

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 23, 2002**

8:00 p.m.

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head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIR: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: Main Estimates 2002-03

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

THE CHAIR: We'll begin the evening with comments and questions. We'll call on the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I go on, I'd like to introduce some very important people up in the gallery. These are very important people. Paddy Meade is my deputy minister. Most of you know her: the curly-haired one sitting up there. Ken Boutillier, the assistant deputy minister of aboriginal relations, is in the back, with the face hair. John McDonough, executive director of strategic services, is the small guy sitting in the front. Neil Reddekopp is the executive director, aboriginal land claims, and he's sitting, oh, just behind Paddy there. Tom Baldwin, executive director, Northern Alberta Development Council, is the man with the slightly higher forehead. Cameron Henry, director of aboriginal relations, is sitting up there too. He's the white-haired man. Peter Tadmán, director of communications, the guy on the right-hand side, is my mainliner. Martin Hanly, director, aboriginal policy initiatives, back there, is the dark-haired guy. Lori Sajjad is director of ministry support services, and we share her with IIR. Lori's in front. Dale Monaghan, who is my executive assistant, is not there. He's probably in the office somewhere.

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to present the estimates for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, which is now about 13 months old. We are continuing to make solid progress. The ministry has three components and is responsible for aboriginal and northern affairs, the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, and the Northern Alberta Development Council. With NADC I'll be calling on the chair to take you through some of its activities a little later on.

The ministry consists of three sections: aboriginal initiatives, strategic services, responsible for implementing the aboriginal policy framework and the aboriginal policy initiative, and land claims. Our plan includes four core businesses, seven goals, associated strategies, and improved performance measures to better assist and support aboriginal people and the people of northern Alberta. Our vision is an Alberta where aboriginal people and northern Albertans are recognized as equal partners and participants in the Alberta advantage. We facilitate solutions, and we do so in several different ways. We work with aboriginal governments, local communities, private industry, and municipal and federal governments. We also work with other Alberta ministries to develop strategies to address the needs of aboriginal people.

We have a complement of 61 full-time equivalents, which includes 15 within the Northern Alberta Development Council and seven within the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal. The total budget for fiscal 2002-2003 remains largely unchanged, decreasing marginally from \$30.21 million to \$30.182 million: \$17.192 million is committed to the Metis settlements; nearly \$2 million is dedicated to the Northern Alberta Development Council; the balance of our

budget is committed to ministry priorities as defined in the business plan.

As I mentioned, our primary goal, which is goal 6 of the government business plan, is to support the pursuit: "the well-being and self-reliance of Aboriginal people will be comparable to that of other Albertans." We are continuing to pursue this goal by strengthening relationships between the government of Alberta and aboriginal people through the implementation of the government of Alberta's aboriginal policy framework, also known as the APF. The initiative addresses social and economic issues and the need for co-operation between both parties. The goal is to improve government/aboriginal relations. It means that all government ministries have a responsibility to address aboriginal issues and that these ministries must report on their achievements. The APF is the key to the vision of a future in which strong, sustainable aboriginal economies support self-reliant First Nations, Metis, and other aboriginal communities and people.

Capacity building is one process that we're collaborating with aboriginal communities and industry to achieve. It means developing tools, knowledge, skills, and abilities for communities to administer, manage, and plan for themselves. It means being able to make choices and set direction for preferred futures, and it means being able to support individual and community socioeconomic initiatives. The end result will be much more self-reliant communities. We are currently involved in several projects fostering relationships between aboriginal communities and private industry; for example, the Athabasca Tribal Council/Industry Working Group, the Little Red River Cree/Tallcree First Nations project, the Dene Tha' First Nations consultation pilot project, and a number of other important projects.

This past year has been very busy with many successful cross-ministry undertakings by way of our aboriginal policy initiative, or the API. I would like to mention a few of them. Alberta Learning greatly assisted 44 native education projects in various school jurisdictions. The Rainbow Spirit project helped six Edmonton Catholic district schools with best practices and meeting the needs of aboriginal students in an integrated setting. The aboriginal apprenticeship project was implemented. There are plans to expand it.

Human Resources and Employment continues to provide opportunities through skills training programs. Projects include the First Nations resource training project, that provided hands-on oil rig experience for members of the Kehewin, Heart Lake, Frog Lake, and Cold Lake First Nations. The Gift Lake employment training project provided settlement members with hands-on oil/gas training and employment demonstrations to prepare for work within the oil and gas industry.

More than 40 aboriginal, industry, and/or government partnerships are currently in place in Alberta. I should also mention that the 2002-2003 expanded version of the API contains 30 strategies, almost 60 targets, and includes input from almost every government department. As part of the development of consultation guidelines, we have put in place and evaluated a series of pilot projects. We are now in the process of drafting overall guidelines and implementation strategies to assist departments in managing their consultations with First Nations. We are determined to ensure that the well-being and self-reliance of aboriginal people will be compared to that of other Albertans. We continue to make improvements to the Metis settlements governing structures, systems, and accountability.

As you may know, this past year was the final year of operation for the Metis Settlements Transition Commission, an organization that had been assisting the settlements governance system for the last 12 years. The commission dissolved on March 31, 2002, and the ongoing functions it previously performed have been transferred

elsewhere, either to the department or the Metis Settlements General Council. The department will administer the Metis settlements land registry, which, under the Metis Settlements Act, is a ministerial responsibility. The department will be establishing and funding a Metis settlements Ombudsman to conduct investigations into complaints regarding the administration of settlement affairs pursuant to part 7 of the Metis Settlements Act. This does not mean that as minister responsible for the settlements legislation I do not have a role. My role is similar to that of the Minister of Municipal Affairs in respect to municipalities.

Our focus for this fiscal year will be to continue to ensure that proper accountability mechanisms are in place. These mechanisms include community approved three-year business plans for each settlement. In addition, the Alberta government and the Metis Settlements General Council are establishing a process to examine financial and legislative changes for the Metis settlements. We are committed to fulfilling our obligation with regard to the settlement of outstanding treaty land entitlement claims as part of our core business. Having resolved 11 claims since 1986, our record is one of the best in Canada. We've got an awesome team. The settlement of these claims is important. Creating certainty for industry and government and providing First Nations with resources to increase their participation in the Alberta economy is important. Our goal is to achieve settlements that are fair and equitable to all parties.

On the national scene I have been working with my federal/provincial/territorial colleagues and with national aboriginal leaders. Our particular accomplishments have been the development of a national strategy to enhance aboriginal participation in the economy as well as continuing work on a national aboriginal youth strategy. In that regard, a very successful national aboriginal youth conference was held in Edmonton in October of last year. With respect to northern issues we successfully hosted the northern forum, which brought delegates from several circumpolar regions to Edmonton in September. The Northern Forum consists of 23 subnational or regional governments from 10 northern countries. As hosts it was a tremendous opportunity to showcase Alberta. I have been working with my colleagues from the Northwest Territories on the further implementation of a memorandum of understanding for co-operation and development between Alberta and the Northwest Territories. This September, as a member of the Northern Development Ministers' Forum, Alberta will be host to the federal/provincial/territorial northern development ministers' meeting to be held this fall.

I'd like to talk about northern Alberta, its significant economic activity, and its opportunities. Diamond mines, natural gas exploration, pipeline ventures are all on the table. The spin-offs from such activity will be enormous. My ministry continues to champion a wide range of northern issues, and on that score, we have undertaken a proactive, co-ordinated approach to deal with them. We have embarked on the preparation of a strategy related to the future of the north, a plan that will address a number of subjects of importance to all Albertans, including co-ordination of northern transportation systems, matching skill development to the employment needs of northern industries, outlining key connections to other provincial and territorial jurisdictions that will enhance trade and commerce, building capacity for northern communities, and expanding the northern economy through value-added manufacturing, tourism development, and increased natural resource activity.

As you know, Alberta's north encompasses many of the province's economic drivers such as oil sands development, petroleum development, forest industry operations, and agriculture. The northern development strategy will provide a framework to address these opportunities and challenges and will serve as an effective

mechanism to keep the economy of northern Alberta healthy. I have requested my colleague the MLA from Peace River to lead this, and he's been doing an excellent job. As a matter of fact, under his leadership as chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council efforts have continued on addressing key opportunities and challenges. The council's work is more important than ever given the significant developments going on in the north. I'd now ask the NADC chair to discuss some of the council's activities, as we discussed.

8:10

THE CHAIR: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You're going to recognize mine as the short speech. You know, my motto is speak little, work hard, and grin a lot to keep them guessing what you're up to.

I always appreciate the opportunity to speak about the activities of the Northern Alberta Development Council, and from the name itself you might guess that the mandate of our council is to promote northern development. One of the primary objectives is to ensure the development of an adequate northern highway network. Back in 1998 the western Premiers signed the northwestern Canada integrated road concept plan, and this became the basis for the northern highway strategy that NADC is just completing. We've got tremendous natural resources, but if you can't get to them or if the people who have to work there can't get around, the province isn't going to be able to enjoy the benefits.

Our council also plays a lead role in promoting value-added agriculture production in the north. For example, we provide the chair role to the Peace agricultural value-added working group. We also work with a group looking at the branding of northern value-added agricultural products.

Another very high priority for us is recruiting, training, and retaining a skilled workforce in our part of the province. Over the years NADC has sponsored the northern bursary programs as a way to encourage northern students to take postsecondary education and to return to work in our communities. It's encouraging to note, Mr. Chairman, that about 75 percent of these students do return and become valued members of our long-term human resources teams. Obviously, a few change their minds for one reason or another and have to refund the bursary, but the success rate of this program is certainly better than most. We also work closely with industry and private organizations, who partner with us to leverage the bursary program much further than we could afford to do on our own. Not only does this increase the amount of funding that's available, but there is more built-in assurance of jobs available to these students. Yet another initiative, which is our Northern Links program, provides high school students with the opportunities to look at postsecondary education options firsthand. They get to see the transitional challenges of moving from a small rural school high school, for example, to a postsecondary facility.

Our members work with the people in industry and assorted other organizations on all types of issues, whether they're challenges or opportunities, and these range from the future of the northern rail transportation to tourism to apprenticeship training to regional economic development. The challenges are as unending as the opportunities are exciting, Mr. Chairman. Fully two-thirds of our province is underdeveloped, and as a northern resident I'm often amazed at the general lack of interest in taking advantage of this situation. As a council we're very determined to realize these opportunities and to meet the challenges in a positive way.

I want to acknowledge the ongoing support of the departmental

staff that the minister just introduced as well as the NADC staff. Without these dedicated people in the background many good ideas would never get past the drawing board. My colleague the minister, who is also a northern MLA, representing the Lesser Slave Lake constituency, is always there for advice and support, and on behalf of our members and staff we extend our thanks to the minister and these people.

Mr. Chairman, if there's anything that I can add during the debate on our portion of the estimates, I'd be most pleased to do so.

THE CHAIR: The hon. minister.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We have made much progress, and I want to thank the chair as well as the NADC staff, who are dedicated to advancing northern development.

I want to speak a little bit about performance measures because that was an issue last time. I'm pleased to report that since the committee examined last year's business plan, my ministry has made a number of improvements. I want to remind you that quality aboriginal-specific data is not readily available. In many instances we are relying on 1996 census data. The data from the 2000 census will not be available until later next year unfortunately. I am pleased to announce, however, that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Human Resources and Employment, Finance, and Statistics Canada have undertaken a pilot project to redevelop the Alberta labour force survey. This will give us accurate aboriginal-specific data on an annual basis. We are the first province to launch such an initiative. In fact, Statistics Canada is viewing our pilot project as something that could become standard practice throughout the country.

We have made significant effort this year to identify key performance measures related to the accomplishment of strategies under the aboriginal policy initiative, but we still have a long way to go. We have set a target of 75 percent of Alberta ministries to have aboriginal strategies included in their business plans, and we're trying to attempt, whichever way we can, to include more.

So, Mr. Chairman, that concludes my comments on the ministry's estimates, and I look forward to comments and questions from my colleagues.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I very much appreciated the comments of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development as well as of the chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council and will engage in some discussion on the business plans and the budgets as they're laid out here and through the course of it ask some questions. Either the minister or the chairman of the council are welcome to interrupt me if they wish to respond, or we can just leave it till the end. That's really at their discretion.

[Mr. Klapstein in the chair]

I notice that the budget for the department is flat, shall we say. The funding levels for the department are virtually unchanged from a year ago, having gone in total from a forecast for last year of \$30,972,000, if I'm reading the right figures, to an estimate for this year of \$30,137,000. So we're looking at a drop there of about \$800,000, and if we were to adjust for inflation and for the growing aboriginal population and the growing population of the north, it's an even larger drop in funding. I'm not going to complain that governments are spending less just for the sake of complaining, but

given that northern Alberta is burgeoning, the population is growing, the economy is developing, given that the aboriginal population has a high birthrate and that the aboriginal population is growing, and given the severity of issues and the fact that this is an area of some priority for the government, I am concerned that the funding levels are not keeping pace even with inflation. I would certainly encourage the minister to do what she can to ensure that the resources necessary to fill her responsibilities are provided to her by her cabinet colleagues. So those would be my first comments: a general reaction to funding and a general concern for the drop in funding for an area of great priority for all of us and of profound, long-term implications for Alberta.

8:20

I'd offer the minister and her department and staff congratulations on their first full year of operation. It seems to have gone smoothly, certainly judging from appearances over here. I'm sure that reflects well on their abilities and their commitment, and I would welcome the staff of the department to the Assembly.

We'll work through, I guess, going program by program. I'm going to jump around a little bit actually if the minister doesn't mind. One of the things that jumps out when you first go through the plans and the budget includes under program 4 what looks like a brand-new budget item, an office for an ombudsman. My reading of the documents is that this is an office that wasn't there a year ago and presumably is a new program. In principle it sounds like a good idea. I'm a big supporter of an ombudsman. There is, as everybody here knows, an Ombudsman for the government in general, an Ombudsman who reports directly to the Legislature here. I know that that Ombudsman's responsibilities are limited. For example, that Ombudsman doesn't typically get involved and is not allowed to get involved in health care issues. In that case I'm referring to the Ombudsman in general. I assume, then, that the office of the Ombudsman of Alberta was prevented somehow from investigating issues in the Metis settlements and issues relating to Metis governance. So if this is a way of filling in, that's terrific. Sounds good.

I am curious: how did you ascertain that there was a need for this sort of an office, and how did you settle on the particular way of organizing it? Why an ombudsman? In the way it's organized, does the ombudsman, for example, report to the minister? Does he report back to the Metis councils or Metis settlements? What's the mandate for the ombudsman, and how will that position be staffed? Also, noting that it's budgeted to consume \$450,000, where did that money come from? Is that money that was taken from another program? What is the source of that money?

There's also a new budget item for the land registry, \$350,000. As with some of my questions with the ombudsman, I'm wondering: how is the need for this registry determined? What is its function? How will it be run? How does it relate to existing provisions for registering land? What's different in this office compared to other offices and services?

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

I'm going to flip around here a bit. Going to the estimates book, on page 28 there's some revenue listed – it looks like it's stable – \$285,000 in ministry revenue. There's no clear indication here – I'm sorry; I'm reading the figures wrong. It has dropped quite dramatically. It's dropped from \$285,000 two years ago to an estimate this year of just \$45,000. What's the explanation for that? Are more services being provided without any fees or charges, or is there some other explanation for that very dramatic drop in revenue? Where was it coming from before, where will it be coming from now, and

what's the plan for the future? Is the plan in fact to eliminate that entirely?

We move to issues of performance measures, and the minister commented on these in her opening remarks. We always raise some issues around performance measures because they are absolutely crucial to the question of accountability. It's very difficult to get a performance measure right, to get it to be measuring what you want it to measure, addressing what you want it to address, to make it reliable, to make it comparable from one year to the next, so we do pay special attention to performance measures. If we go back, jumping around among the documents here, to the business plan and look at the first set of performance measures, for example, under goal 1, goal 1 is "to lead or support the implementation of commitments to action in the aboriginal policy framework." There's a whole host of strategies in here.

One of the performance measures that jumped out as a measurement of those strategies and of how that goal is to be achieved is one that the minister herself mentioned, which is that "aboriginal strategies and initiatives are identified in 75% of Alberta Ministry Business Plans." That raises for me all kinds of concerns about: what does that really mean? Seventy-five percent of Alberta ministry business plans have aboriginal strategies and initiatives, but there's no sense of which departments or ministries are priorities, and it doesn't give me any sense of what those strategies might be or what those initiatives should be aimed at. Indeed, it doesn't give me a sense of how those other ministries will be held accountable by you, by your department, for fulfilling those aboriginal strategies and initiatives. What's to prevent a department from merely paying lip service to its aboriginal strategies and initiatives? So some specifics on that particular performance measure would be helpful, and I guess in some ways my words are words of caution to the minister that the way that's set up seems very, very open to interpretation and even to becoming meaningless frankly.

If we move on from the performance measures to goal 2, goal 2 is "to strengthen working relationships with aboriginal governments, communities and organizations," obviously an important goal. But when we go through to the performance measures – and I'm reading here from page 51 of the business plan – "aboriginal governments and organizations report satisfaction in their relations with [the department] and the Government of Alberta. The target for 2002-03 is 55%." Fifty-five percent strikes me as a fairly low, fairly modest target. If 55 percent of people are satisfied, that means that 45 percent may not be satisfied, and it just seems like a very low level at which to set the bar for the performance measures. If we said that 55 percent were to be very satisfied, well, that's certainly more ambitious, but 55 percent satisfaction seems pretty modest to me. Maybe it's a realistic starting place. Maybe you start there and work your way up. I'd be prepared to accept that in a brand-new ministry, but it does seem like a low target.

8:30

Moving through the performance measures under goal 3, "To assist in furthering accountable, self-administering, self-reliant, self-regulating Metis Settlement governments," the first one is: "Increase the percentage of Metis Settlement self-generated revenues by 2%." My questions are simply more for clarification here. I take it that what you're looking for here is that the self-generated revenues of the Metis settlements, as it says, will increase by 2 percent. What are those self-generated revenues? Are those revenues that result from levies or the equivalent of taxes, or are they revenues that might reflect a strengthening economy on the Metis settlements, or are they somehow earned revenues, or are they revenues that reflect a growing prosperity? Or might they be revenues that simply reflect

a local council that has jacked up the levy by 2 percent? I'm sure your department would have an answer to that. It's more a question of clarification for my own interest.

Goal 4, "To resolve land claims and other claims by aboriginal people concerning the province." Certainly I would urge the ministry to carry on in this fashion. I shared with the minister earlier in the week a newly released video which won a major award on the weekend as best documentary, a video I would recommend to everybody, called the *Honour of the Crown*. It follows the very long and slow process through which a land claim in northern Alberta was eventually settled.

To the credit of the government and to the credit of the department, Alberta in fact has one of the best track records, as I understand it, in the country on settling aboriginal land claims. So let's carry on with that. Let's try to settle these issues as quickly and as expeditiously as we can. It's in everybody's interest to do so. We can see what's happening in British Columbia right now when land claims are allowed to turn into a terrible, terrible mess, the profound bitterness and division that that causes in society and in fact even the problems it creates for the economic development of the society, because when land claims are not settled, our society's ability to work on that land is left up in the air.

I see that my time is starting to run out, and I want to address a couple of other issues. I haven't even touched on the Northern Alberta Development Council.

One of the profound and massive long-term issues for the whole province but I think somehow especially for northern Alberta is the issue of the health of the environment and the tradition of aboriginal people of living off the land and living in harmony with the environment. Our desire to help those cultures remain healthy raises the question: how is that going to be achieved? How do we sustain the health of our aboriginal communities, who still rely so much on fishing and trapping and hunting, when we are also looking at potentially massive industrial developments in northern Alberta with their huge impacts on the environment: on the water, on the land, on the forests, on the air. I know that the environment is clearly not the lead responsibility of this minister, but it's got to be one of profound concern not just from an economic view but from a cultural view.

I'm not aboriginal, but from watching situations, the role of the land in the culture of aboriginal people must be profound. The sense of place and even the sense of spirituality that connects people to their land is of fundamental importance I think to the health of the aboriginal communities and aboriginal society and aboriginal culture. There are risks to that land, for example, from the massive developments around Fort McMurray or indeed from the potential for huge pipeline developments. I'm wondering what the ministry's role and co-operation are with the Department of Environment and the Department of Sustainable Resource Development. How are those departments working together to make sure that the view of aboriginals is respected when it comes to the economic development of the north and the environmental impacts of that development?

I hope I'll have a chance to rise again with just a handful of other questions. So I will take my seat now and let somebody else carry away.

THE CHAIR: Hon. minister, do you want to answer, or would you like more questions?

MS CALAHASEN: I'd like more questions, if I can. We'll just keep going, and then I'll answer after two or three.

DR. PANNU: I rise to ask a few questions, but I first want to thank the minister and the chairman of the Northern Alberta Development

Council for their introductory remarks. It being a new department, there seems to be lots going on in terms of planning and setting out goals and strategies and objectives. I noticed that in the business plans there's quite a bit of detail in terms of planning and things that need to be done in terms of the aspirations of the department and efforts there at goal setting. So since the department is new, I think it's perhaps inappropriate to expect too much in terms of concrete information here yet.

With respect to the office of the ombudsman, when will this office be set up and running, Minister? It's a new office; you have sought some funding for its establishment. I'd be interested to hear from you when the office will in fact be created, when the appointment will be made, and when it will be off and running.

The second question related to that is the exact responsibility of the Ombudsman: is it to hear complaints from individuals or families who are part of the Metis settlements? What exactly will the Ombudsman be doing? Whom will it be hearing from? What will it be adjudicating? It would be helpful if we had some information on it.

I just want to also share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview that in terms of real dollars – that is, if you adjust for inflation – the budget seems to have shrunk from last year. It's a very new department. I would have thought that in the first few years of the development of the department's programs – staff development, program development – in fact one would have expected allocations of increased resources given the challenges that are set out in the business plan and the strategies and the goals. I am a bit concerned that the actual resources available from last year to this year will be smaller given the ambitious program set out here and also given the fact that the population both in northern Alberta in general and the population of First Nations and Metis portions of the Alberta population are growing faster than the rest of the population. So given the potential for increased needs of the population that you have responsibilities for, the decrease in the budget in terms of adjusted dollars is a matter of concern, and I hope that you will in your remarks explain how you are going to deal with this problem.

8:40

Northern Development, again, is sort of frozen in terms of the funds that it has, \$1.954 million, a huge area, a growing population, rapid growth, both industrial and other population movements, I guess, urbanization and all that, yet the budget is the same as last year. In effect, that will mean that fewer resources will be available for that purpose as well. So some question there.

Two other questions and I'll sit down. Maybe someone else will speak, or the minister will have some opportunity to address some of the questions already put to her.

Over the last year or so we have seen a reduction in children's services, the elimination of early childhood intervention programs targeting aboriginal families in particular. Is there room in this budget to make up for that shortfall resulting from the elimination of early intervention programs? The PDD board has also had to cut staff. Clients have been told to seek assistance through community agencies, but there are no agencies with expertise working with aboriginal clients. So, again, any comments on that from the minister as to how she plans to respond to the vacuum that has been created?

The family court worker program provided through native counseling services has been in place for some long time, and I guess that may also have suffered the same the fate as the other program that I mentioned.

The last one. The Ben Calf Robe Society has lost the funding it formerly received from the community lottery fund.

So there are growing needs here of the communities that the department is mandated to serve, and I would ask the minister to perhaps spend a few minutes commenting on the budget allocations and the growing needs indicated here. I will stop here. There's enough for the minister to talk about I guess.

MS CALAHASEN: I can go ahead and attempt to answer some of the questions that have been brought forward, and if I don't, just bring them up to my attention again. I've been trying to write madly, but it's pretty tough to write with all the questions that are coming forward. I'll do my best.

Regarding the drop of \$800,000 that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview was talking about and the fact that we have quite a population to deal with, an aboriginal population as well as the increasing needs of the population, just to give you information on that, the drop is actually \$848,000, the budget difference. It reflects actually the supplementary estimate that was requested to cover legal costs associated with the Peigan and Siksika Nation settlements. That's basically why we dropped there. That addressed that specific issue.

In terms of the funding and the needs that we're talking about to deal with the increasing needs of the group that we're dealing with, we did not go forward with any of the requests in this last budget. However, we have just been trying to figure out what it is we'll need to do as we implement the aboriginal policy framework and put that into place, and we don't know what the extent of those costs will be at this stage. We're just in the preliminary stages of being able to do that. As we begin to do that, as we go forward, we'll start to see what we'll need. So that's one of the areas of concern, but I thank you for your supportive comments in terms of getting more money to be able to implement that. Thank you.

Regarding the northern Alberta environment issue actually we've been working with the aboriginal people and the elders to blend the aboriginal cultural and traditional practices and to make sure that industry also becomes part of that so that they can begin to look at environmental practices that are conducive to the people within those areas. So we've been trying to get that going. As well, we've been talking about pulling together traditional practices and how those traditional practices affect some of the things that we have to do on a consultation process. The consultation processes are the ones that we've been working on with industry as well as First Nations and Metis people to see how we can ensure that those that blend can happen in that respect. So we're trying to make sure that it occurs in that way.

Regarding the Metis settlements' self-generated revenue, it's actually made up of industry tax levies, user fees, charges, revenue under comanagement agreements, and surface rights that are there. So that's basically what we've been dealing with in that respect.

You also asked a question regarding the ombudsmen, and I know that the leader of the third party also asked a question. This is an important one. I was just going through my information as we were going through it, because we've been working on this for a while. You asked a lot of questions relative to what was going to happen, who was going to be there. So just to give you an idea of what happened, this was first raised actually in a report on the mandate of the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal that was chaired by my colleague the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. He did a report initially, and that report recommended that there needs to be an impartial, independent office to investigate complaints by settlement members of unfair treatment and conflicts of interest on the part of settlement councillors. That was the whole reason why it was done.

With the other component, though, there was a three-member panel made up of settlement people that went out as well to find out what the people actually wanted to see happen. They came back saying very strongly that they would like to see an ombudsman of some sort be established.

As you know, this is part of going toward a greater transparency and accountability, which the settlements would like to see happen, and we would like to see them go in that direction. In addition, as agreed in 1997, the transition commission came to an end at the end of March. That was an agreement in 1997. The dissolution of that commission created the need and provided the opportunity to take a new approach to how investigations will be carried out, because that has to be part and parcel of whatever we do with the settlements. It means, in my view, that settlements will agree to take the necessary actions to integrate the idea of an ombudsman and for their own governing structures. We haven't decided in terms of who that will be at this stage. We will be advertising to make sure that we get a person who could fit in there.

Actually, the difference between the provincial Ombudsman and what we're trying to do is that the provincial Ombudsman can only look into complaints regarding actions of the provincial government. What we're saying for our ombudsman in the budget is based on the historic costs of both the former Metis Settlements Transition Commission and the department of formal and informal investigations. So the question that the member of the third party is asking deals with those specific kinds of things.

The land registry is established – that was from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview – by the Metis Settlements Act. Previously the budget for the land registry was included in the transition commission. I don't know if you knew that, but that's where it was. When reviewing the land registry budget, it was noted that it had been increased for several years, so we sort of factored in the need to examine the operation and the technological requirements of the registry so that we could ensure that we were dealing with that.

There were a number of other questions that you asked, and I'm going to see if I can find my written stuff here. You asked about some of the goals and performance measures. I'm going to see if I can attempt to answer some of that.

Goal 1. The specifics can be found actually in part of the aboriginal policy initiative, which is in the government's business plan. If you look in the business plan, you'll see the API in there. There are specific targets that are reported on in *Measuring Up* as well, and you probably have read that because I've heard you quote that a few times.

We do not set the targets and strategies for other departments in our business plan. However, we work with all the ministries to support the development of effective strategies. As well, I examine every single department that impacts my area and go through the department budget plan process so that I can make sure that that's happening as well. As you can see, the business plans of other ministries that came before the House also indicated some of the areas where they put forward what they would like to see as strategies with Aboriginal Affairs. If you look closely at some of the ministries, Human Resources and Employment as an example, you will see in there that they're working on skills development and a number of other areas with projects specific to Aboriginal Affairs. If you look at Environment, you'll see that they're working with water strategy and making sure that the Aboriginal Affairs component is involved. If you look at Justice, you'll see that there are a lot of different initiatives and strategies within that budget. If you look at Solicitor General, you'll also see some of the areas where we're trying to work together to make sure that we address the issues under

the APF and the API to see how those strategies can meet their goals within the government of Alberta.

8:50

So we have a number of strategies that we're working with and a number of ways to be able to do that. As well, we have the API, where my deputy is one of the ministers who co-chairs and co-leads that initiative so that we can make sure that it continues to be flowing throughout all the ministries as we work forward in that respect.

That's just goal 1. You also had a number of other questions on the other goals, and I couldn't get them all. So what I will do is I'll try to see if my staff have any of the information, and we'll certainly give it to you or have it in writing. But we'll continue on, if that's okay.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few general comments that I would like the minister to respond to, if she can, either today or at a later date. There's no doubt that this minister takes a great interest in this ministry and does the best with the resources available to her, but it is still very evident to all of us by the statistics we see that aboriginal communities are grossly overrepresented in some of the worst possible kinds of areas; for instance, in our justice system. So if she could comment briefly for us on the work that she's doing with the Justice minister and exactly how support from her ministry will try to reduce the overrepresentation we have of aboriginal populations in our detention centres throughout this province.

Along the same vein, I would like her to comment on the actual outcomes that we're starting to see in this population in terms of school graduations, postgraduate education, and the kinds of real benchmarks that we would generally measure success by but where we have a population that doesn't seem to benefit from the same kinds of support that the rest of Albertans do. So if she could comment on that.

There's also a great deal of discussion and talk these days about us importing labour from outside of Alberta, particularly skilled labour, because there aren't enough people to fill the jobs. Yet we have the population, Mr. Chairman, and a great percentage of that population are people from the aboriginal community, who for some reason we can't seem to get trained and well placed. So I wonder if she could comment on that as well.

Recently we've been hearing in constituencies across this province a bit of a backlash against aboriginal communities and members in terms of changes in tax policy and negotiations that are going on for treaty settlements. How would the minister suggest that we handle those concerns when they come to our constituencies? Do they have information available to us to use so that we can make valuable and correct presentations to people who are upset about some of the changes that are happening in our province at this time?

So, Mr. Chairman, if she could comment in those few areas for me, I think it would benefit all the members in this Assembly.

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

DR. TAFT: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. We'll follow up on my earlier comments and the comments of my colleagues with a number of other questions. I appreciate the minister's responses so far, and I'm sure she will continue responding either verbally or in writing.

I'm looking at this moment at goal 3, which is on page 51 of the business plan. The goal, as I read earlier in the evening, is "to assist

in furthering accountable, self-administering, self-reliant, self-regulating Metis Settlement governments." Under the strategies one of the three strategies is to "encourage Settlement self-reliance through the terms of Provincial/Settlement funding arrangements and the implementation of economic viability strategies." It's that last clause that really catches my attention tonight, the clause that says "the implementation of economic viability strategies." It raises the whole issue around the economic development of Metis settlements or of areas where there are large aboriginal populations.

How does the minister foresee this economic development occurring? What kind of economic development is going to be encouraged? Indeed, for that matter, what makes a settlement economically viable? I suppose a settlement could be economically viable and a perfectly happy community at a fairly low standard of living by the measures of, say, a typical Edmontonian. You might have a settlement that's viable on the basis of trapping and hunting and fishing and agriculture and is a perfectly healthy community. Is that sort of economic viability acceptable in the department? How would that sort of economic viability fit into the plans?

How does economic viability and cultural viability interrelate in the minister's plans? Do we want to see economic development like strip malls and big-box stores, which would potentially have a devastating impact on the culture of Metis settlements, or are we looking for something different? There's been a lot of discussion in the media in the last many months over casinos on Indian reserves. Well, I know that Indian reserves aren't specifically in question here, but gambling as a form of economic development surely is a concern for this government and an interest of this government. Are we looking at economic viability being satisfied if there were to be a casino on every Metis settlement, for example? Are we looking at some other form of economic development? I know that's a very difficult issue for our society and for this government and for all of us, but it's also one of huge importance, because the strength of the economy and the nature of the economy affects so many other things.

We could in fact get more specific, and I'm now looking at some other notes I've got relating to that particular goal. We could ask specific questions on this budget right now: what economic viability strategies specifically will be implemented this coming year on Metis settlements? What were implemented last year? How are they coming along? How are those viability strategies developed? Who develops them? How do they encourage self-reliance and self-governance?

I'd like to now turn my attention to the question of urban aboriginals, urban aboriginals of all types: Metis or status Indians or nonstatus Indians, all of them, every one. This is, I'm sure, an area of great concern and priority for the minister and the department. I'm not sure that it's clearly reflected and singled out as a concern in the budget here, but if it is, I'd appreciate having my attention drawn to it.

9:00

There are many concerns that all of us would have with the lives of urban aboriginals: unemployment rates, health levels, suicide rates, education levels, poverty levels. Those are all areas of real concern, and I commend the mission, I believe it is, of the department, which is to have Alberta's aboriginal population at a level of wellness equivalent to the rest of the population. I think that's a good idea. We have a long way to go to achieve that. So my question is: how are we proceeding in achieving that in terms of our urban aboriginals?

One of the fundamental questions around that, first of all, is: what population projections do we have for our urban aboriginal and

indeed all our aboriginal people in Alberta? What growth rates are we looking at in the population of aboriginals in different regions of Alberta? Do we have that for Edmonton and for Calgary and for northern and central and southern areas? What do those projections tell us about, for example, the number of students who will be needing to be accommodated by the school systems in different regions of the province? I've read some figures suggesting that the percentage of students in Edmonton public schools 10 or 15 years from now who are aboriginal will be very high. What are we doing to plan for that? Do we have the baseline data, and what are we doing to plan for that? It would be really helpful and really interesting to me if the minister could provide population projections for aboriginals, however that's defined, for different regions of the province.

There are also health issues that I want to touch on, because I'm also health critic here. One in particular comes to my mind and has been brought to my mind by others, and that's the very profound concern over fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect. These are very, very difficult health problems, entirely preventable. I know they do get some attention from the provincial government, from some of the regional health authorities, but they are so important and, as I said earlier, so tragic because they are entirely preventable. I would like to see them get a very high priority from this government and from this department. What are we doing as a government to prevent or at least reduce the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect? What percentage of aboriginal babies are born with these conditions now, and what targets do we have for that in the future?

There are, of course, other special needs presented by urban aboriginals, needs, as I mentioned earlier, around education and poverty and various health problems, whether that's diabetes or alcoholism or other problems. What measures are we seeing here or what efforts are we seeing being taken here by the department in those particular areas?

Finally, I'll shift my attention a bit to the comments from the chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council and to the activities of that council. Goodness, the Northern Alberta Development Council has been with us for decades. I'm not sure when it was formed, but it was a long time ago. I've suddenly found myself wondering: why don't we have a southern Alberta development council as well? The northern half of the province is booming in many areas; not everywhere, but certainly major centres like Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie are flourishing. There are new roads being built. There are all kinds of new developments in the northern half of the province, and I'm sure that the Northern Alberta Development Council is responsible for any number of those, has certainly contributed to them. I'm wondering if we should be considering an equivalent body for southern Alberta, which seems to be chronically functioning at, shall we say, a very flat economic level. Lethbridge and Medicine Hat aren't experiencing the booms of northern Alberta. Anyway, that's certainly not for the Member for Peace River to directly address tonight.

He did in his comments mention the northern highways strategy. Some information on the costs and benefits and scheduling and so on of that would be of help here. The development of the highway up to, say, the Grande Prairie district is going along great guns. What other northern highways are we going to be seeing developed? Are we going to be seeing the opening of more east/west transportation corridors across northern Alberta? Do we even want that? Maybe we're better off leaving some parts of this province more or less in their wilderness forms.

He also mentioned the bursary program for students, and certainly that's an issue for all northern students, whether they're aboriginal

or not. If there are documents or details on those bursary programs, I'd be interested in having a look at them. I would also be interested in what measures are being taken by the minister to encourage greater education among the aboriginal population at all levels, whether that's in schools or at postsecondary levels. So education for northern Albertans is an interest for me.

Finally – and I suppose this is a bit of a philosophical question for the chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council – he mentioned, I think, that two-thirds of the province is underdeveloped. As I watch our province grow and, quote, develop, I find myself wondering: what does it really mean to be developed or to be underdeveloped? When he looks at two-thirds of Alberta being underdeveloped, what does the chairman mean? When is something underdeveloped and when is it developed, and is it possible for us actually to overdevelop something? Are we looking at that being a risk in our major urban centres? Do we want Edmonton and Calgary to be cities of 2 million or 3 million? By the same token, do we want Peace River to be a city of 100,000 people in 25 years, or are we happy for it to remain at the level it's at?

MR. BONNER: Our mountain parks.

DR. TAFT: Yeah. What happens to our mountain parks? What happens to the wilderness areas of our province, that we all cherish and really take for granted, when we look at development? So that's a bit of a philosophical note to end on. Maybe there's no real response from either the chairman or the minister on that, but I think it's a topic worth some serious consideration.

Actually I have one other question, just going through my notes, which has to do with financial assistance to students from northern Alberta specifically aimed at health care. Are we looking at students from northern Alberta who are studying in fields of health care being encouraged to return to their areas, or maybe are we looking at students from other parts of the province getting assistance with practicum placements in northern settlements or towns so that they can not only develop their own skills and contribute themselves but also improve the health of our northern communities? Is there assistance for that sort of practicum placement for students in northern Alberta?

Thanks very much.

THE CHAIR: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few comments and questions this evening for the minister. To start off with, I'd certainly like to congratulate the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and her department shortly after their first anniversary. I'd also like to thank the chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council for his comments earlier tonight and the staff of the department for being here to assist on our many questions.

Now, then, earlier speakers have outlined a number of concerns, have asked a number of questions, and certainly one of the major areas is the level of funding of this particular department, particularly in regard to the issue of inflation, which continues to eat away at all budgets if you're not inflation-proofed, and as well the population growth of the aboriginal community. We have certainly seen a tremendous economic growth in northern Alberta, and I don't think it matters whether you talk to members of the aboriginal community or if you talk to other members of northern communities. They have a great concern with the tremendous amount of resource revenue that is flowing out of the north and the amount that's being

returned. I would think that the minister should use that piece of information to look for an increase in her budget next year.

9:10

As well, I would like to first of all look here at the vision as you have stated it for the department, and it is

an Alberta where self-reliant Aboriginal people and Northern Albertans are recognized as leading contributors to and participants in the Alberta Advantage which includes understanding of and respect for Aboriginal cultures.

I think that's a statement that is so very, very correct. I think it was well chosen, and it is certainly a vision that all Albertans wish you every success in.

In looking at this, I want to first of all look at goal 6, which is on page 54 of the business plan. Goal 6, I see, first of all – and the Member for Edmonton-Riverview did touch on this – is to “increase students’ financial capacity to access post-secondary education through provision of bursaries or other assistance.” I would like to make some comments on this. First of all, I've had discussions with the dean of education at the University of Saskatchewan, and they have a tremendous aboriginal program. I think that here in Alberta we are trying to certainly bring our departments up to that speed. I would like to ask the minister what has been done as far as her department or her ministry. Has she become involved in discussions with the University of Alberta and looked at the model that we currently have at the University of Saskatchewan for the aboriginal education program?

Now, as well I have a certain percentage of aboriginals in my constituency, and I had a call from one of them, a young single mother, who had made every effort after a failed marriage to go back to school. Very difficult with a young child, but she got back to school. She had perfect attendance. She got into what I guess we would call a relatively lower level of program, got very excited about learning, and did extremely well, so she decided that she would like to continue with a harder program. The funding that was available to her was for the third and fourth years of this program, yet to get her started and get her involved in the new program, there was very little funding. What I would like to suggest is that the minister look at certainly not only the funding for students who are in their final years of a program but also look at funding for those students who have proven that they are committed to learning, that have indicated they have attained some success and that they certainly would be good candidates to support.

I look at core business 4, to “promote and facilitate the economic and social development of aboriginal and northern communities.” Goal 1 there is “to increase skill levels of aboriginal and northern Albertans.” The strategy here, 1.1, is to “increase students’ financial capacity to access post-secondary education through provision of bursaries or other assistance.” Now, when I look at the key performance measure, which is to “provide bursaries to students in Northern health practicum placements,” and I see that we have 50 bursaries, my question here is: are 50 bursaries enough? Do these fulfill the number of requests or applications, and if they don't, what would we have to do to get more bursaries available? Certainly that would be a question there.

I think we all realize that when students from any small community have to leave to attend a postsecondary institute or whatever, again this is very, very difficult, and I'd like to know what supports the ministry has in place for these students who do leave their small communities and have to travel to some urban centre to continue their education. It would seem to me that this would be critical, to offer that support for students who certainly could be overwhelmed, as many students are that come from small towns or small communities when they do enter larger urban areas.

Now, one other area I would like to talk about is on the health of our aboriginals. Certainly one of the areas that's come to light in discussions with people that are involved with diabetes research here in the province as well as people who are involved in the nephrology unit, the kidney dialysis unit, over at the University hospital is that there seems to be a higher incidence of diabetes amongst our aboriginal population. Of course, one of the complications of diabetes is kidney failure, and approximately 50 percent of the population that are on kidney dialysis are diabetics. So if in fact these numbers do bear out, what is the ministry doing first of all to educate the aboriginal people about diabetes, whether it be through a cross-ministry strategy or whatever? What are we doing to reduce the incidence of diabetes, and do you have any targets there?

So those are a few questions I had, and I thank you very much for the opportunity to ask those this evening.

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

9:20

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask a few questions of the minister with respect to certain program expenditures. One that really caught my eye is in the volume on business plans, and it's page 56. The ministry program expenditures indicate first of all that of the 30 million or so dollars in the department's budget, a good three-fifths, or 60 percent, goes towards programs related to the Metis settlements, and of the remaining 40 percent about, I guess, 35 percent goes for the First Nations aboriginal affairs. My question is specific to the Metis settlements legislation. Of the \$18 million plus that is allocated to the Metis services portion of the programs, why is more than half, \$10 million, allocated to legislation? What's that legislation about? Why is it so expensive to spend money on it? This is the only department where I find money allocated to legislation, so I'm curious.

This raises the question of: how many Metis settlements are there in the province? Could the minister give me an idea of the number of Metis settlements we have in the province for which these programs and expenditures are presented here and the Metis population and the First Nations population? In terms of the relative allocation of resources under your ministry to these two main groups or subpopulations, the First Nations and the Metis, the expenditures I guess need to be judged also relative to the numbers within each category that are served by the ministry.

So these are very simple, straightforward questions: the number of Metis settlements and the number of people in the Metis subgroup or population and the First Nations. The last one: what's the \$10 million on legislation about?

THE CHAIR: The hon. minister.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There were a few questions I got after that you were asking initially, so I'll start with those, and then I'll answer the subsequent questions you've asked, if that's okay. My colleague the chair of NADC will also answer some questions that were directed to him on northern issues.

There were some questions on the ombudsman which I didn't get, and I want to talk about those. I indicated that we haven't had anybody yet, but we're going to advertise shortly. We also anticipate that a selection will be made by the end of June, and we're trying to push it as quickly as we can. A review panel of government and settlement representatives will interview candidates and make a recommendation to myself, so we'll go through that process and make sure that it's done. The ombudsman will hear complaints from settlement residents regarding the decisions and conduct of

settlement councils under administrators, as I indicated earlier. The ombudsman will not be responsible for taking corrective action. That will be the responsibility of the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal for settlement councils or myself. So we've got those answered. I know those were questions that you had asked.

You had also asked why my department's budget did not increase this year. It's a new department. We actually have been trying to work with other departments. We're a facilitating group. What we want to do is make sure that we deal with the various departments to work on that, and as a facilitating group we'll be able to pull it all together. As I indicated earlier as well, we'll try to make sure that we continue to assess what it is we're going to need in the future, and we'll continue to work on the implementation of the aboriginal policy framework and see how we can do that. So that will be in future budgets you will see coming forward.

There were a number of questions also from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. With respect to the performance measure under goal 2, you had asked that question. I agree that the satisfaction measure is set at a beginning level. We call it a beginning level. There are many factors that make up satisfaction with government programs, as you probably will recognize. There's also confusion as to whether government is responsible for different programs, whether it's federal or provincial. So our government's efforts are occasionally confused with federal programs. Perhaps this explains the beginning level of satisfaction that we're trying to get at, but we certainly will take any recommendations that you have to see what can be done in that respect.

My colleague will deal with the northern issues. I'll go forward on Edmonton-Riverview.

You talked about economic viability for the Metis settlements. It's being decided by the settlements. Actually, in the year 2000 the Metis settlements undertook a survey to determine just what those issues were near and dear to them. They had a conference, and I attended that conference. The settlement members know what they want at this stage, and they've indicated it in that economic viability strategy. As a matter of fact, strip malls aren't really on the list, but they certainly have a number of other things. They've talked about bison farms, looking at agriculture, looking at oil and gas. Some of them do have oil and gas possibilities. Some have forestry. So they're looking at a whole variety of ways that they can begin to get money in and to be able to look at how they can be economically viable. That's a task that they've been taking on themselves, trying to figure out how they can do that, and we've been waiting for that to see how it could all come together. We have to continue to work in that respect and continue to see what can be done.

You asked about how we are doing regarding economic development. Well, we've been working with aboriginal communities and industries to look at ways to increase aboriginal jobs, aboriginal businesses, and aboriginal partnerships with industry. As a matter of fact, I carry around my list, and it's Current and Recently Completed Aboriginal, Private Sector, and/or Government Partnerships. I just want to read them to you, because this is really important. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the Athabasca Tribal Council/industry working group I talked about earlier in my speech. That's one that we've been working on. Another one that we've been working on, that I said in my speech, is the Little Red River Cree/Tallcree First Nations pilot project. The Dene Tha' First Nations consultation pilot project along with Alberta Energy and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers are doing the traditional use study. Of course, there's the Calling Lake economic development interagency project, which we've been working on.

The other ones are really good success stories as well. Alberta

Human Resources and Employment has been a major player. Blackstar Learning Centre, Oteenow Treaty 6 and Treaty 8, the Metis Nation of Alberta Association, Alberta Learning, and Alberta Human Resources and Employment are part of a skills for work contract designed to provide participants with the prequalifications for apprenticeship programs. That's just one example. Lethbridge aboriginal employment centre's partnerships contract has been developed with HRDC, MNAA, Treaty 7, and Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Another one is the Edmonton urban aboriginal initiative committee, and I want to talk about that because there were some specific questions relative to that, and I'll go back to that, the same with the Calgary urban aboriginal initiative committee. We've got two of those that are sort of specific to the aboriginal component. We also have human resources and petroleum land administrator training – the Stoney tribal administration and Suncor, Olympia Energy, and Utilicorp. The Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Treaty 7, and MNA zone 3 labour market development units project involving SAIT and Bow Valley College. The First Nations resource training project, the Precision Drilling project, which involved four First Nations – Kehewin, Heart Lake, Frog Lake, and Cold Lake – industry; the federal government, INAC; AHRE; and the Petroleum Industry Training Service, otherwise known as PITS. Actually, AHRE developed a joint oil/gas training and employment demonstration project at Gift Lake with PITS and Edge Petroleum.

We've got quite a lot of them, and I don't want to go through them, but I can certainly provide that information to you if you would like to see that. I think it's very important to note that in working with the aboriginal community and with industry, we can come out with partnerships that are really conducive to making sure the economic initiatives can occur in that respect.

The other one I just want to talk about, questions that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was bringing up, the overrepresentation in the justice system. We see that, and we've been trying to work with Justice to see how we can bring those numbers down. We've also been doing a number of things on an earlier basis, so it's through the capacity-building strategy to develop the healthy communities, which is something that I hear you talk about on a continual basis, how we can do that. Any suggestions that you have I'm willing to take and see how we can implement that.

The focus on learning skills/training with aboriginal youth that will be trained and employable. That's where, when you're talking about our youth, we have the fastest growing population but we've also the largest population under the age of 19. So we have that whole issue of making sure that we continue to get the kids educated and get them trained somehow along the way to be able to make sure they take advantage of what's happening in the province of Alberta.

Justice also co-chairs the aboriginal policy initiative, and we're trying to look at many different things for crime prevention. We've got a number of initiatives that are occurring, but we can certainly take on as much as we can, as long as you are willing to give us more information as to how we can do that as well. We're always looking for suggestions and always looking for answers. As you know, that's a tough one, and we've been doing everything we can in that respect.

9:30

The Benoit backlash that you were talking about: unfortunately, because it is a matter before the courts and it's active litigation, we can't discuss that. However, I think it would be important that if you have questions like that, you refer them to the Minister of Justice or to myself. We can give you the kind of answer that will be helpful to you if you have to answer some of those questions. Also, I would

advise that this case is legal; it is not, as I would say some have described it, racial. So that's an important one.

I want to talk about urban aboriginal issues. As you know, just to give you a perspective on aboriginal populations, even though we're only 6 percent of Alberta's population – and that's part of me – 63 percent reside on reserve, 33 percent off reserve, and 3.3 percent on Crown land. Just as an example, we have 33,235 who live in Edmonton. All the people who are in Edmonton probably have a smattering of that. In Calgary we've got 22,390 that are identified. Some of them are not identified, so we know that it'll probably be a little bit more in terms of that. So when we're talking about the aboriginal population and urban aboriginal initiatives, we have to be able to look at some of the possibilities of what we want to do with them.

We've been working on a number of areas in the urban aboriginal initiative that I think are so important. I had some information here on the urban aboriginal initiative. It's very, very key. I don't know if you know that the Edmonton urban aboriginal initiative committee exists, but it exists here in Edmonton, a very good group, and they support the aboriginal liaison and career counseling project at Amiskwaciy Academy. As you know, there's that first aboriginal high school that just opened the other day, and it was just awesome to go to. I was there the other night. They're working in conjunction with the Oteenow Training and Employment Society. So that's a really good committee that's been working together.

In Calgary HR and E is collaborating with the MNA and Treaty 7 in the development and implementation of a skills training program leading to an apprenticeable trade. So we've got a number of areas that I think are really important when we're talking about urban aboriginals and trying to figure out what else we can do in capacity building, as I indicated. The same with Alberta Learning.

We have some more questions that I got from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. FAS is a big issue, as we know. We've been working with Children's Services as well as through the cross-government initiative under children's initiatives, and we've been involved in that and figuring out what we can do. We've been working with the federal government as well. As you know, we need an educational component attached to that as well, because it's preventable. How do we educate people to make sure that they know that this is preventable? So we've been working with the children's services initiative to make sure that we are on that group, to make sure that we continue to address the issue of the aboriginal community in that context.

There was also aboriginal diabetes from the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. You were talking about aboriginal diabetes. It is becoming an epidemic within the aboriginal community. Even younger people now are getting the disease. We've been working with Alberta Health to try to figure out what we can do to deal with the issue, and in talking with my colleague from Alberta Health, he's got an aboriginal health strategy that can be accessed through dealing with some of these more prominent cases of problems that we're experiencing at the local level.

Diabetes, as you know, probably stems from the change in diet and a number of other things, so we have to be able to educate the people on the dietary situation as well as how we deal with the immediate situation. It's an interesting one in my view, because I see that in my own area. I see people now starting to get sicker and sicker. It's a real issue that I have relative to my people in my own constituency. I know that Alberta Health is trying to make sure they do a number of initiatives to address this. Some of the programs that I think have been innovative are with the Capital health region. They've done a number of things dealing with diet as well as dealing

with aboriginal staff. So we've got a number of things that are occurring, but we still have a long way to go.

I think I'll leave some room for my colleague the chair of NADC to respond to some of the concerns on northern Alberta.

THE CHAIR: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's going to be a little bit confusing following the order of the questions. I was picking from the questions those things that might more directly relate to the Northern Alberta Development Council as compared to the responses that the minister has already given you.

I do want to acknowledge several of the members who expressed sentiments that the budget for northern development and, I'm assuming, for the entire ministry was rather meagre. I'd be more than pleased to take those sentiments to our next budget meeting with the minister, to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. I'm sure we can use all the help we can get to encourage them to open the purse strings a little bit. The north isn't a greedy bunch, but we continually have to press for more equity, and in a sense that's a good deal of what the Northern Alberta Development Council is all about.

But on the serious side, you know that when we're strapped for cash – a lot of our work is partnerships with industry – this means that we have to lean on them a little heavier for more involvement in things like skills development training, our bursary funding – there are partnerships there – roads development, and the like. So we're fairly innovative in that way as well.

The Member for Edmonton-Riverview made references to the balance between economic development and environmental protection. This is a major issue. I mean, we talk about it a lot, but as a northern resident myself I see this not as an either/or matter. There has to be a balance. There has to be not only respect for the environment, but you also alluded to a respect for traditional values for people that have been there for generations and generations.

The northern two-thirds of the province is significantly underdeveloped. You asked a question about that, and I'll get to that in a moment. There's lots of room for growth, but with that growth we have to put a key pressure on sensitivity for the environment. This has to be high on the priority list. Natural resource extraction by its very nature is viewed as creating environmental problems. You see forests harvested, and depending on where you look, if you follow the area where this has happened immediately the spring after a winter harvest, the media sometimes sensationalizes that into the raping and pillaging of nature. We would like to see some of the people that make those comments, however, come back in a few years when reforestation starts to take place, you know, the stringent requirements to make sure that forestry harvesting, for example, is sustainable.

As strange as it might sound, many of our industry players recognize this problem and do take a proactive position on ecosystem management. Sometimes it's not just because they want to do it, but they know that if they don't act positively, either the provincial government or the federal government or both are going to force them to do it. If you're out front doing the right things, it's probably going to be in your best stead. I think the vast majority of our industry players are quite responsible.

A lot of times I read stories and articles written by people who are considerably removed from our area about the environmental issues, and the only thing I can say is that it's great to criticize from a distance when you've never been there, but I truly would invite some of those folks to come out and see for themselves what actually happens. As I say, we as residents certainly wouldn't put up

with it, and I would like to see some of the armchair critics come out and be as concerned as we ourselves are.

9:40

Virtually all of our major development plans do include environmental concerns. They have to be built into the development plans, and probably the hoops that the developers have to go through are significantly the environmental ones. Things like financing and everything else they have to go through probably are minor in comparison.

Both the members from Edmonton-Ellerslie and Edmonton-Glenarry asked about job opportunities for our growing aboriginal population. The minister did make reference to a number of specific programs that are available for the aboriginal community itself, but NADC focuses heavily on education and training and skills development. Probably the specific NADC programs are for all our residents, but aboriginal communities by virtue of where they predominantly are located could be major beneficiaries. You know, we encourage and even go so far as to pressure our major employers to make a special effort to train and employ aboriginal people. It's not an overnight process because many of these new jobs have high technical skill requirements, and that leads to certainly some cultural challenges. First of all, a lot of the young people, the people who are looking for employment, likely have to leave their home communities to go where the jobs are. Unfortunately, they're probably not as close to the traditional communities as they would like to be.

Likewise, there's kind of a cultural challenge in having to go to postsecondary education. One of our programs, the Northern Links program, gives young people from small communities the opportunity to go out and see firsthand what the opportunities and the challenges are in postsecondary institutions, whether they're colleges or universities. A lot of these young people have never been beyond a small high school, and to go someplace where there are several hundreds of enrolled students or even several thousands can be a pretty intimidating experience. It's not just like probably most of us in here, even if we're some distance from where the universities are, saying: okay, we're going to send our kids off to university and college. The intimidation they face might be nothing compared to some from very tiny communities. So it's more than just training and education. It's an entire cultural development.

I think that one of the challenges we face is maybe making more traditional kinds of jobs available, you know, the kinds of things that they already have a built-in aptitude and skill for. We shouldn't necessarily be assuming that they should adapt to our kinds of work. Maybe we should be looking at making some of the kinds of work that they would be interested in, and that also means partnering with those communities. They could be partnering with some of the industries, whether it's forestry, you know, many of those things that might even give them an advantage. Those are some things that we have to look at.

The Member for Edmonton-Riverview asked about the reason for NADC. Yes, you're right; it's been around for a long time. Officially in its present state it goes back to 1975 but even almost 10 years before that in a probably significantly different version.

You also commented on: should there be a southern development council? I'm hoping that was a rhetorical question, because I think we know that the southern part of the province is quite well developed, and if you read about some of the things that are going on these days, I mean, there's concern about, say, a shortage of water. There's also concern about highly developed intensive livestock operations. They call them something different now. We look around and say: "Well, you know, we have quite ample supplies of water. We have lots of open spaces. We certainly could have room

for more ranching and farming opportunities and things like that. Maybe look a little further north.”

But having said that, the Northern Alberta Development Council covers an area of two-thirds of the entire province if you go about a hundred kilometres north of Edmonton where the boundary starts and from there on, and there are maps that show this. As a matter of fact, we fairly proudly display on a pin that we have the size of this. That same area only has about 10 percent of the population of the province, yet over half of the province’s GDP comes from there, you know, in terms of resource extraction, farming, and whatever else. So I think that if you put the numbers together, it doesn’t really take rocket science to suggest that there is lots of room for development.

You also mentioned about our workforce. I think a couple of the members touched on this. The training component – and I think this probably overlaps into the bursary question as well. Some might say: do you really need a bursary program to get young people from the north to get their training and come back? I suppose there are a number of answers to that, but I’m going to tell you from personal experience, you know, that my own kids, when they went off to – well, they had to come to Edmonton for university. But what happens with all the best intentions: the first year or two they are fully intent on coming back home to work, but after they’ve lived in the city for maybe four years, they become kind of acclimatized or citified, and some of the things that they get used to make it more difficult to get them back. So, yes, it needs some kind of an incentive, especially in the areas of health care professionals and trades, things like that. We need to make sure that those opportunities do exist. We don’t want our workforce to be people who are two or three days a week transients. We want them to be permanent residents of our community, to be as proud of it as we are, and the minister is telling me to shut up and sit down because our time is up.

One last comment on the northern highway strategy. The document is going to be distributed fairly shortly, and there’ll be a lot of information in there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, just before we go to the question, may we revert to Introduction of Guests?

THE CHAIR: May we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MS CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce a good friend of Albertans and certainly to those of us in the Official Opposition. We are joined tonight by Kim Cassady. I would ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2002-03**

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development *(continued)*

THE CHAIR: After considering the business plans and proposed estimates for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, you’re ready for the vote?

Agreed to:

Operating Expense	\$20,182,000
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THE CHAIR: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

9:50

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report the estimates of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, for the following department.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: operating expense, \$20,182,000.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 25

Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2002

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure tonight to move Bill 25 for second reading. Bill 25 is the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2002.

Members having had the opportunity to peruse the bill since first reading will note that most of the substance of Bill 25 provides for the alignment of our provincial corporate tax and definitions and operation with federal legislation in the same manner.

There are a few other circumstances in the bill which are available for members to review, but for the most part this is a pretty straightforward although very technical bill. I think that for members having had the opportunity to review it since first reading, I would commend it to their attention, and we can deal with the details of the specific provisions which members might want to address when we get to committee.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The key highlight that the Government House Leader failed to outline was that this bill is a tax reduction for small businesses, which is good news. The bad news is that it’s a slower pace than planned or promised. So I think that’s quite interesting in itself.

We, Mr. Speaker, support affordable tax relief in order to enhance Alberta’s attractiveness to business investment, and in fact it’s been a policy of ours for many years, since I believe 1994, that there be

a reduction in the small business tax rate. During the late part of '93 and '94 we did a jobs, jobs, jobs policy paper that we took around the province and got feedback on and put forward proposals, and one of those was to lower the tax rate. But it took this government over six years to act on our recommendation, and now they're further delaying the implementation by one year. The benefits in terms of employment and investment income that could have accrued over that year had the cuts proceeded as planned would have been greater than what we'll see. We haven't seen where the retained tax revenue will be spent since it's being withheld from businesses at this time, so this is interesting in itself.

This is another good example of a good idea by the Liberal opposition that this government has ultimately gotten around to and accepted. So for that, Mr. Speaker, we thank the government, and we will support this bill at second reading.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Revenue to close debate.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having heard the overwhelming support, I've learned to quit before you get too far behind. So thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIR: I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order, please.

Bill 10
Public Works Amendment Act, 2002

THE CHAIR: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and make a few brief comments on Bill 10, Public Works Amendment Act, 2002, at committee stage. I think this is certainly a bill that could be described as housekeeping legislation. We in the Official Opposition were very happy to see that there was extensive consultation involved in this bill, not only that there was extensive consultation but there was some compromise involved between the various stakeholders. Certainly there is some work to be done, but what this legislation will do is create harmony between the Builders' Lien Act and the Public Works Act, and it will provide a certain degree of clarity and consistency between the two pieces of legislation.

Well, I would like to point out just a few areas here. I see that section 8 has been amended. The major point is that since 1980 the contract law principles have been developed based on various court decisions so that the lowest bid does not necessarily have to be taken. Other bids can be taken, and the criteria for these include fairness, good faith, past performance of contractors, et cetera. What this amendment will do is harmonize this legislation with other public-sector agencies and place the final responsibility with the minister. So we certainly are in agreement with that particular amendment.

10:00

Now, then, another concern that the industry had was certainly the protection under the Public Works Act of all first and subsequent

levels of subcontractors. Certainly with the proposed changes it is guaranteed now that this will extend to all layers of contractors involved.

[Mr. Klapstein in the chair]

In looking at the amendment of 45 days, this used be 90 days for a contract with the minister of transportation and utilities. What we are seeing here now in the amendments is that this increases the period to 45 days to be consistent with the time that is provided for registering a lien under the Builders' Lien Act, and certainly some of the industry had questions as to whether 45 days was enough time.

Now, then, another amendment that we want to look at is 1(b). Certainly we welcome this particular amendment and particularly with this department, because we have seen where this has been a single ministry and has also been a dual ministry. It's bounced back and forth, so this amendment will certainly add stability in the department. It's something that people would like to see, including the Official Opposition, and it will certainly give everybody an opportunity to track budget changes.

As well, when we look at section 1(c), again just another cleanup clause, it does clarify what is a public work. Of course, this is vital when you look at what is needed when we have an increase in the number of public/private partnerships and also when there are other agencies entering into contracts where public dollars are involved. We look at the departments, for example, of education or of health care.

Now, then, as well, we like the changes to section 2(2). One of the questions we did have here is: how often has a person in authority been challenged when signing a contract? I don't know if the minister will be able to supply that information tonight or not, but if he could provide that down the road.

The amendments to section 5. This is definitely an improvement. Again, when various companies do tender their notice, then certainly they can be notified by written notice to those who have picked up the tender notice instead of the former situation, where we had to have a public notice. This certainly is a much more efficient way of doing business.

As well, we see that section 8 is amended. The act is currently interpreted by reading in the word "valid." What happens here is that we can look at terms such as qualified, noncompliant, contain errors, and whatever. So by adding in this particular statement, this adds strength to the bill.

Section 9 is also amended. This is again a cleanup amendment. It reflects current tendering law, as does section 10.

Other changes to 12(2) and 12(3) are also part of contract law, and these are cleanup clauses.

Now, then, as well, in sections 14(2)(a) and 14(3)(a) one of the strengths here is the consultation that took place with the Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association. This was a negotiated time period, with a reduction from 90 to 45 days.

I think those are the major changes that I wanted to look at in the bill and comment on the amendments, Mr. Chairman. From the Official Opposition's standpoint this bill certainly fills many of the desired changes of the industry and the stakeholders, and we'd urge all members to support it. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE ACTING CHAIR: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 15
Dairy Industry Omnibus Act, 2002

THE ACTING CHAIR: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to rise and provide additional comments and respond to questions raised during second reading of Bill 15, the Dairy Industry Omnibus Act, 2002. It is a sincere pleasure for me to help the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development with this bill, and I remind members that the objective of the Dairy Industry Omnibus Act is to shift the governance responsibility for dairy production and marketing away from government and into the hands of dairy producers.

During second reading the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar asked how many of the 18 dairy companies operating in Alberta were actually Alberta-based companies. Mr. Chairman, 14 of the 18 are Alberta companies, operating only in Alberta. The other four – Lucerne Foods Limited, Parmalat Canada, Saputo Foods Limited, and Sunny Rose Cheese, a division of Agropur – have major processing facilities in Alberta, with the parent company outside of Alberta.

There are currently 850 producers in the province, and as the members of this committee know, Canadian citizenship is not a requirement for quota purchases. However, producers must be residents of Alberta and registered with the board. As in all agricultural sectors the trend is moving toward larger operations that can realize efficiencies. However, our Alberta industry is certainly primarily comprised of family operations whose owner or operator lives right on the farm. We aren't talking large foreign-owned corporate operations. A typical dairy farm in Alberta is run by a husband/wife team, with the kids pitching in before and after school. I have many such farms in my own constituency, Mr. Chairman, and I visit them often.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar also asked about the dairy quota system. The existing dairy board sets policy and approves all quota transfers and all quota leases. The new producer board would continue to do this as well. The price of a quota is set by the marketplace and is negotiated between buyers and sellers. The existing board has absolutely no role in setting quotas, quota values, nor will the new producer dairy board. It is the marketplace too, Mr. Chairman, that in large part drives the number of producers. Alberta is part of the national supply management system for milk and dairy products. Our provincial allocation is based in part on market demand. The Alberta Milk Producers' Society in co-operation with the Dairy Farmers of Canada does an excellent job of promoting milk and dairy product consumption. As demand increases, so does production and so does the opportunity for growth.

The new dairy board will be operated by producers, not by the provincial government. We do not want to end up creating another Canadian Wheat Board. Producers will vote to create a board or commission under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. Producers choose to operate under a supply-managed system. It is not a system imposed upon them by the government. Also, I should mention that the contract export milk program allows any producer, regardless of whether they have a quota or not, to produce milk for export. We are a Progressive Conservative government, Mr. Chairman. We believe in free trade and market-driven pricing.

10:10

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition centred his comments on public accountability, and I'd like to assure him that the government isn't stepping out. We're just stepping back. The new producer dairy board will still operate under provincial legislation; that is, the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. This marketing council supervises all boards and commissions, and there is direct accountability back to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The price for fluid milk will continue to be set by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. The AEUB acts as a public watchdog to ensure that the proper formulas are used for setting the price of fluid milk.

The regulatory powers proposed for the new producer board are located in section 27 of the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. All six marketing boards in the province use these section 27 powers. The proposed dairy board will have broader powers with respect to processed dairy products, but this is required to maintain the system of payment to producers. Mr. Chairman, this board will operate much in the same manner as the four poultry boards in the province. It will be able to fix and allot quotas, license producers, and set minimum prices. The Alberta dairy board will also have regulatory powers similar to other producer boards in other provinces.

Another question that came up during second reading is: how is the dairy industry motivated to consider consumer concerns about price? Well, as I have just stated, Mr. Chairman, the price of fluid milk will continue to be set by the AEUB, as it has been in the past. The price for processing milk will be set through negotiation between the board and processors. Of course, because processors are competing in a Canadian market, prices in other provinces will still be a factor in the price set right here in Alberta.

We know that processors must remain competitive, and part of that competitive equation is responding to consumer demand. Let's face it: producers gain nothing by pricing Alberta processors out of the market. The hon. leader opposite made reference to the dairy producers being something like a millionaires' club. Yes, it does take a lot of money to get into dairy, but once you're in, you work very, very hard 365 days a year. The profit margin is always slim, as in any farming operation, and you sometimes wonder why you even do it. It reminds me of the farmer who was asked what he would do if he won a million dollars. His reply: well, I guess I'd just keep on farming till it was gone.

As far as public participation in the governance of the dairy industry is concerned, I want to make it clear that the provincial government is simply getting out of the day-to-day management of the dairy industry. As I mentioned previously, this board will still operate under provincial legislation, and it will be supervised by the Agricultural Products Marketing Council, which reports directly to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

In closing, let me say that there are many checks and balances built into the system to ensure that the public's interests are protected. For instance, under this act there is an independent appeal tribunal, which is an avenue where anyone impacted by a board decision can make an appeal. It isn't a new model, Mr. Chairman. It's tried and it's true and it works. Take the Alberta poultry industry as an example. Here's an industry that is thriving. The producer board continues to work co-operatively with poultry processors to meet growing consumer demand, and these poultry boards are the ones leading the implementation of on-farm food safety programs to address consumer concerns with safe, quality food.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I conclude my remarks on Bill 15. I will try to answer any further questions as they may arise. Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

AN HON. MEMBER: Don't ask him any questions.

MS CARLSON: Why? Because he answers them? Well, from our perspective it's nice to have the questions finally answered. I hope all the clapping and desk-thumping that occurred for the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar was a reflection on the lateness of the hour and not anything else. I personally would like to thank him for the questions that he answered, because we were going to take him to task if he hadn't done so given that there was going to be some pretty speedy passage of this bill in the Legislature.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

I would like all members to know that I have a dairy farm in my constituency. Not a very large one, but . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It's called Safeway.

MS CARLSON: It's not called Safeway. Real cows. I know their names, and I say that they're the best represented cows in this province. [interjections] No. No. Smart guys. Just because I live in the city doesn't mean I don't know a little bit about rural issues.

On this bill, Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank the member for answering the majority of the questions that were brought up in second reading, although it seems to me that there were still a few of them that are a bit open-ended at this particular stage.

Just to go through the Leader of the Opposition's comments previously, he had a few concerns about the self-governing, but I think those were answered. He talked about how they compared to other commodities. He wondered about the motivation for the dairy industry to consider consumer concerns about price, which was answered, but then the rest of the issues were not. So consumer concerns about issues that reflect on competition in the market but also associated agriculture producers who may want to enter into that industry: that was left open-ended. I expect that the member will respond to those at some other time, maybe in third reading, or in writing if that's not possible.

The member also said in his comments on March 7 that there's still a degree of responsiveness to the consumer and a relationship with the dairy industry in a way that we have some semblance of market forces working. He's worried about what might happen with the changes here. That also wasn't specifically addressed. The member supported moving out from under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act but stated that there still needs to be consumer input into the decision-making process because they are a special industry. So is there some specific vehicle being set up to address that concern?

I think that with those comments, Mr. Chairman, that addresses all of the concerns we had. In general we were supportive of this. There are some outstanding issues, and we'll watch to see how it progresses as it unfolds. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 15 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE CHAIR: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 13

Administrative Penalties and Related Matters Statutes Amendment Act, 2002

THE CHAIR: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Hon. Minister of Environment, do you wish to make opening comments? Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We always take a look at bills that are called things like related matters statutes amendment act with a little bit of suspicion in this Assembly, because it seems to be the kind of act where . . .

DR. TAYLOR: You can trust me.

MS CARLSON: Yeah? Well, that's really my concern. I certainly don't trust that particular cabinet minister very far, Mr. Chairman.

So that's what makes me nervous about this bill, in addition to the fact that this is one of those bills that really got the bum's rush through this Assembly in second reading. We're a little concerned about that. The minister says that over 45 stakeholder groups, including the kind of cross section that we like to see represented, being industry and recreation and municipalities – he stated that there was significant support for these proposed changes. So we're going to take his word on this one but be paying very close attention.

10:20

MR. NORRIS: That's very wise of you.

MS CARLSON: Well, I don't know if that's wise or not, but we're going to do it in this instance, Minister of Economic Development.

We'll see how this particular one unfolds, because in general we think that it's good to see that this particular bill addresses some of the need for increased and more stringent penalties. That's a good thing.

Of course, as always, we've expressed concern numerous times inside and outside of the Assembly that the problem really is a sufficient number of enforcement officers and the funding to support those officers. You can have all the rules you want, but if there's no one there to see that they're carried out, then what good are they? You know, there are regulations, penalties, but if there's insufficient staff, then the legislation really means nothing. I know that this minister is a minister who likes to see industries self-police, and that works very well for some people, but we know that that isn't always the best way to carry out these kinds of duties.

Our concern is that continued cuts and department reorganizations make it very difficult to design and carry out long-term plans. Self-reporting, with appropriate penalties for failure to report, is an important part of the enforcement process, but it doesn't replace officers and random inspections. We'd like to see random inspections beefed up rather than scaled down. The increasing pace of resource development that we see in this province means that enforcement is increasingly important, particularly as we see development butt up against the settlement of larger communities, so that's a problem.

We see that this bill increases the personal responsibility that directors have for the work done by their companies. That's a good change, and we applaud that particular change.

So I think that's all I'm going to say at this particular time. There are a lot of changes happening here in a lot of different acts, and we'll be paying attention to what happens as it unfolds and staying

in touch with the stakeholders to see if they continue to be happy with this.

Mr. Chairman, with those comments we will cross our fingers and hope that everything goes well with this bill. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE CHAIR: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report progress on bills 10, 15, and 13.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following: bills 10, 15, and 13.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:25 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]