so anxious to rush this report into the public domain was to try to deflect attention away from the issues that are really troubling Albertans right now: the waits in health care, the overcrowded classrooms their children are facing, how thin their wallets are getting when they have to fill up their car at the gas pump, the rising prices on electrical bills, and the heating costs which are going through the roof.

Mr. Speaker, the other item that was brought forward today, Bill 30: is that a reflection on the fact that there might be a majority government next week that doesn't reflect what they have in their own flat tax?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a look at what it means with other items. This is to actually talk more and more around why the Alberta Liberals cannot support this latest installment of supplementary estimates without some explanation of what this new spending will contribute to meeting defined outcomes and performance criteria such as reducing health care waiting lists, opening hospital beds, and reducing student classroom sizes. Although we recognize that funding is needed in these areas, we have serious concerns about the supplementary supply, symptomatic of lack of planning, which I referred to before as planning on the fly.

The Provincial Treasurer will have brought in this huge sum of \$979.3 million in supplementary supply during nine months as Provincial Treasurer. By contrast, past Treasurer Dick Johnston brought in \$2.124 billion in special warrants in six years as Provincial Treasurer. Jim Dinning brought in \$611.257 million in supplementary supply during four years as Provincial Treasurer. The Provincial Treasurer has brought in more in supplementary supply in 2000-2001 than did Mr. Dinning or Mr. Johnston, and in that one year through supplementary supply the Provincial Treasurer has brought in the second largest spending bill, \$979.3 million, more than any Provincial Treasurer since 1986.

4:50

Over the past year in this House I've asked questions around the money going to Alberta Hospital Edmonton versus Alberta Hospital Ponoka, being called all kinds of names in the House, whereas if you try to get that question answered outside the House, you never get an answer.

As I look through different spending and tax announcements subsequent to Budget 2000, we look at dollars that were projected for reducing waiting time for open-heart surgery, joint replacement,

other elective surgeries, MRIs, and cancer treatment. This is very, very important. I don't think there's anybody on this side, anybody in Alberta who would ever deny the fact that we have long waiting lists. But I really believe that instead of throwing money after money, we have to start building a plan in these areas, and six years of destroying doesn't reflect back into building again. I do know that we're living in a world of high technology. The fact is that MRIs have just come in in the last few years. But when we start having this amount of human infrastructure loss in our medical facilities as well as our cancer clinics, we do have to start looking in the mirror and wondering what went wrong.

We look at long-term and home care. Now, I look at what happened to our education system here. Years ago, in the 1980s, my wife, being a nurse, was told that within the next few years there would be a lot more home care. People that were registered nurses would have to be going back and finishing their degree so they could be working in the field. Well, we haven't got there yet. We haven't got the numbers we need out there in the field.

In my constituency, where you've got Alberta Hospital, the downloading has actually resulted in removing patients from the actual institute over the last few years. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that except for the fact that we do not have the care in the community that we should have to help them. If I could afford two staff in my office all the time – the trick that we use is that when there are two of us, there's a tapping effect. The next person runs over, looks at the phone and the number, and then we call the hot line that we have to Alberta Hospital to make sure that we get help out there right away.

School construction and repairs, the dollars that went to that. Well, I look at the nonanswer that we got from the Infrastructure minister in question period yesterday and the thoughts of some standing committee that feels that you have to have full occupancy of schools in cities like Edmonton and Calgary. That is totally a myth. It's wrong thinking. I've stood in here and talked about it before. In the inner city it's very important that we have kids that can walk to school because their parents aren't necessarily awake or capable of getting them there; they do not have cars. So if the occupancy of an inner-city school is 60 percent, I feel that is a figure that can be worked with.

Then you work out from there. You work out to the next ring of the circle, and you look at 75 percent. Then you get out into constituencies like I have, and for the most part I'm 150 percent overoccupied. I have the rural school of Horse Hill that is underoccupied, but they fall back into the equation of the ring that should be 75 percent. So if we have to wait in our city and in constituencies on the outer perimeter of our city with this type of attitude, that before we can trigger schools – I think the next generation of kids is going to be raised being bused into the city, because I've got schools, as I mentioned before, that are a hundred percent over. They're crowded. I've got new areas that are being built where parents are calling continuously about where their children are being bused to. I won't name names of schools, because they've still got fantastic teachers and they're very good schools. By all accounts, they are inner-city schools that they're going to.

The next item – I keep looking at different parts of where the money went to – is funding of long-term care facilities. This is something that's really interesting: how long it took for the Broda report to get off the shelf and be something that was actually looked at. Mr. Speaker, we will have to start planning very quickly, because not only are there a number of us in here that are getting closer to the time of retiring, but we'll be retiring into places where we can have care. Ninety percent of Albertans are still in their homes. That goes back to the fact of what I was saying about home care, not only in mental health care but in long-term care, making

sure that we do keep people in their residences as long as we can. People are actually able to stay in their homes a lot longer because of all the different technologies and health systems we have, better heating, eating habits, and so on.

Now, that takes me to the questions and concerns that a lot of people have called into the constituency offices about in the last few weeks as they're getting their new gas bills and electrical bills. Their question is: am I to think that by paying my electrical and gas bills, I'm not going to be able to buy the fruit, the pears and everything, that keeps me healthy the other way? It already is being talked about, and I'm talking to people that probably never voted in my direction before but are really starting to think that way now.

A new area in a new ministry was the Task Force on Children at Risk. We knew this was coming. We knew something had to be done, and I'm very thankful to the minister that has taken this position. But is it quick enough, fast enough? Where was the planning over the last few years?

Another area is community mental health and eating disorders. I just mention that both in the case of home care workers and the fact of the expenses that are affecting people on a fixed income and low income.

Senior housing, lodges: \$10 million, coming out of the Broda report presumably. It didn't need a report that took two years to do to find out that a lot of these figures needed to be spent. When we're talking in fast form, talking about how quickly we need to spend \$1 billion, it seems to take a lot to pull \$10 million out to work on some of these items.

One of the last items I want to talk about is the fact of education property tax and the cap and a committee that tinkers, a government that tinkers without coming out and being progressive and listening to their partners; that is, the AAMD and C, the AUMA, and the School Boards Association. I know the AAMD and C, even at their last week's conference, was still talking a hundred percent. Well, the other two sides weren't there, but they are talking 75 to 80 percent. I believe it is time that we moved forward on items like that and quit tinkering and showing, for great effect and everything, that a \$135 million cap is the only way that we're out to plan.

Why is this government operating on three-month plans when the Government Accountability Act talks about three-year plans? When I first got elected, every time I stood up here and talked on the budget, I said: "Where is the three-year plan? Where is the five-year plan?" Municipalities out there, the backbone of our province, have always had to work on a three-year or five-year plan, even when they had been downloaded on extensively by both the province as well as by the federal government.

Municipal governments, as I mentioned before, are the backbone of Alberta society. You know, we all live and raise our families in our communities, and our communities are very important. If we don't keep an overall plan moving all the time instead of onetime dollars, Mr. Speaker, where are we going with this? The quality of life within our communities is dependent upon the availability of local infrastructure.

With that, I'm going to take my leave, Mr. Speaker. But I am very concerned that we come back every few months, and all we talk about is supplements to the previous budget. Where's the plan? Where's that three-year plan, the five-year plan that we should actually have as a province as well as asking the municipalities to stay that way?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

[At 5:01 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]