

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 10, 2004**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 04/05/10

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments. Amen.

Now, hon. members and to all the people in the galleries today, would you please join in the singing of our national anthem. We'll be led today by Mr. Maurice Lorieau. Feel free to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you. I think that only one thing more has to be said: go, Flames, go.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly eight seniors from the Riverside Lions Village from my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. I had an opportunity to meet with them a little bit earlier today. They're here in the members' gallery: Mr. and Mrs. Bill and Margaret Manning, Mrs. Ella Ozubko, Mrs. Natalie Kuch, Mr. and Mrs. Doug and Jean Whyte, Mrs. Vickie Deagle, and Mrs. Norma Johnston. They're accompanied by Mrs. Michelle Kraeling, who is their recreation/leisure consultant. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Jonson: Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 27 students from the Rimbey elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Jim Moore, and parent helpers Mr. Dallas Mannix, Mrs. Marnie Bland, and Mrs. Laureen Morton. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly Katie Hobday. Katie will be assisting me in the Calgary-Glenmore office this summer.

Mr. Norris: A huge challenge.

Mr. Stevens: A huge challenge indeed.

Katie, Mr. Speaker, is just finishing her third year at U of C in a five-year, double degree program in economics and political science. When she's not studying, she's writing for the university newspaper, *The Gauntlet*, and working on a variety of clubs. If Katie could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Ms Kryczka: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really very excited and proud to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly one of two very special men in my life in Calgary: my son, Mike Kryczka. Mike truly represents Alberta's entrepreneurial spirit. Years ago now, he ran his own landscaping company while attending the University of Calgary in the petroleum land management program. He has successfully built and sold two junior oil and gas companies in southern Alberta and has launched his third, Bowood Energy. He's not as old as you're thinking he is. He loves masters badminton, skiing, and golf and even fly-fishing, but most importantly Mike is a wonderful husband to Sarah and father to Emily, Jacob, and Joshua. I would ask Mike to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 72 visitors from Webber Academy, 63 grade 5 students and nine adults. Webber Academy is a private school in the constituency of Calgary-West, and their goal is to prepare students for university and beyond as leaders in the community and in society.

I would just like to say a few words about Dr. Neil Webber, their president. As many of you may or may not know, Neil was an MLA and minister for 14 years in this Legislature, from 1975 to 1989, for the constituency of Calgary-Bow. He held four portfolios, and I told him that I'd only mention two at this time, Energy and Education.

He also has with him teachers Ms Janice Chan, Ms Janet Wushke, Mr. Daniel Mondaca, and parent helpers Ms Virginia Hughes and Mrs. Carol Celli. I would ask the Webber Academy students – I believe they're in the public gallery – to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Ms Graham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and other members of the Assembly three members of my family who are visiting today from Red Deer. Actually, they belong to the Red Deer-North constituency. They are seated in your gallery. They are my sister, Audrey Graham-Thievin, her husband, Tom Thievin, and my niece, Kayla Thievin. Audrey is a jazz musician and a music teacher. Tom is a piano tuner. Actually, they're all musicians. Kayla was a member of the Red Deer Royals for many years, and she just finished her first year at NAIT in business. So I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real privilege for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of very dedicated people. I'm honoured that they are under contract through my office as the government caucus whip to look after the needs of the private members on the government side.

Mr. Speaker, in my office there are three young people working: Mr. Jason Zwart, our director of caucus; Mr. Bartek Kienc, the whip's administrative assistant; and Gerald Proctor, the whip's legislative assistant.

Going to the research branch, our senior researcher is Mr. Jason Ennis. Our researchers are Matthew Steppan, Greg McFarlane, Frank Ostlinger, who's leaving us right away to move over to Government Services – we wish him all the best over there – Jordon Copping, Emir Mehinagic, Richard Westlund, Andrea Hennig, Dan Hanson, Mike Simpson, and David Williams, who will be starting with them next week.

The legislative assistants are, in alphabetical order, Jan Aldous, Deb Arcand, Darlene Beckstrand, Chris Brookes, Jon Buck, Darla Cowdell, Daryn Fersovich, Carmen Frebrowski, Gladys Gammon, Mike Gladstone, Brenda Goebel, Phyllis Hennig, Cheryl Koss, Donna Krasowski, June Lam, Cheryl Lees, Stacey Leighton, Barb Letendre, Brendalee Loveseth, Bethany MacGillivray, Marie Martin, Shelly McCrae, Leah Ritz, Diane Todoruk, and Joanne Williamson.

These are the people who keep us on track year-round, Mr. Speaker, not just when question period is on, as we're all up here working with them all the time. They work with our constituency assistants as well, and they keep us well informed. I'm very grateful to them for their dedicated duties to us. I would ask them all to rise – they are in both galleries – and receive the warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce – and I'm not sure that they are here, but they'll be joining us very shortly if they're not – a group of students from Lloyd Garrison school in Berwyn. Berwyn is between Fairview and Peace River, about five and a half hours' drive from here, so it's quite an effort for them and quite a pleasure for me to get a school group to visit the Legislature. They're accompanied by teachers Mr. Rob Hoban and Ms Shaunna Regal and parent helpers Suzie Reyda, Bruce Warren, Mrs. Sandra Eastman, Mrs. Greit Heimstra, Mrs. Kim Alexander, and Mrs. Gwen Sukeroff. I don't believe they are here, but I'd ask the Assembly nonetheless to wish them a warm welcome. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've got two introductions today. I'll start with the first one. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mary Elizabeth Archer, who has been working as sessional support for the New Democrat opposition during the current session of this Assembly. Mary Elizabeth has an exceptional work ethic and brings an enormous amount of energy and cheerfulness to her work. So I take this opportunity now to thank her for her valued work and contribution to the work of the caucus. She is seated in the public gallery. I would now request her to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure as well to introduce to you and through you to the House Ms Elena Napora. Elena Napora is a member of the Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society. She is here this afternoon to observe the proceedings of the Assembly. Ms Napora is seated in the public gallery, and I would now ask her to rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Hlady: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce four people to you today. The first one is my summer student. She is visiting us here to spend a couple of days to see how business works between the Legislature and constituency offices. Her name is Melanie Fic, and I would ask her to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the other three that I have to introduce today I'm truly honoured and humbled to introduce to you. These three gentlemen are here to observe, hopefully, with any luck, the passing of Bill 206 today in the Legislature. These three gentlemen actually have felt the wrath of our federal government and, unfortunately, were thrown in jail. They served a total of 90 days in jail for nothing more than the crime of selling their wheat to someone other than the Canadian Wheat Board. I would ask Jim Chatenay of Red Deer, Bill Moore of Red Deer, and Ron Duffy of Lacombe to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of introductions today. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a bright young woman who has come to work for us for the summer as part of the summer temporary employment program. She's an honours graduate from the University of Alberta with a bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology. She's also a committed community volunteer. She's currently working with the World University Service of Canada and the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, and we're very pleased to have her working with us for the summer. I would ask Ms Janina Strudwick to rise and receive the warm recognition of the Assembly.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly Héctor González and Leo Campos, two well-respected leaders of the Chilean community in Edmonton. Like thousands of Canadians of Chilean ancestry they were forced to flee their homeland because of the brutality and oppression of the Pinochet dictatorship. These two gentlemen are seated in the public gallery. I would ask Héctor González and Leo Campos to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a bit of a surprise to see the students from Webber Academy here today as I was talking to one yesterday and she failed to advise me that they were going to be here. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly my granddaughter Mackenzie Symonds. Mackenzie, if you would rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Automobile Insurance Reform

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's auto insurance plan is seen as a failure even by government MLAs. One of them said about the plan this weekend, quote, there's nothing in it for the average Albertan, end quote, and, quote, this is a long way from what the Premier promised Albertans, end quote. My questions are to the Premier. The Premier's own backbenchers say that the government's auto insurance plan is a failure, so why won't the Premier himself admit it?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the government's ultimate goal is to establish a system of fair and affordable premiums that rewards good drivers with low premiums and doesn't penalize drivers based on age, gender, or factors that don't relate to your driving record.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've taken steps to address immediate concerns such as freezing insurance rates, and we continue to work through the rest of the reforms. We continue to work through the rest of the reforms. Auto insurance, needless to say, is a very complex subject and very individual, and the government is still discussing the details of insurance reform. Bottom line: the strength of the system is that it's based on personal responsibility to be a good driver. Good drivers will pay fair and affordable premiums, and bad drivers will pay surcharges.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, an all-day standing policy committee meeting is scheduled on May 27 to finalize the reforms, and I would think it would be appropriate to comment at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that public auto insurance plans in other provinces don't collect information on age and gender when you're applying for policies, as I discovered, will this government make it illegal for auto insurance companies in Alberta to collect this information, specifically age and gender information, from auto insurance policyholders?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the policies are of the various insurance companies operating in the province, but certainly since one component of automobile insurance is compulsory – and that is the public liability and property damage component – we are in a position to regulate that component only.

Relative to the information that they seek, I don't know if that will be moot or not, because what we are saying is that we want to end the discrimination that insurance companies might gather relative to age and gender. Mr. Speaker, it stands to reason that they would gather information relative to driving records because a bad driver should be penalized.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given the Premier's comments that so offended the Chilean-Canadian community made in response to a question on auto insurance last week, will he apologize for his remarks?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I will have more to say on that later. I understand that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands will probably be asking a question.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

1:50

Achievement Testing

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Information has come out in the last couple of days that young students who do not pass their grade 3 achievement tests will be retested in grade 4. This has been widely condemned by educators, and various school jurisdictions in the province have said that they will not co-operate on this matter unless they're forced to. My questions are to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us if the tests being proposed for grade 4 were developed in Alberta specific to the Alberta curriculum, or are they being imported from out of province?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible is not here, I'll take the question under advisement.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll look for the answer tomorrow.

Can the Premier tell the Assembly if the government is also planning to retest in grades 7 and 10 students who do not pass their achievement tests in grades 6 and 9?

Mr. Klein: Same answer, Mr. Speaker. I'll take the question under advisement.

Dr. Taft: And once again I'll look for the answer tomorrow.

Can the Premier tell this Assembly what the costs of this testing scheme will be?

Mr. Klein: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll take the question under advisement.

Government Travel Expenses

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, in October 2001 this government announced an immediate hiring freeze and made announcements to reduce government spending. Last week at the Public Accounts Committee meeting taxpayers were advised that all hosting expenses incurred by the government exceeding \$600 are listed publicly in the *Alberta Gazette*. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. How much money did the Department of Economic Development save when in October 2001 it was announced that international travel would be deferred to reduce government spending?

Mr. Norris: Well, I think some clarity, Mr. Speaker, should be brought to the question the hon. member is asking. As I recall, in the fall of 2001 there was a fairly catastrophic event that caused us to review the safety of ministerial travel. I don't believe it had anything to do with the cost of the travel, so the question is I think twofold.

In answer to his original question, I will get him dollar figures, but in actual fact – and the hon. minister of international and government affairs may want to comment as well – it was seen as a safety measure primarily. Once it was deemed that it was safe to travel again, we did so because Alberta is a remarkably strong exporting province, Mr. Speaker. We have to sell our message around the world, and we're going to continue doing it.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister and this time regarding dollar figures: why did the Economic Development department spend close to \$20,000 on a lunch and a reception in Mexico City on September 23, 2002, when this government was telling Albertans back home to reduce their expectations and make do with less?

Mr. Norris: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect the question has no relevance to what he's asking. Our job as Economic Development is to sell the best economic model in the world, which is Alberta. It's a very simple equation. We have the lowest tax regime, we have the best employment, and we have opportunities in forestry and agriculture and oil and gas, so our job, quite frankly, is to get out there and sell it. One of our largest trading partners – I believe it's number 3 in the list of the top five – is Mexico, so clearly, as any businessman would, it behooves us go get in front of our clients.

With reference to the specific lunch I don't know if there were 50 people or 500, but I can tell you one thing. [interjection] Our trade with Mexico – and I'm hoping you'll be silent long enough to hear this – has gone up approximately 500 per cent in the last four years, Mr. Speaker, from about \$600 million to about \$1.2 billion. I know that the hon. members who are very, very passionate about the agriculture industry will be pleased to know that our border is open to Mexico, and the agriculture minister may want to supplement as well. But I don't understand; if the reference is that we spent money promoting the province of Alberta to create more jobs, I'll never ever stop doing that.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, this time to the Premier: given that all other government departments must list hosting expenses over \$600, why is the Premier exempt from the credit card policy directive issued under the Financial Administration Act, which is one of the rules regarding documentation to support ministry-related business expenses? Why are you exempt?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I think that names on credit cards are pretty well exempt under the FOIP legislation, which was supported by the Liberals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Automobile Insurance Reform

(continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last October the Premier promised Albertans that all good drivers would see reductions in their insurance premiums. He subsequently modified this position to promise that most drivers would see reductions, then more recently that a few drivers would see reductions. Martha and Henry could be forgiven for wondering why Jackie and Ron in Saskatchewan or Mary and Tom in B.C. are allowed to enjoy cheaper public auto insurance while Albertans are left lining the pockets of profitable auto insurance companies. This is to the Premier. Given that Gordon Campbell, Grant Devine, and Gary Filmon, none of whom are strangers to the Premier's own Conservative ideology, have each recognized that public auto insurance is the best way to deliver lower rates to drivers, why won't this Premier?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, our goal, as I pointed out to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, is to establish a system of fair and affordable premiums using the free enterprise and entrepreneurial system, at least that portion of the system that is regulated by government as it relates to public liability and property damage insurance, which is mandatory in this province. We want to arrive at a system that rewards good drivers with low premiums and doesn't penalize based on age, gender, or other factors that don't relate to driving records.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that B.C., Manitoba, and Saskatchewan have all developed public auto insurance programs without being threatened with bloody coups, how can the Premier continue to dismiss the Consumers' Association of Canada report that showed that public auto insurance delivers the cheapest and best product for drivers?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, historically and traditionally we've had

private insurance in this province, and there hasn't been a problem with it until this government identified the problem. [interjections] This government identified the problem. It wasn't the opposition parties that identified the problem; it wasn't the third party NDs that identified the problem.

It was this government and the hon. Minister of Finance who brought the matter to caucus and said – and I'm paraphrasing right now – we have a problem, and the problem is that it's hurting the economy where young drivers, because they are male between the ages of 16 and 25, cannot be employed because of high insurance rates, nor can they afford to drive a personal car because of high insurance rates. She also pointed out that older males, males over 65 years of age, were being discriminated against because of their age and because of their gender. She said that we have to deal with this problem, and that's precisely what is happening right now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier apologize to Alberta's Chilean community for trying to conceal his government's bungled insurance reforms behind praise for ruthless and murderous dictators?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, you know, they say, "Bite your tongue," and I plan to do just that, because I am not hiding behind a ruthless killer.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify my remarks about the Pinochet regime in Chile. I'm not an historian, nor is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, but I recently completed a paper for one of my university courses on some aspects on Chilean history. It was entitled Allende, Pinochet and the Chilean Media. I received a mark of 77 per cent, not great but not bad.

My research for that paper made me very aware that the Pinochet government was responsible for an untold number of deaths and for the destruction of the lives and hopes of many, many Chileans. I've since had the opportunity to visit Chile and have seen that things have stabilized there tremendously. I know that many people of Chilean origin living in Alberta still bear the scars and painful memories of that dark period in Chilean history, a history that lasted until 1989, if my memory serves me right, when free elections were held again.

2:00

My comments last week were not meant in any way to suggest personal support or admiration for the Pinochet regime. Quite the contrary. Again, I'll be glad to table the paper, that points out that Salvador Allende was elected president in 1970, the first communist ever to be elected in a democratic vote. The paper sets out the moves he made to nationalize a number of industries in Chile and the wrath that he incurred from the CIA and the Americans, ostensibly over the socialization of the copper mines.

My only purpose for making those remarks was to point out that socialism can often lead to unintended and negative repercussions in societies, and unfortunately that's what happened in Chile. It did. The remarks were made in the context of a discussion about the merits of socialism.

However, let me be clear. I had no intention of appearing to argue that the Pinochet government was in any way preferable to its predecessor. As a matter of fact, it was a brutal government.

I very much appreciate the contributions and the integrity of Chilean communities in Alberta and want them and all Albertans to know that I am aware that the mere mention of the name Pinochet

can resurrect great sorrow. For that reason I will endeavour to be more appreciative of those concerns even as we debate important and timely issues in this Legislature.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to table my term paper. The Chilean community and members of the opposition can read it and assess it, and maybe my learned friend across the way will give me a better mark.

Addictions Treatment for Youth

Ms Graham: Mr. Speaker, late last year I was appointed chair of the board of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. Since that time I have gained an appreciation for the excellent programs that AADAC sponsors and the very good people that are delivering these services to Albertans who suffer from alcohol and other substance abuse as well as gambling problems. However, it has come to my attention that we do have a gap in our continuum of services in that we lack detoxification and residential treatment services for the youth of our province. I was surprised to learn of this, because we do provide this for adults in the province at several locations. This is the number one unfunded priority for AADAC. My questions this afternoon are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Is the minister in support of AADAC's plans to develop these services for the youth of our province?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I share the concern expressed by the hon. member, and I would suspect that we could speak on behalf of all Albertans when we talk about concerns for addiction, whether those addictions are caused by gambling or alcohol or drugs. It is a problem that can be significant to individuals. It's a cost that is borne by all of society.

We are working very hard, Mr. Speaker, at coming up with comprehensive, integrated, and balanced programs that can help deal with these. AADAC has been involved not only by itself but working in collaboration with Alberta Children's Services and the Department of the Solicitor General. Youth services are important, and I know that AADAC does consider this to be a great priority. The priorities of AADAC have changed over time.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that I'm supportive of AADAC moving forward in making sure that its top priorities are dealt with. If AADAC believes and if the hon. member in her capacity as chair believes that this is a top priority, then I presume that it will come through as a top priority in future business plans for the operations of AADAC.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Graham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one other question to the same minister. In the face of growing substance abuse problems, including the use of the very destructive crystal meth drug, and given that there is a growing demand from the community, from parents, from child advocates, from a resolution at our PC conference two weeks ago, where it was unanimously supported that we do this, I'm wondering if the minister is prepared to act quickly to establish at least one detox and residential treatment centre in the province for children.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for me to answer as an individual expressing my support for such a program. I can say, though, that through the process of business plans we do fund the top priorities put forward by agencies of government like AADAC.

I think it's worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that in the year 2003-2004 AADAC did receive an increase in the magnitude of 25 per cent. A

large portion of that increase was dedicated towards a tobacco reduction strategy, which was also considered to be a very high priority. For the 2004-2005 year a 10.3 per cent increase was tabled in the budget.

We do of course need to maintain the important services that AADAC provides, and it's a question of priorities. If AADAC were able to find within its budget the ability to move forward on a residential treatment facility for youth and they view it to be a priority, then I would certainly support it.

Electoral Reform

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the birthplace of many of the major democratic reform initiatives in Canada, including recall and citizens' initiatives, but now the government of Alberta just points a blaming finger at other jurisdictions while it lags behind in implementing democratic reform. One way the government could improve its democratic record would be to implement a citizens' assembly. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier follow the lead of other provincial governments and look at alternative electoral systems to replace the outdated first past the post system?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the system has served us quite well over the course of history. Other than the question raised by the hon. member, I must say that I don't get a lot of cards and letters on this particular issue. Mind you, there is a small portion of the population who become involved in democratic reform, so to speak.

Quite frankly, I've spoken on this subject in the past, and I've said that this is precisely the kind of thing that the Alliance and the Conservatives had to put aside in order to focus on the big-picture items and the matters that are of concern to most Canadians and, I would say, most Albertans. Those are health, education, good infrastructure, safe communities, protection of the environment, responsibility for those less fortunate in society, and all of the other core services that government offers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: what plans does the government have to increase voter participation in provincial elections by people under 30?

Mr. Klein: That's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't aware that there was a problem relative to voters under 30 years of age. I would say to the hon. member, as I would say to anyone: "Get out there and vote. It's your democratic right. If you're over 18 years of age and a Canadian citizen, get out and vote. Vote for the party or the person of your choice, but please vote."

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Again to the Premier: what are the reasons that this government won't put a citizens' assembly on electoral reform in place?

2:10

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, nobody is asking. I guess it's a fundamental policy of this government that if it's not broke, don't fix it. Traditionally and historically we have operated a system here that has served the people of this province quite well.

If I can get political just for a moment, it's no wonder that the Liberals are upset with the system the way it is, because the majority of Albertans prefer a Conservative government. That's why there are 74 of us and seven of them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Oil Sands Tailings Ponds

Mr. Yankowsky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil sands are in many ways the economic heart of this province, but the environmental impact of these megaprojects is a consideration. Potentially even more significant, however, is the environmental damage that might result should any of the safeguards that protect the environment from the waste generated by the oil sands fail. Ponds that hold the hazardous by-product, or tailings, of the oil sands are often built right next to rivers, separated from them by only a small earth dam. My questions are all to the Minister of Environment. What safeguards are companies required to have in place to ensure that these tailings ponds will not fail?

Dr. Taylor: Well, first of all, let me assure the member that the tailings ponds are built only when absolutely necessary, and as the technology improves, we will need fewer and fewer of these tailings ponds. So that's the first thing.

Secondly, before any tailing pond can be built, it has to receive the approval of Alberta Environment, has to receive the approval of my colleague's ministry, Sustainable Resource Development, and it has to receive the approval of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. All of these hearings are public, so people can participate in these hearings and present their objections to this if they have any. It's a very open and public process. These tailings ponds are designed by experts, engineers that can do these things. So it's, as I say, a very open, public process only done when necessary and under the strictest regulations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Yankowsky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister tell this Assembly who would be responsible for the damage that would result should one of these tailings ponds fail or leak and destroy the surrounding environment?

Dr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be the responsibility of the people that built the tailing pond. As part of the construction of any tailings pond or a big plant like that, the company that builds it is required to put up a security deposit of some sort. It may be a bond. It may be a letter of credit, whatever is appropriate. As we move forward, if that company were to fail or didn't have enough money for whatever reason to reclaim a tailings pond if it needed to be reclaimed or in the unlikely event of some failure, then the bond or the letter of credit would be called into effect, and that bond or letter of credit would cover the cost.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Yankowsky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: who is responsible for reclaiming these ponds back to a healthy state so that they don't leave a legacy of toxic waste for our children like the Sydney tar ponds?

Dr. Taylor: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, under the act it's the oil companies' responsibility. We're talking about oil companies right here. If it were a chemical company and they had to reclaim something in the area of the chemical company, it would be the chemical company's responsibility. Remember that whether it's a chemical company or an oil company, we do have the bond, we do

have the security deposit, and if they were not able to pay for it, that bond or that security deposit would pay for it. It would not come out of Alberta taxpayers' pockets.

Ophthalmology Services in Calgary

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has obtained a copy of a letter sent from Dr. Megran, chair of the Medical Advisory Board of the Calgary health region, to a group of medical specialists in Calgary who have continually raised concerns over the current chief of ophthalmology in the Calgary health region. These physicians have raised their concerns several times that the current chief of ophthalmology is putting his and his family's business interests ahead of his duties as chief of ophthalmology for the region, and I will table the letter. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Has the minister taken any action to resolve concerns raised by physicians over the current chief of ophthalmology for the Calgary health region?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was good enough to provide me with a copy of the letter to which he refers, which, I understand, he will be tabling at the appropriate time. It was difficult to read because he I think highlighted all of the pertinent, most important portions of it, and by doing so, when he photocopied it, he blacked out much of the portions that I think he wanted to bring to my attention.

But let me say this, Mr. Speaker. I recognize the issue of the bylaws of the regional health authority as it relates to conflict of interest. The regional health authority is in the process of revising their conflict-of-interest bylaws, and I think that has been largely because of the Medical Advisory Board supporting the need to do this, and I think that that's appropriate for the regional health authority to do.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is making allegations about the allocations of surgery time, allocation of surgery time at the regional health authority is really done by the chiefs and department heads of surgery, who once a year meet, and over the last two years they have discussed the block allocation process, and they've determined to keep it as it is.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have looked into this matter, and if the regional health authority thinks that it should change its conflict-of-interest bylaws, I think that's an appropriate step.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister ensure that someone from outside the Calgary health region and preferably outside the province investigates conflict-of-interest allegations surrounding the current chief of ophthalmology?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen any need to do that. I think the regional health authority is doing an appropriate set of steps right now to deal with the issue.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Given that new conflict-of-interest guidelines for the Calgary health region have been sent to the minister in the past, fairly recently, and more than once for approval, can the minister explain why it is taking him so long to approve them?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, we've had reviews of conflict-of-interest bylaws and bylaws from throughout all of the health regions. One

can appreciate the magnitude and size of such a job. We take the care to go through it in some fine detail. That's the reason. It's as simple as that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

WorldSkills Trades Competition

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Skills Canada announced today some great news, that Calgary has been chosen as the host city for the 2009 WorldSkills competition. Great work by the bid committee. Now, Mr. Minister, I understand that WorldSkills brings together youth from around the world to compete and demonstrate the skills of their various trades and technologies against some very demanding international standards, but how will hosting this event benefit Albertans?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, this has been a good week for Calgary: lacrosse with the Calgary Roughnecks and, of course, the "Go, Flames, go" that we're all so enthused and thrilled about.

In terms of benefits there are at least two that we could talk about immediately from WorldSkills. It would be estimated at this time that there would be something around 750 competitors – they're going to bring families; there will be coaches; of course, there will be judges – that will come from other countries and have to be housed and fed and all of that in Calgary during those competitions. I'm briefed, Mr. Speaker, that it's likely to be a benefit of something in the order of \$46 million to Alberta and then, of course, more specifically Calgary.

The biggest thing is the attention that skilled trades will get through this competition. I attended the WorldSkills in Montreal in 1999, and if you want to see an Olympic-like event or perhaps even an Oscar-like event, I mean, this is it. They have the parade with the flags. They have at the end the gold, silver, and medal presentations. I mean, this is a big deal. We've been trying for many, many years to find a way to show young people in Alberta that there's great money, there's a great career, there's great work in the skilled trades in this province, and we hope that this will take us a long way down the road to proving that.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister. I understand that the provincial Skills Canada Alberta competition is currently taking place in Edmonton. How is this event related to the WorldSkills program?

Mr. Dunford: Well, again, I think it might be obvious. We're trying to draw the similarities in the skills competitions to the way they deal with athletics. You know, you have local competitions, then you move on to provincial competitions, to national competitions, and then of course to world competitions.

So really what's happening in Edmonton – I think it starts tomorrow, and I would encourage all members to write it into their little agendas to try and get over there, especially members here in Edmonton, that would have perhaps a little better access. In any event, again, it's the idea that we spread the skills competition into the high schools and into first-year apprenticeships right across this province, give them a provincial competition to work toward, and then the winners will move on to Winnipeg later this year for the nationals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Captive Wildlife Standards

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Near Three Hills, Alberta, the GuZoo animal farm continues to operate despite significant animal welfare and human safety concerns, which were exposed as long as five years ago. The permit for this farm continues to be renewed on a temporary basis year after year despite the fact that it has not complied with the majority of recommendations that were issued to it by an Alberta Environment assessment team back in 1999. My first question is to the Minister of Environment. Why has the government renewed the permit for this establishment when it has failed for five years to comply with the recommendations from the Alberta Environment assessment team?

Dr. Taylor: I think that when we changed the ministries, that has been moved from my ministry to the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development. If it hasn't, I'll give you your answer, certainly, tomorrow.

But I'll ask the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development to supplement.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of the situation that the member is bringing forward, and within two weeks I plan to tour the facility personally and personally inspect it to see what the issue is. In fact, the opposition members are welcome to come with me on a tour if they want. We have nothing to hide. It's an issue that's out there, and if it needs to be dealt with, we'll deal with it at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: will the minister now finalize the updated captive wildlife standards manual before any further zoo permits are issued in the province of Alberta?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, again, that's a good question. As a minister that is responsible for a ministry, we always on an ongoing basis review our policies as we move forward as a government, and I'll look at this policy. If there is a need for change, of course we always do that.

Ms Blakeman: I'll try that again, Mr. Speaker. The question to the minister was about finalizing the updated captive wildlife standards manual, not a sort of constant review. When do we get a final version of this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, when this process is finalized, then of course it will be available to the opposition also.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Government Accountability

Dr. Pannu: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, when does a government

choose to become accountable? Is it when, after 33 years in power, it becomes secretive, arrogant, and out of touch, or is it when it repeatedly fails to deliver on its promises like cheaper auto insurance, lower power costs, or smaller class sizes? My questions are to the Premier. When will the government choose to become accountable for its failure to deliver auto insurance rates on par with public systems in the rest of western Canada?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, we have not finished the exercise. There is an all-day standing policy committee meeting scheduled for the 27th of May to finalize the reforms. We will then require cabinet and caucus approval, and then we can begin communicating the entire package to the public. All we're getting now are bits and pieces and dribs and drabs, I guess, that are being unfortunately leaked or somehow obtained outside of SPC meetings that indicate to the media that this is going to be government policy when in fact there is no government policy relative to the regulations surrounding insurance at this time.

I would say to the injury lawyers and the insurance companies who are running ads battling each other and battling the government and to the NDs and the Liberals to stay cool and stay calm and stay tuned, because we will deal with this issue and we will come out with a policy paper relative to the regulations shortly after the 27th of May.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the government choose to become accountable for the failure of its deregulation policy to deliver lower electricity costs to homeowners and businesses?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I forget how the question was framed, but immediately we'll become accountable for deregulation.

As to why we will be and are accountable, I'll have the hon. minister explain.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, because in fact accountability always starts at the onset. In 1994 when the first discussion about deregulation or creating a competitive market for electrical generation came through, it was estimated that we would not need the power that we're using today until 2014. So it's a record of this Premier's policies on balanced budgets and reduced debt coupled with the ability to deliver a fundamental underpinning for economic growth called electricity which is the reason why we're the most prosperous province in the dominion of Canada today.

Dr. Pannu: My final supplementary to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: when will the government choose to take responsibility for failing to fund the Learning Commission recommendations for reducing class sizes?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I will take most of that question under advisement and have the hon. minister respond in more detail when he is present in the Legislature, but I can tell the hon. member that we have begun the process of undertaking the recommendations of the Learning Commission. I'm not sure how many were rejected.

Mr. Hancock: Two were rejected.

Mr. Klein: Two recommendations were rejected. I think that they referred to administration more than anything else. But all of the other recommendations and particularly those recommendations as

they affect the classroom, classroom size and so on, have been adopted, Mr. Speaker. It's just a matter of implementing those recommendations over a period of time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Innovation Strategy

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has launched four pillars that provide a plan for this province to guide it for the next 20 years. One of these pillars is "unleashing innovation," and it's no secret that our advantage above all and other jurisdictions rests upon us unleashing innovation to its greatest potential. As chair of the Alberta Research Council I find it extremely important that this province develop the components of an integrated, province-wide innovation system, identify specific value-added opportunities, and align its policies to support this strategy. My questions are to the Minister of Economic Development. What is the minister doing to develop such a strategy?

2:30

Mr. Norris: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for not only his question but his involvement in ASRA. As he knows, we had a joint meeting in Calgary recently with the board of directors of AEDA, the Alberta Economic Development Authority, and ASRA to talk about specifically these kinds of issues. It was determined with the hon. Minister of Innovation and Science that we do need a go-forward plan, and as such we've released the value-added strategy. That was done about a week and a half ago.

What it calls for primarily, Mr. Speaker, is to seize the opportunity that we have right now with a remarkable economy and to look at how we will work with industry, clearly not telling them how to do it, because that's not the way we operate in this government, to understand and identify what the barriers are to value added and unleashing innovation. To that end, of course, as I said, the strategy was released about a week and a half ago. I am sure the hon. member has a copy, and I would be happy to discuss it further with him at any time, as I would with any member of the House.

Mr. Johnson: Securing Tomorrow's Promise I believe is the name of this plan that you talk about. How does it further the opportunities available for rural Albertans such as those in my constituency?

Mr. Norris: Well, I mean, this is really the remarkable part of the program, Mr. Speaker, in that we have a rural development strategy that was co-chaired by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the hon. Member for Wainwright, and it talks about some remarkable opportunities. The agriculture department, quite frankly, under the current minister has done a remarkable job identifying their particular program, which is called 20-10 by 2010, which refers to \$20 billion in manufactured products and \$10 billion in primary products by the year 2010. Very, very aggressive targets but it does look at it.

What we are trying to do, to answer the hon. member's question, with rural Alberta leaders and industry is understand what their barriers are to value adding specifically in agriculture but also in forestry. To that end, the hon. Member for Dunvegan and I the other day went up to a forestry conference to talk about value-added strategies in their particular industry. I know that the Member for Airdrie-Rocky View has a very significant value-added forestry opportunity.

So the long and short of it is, Mr. Speaker, that what we are doing is what we've always done, which is consult with industry. Whether

it's located in rural or urban Alberta does not matter to us one iota. It's about jobs for Albertans, and it's about where the opportunities are, and we will continue to work with rural Alberta and the leaders to find out what the opportunities are.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Pure Lean Inc.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The now-closed Pure Lean plant near Oyen did not go through all the steps of inspection. An NRCB decision report completed on August 28, 2003, illustrates that the NRCB and Alberta Environment decisions were fast-tracked. My first question is to the Minister of Environment. Given that the report states, quote, this proposal was exempt from the Alberta Environment provisions related to the design of facilities, approvals, and notifications, end of quote, can the minister please explain why?

Dr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, Pure Lean was coming with new technology. Most hog farms have technology that puts hogs in a real tight space and real small pens, and Pure Lean was coming with some new technology. There were big pens, and they handled manure in a different fashion. In fact, the fellow, Bob Notenbomer, that developed the Pure Lean technology is a constituent of mine. It was new technology, so some of the old regulations didn't necessarily fit the new technology. As the program moves forward, of course, it's ultimately the NRCB that decides, and Alberta Environment works closely with NRCB as it moves forward.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister: is it common practice to fast-track applications for intensive livestock operations by not having Alberta Environment studies completed at the time of an NRCB decision?

Dr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, really the only thing we're involved with is the water decisions around the approvals of intensive livestock. With any intensive livestock decision they have to apply for a water licence, and there's a full approval process, and on a water licence there is an appeal process as well. That's a decision that's made by a director, and there is the Environmental Appeal Board that people can appeal to. The one that's got the most press recently certainly is the Capstone one in Red Deer, where a director made a decision that was appealed.

With the intensive livestock we are only involved at the water licensing level. There is a process for the water licence, and that process is appealable to the Environmental Appeal Board.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I want to just make a clarification so that there is an understanding in the House that this project began prior to the new Agricultural Operation Practices Act being introduced and the NRCB taking over the handling of intensive livestock. The development permit for that project was provided by the municipality, and Alberta Agriculture was involved to some extent at that time. The NRCB came into the picture on this particular project over an issue on composting some time down the road. I don't want to leave the impression that this was approved under the present legislation and operation of the NRCB.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. This time to the minister of agricul-

ture if she's willing: what role did Alberta Agriculture play in the development, then, of the Pure Lean plant near Oyen. What exactly was their role?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my earlier supplemental answer, it was the municipality who granted the approval for this operation, as was the practice at that time. Any support that Alberta Agriculture would have would be of a technical nature to provide technical assistance to, one, the municipality, if it was asked for, and/or to the proponents and to look at different aspects of the operation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this was prior to the NRCB assuming responsibility for the Agricultural Operation Practices Act.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we participate in Recognitions, there are a number of items that I'd like all members to observe. First of all, let me call on the hon. Deputy Speaker.

Legislative Assembly Pages

Mr. Tannas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Chairman and I would like to draw to the attention of all hon. members that we are going to lose five of our wonderful pages when this spring session ends. They are Maya Gordon, Greg Andrews, Andrea Balon, Natalie Wilson, and Lara Kinkartz. These fine young people will be leaving their duties in this Assembly following the close of the spring session, whenever that might occur. I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing the great efforts of our pages, who daily showed patience and understanding of our many demands. They carry out their tasks with attention to duty and in good humour. Oh behalf of all hon. members I would ask our head page, Maya Gordon, to give each retiring page our gift and with it our best wishes to each and everyone. We are honoured to have had you work with us in the Alberta Legislature.

2:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, these are remarkable young people. They sent me a letter dated May 10, 2004. The subject is retiring pages, and it's addressed to me, but it's addressed to all of you. I'd like to read it to you. It says:

Mr. Speaker,

The Page Recruitment posters state "Get More Than a Job", and nothing could be more true. We can say, without a doubt, we all received more than a job. To us, our time at the Legislature is also a lesson in life and politics that no university, however well funded, could provide. It could also be thought of as a social life for a busy student, meeting like-minded peers that we shall hopefully keep in contact with for years to come. Even when nothing else, our time here was entertaining, and perhaps it is a pity that Question Period is not broadcast during prime time.

We believe there is a popular misconception within the public that politicians are to be superhuman, and as Pages, this misconception was corrected quite fast. Indeed, the members of the House are very much real people; real people with real gifts, flaws, and quirks. By observing them, we see that it is quite possible for real people to do great things with their lives, and stands as an inspiration for ourselves to aim higher than we might have previously thought possible.

There is no amount of thanks that would truly express our gratitude to you, the Sergeant at Arms, and all members of the Assembly for the opportunity to work among the honourable people of this prestigious building. Indeed, being a Page is an invaluable experience that will hold worthwhile throughout our entire lives. If every citizen of this province was as informed as we are now, parliamentary democracy in Alberta would certainly be better served. Although such is impossible, it is now our duty to use our

knowledge of the political process to improve society in whatever path we chose.

For nearly a century, the laughter and footsteps of Pages has crisscrossed through this building, and we truly are blessed to have been able to experience every moment in the Alberta Legislature. Thank you, and everyone, for this unique and wonderful opportunity.

Farewell, and please don't forget about us!

Greg Andrews, Maya Gordon, Andrea Balon, Natalie Wilson, and Lara Kinkartz.

[applause]

Hon. members, I'd also draw to your attention that in the latter part of the 20th century, the very, very late part of the 20th century, the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane came into the world. Happy birthday.

Now might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: Then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. McClelland: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the request of one of our soon to be departing pages, Natalie Wilson, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to other members of the House two constituents who are seated in the members' gallery. Angela Bentley and Felicia Mathison are both attending the University of Alberta, Faculty of Science. They both received academic excellence awards and Rutherford scholarships. We'd ask them to stand and receive the recognition of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's my pleasure to reintroduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly our group from Lloyd Garrison school at Berwyn who are here observing the workings of the Legislature. It's my pleasure to welcome Rob Hoban, the teacher, and Ms Shaunna Regal, a teacher that's accompanying the group, as well as parent helpers Mrs. Suzie Reyda, Mr. Bruce Warren, Mrs. Sandra Eastman, Mrs. Greit Heimstra, Mrs. Kim Alexander, and Mrs. Gwen Sukeroff. Certainly, they've travelled a long way to be with us today, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, and then would you carry right on with your recognition.

Ms Blakeman: Happy to. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a great teacher and artist who is largely responsible for the strong reputation of the theatre design section of the University of Alberta fine arts department, David Lovett. You will hear more about him directly. With him is one of his students and an award-winning designer in his own right, Robert Shannon. I would ask them both to please rise and accept the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Recognitions**
David Lovett

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, it is my very great pleasure to recognize David Lovett for his contribution to Edmonton's and Alberta's

theatres, opera, and ballet. As we anticipate his retirement from the renowned University of Alberta fine arts theatre design program, we can be thankful that David chose in 1969 to emigrate and take a job teaching here.

He went off to UBC in 1972, but Tom Peacocke, then department chair, wooed him back in 1976 to teach theatre design. David has also designed for Theatre 3 and Phoenix Theatre in Edmonton, designed the production of *Romeo and Juliet* which opened the new Citadel Theatre in 1976, and designed numerous productions at the Banff Centre for the opera and ballet sections and for Alberta Ballet's first *Nutcracker* and *Firebird*. We even loaned him to Stratford Festival.

David also designed the first production of *South Pacific* for Edmonton Opera. The second production was recently designed by his student Robert Shannon. "More, better, faster, grow," was David's favourite instruction.

Thank you, Mr. Lovett, for bringing us such fabulous designs. You enriched your students, the artists, and the fans of theatre, opera, and ballet. Thank you so much for your contribution.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

National Nursing Week

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Nursing Week, which will be celebrated May 10 to May 16, 2004, across Canada as well as internationally. The theme for this year is Nursing: Knowledge and Commitment at Work, which is reflective of the fact that care provided by nurses is knowledge-based and that nurses deal with increasingly complex cases and issues in the workplace.

Registered nurses make a difference. They play an important role in our health and in our communities. They are dedicated, compassionate, caring, and make a very important contribution to our health care system.

Nurses are appreciated, and I hope that by my rising today in the Legislature, the people of Alberta will take a moment to thank nurses for the job they do 365 days a year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Leaders of Tomorrow Awards

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the recipients of the leaders of tomorrow awards handed out in my constituency recently. The awards are designed to honour young people in the community that stand out in their efforts to make a difference by volunteerism and service to individuals in their community in general.

Awards were handed out in both Camrose and Wetaskiwin, and the recipients were well deserving. Out of 33 outstanding nominees from the Camrose ceremony the leaders of tomorrow were Ryan Koehli, Jen Ross, Jarett Rude, and Kelsey Symyck. In Wetaskiwin there were 22 nominees, and the winners of the awards were Katrine Maygard, Rachael King, and Melissa Henke.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the nominees and award recipients for the contributions they make to our communities and for the important work they do as volunteers. They are the leaders of today, and their services and generosity will surely make them leaders of tomorrow. It is with great pride that I recognize my young constituents today and wish them continuing success on their way to a promising future.

Thank you.

Alberta Summer Games

Mr. Tannas: Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to recognize the great efforts of volunteers in High River, Okotoks, and the MD of Foothills who are hosting Alberta's 2004 Summer Games from July 22 to July 25. Volunteer committee members Diane, Ellen, Carol, Shawn, Doug, Lee, Marg, Traci, and countless others are eagerly preparing to host teams and visitors from across Alberta. Teams will compete in events as diverse as badminton, baseball, BMX, canoeing, golf, basketball, football, soccer, softball, rugby, swimming, athletics, field hockey, and many more sporting endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans are invited to attend. Information and details are available by calling (403) 652-3005 or through the web site www.albertagames.com. I hope to see you all there.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

National Nursing Week

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. From May 10 to May 16 Canadians across the country are getting together to celebrate National Nursing Week. Nurses are the front-line workers in our health care system and are dedicated to restoring, maintaining, and improving the quality of life for all Canadians. From delivering community health programs to providing life-saving care in hospital situations, nurses are involved in many aspects of their patients' well-being.

In 1985 the Canadian Minister of Health established National Nursing Week to recognize the many contributions of the nursing profession to the health of Canadians. Every year National Nursing Week falls on the second week in May to coincide with Florence Nightingale's birthday on May 12.

This year the theme for National Nursing Week is Nursing: Knowledge and Commitment at Work. Nurses are working in an increasingly complex environment, and to best serve their patients, nurses need to stay up to date on the latest research and technology. The theme this year recognizes the commitment of nurses to provide the best care possible by combining new information with more traditional best practices and lessons learned.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Wamer.

2:50

Apex Youth Awards

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise in this Assembly to recognize four outstanding young individuals from my constituency. On Wednesday, April 7, Melissa Krizsan, Gloria Layton, Virginia Layton, and Kristen Reti were honoured as winners at the third annual Apex youth awards. These awards were created to recognize remarkable young citizens and are hosted each year by the Rotary Club of Taber and the *Taber Times*.

The Apex awards are unique because they do not focus on athletics or academics but rather acknowledge extraordinary individuals who illustrate dedication and commitment to serving their communities. These are exceptional individuals that unselfishly dedicate their time and effort to helping others.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that members of the Assembly join with me in congratulating the four winners of the Apex youth awards and the 21 nominees for their exceptional service and dedication to their communities.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Art from the Heart

Ms Kryczka: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, on May 7, the Rotary Club of Calgary Sarcee hosted its sixth annual Art from the Heart dinner and auction at the Red & White Club at McMahon Stadium. Over 400 people attended the very successful, fun event.

What is amazing about Rotary Sarcee Club is that it is one of the youngest and smallest in Calgary, but the 25 members are confident that if they indeed raise their goal of \$40,000, they will have raised \$235,000 in total to benefit many worthwhile projects, including Salvation Army Children's Village, Closer to Home Community Services, and Rotary Challenger Park.

This year the money raised will provide the YWCA's Mary Dover House, an emergency residence for women and children in need, with an urgently needed community kitchen. In 2002 Mary Dover House provided shelter for 1,800 women and 422 children who required crisis or transitional accommodation.

First Calgary Savings, the YWCA, and Ernest Manning high school volunteer club also provided support to the fundraiser.

My husband, Gord May, and I are proud to be members of the Rotary Sarcee Club, and I heartily congratulate this Little Club That Could and did and continues to do so.

Thank you.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 32

Appropriation Act, 2004

Mrs. Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 32, the Appropriation Act, 2004. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Bill 211

Alberta Personal Income Tax (School Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2004

Mr. Vandermeer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Alberta Personal Income Tax (School Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2004.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this bill. Its purpose is to amend the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act by introducing a nonrefundable tax credit to help parents pay for additional costs associated with education worth 50 per cent of the costs to a maximum of \$3,000 which would be available to parents with children enrolled within a primary or secondary school. The credit could be used whether children are attending public, separate, or independent schools. Parents who home-school would also be eligible for the credit, and it could also be used for tutoring expenses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Bill 212

Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 212, the Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act.

This bill will create a nonpartisan association of former Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. This association would be able to use its knowledge and experience to promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy in Alberta and throughout the Commonwealth.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 212 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Bill 214

Public Automobile Insurance Commission Act

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Public Automobile Insurance Commission Act, otherwise to be referred to as Bill 214.

Mr. Speaker, this bill calls for the appointment of a public automobile insurance commission, its function being to review existing legislation governing automobile insurance, to hold public hearings, and to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly regarding the implementation of public automobile insurance in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 214 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Bill 215

Alberta Official Folk Dance Act

Mr. Yankowsky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 215, the Alberta Official Folk Dance Act.

Mr. Speaker, the bill asks for square dancing to be declared as the official dance of Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill 215 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Bill 216

Low-cost Electricity for Alberta Act

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I request leave to please introduce a bill being the Low-cost Electricity for Alberta Act. This bill will be known as Bill 216.

It will recognize that electricity should be treated as an essential service and not a commodity subject to radical price swings, and it will implement a manner in which we can once and for all unplug this province from electricity deregulation.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 216 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Bill 217

Government Accountability (Identification of Expenditures) Amendment Act, 2004

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent years Albertans have seen continuous rising in our public expenditure. However, myself and my constituents are concerned with the creeping effect of budget increases. Bill 217, that I'm introducing today, is to provide a mechanism for the government departments to improve their accountability for each budget increase over the prior year. Each budget increase should be justified, account for its purpose, and be tracked and reported for its results.

The Speaker: I would sincerely ask the hon. member to move first reading.

Mr. Cao: Yes. I request leave to introduce this bill being Bill 217, the Government Accountability (Identification of Expenditures) Amendment Act, 2004.

[Motion carried; Bill 217 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two quick tablings. My first is a tabling of a letter to Mr. Bob Nicholson, president of Hockey Canada, congratulating him and all members of Hockey Canada for a second straight gold medal win at the 2004 World Hockey Championships in Prague, Czechoslovakia. I might note that Team Canada has done its part for the country, and we all wish the same for the Flames: to do their part for the province in the Stanley Cup. I'm sure they will.

My second tabling is to Mr. Brad Banister, president and general manager of the Calgary Roughnecks lacrosse club, congratulating them on winning the 2004 Champion's Cup.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. the Premier, who indicated in question period the other day and again today that he would table the appropriate number of copies of his paper Allende, Pinochet and the Chilean Media in response particularly to the misapprehension of what was said in *Hansard*, which was that as a dictator he, meaning Pinochet, was no better than Allende.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on behalf of.

Ms Blakeman: I have two tablings, and one is on behalf of. Thank you. The one on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview is the appropriate number of copies of the letter that he referred to, which is on the issues of conflict of interest in the ophthalmology department and the Calgary regional health authority.

The second is documents that I referred to during one of my questions, that being five copies of concerns raised by Zoocheck Canada on the GuZoo facility, including some very distressing photographs of how animals are being treated.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to table the appropriate number of copies on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar – this is under the Financial Administration Act – of Treasury Board directive 14/98, and it was dated at Edmonton, Alberta, the 16th day of December 1998.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Thank you very much. I would like on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to table the appropriate number of copies of a memo outlining all the concerns the Auditor General raised regarding the need for detailed documentation to support ministers' expense reimbursements. This came from a deputy minister to cabinet ministers.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands to table two letters. The first letter is addressed to the Premier from hundreds of members of the Chilean community expressing their outrage at the "offensive, disrespectful, and inaccurate remarks" made here in the Assembly the other day by the Premier concerning the terrible events in Chile in 1973.

Mr. Speaker, the second tabling is a letter dated May 7, 2004, written by Leo Campos Aldunez to the *Edmonton Journal*. The letter again is asking the Premier to apologize to the thousands of Canadians of Chilean ancestry who fled their homeland because of the brutality of Pinochet's dictatorship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings, annual reports. The first is the annual report for 2003 of APEGGA, the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta.

The second tabling is the financial statements dated June 30, 2003, for the Certified Management Accountants of Alberta.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, proper notice having been given on Thursday, May 6, it's my pleasure to move that written questions 67, 70, 74, and 82 through 88 be dealt with today. There being no further written questions, there are none to stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

Trade Director's Dinner

Q67. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that the following question be accepted.

What was the government purpose that resulted in the trade director for Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean charging \$226 to the Alberta taxpayer at the Four Seasons restaurant on September 30, 2002?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Economic Development I'm pleased to indicate that we are prepared to accept Written Question 67.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close the debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you. We thank the minister for that and wish that that could happen with all of the written questions we've asked.

[Written Question 67 carried]

Utilities Service Quality Plans

Q70. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that the following question be accepted.

What established service quality benchmarks is the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board using to ensure quality customer service following its December 19, 2003, announcement to implement service quality plans for regulated gas and electric rate providers and electric-wire owners effective January 1, 2004, and how were these benchmarks determined?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Although this ministry is responsible for the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, it of course does not direct the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. In that light, there has been discussion between the ministry and the utilities board. Of course, it is well known that the bulk of this information is found in abundance in the public domain. Recognizing the reduced assets of a party that's moving from seven to five, we will be very pleased to ensure that the EUB can provide this information for them.

Mr. Bonner: Well, I'd like to thank the minister for his co-operation in providing that information and certainly inform him that the five that are here plus the other person that I think he referred to is here as well to keep him accountable.

Thank you.

[Written Question 70 carried]

Utility Companies' Performance Reports

Q74. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that the following question be accepted.

How often are utility companies in Alberta required to submit performance reports?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to spend a great deal of time talking about the inadequacy of the question; in fact, what type of performance report? What factors should it cover? How would they define the word "performance"? How would they define the word "report"? But to be extremely, as usual, charitable

and transparent and accountable, I will answer the question by saying that the utility companies provide the Energy and Utilities Board with quarterly reports once every three months on their customer quality of service plans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Yes. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar I'd like to thank the minister for his response.

[Written Question 74 carried]

3:10 Tuition Fee Policy

Q82. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that the following question be accepted.

What measures has the government taken to implement the Auditor General's recommendation contained in his 2002-2003 annual report that the Department of Learning measure whether the tuition fee policy and its related programs are effective in making postsecondary education affordable to students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to respond on behalf of the hon. Minister of Learning and indicate that the government is prepared to accept Written Question 82.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Yes. I'd like to thank the Minister of Learning for that response.

Thank you.

[Written Question 82 carried]

Tuition Fee Policy

Q83. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that the following question be accepted.

What measures has the government taken to implement the Auditor General's recommendation contained in his 2002-2003 annual report that the Department of Learning require public postsecondary institutions to comply with the tuition fee policy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Evans: Thank you. Once again on behalf of the Minister of Learning I'm prepared to respond, indicating the government's willingness to accept Written Question 83.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Yes. Once again I'd like to thank the minister for his co-operation.

[Written Question 83 carried]

Department of Learning Grant Processes

Q84. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that the following question be accepted.

What measures has the government taken to implement the Auditor General's recommendation contained in his 2002-2003 annual report that the Department of Learning improve its grant processes by not approving the money before defining the nature and extent of the grant commitment or establishing accountability criteria?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Evans: Thank you. I'll respond and indicate that the government is willing and prepared to accept Written Question 84.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to close the debate.

Mr. Bonner: Once again we'd like to thank the minister for his co-operation on this particular issue.

[Written Question 84 carried]

Management of Parks and Protected Areas

Q85. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that the following question be accepted.

What measures has the Ministry of Community Development taken to conduct an evaluation of the cost effectiveness of "service delivery alternatives" to managing parks and protected areas to correct serious flaws in its implementation as indicated in the Auditor General's 2002-2003 annual report?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate that I'm prepared to accept this question with amendments, which I'll get into shortly. Those amendments, of course, were shared with the opposition prior to 11 this morning as per procedures.

Now, as to the amendment, Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed this question quite carefully, and in the interest of trying to respond to it accurately, I'm proposing that we do amend the question to more accurately reflect the specific recommendations made by the Auditor General. I believe those amendments have been circulated.

I should also take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to briefly explain the rationale for these minor changes to the question in order to better reflect the exact wording used specifically by the Auditor General as opposed to the wording used by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, which I think will be helpful in considering the question.

The change in wording from "to managing" to read "for operating" reflects what we are considering here as better ways to operate our sites and not alternatives to parks and protected areas management altogether.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the Auditor General's report is it suggested that there are serious flaws, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre has indicated in the original wording. In fact, the parks agency is merely looking at better ways to evaluate the cost effectiveness of service delivery alternatives and to get the best possible service for Albertans.

That having been said, I'm pleased to amend Written Question 85, and it would now read as follows:

What measures has the Ministry of Community Development taken to conduct an evaluation of the cost effectiveness of "service delivery alternatives" for operating parks and protected areas as recommended in the Auditor General's 2002-2003 annual report?

Thank you.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It comes as no surprise to us that the minister wouldn't accept a written question that indicated that his department had serious flaws in it, so we are not surprised at the amendment but, in fact, are pleased that he would at least consider this written question. So we are in support of the written question as he has amended it.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close the debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate it whenever we can get information from this government, so we thank the minister for this.

[Written Question 85 as amended carried]

Park Management Contracts

Q86. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that the following question be accepted.

What measures has the Ministry of Community Development taken to implement the changes to the process for awarding and monitoring park management contracts to private operators as recommended in the Auditor General's 2002-2003 annual report to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are not being wasted?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will accept Written Question 86 with amendments. I would just indicate to the House that the amendment, as I will read shortly, was shared with the opposition prior to 11 a.m. today as required by procedures of the House.

Now, specifically to Written Question 86 I should just point out again that in order to fairly and accurately represent what the Auditor General's recommendations were and in particular as they relate to the question here before us, I need to explain briefly the rationale for the changes that I'm suggesting for the House's consideration to the original motion.

Again, what we're talking about here, hon. members, is making improvements, not making dramatic changes, hence the need for the question to be amended.

Secondly, once again for all members' ears, I would ask people in the House to please choose their words as carefully as possible, because in fact no taxpayer dollars are being wasted anywhere in our provincial parks or our protected areas. Those dollars that come from taxpayers that are allocated to those areas, Mr. Speaker, are being stretched to the max, and they certainly are not being wasted.

That having been said, we are looking to improve some of the processes, and therefore I would move that Written Question 86 be amended to now read as follows:

What measures has the Ministry of Community Development taken to improve the process for awarding and monitoring park management contracts to private operators as recommended in the Auditor General's 2002-2003 annual report?

Thank you.

Ms Carlson: Mr. Speaker, this minister and I are never going to

agree on whether or not this government is responsible for wasting taxpayer dollars, but we will accept the amendments.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close the debate.

3:20

Ms Carlson: Mr. Speaker, we'd like to thank the minister for providing the information to us.

[Written Question 86 as amended carried]

Commission on Learning Class-size Recommendations

Q87. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that the following question be accepted.

What progress has the government made and what measures have been put in place to implement all the class-size recommendations of the Alberta Commission on Learning?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will respond and indicate that the government is prepared to accept Written Question 87.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to close the debate.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you. We appreciate the information being supplied by the minister.

[Written Question 87 carried]

Utilities Disconnections

Q88. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that the following question be accepted.

How much money has the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board distributed to energy customers whose utilities were disconnected in error between January 1, 2004, and March 9, 2004?

Mr. Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just feel this afternoon that my life is an open book, and as such and in the spirit of such transparency we'll of course accept again the question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to inform the minister that we certainly appreciate his co-operation.

[Written Question 88 carried]

The Speaker: Well, that clears that section of the Order Paper.

Motions for Returns

head:

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been served on Thursday, May 6, it's my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions 88 through 105, 108 through 123, 128, 134 through 143, 146 through 162, 164 through

168, 174 through 180, 183 through 205, 207, 208, 209, and 210.
Thank you.

[Motion carried]

Capital Plan Transfer of Funds

M88. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount broken down by transaction of funds transferred into and out of the capital plan between April 1, 2003, and February 17, 2004.

Mrs. Nelson: Mr. Speaker, the answer is nil, and therefore we have to reject. I think the hon. member is referring to something else. We don't transfer money in and out of the capital plan at all. If she is talking about something else, maybe the capital accounts, then she might want to phone me and I'd be delighted to give her the summary, but we would have to reject this motion as it's written.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to conclude the debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will request that information from you. Thank you for that. We stand corrected.
Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 88 lost]

Fiscal Stability Fund Transfers

M89. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount broken down by transaction of funds transferred into and out of the Alberta fiscal stability fund between April 1, 2003, and February 17, 2004.

Mrs. Nelson: Again, Mr. Speaker, I think we're onto a different track. We don't have a stability fund in the province of Alberta, so we're going to have to reject the motion for a return. I'm gathering – and I'm making an assumption – that she's probably referring to the sustainability fund. Again I'll make the same offer. If that's what you're looking for, just give me a call and I'll provide the information. But we have to reject the motion as it's written.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close the debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will reword that motion and forward it to you. Thank you for agreeing to provide the information.

[Motion for a Return 89 lost]

Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development IT Initiatives

M90. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent on information technology initiatives within the Department and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development broken down by initiative for the fiscal year 2002-2003.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Deputy Premier I accept Motion for a Return 90.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very pleased to get the answer to this question. I believe I asked a similar question to other ministries last week and was denied, so thank you very much.

[Motion for a Return 90 carried]

Drilling in Parks and Protected Areas

M91. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total number of oil and gas wells drilled within 25 kilometres of a park or protected area in Alberta between January 1, 1985, and February 17, 2004, broken down by the type of well and the number of wells drilled for each year.

Ms Carlson: This becomes quite critical information when we're talking about managing the wild and protected areas of our province and particularly in terms of managing wildlife corridors and habitat. So I am hoping that the government will provide this information to us.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we'll not be able to provide that information; therefore, we're accepting the rejection mode of questioning here. In fact, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board information service collection offers a huge, huge amount of data on oil, gas, and oil sands drilling and well information.

We're rejecting the request not, certainly, out of a mean heart or more work; we're just rejecting it in the fact that we don't think the question is in fact answerable, because we cannot be sure that the exact information the member is seeking is available from the board in the form she desires. For example, the number and the size of parks and protected areas have changed considerably since 1985 as this government has moved forward to fulfill its commitment of protecting well over 12 per cent of the available land base.

I know that after the next elected event in which she participates, the member is going to have ample time to be able to do a great deal of research in finding the answer to this question.

Ms Carlson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the sarcasm does not become him. That information is available. We know that it is. We will put another motion for a return on the Order Paper, then, asking for that information by specific year, and perhaps he could answer the question at that point in time.

[Motion for a Return 91 lost]

Drilling in Urban Areas

M92. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total number of oil and gas wells drilled within 50 kilometres of an urban area in Alberta between January 1, 1985, and February 17, 2004, broken down by the type of well and the number of wells drilled for each year.

Ms Carlson: Now, perhaps the urban areas have not been quite so movable as the park boundaries have and this information will be more readily available.

Mr. Smith: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the urban boundaries are extremely movable. I think that any administration that has seen since 1992 the explosive growth in Alberta coupled with the creation of almost a half a million jobs, balanced budgets, orderly debt paydown – we've seen a tremendous infusion of welcome people

from across Canada. Of course, well over 600,000 people have moved to this province, and that has created tremendous changes in the urban makeup of this great province and, in effect, would make it again extremely difficult if not impossible to reflect on the member's question.

So I would have to refer to my previous answer and again reject the motion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close the debate.

3:30

Ms Carlson: Well, Mr. Speaker, if I believed that this minister was acting in good faith – some other ministers have this afternoon – we would have seen at least an amendment where he would have given some information for one or two or three years past. In fact, anyone who thinks of the kind of growth that we've had in this province, it hasn't changed the urban boundary such that this information would be impossible or even hard to provide. Once again, he is trying to deny information to Albertans.

[Motion for a Return 92 lost]

Premier's Office Bonuses

M93. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount of each bonus and aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to senior officials within the office of the Premier over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by position and amount paid to each official.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 93 you may recall, as I hope other members here will as well, that we did deal with this matter when we discussed Motion for a Return 34. Subsequent to that discussion we of course approved an amendment for Motion for a Return 34 and tried to list all departments as being covered under the amendment. So the amended Motion for a Return 34 as passed currently reads:

A breakdown of the aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to employees within the government of Alberta listed by department over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by the range of bonus dollar amounts and the number of employees who received a bonus within that range.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 93 is addressed through the amended Motion for a Return 34 because, of course, issues in this regard that pertain to the office of the Premier are in fact included under that amended motion. With that having been said, there is no need for Motion for a Return 93 to be pursued any further since the essence of it is covered in the amended Motion for a Return 34, as I've indicated. So we'll be rejecting this one.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 93 lost]

Executive Council Bonuses

M94. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount of each bonus and aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to senior officials within Executive Council over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by position and amount paid to each official.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the same reasons that I just indicated regarding Motion for a Return 93, it is not necessary to have Motion for a Return 94. It is already covered under the amended Motion for a Return 34, that I spoke to just moments ago. So, on that basis, we're able to reject Motion for a Return 94 since it is essentially covered also under Motion for a Return 34 as amended.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 94 lost]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Natural Gas Pipelines

M95. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the number of natural gas pipeline ruptures, bursts, breaches, and leaks that have occurred in Alberta in the calendar years 2002 and 2003 broken down by location and level of environmental damage.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would direct the member to the Energy and Utilities Board's information service that includes information such as a field surveillance inspection incident list and the annual field surveillance report. Information is available on incidents from as far back as 1975, including information on pipeline hits. It is available for viewing at no charge, or the member can get information by annual subscription updated monthly and pay for the service, as does everyone else.

Therefore, with that abundant amount of public information in the domain today we are compelled to reject the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to conclude the debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that the environmental damage is not listed there and/or any moves that they have made to repair such damage. So what he's suggesting isn't adequate information.

[Motion for a Return 95 lost]

Department of Economic Development Bonuses

M96. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount of each bonus and aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to senior officials within the Ministry and Department of Economic Development over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by position and amount paid to each official.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Economic Development I'm going to indicate that the essence of this motion for a return is already addressed through amended Motion for a Return 34, that was accepted by this House. I won't bother to go into all the explanation in that regard, because I covered it, I think, adequately a few minutes ago when we were talking about MR 93 and 94. On that basis, MR 96 is not required, because it's already taken care of through MR 34 as amended. So we can reject it, in other words.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Ms Carlson: No. Thank you. Question.

[Motion for a Return 96 lost]

Department of Environment Bonuses

M97. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount of each bonus and aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to senior officials within the Ministry and Department of Environment over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by position and amount paid to each official.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the essence of Motion for a Return 97 is covered under Motion for a Return 34 as amended. We'll just be reminded of the comments I made earlier this afternoon when addressing motions for returns 93 and 94, which make MR 97 essentially covered by MR 34 as amended. So, on that basis, on behalf of the Minister of Environment we are able to reject MR 97.

[Motion for a Return 97 lost]

Department of Sustainable Resource Development Bonuses

M98. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount of each bonus and aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to senior officials within the Ministry and Department of Sustainable Resource Development over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by position and amount paid to each official.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 98 it, too, is covered under MR 34 as amended and approved by this House earlier this year wherein all departments of government will be responding and addressing the issue of bonus dollar amounts and numbers of employees and so on. So, on that basis, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development I can indicate that MR 98 is not required and can therefore be rejected since its essence is also covered under MR 34 as amended.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 98 lost]

3:40 Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations Bonuses

M99. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount of each bonus and aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to senior officials within the Ministry and Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations over the 2002-2003 fiscal year broken down by position and amount paid to each official.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I'm going

to indicate that MR 99 is also covered under MR 34 as amended and approved by this House, and it will provide for a breakdown of the aggregate amount of all bonuses awarded to employees. It'll be listed by department and so on. So, on that basis, MR 99 is not required and can be rejected accordingly.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 99 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Municipal Affairs Department

M100. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Municipal Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs I just want to indicate that this particular motion for a return is of course addressed specifically to the Department of Municipal Affairs, as you've just heard from the hon. member opposite, but in fact amended Motion for a Return 24, that was approved and accepted by this House earlier this year, opens up that particular motion to include all government departments. As such, we do not need to address them individually as each MR is suggesting here. They are going to all be addressed under MR 24 as amended, and as such we are able to reject Motion for a Return 100 on that basis.

I'll just quickly read this once, Mr. Speaker. MR 24 as amended indicates the following:

A statement of all credit card expenses for the fiscal year 2002-2003 incurred by all deputy ministers, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders in aggregate for each government department categorized by accommodation, travel, hosting, and miscellaneous expenses.

So that information will come forward under MR 24, as I've indicated.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member to conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 100 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Revenue Department

M101. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Revenue.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the hon. Minister of Revenue to indicate that Motion for a Return 101 is also essentially covered under Motion for a Return 24 as amended. So for the reasons that I just put on record a couple of minutes ago regarding the information requested, we are able to reject MR 101 since, again, its essence is covered under MR 24 that was amended and approved by this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member to conclude debate? No?

[Motion for a Return 101 lost]

**Business Credit Card Statements for
Transportation Department**

M102. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Transportation.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Transportation I can indicate that MR 102 can also be rejected since it is essentially also covered under MR 24 as amended and approved by this Assembly, wherein a statement of all credit card expenses, et cetera, will in fact be provided through that particular MR as amended. Transportation is of course one of the many ministries within government, so it is going to be reflected therein. Therefore, we can reject MR 102.

[Motion for a Return 102 lost]

Department of Transportation IT Contracts

M103. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent by the Ministry of Transportation on contracts for information technology services broken down by company and total dollar amount for each for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 103 I can indicate on behalf of the hon. Minister of Transportation that this motion is essentially covered under MR 10 as amended and approved earlier by this Assembly, wherein it was amended to read as follows:

An order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent by the government of Alberta on contracts for information technology services and a listing of vendors providing these services for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

That having been said, the information is going to be provided under Motion for a Return 10 since the Department of Transportation is of course going to be reflected therein. So, on that basis, we are able to reject Motion for a Return 103.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 103 lost]

Calgary Courthouse Public/Private Project

M104. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence received by the Premier between January 1, 2002, and November 18, 2003, regarding potential conflicts of interest over the usage of a private/public partnership to build the Calgary courthouse.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I have to advise the House that on behalf of the Premier and the government I'm rejecting the question. There are a number of reasons for rejecting the question.

First of all, under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, all members of the House should be aware, correspondence that's written to the government is not necessarily public and can only be made public in certain circumstances if the writer of the letter agrees. So it wouldn't be within our purview to accept a question under an order of the Legislature to deliver documents which might otherwise not be deliverable under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and, in fact, without the permission of the writer of the letter.

Secondly, the question is far too broad and ambiguous. It's not clear from the question what conflicts of interest they might be talking about. There are a number of different areas. I don't want to make their case for them, but one might look at some of the questions which arose earlier in the project relative to the concern of the judiciary with the possibility of there being conflicts that might arise if other businesses were collocated in a courthouse with them, the conflicts of interest that might come out from that perspective.

Or they might be asking for letters which refer to a potential conflict of interest with respect to somebody who might be bidding on the process. If it is the process, then I can assure the hon. members that the process has been open and transparent in every way. There was a request for information which went out, and as the Minister of Infrastructure has said in this House on numerous occasions, many parties responded to the request. The next time it went out, it was a request for qualifications, and there were some 15 organizations, groups that responded to the request for qualifications. Then that was narrowed down to a request for proposals, to which four groups responded, and those were narrowed down to three groups and then ultimately to two groups before, finally, the final group.

3:50

With respect to all of that process, there was a fairness commissioner put in place precisely to deal with the issue of potential conflict of interest and to ensure that everybody bidding on the process had the same information and the same opportunity to participate.

So if they're talking about conflict of interest with respect to the process itself, again FOIP wouldn't allow the release of the letter automatically, if there was one. I'm not aware that there are any, but if there were letters, they wouldn't be releasable, because you'd have to get the permission of the person that wrote them. In order to answer this question, you'd have to explore the full gamut of what they were talking about in terms of potential conflicts.

Then, finally, Mr. Speaker, the process is still underway. The Minister of Infrastructure and his department in conjunction with Justice and Finance are working as we speak with the parties involved to finalize the contract with respect to building the courthouse.

So for all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, the question is not appropriately framed and can't be answered appropriately, and I'd ask the House to reject it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to close debate.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I thank the minister for his comments, but I think as well, when we've seen how this whole process for the building of the Calgary courthouse is

unfolding, that it is even more important that this information be shared with all members of this Assembly and with the public.

It is my understanding that we've had comments from some members of the judiciary who have expressed the potential conflict of interest that can occur if the Calgary courthouse were run under a P3 model. As well, we also have seen tremendous cost overruns that have occurred. When we start talking here about conflicts of interest, I think there were also some concerns that one of the companies that would be involved in the private/public partnership also has a number of court proceedings that are taking place right now.

This is a very timely question. It is also a question of openness and transparency, that certainly has not occurred. This is certainly the reason that this motion for a return was put forward. If there ever was a time when this government could be open and transparent, this is it, and I would urge all members of the Assembly to support Motion for a Return 104.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 104 lost]

Public/Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development

M105. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all reports in the possession of the government detailing a cost analysis for the use of private/public partnerships for infrastructure development.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I've outlined many times in this House to the member the process that a proposal goes through. They all have to present a business case for the proposal. There's a very detailed analysis of that done, and any project that is found to be in the public interest can move forward, but until they get to that point, then in fact they can't.

The information that we are given is very much in confidence and proprietary, and as the members quite well know because they served on the all-party committee dealing with freedom of information and protection of privacy, that kind of confidential information just simply cannot be released.

So for those reasons we find it necessary to reject this particular question.

[Motion for a Return 105 lost]

Region 1 Child and Family Services Authority IT Contracts

M108. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent by the region 1, southwest Alberta, child and family services authority on contracts for information technology services broken down by company and total dollar amount for each for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much. Well, it's a pleasure to respond and indicate that the government is prepared to accept MR 108 with amendments, specifically moving that the amendment include "and each of the child and family services authorities or their predecessors, referred to in motions for returns 108 to 116 inclusive and 121," after "region 1, southwest Alberta, child and family services authority."

Mr. Speaker, the rationale for that is fairly obvious. It will enable

us to be more effective in moving the motions for returns. It will encompass the intent of 108 and all of the motions that follow, up to and including 116 and 121. Also, we have shared this information with the opposition colleagues prior to 11 this morning, and I believe it was circulated to all of the members today.

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is in fact a very, very helpful amendment, and we thank the minister for providing it and taking the request for information seriously when it was in fact a serious request. So we will be supporting this amendment and once again thank her.

[Motion for a Return 108 as amended carried]

Public/Private Partnership for Calgary Hospital

M117. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Mr. Bonner that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the business and cost analysis for the proposed private/public partnership for the hospital in south Calgary including any analysis of the savings accrued by using a private/public partnership over a public model.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we don't have much information on the south Calgary hospital. It's in its infancy. Therefore, we have to reject this motion.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member to conclude debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you. It would seem that there are some costs or some projections that should be available to share. We would at least anticipate a future commitment for you to provide that information as it is available.

[Motion for a Return 117 lost]

Premier's Travel to Asia

M118. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount of and a copy of all receipts for the Premier's trip to Asia between January 11, 2004, and January 21, 2004, broken down by travel costs, dining costs, costs for hosting events, entertainment costs, accommodation costs, and miscellaneous costs.

Ms Carlson: We think that these kinds of trips definitely should be scrutinized by taxpayers and hope that they provide this information.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate on behalf of the Premier that he has obviously said in this House that he'll be making information available very shortly with respect to this matter. So I believe the issue being requested in MR 118 will be addressed through that process, and I understand it will be very soon. Therefore, Motion for a Return 118 can be rejected at this time on that basis.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 118 lost]

Community Development Minister's Travel to India

M119. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount of and a copy of all receipts for the Minister of Community Development's trip to India between January 11, 2004, and January 21, 2004, broken down by travel costs, dining costs, costs for hosting events, entertainment costs, accommodation costs, and miscellaneous costs.

Ms Carlson: In fact, it's not just our caucus who's interested in these receipts. As the minister knows, his own constituents would like to see them.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in response to MR 118, there will be more information coming out very, very soon regarding international trips. This was a trip which, for the most part, was also one I made on behalf of the ministry and in conjunction with the Premier, so that will be addressed in that information release that is coming out very soon. That having been said, I won't take up more of the House's time other than to say that Motion for a Return 119 can be rejected on that basis at this time.

[Motion for a Return 119 lost]

Treasury Board Minutes

M120. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all minutes taken at meetings of the Treasury Board between January 1, 1994, and February 17, 2004.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Nelson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion for a Return 120 requests copies of all the minutes taken at meetings of the Treasury Board between January 1, 1994, and February 17, 2004. The deliberations of Treasury Board are in fact confidential. They allow fiscal directions to be determined and options to be evaluated before finalizing their budget. Now, the culmination of the decisions from the Treasury Board are very obvious within the budget documents that get presented in this House and that in fact are debated in this House by ministry.

Further, I would refer hon. members to *Beauchesne* 428(gg) for reference to this that actually reaffirms the position to reject this motion for a return.

[Motion for a Return 120 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We have a request that I would like you to hear. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity. I would like to ask for unanimous consent of this Assembly to revert to private members' bills at 5 o'clock this afternoon.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Ministry of Solicitor General IT Contracts

M122. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total

dollar amount spent by the Ministry of Solicitor General on contracts for information technology services broken down by company and total dollar amount for each for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Solicitor General I would just indicate that the essence of MR 122 is also covered under MR 10 as amended and approved by this Assembly earlier this year, wherein it reads that

an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent by the government of Alberta on contracts for information technology services and a listing of vendors providing these services for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

That having been said and because the Ministry of Solicitor General is one of our government departments, it will be reported on through Motion for a Return 10 as amended. Therefore, Motion for a Return 122 can be rejected at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 122 lost]

Ministry of Infrastructure IT Contracts

M123. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent by the Ministry of Infrastructure on contracts for information technology services broken down by company and total dollar amount for each for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Infrastructure I just want to indicate that MR 123 is also covered under MR 10 as amended and approved by this House. I won't repeat everything I said just three minutes ago, but on the same basis as what I said, Motion for a Return 123 can be rejected at this time since it's already covered under MR 10 as amended.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 123 lost]

4:10 Personnel Administration Office IT Contract Tendering Policy

M128. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the current information technology services contract tendering policy and process for the Personnel Administration Office.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, thank you. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment I just want to indicate that Motion for a Return 128 has essentially already been addressed and covered by Motion for a Return 16, and we may refer back to that as a precedent if you wish. That having been said, we can at this time reject Motion for a Return 128 on that same basis.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member to conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 128 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Department

M134. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated that previous motions for returns are able to be rejected on the basis that they are covered under other motions. This particular one is covered under Motion for a Return 24 as amended, and a statement of all credit card expenses, et cetera, will be provided for each government department. Therefore, since Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is one of our departments, it will be addressed under MR 24 as amended, and as such we're able to reject MR 134 before us at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 134 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Justice and Attorney General Department

M135. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Ms Blakeman that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Justice and Attorney General.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General I can indicate that MR 135 as requested will be addressed through the amendment to Motion for a Return 24, wherein each government department will report. As such, Motion for a Return 135 is not needed and is able to be rejected at this time since the Department of Justice and Attorney General will be covered under MR 24 as amended and approved by this House earlier.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 135 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Children's Services Department

M136. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Children's Services.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, with respect to Motion for a Return 136, again, the essence of this one is already referred to and covered under MR 24 as amended. For the same reasons I've indicated earlier regarding other motions for returns, this one can be rejected at this time because the information essentially will be provided under MR 24 as amended and approved by this House earlier.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 136 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Learning Department

M137. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Learning.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Learning I can indicate that MR 137 is also being addressed through MR 24 as amended, wherein a statement of all credit card expenses, et cetera, will be provided for all the positions and titles for each government department, and that includes the Department of Learning, of course. So on that basis we can reject Motion for a Return 137 at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 137 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Innovation and Science Department

M138. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Innovation and Science.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Innovation and Science may I just indicate that MR 138 is also going to be addressed under MR 24 as amended and approved by this House earlier this year. That having been said, Motion for a Return 138, regarding the provision of credit card expenses and so on, is not required at this time, and we are able to reject it.

Arigato.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 138 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: May we have consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have with us today in the members' gallery a group of 20 elementary school teachers from the Seoul metropolitan office of education in Seoul, South Korea. This is a public school district in Seoul, and they serve approximately 1.6 million students from kindergarten to grade 12.

The Korean teachers are here for a month-long teacher development program, the fifth such program provided under contract to Edmonton public schools. These teachers will study in 14 different elementary schools where they will observe western teaching methodologies, practise teach in classrooms, and share lessons about Korean education and culture with district students. They will reside in homestays with staff at Edmonton public schools. We welcome this sort of collaborative, crosscultural education program, which speaks to the quality of programming available in our schools and the competence of Alberta teachers.

They're accompanied today by Ann Calverley, Nina Brown, Caroline Letourneau, and Sharon Lougheed, in whose class a couple will be observing later this week. I'd ask them to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: 4:20 **Motions for Returns**
(*continued*)

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

M139. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the minister's executive assistant.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development may I just indicate that Motion for a Return 139 is also essentially addressed under Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved by this Assembly earlier this year. That having been said, of course, that particular ministry is one of the government departments that will be reporting a statement of credit card expenses, et cetera, as outlined, and therefore Motion for a Return 139 can be rejected at this time, as I said, on that basis.

To our guests in the gallery may I just say: anyo hasayon. Kamsam hamnida. [As submitted]

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 139 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Energy

M140. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Energy and the minister's executive assistant.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy with respect to Motion for a Return 140 I can indicate that this is also going to be addressed through Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved by the House. That having been said, MR 140 can be rejected on that basis.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 140 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Children's Services

M141. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Children's Services and the minister's executive assistant.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Children's Services I can indicate that Motion for a Return 141 will also be addressed through Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved by this House earlier this year. Therefore, Motion for a Return 141 is able to be looked at through that particular mechanism, and we are on that basis able to reject Motion 141 at this time.

Kamsam hamnida. [As submitted]

[Motion for a Return 141 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Innovation and Science

M142. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Innovation and Science and the minister's executive assistant.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Innovation and Science I can indicate that Motion for a Return 142 will be addressed through Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved earlier this year by the House. Therefore, a statement of all credit card expenses related to members of Executive Council, their executive assistants, and so on with the breakdowns provided for will be addressed. So on that basis MR 142 can be rejected at this time.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To close debate?

[Motion for a Return 142 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Learning

M143. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Learning and the minister's executive assistant.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Learning I just want to indicate that Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved by this House earlier this year will address this matter. As such, Motion for a Return 143, before us at the moment, can be rejected on that basis.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 143 lost]

Ministry of Children's Services IT Contracts

M146. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Dr. Massey that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total dollar amount spent by the Ministry of Children's Services on contracts for information technology services broken down by company and total dollar amount for each for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Children's Services I just want to say that Motion for a Return 146 is not required since the issue of information technology services, the contracts and the vendors and so on, has been addressed through Motion for a Return 10 as amended and approved by this House earlier this year. As such and on that basis, we are able to recommend rejection of Motion for a Return 146.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 146 lost]

Utilities Consumer Advocate

M147. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, correspondence, and recommendations from the Utilities Consumer Advocate to the government regarding consumer utilities issues between September 22, 2003, and February 17, 2004.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This request would involve hundreds of documents that contain personal billing, consumption, and other information entrusted to us in confidence by Alberta's electricity and natural gas consumers. It would also contain sensitive business intelligence entrusted to us by Alberta's electricity and natural gas utilities under a similar protection of privacy. Therefore, Government Services is prepared to reject this Motion for a Return 147.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate?

[Motion for a Return 147 lost]

4:30

Utilities Consumer Advocate

M148. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies

of all documents, including but not limited to correspondence, business plans, budgets, and contracts, related to the creation of the Utilities Consumer Advocate office between September 22, 2003, and February 17, 2004.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We'll be accepting Motion for a Return 148.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Yes. Mr. Speaker, we would like to thank the minister for his openness in providing us with that information.

[Motion for a Return 148 carried]

Shut-in Natural Gas Wells

M149. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents regarding government compensation to companies whose natural gas wells in the Athabasca-Wabasca-McMurray region have been ordered shut in by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

Mr. Smith: We'll reject that.

The Deputy Speaker: To conclude debate, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If he isn't going to give us any information, he could at least tell us why he won't give us any information.

[Motion for a Return 149 lost]

Coal Bed Methane

M150. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents regarding the development of regulations and/or guidelines for the development of natural gas in coal, or coal bed methane, between January 1, 2001, and February 17, 2004.

Mr. Smith: We'll reject that, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands on the motion.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, it's my view that the minister, in rejecting a legitimate request from the opposition to table this thing . . .

Mr. Norris: Can't hear you.

Mr. Mason: I'm sorry. I'll start over. Thank you very much, hon. minister.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Energy, when he rejects a legitimate request for information from the opposition, ought to at least have the courtesy for members of the House to stand up and explain why that might be. You know, in this particular case the whole issue of coal bed methane is a very, very serious issue

facing the future of this province. We've seen in other parts of the continent – particularly I think it's Wyoming if I'm not mistaken – that there has been tremendous damage to the environment by this process.

The minister has on a number of occasions talked about how much different Alberta's situation is, yet the fact of the matter is that the process of drilling for coal bed methane is going ahead and without adequate consideration, without adequate testing or research to determine what is going to be the effect on the environment and on the water table and all kinds of things. Many, many people are concerned about this.

Such a cavalier approach on the part of the minister to these kinds of matters and showing a lack of respect for members of the Assembly by just saying, "Stand up, all you trained seals, and vote this down because I tell you so," is not just showing a lack of respect for the opposition but showing a lack of respect for the government members in particular, and I don't think they should stand for it, Mr. Speaker.

We'll wait and see if the minister has anything to add to this before we have further debate on the matter and on subsequent motions that might be addressed by that minister this afternoon.

With that comment, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat for now.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair would observe that the hon. member is asking for something that's an impossibility. By the rules of our House, to which all sides have agreed, the minister is not allowed to reply to your comments.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to conclude debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very disappointed that this minister would refuse to share any information with us about what is going to be the largest new industry in this particular province in the future. Now, it's going to be critical in terms of the balance between business and energy sector development and environmental needs for the province and for the people that this information be public, be open, and be open for debate.

The kind of arrogance we see reflected not only by this minister's rejection of the questions but rejection of any reason for not disclosing information is indicative of how he intends to proceed in the future, and that does not bode well for the future of this province.

I would request that he reconsider his answer and provide some level of detail in writing to us in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 150 lost]

Coal Bed Methane

M151. Ms Carlson moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including but not limited to correspondence, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes, of the natural gas in coal multistakeholder advisory committee between January 1, 2003, and February 17, 2004.

Mr. Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will be rejecting this motion as well and feel compelled to reply to the earlier comments of the member. I will do it briefly and succinctly out of respect for the private members of this Assembly, whose precious time we are taking answering these questions that they know full well how to get answers to. I'm trying to move quickly through this so that private members' business, particularly important ones of the Canadian Wheat Board, can proceed. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Whoa. We're in Motions for Returns, right now, hon. members.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands on Motion for a Return 151.

Mr. Mason: The minister started by saying that he was going to answer the question and do it succinctly, and all he did was attack the opposition for asking the question and say that the opposition was trying to hold up the private member's bills. [interjections]

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the House has a level of courtesy, which I'd hoped a number of people would return to; that is, we have one person speaking at a time. Right now, the only person . . .

Mr. Lukaszuk: Why would we revert to that?

The Deputy Speaker: That doesn't invite a comment, hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands is the one that's been recognized.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All the minister has to do is give three or four sentences explaining why the information is not going to be forthcoming. That's all that is asked. You know, if he showed as much respect for the opposition's role in this place as he claims to do for the backbenchers and their private members' bills, maybe we could get on with both today.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to conclude debate.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have for the past three weeks given unanimous consent to this House to revert to private members' business, putting aside our questions. We have had to revert to Written Questions and Motions for Returns because this government refuses to provide information, refuses to be open and accountable, and refuses to share any information about their future developments with the people of this province. This is in fact the only recourse left open to us, which they are once again denying us access to.

We have had some cases of extreme co-operation here this afternoon from ministers other than the Minister of Energy. We have had several ministers here provide excellent information to us. The Minister of Children's Services agreed to provide detailed information and consolidate a number of motions for returns, which we also agreed to in order to speed up this process. So I would say that we in the opposition are acting in extreme good faith, and this government, particularly the Minister of Energy, is acting in extreme bad faith.

[Motion for a Return 151 lost]

Crude Oil Royalty Marketing Process

M152. Mr Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all economic reviews and evaluations of the Alberta crude oil royalty marketing process between January 1, 2003, and February 17, 2004.

Mr. Smith: A report is being done, Mr. Speaker, that in the fullness of time will direct an answer to this question. Therefore, we are compelled to reject.

The Deputy Speaker: To reject?

Mr. Smith: To reject.

[Motion for a Return 152 lost]

Electricity Transmission Development

M153. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, business plans, and correspondence regarding the government's electricity transmission development policy between January 1, 2001, and February 17, 2004.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we'll reject this motion and direct the member to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, where it can be dealt with more appropriately.

Mr. Bonner: Once again, for the minister who more often than anybody else in this House tells us that his government is open and transparent, that type of a reply to Motion for a Return 153 is certainly unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

We have not had such a boondoggle in this province since we went to electricity deregulation, that has cost Albertans somewhere in excess of \$8 billion to this point, and it is continuing to soar. Certainly, as the price of oil and natural gas continue to rise at rapid rates, the cost of electricity generation is going to increase as well. So for the minister not to be open and accountable and not to share these documents with all of us in the Assembly and all Albertans is unforgivable.

[Motion for a Return 153 lost]

Redwood Energy Well Blowout

M154. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, reports, statistical data, and correspondence regarding the blowout of a Redwood Energy well located near Edson between June 7, 2001, and February 17, 2004.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, the process compels us to reject this motion and would direct the member to the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, that can provide any interested person with extensive information about this and other events.

[Motion for a Return 154 lost]

Electricity Deregulation

M155. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, business plans, performance measures, and statistical data regarding the government's deregulation of electricity between January 1, 1992, and January 1, 2001.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would direct the member to business plans and performance measures all readily available in the public domain and, therefore, am compelled to reject Motion for a Return 155.

Mr. Mason: I'm compelled to rise on this one, Mr. Speaker, because it was more than just the business plans and the performance measures contained in them that was asked for here. Now, this is

probably one of the central requests before the Assembly today. Here is the paper trail on electricity deregulation. I commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for asking this question because he's basically asking: what has the government been doing on electricity deregulation? Why did they do it? What's happened? What have they been doing to monitor and analyze the situation as it progressed? You know, the public of Alberta and certainly the opposition parties really are perplexed about why it is the government has stuck with electricity deregulation all along.

In the face of it, it would seem that it would be almost an irrational course of action given the dramatic increase in electricity prices and the growth of bureaucracy, which the government claims to be opposed to. It's far more complex than it used to be. There's a lot more bureaucracy. There are more bodies running it. More people have to be assembled and documents kept and so on. This is a critical piece of the package of information that we need in this Assembly in order to analyze whether or not there's some rationale behind the government's actions in essentially doubling the cost of power in this province. Why would a government do that and persist in that course of action in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, Mr. Speaker?

So I would urge members of the Assembly to vote aye for this particular motion for a return because this is probably one of the key ones of the entire session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

Mr. Snelgrove: As we carefully weigh the extreme relevance of this motion, could the minister tell us before we cast our vote on this, considering this goes back up to 12 years, how much time and how much cost this might actually be in his department to consider answering this motion?

The Deputy Speaker: That's probably a very good question, but under our rules that all sides have agreed to, the minister can only reply once, and he's already had his crack at it. The proposer may have a response to conclude.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in support of the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, the cost of providing this information compared to the eight billion dollars plus that it's cost Albertans through the whole deregulation process of electricity is minuscule. It is very, very small, so I would think that's a very good question and that the minister should reconsider very quickly about allowing everybody in this Assembly and all Albertans access to this very important information.

[Motion for a Return 155 lost]

Electricity Deregulation

M156. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence between TransAlta Corporation, including any subsidiaries, and the government regarding electricity deregulation between January 1, 1990, and February 17, 2004.

Mr. Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to move quickly out of deference to important matters of private members in the House. Again, we'll reject this motion. Anybody who has been in this House for any length of time, which the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has, knows full well the details surrounding the freedom of information act, knows full well that that's third party information, and knows full well that that is prohibited by law to be released.

[Motion for a Return 156 lost]

Electricity Deregulation

M157. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all performance measures and statistical data regarding the effect of the government's deregulation of electricity on residential and small- and medium-business customers between January 1, 2001, and February 17, 2004.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, there are no documents available to respond to this motion; therefore, we could accept it and say that there are no documents available to this motion, or we can in fact reject it because there are no documents responsive to this motion. I leave it in the hands of the Assembly.

[Motion for a Return 157 lost]

Electricity Deregulation

M158. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the total cost of all reports commissioned by the government regarding electricity deregulation between January 1, 1990, and February 17, 2004, broken down by the cost for each report.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, there's no evidence that I know of that any reports addressing the wide-ranging subject of electricity deregulation exist in the department. So again I leave it to the good minds of the members of the Assembly to make this decision.

[Motion for a Return 158 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Finance

M159. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Finance and the minister's executive assistant.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance I can indicate that Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved by this House earlier this session in fact addresses this issue, and a statement of all the credit card expenses et cetera for the minister and for executive assistants and so on for all government departments will be provided pursuant to MR 26 as amended. On that basis MR 159 can be rejected at this time.

[Motion for a Return 159 lost]

Business Credit Card Statements for Minister of Infrastructure

M160. Mr. Bonner moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2002-2003 issued to the Minister of Infrastructure and the minister's executive assistant.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Infrastructure I just want to indicate again that Motion for a Return 26 as amended and approved earlier by this House does address this matter, and the statement of all credit card expenses will be provided, including the Ministry of Infrastructure, which, of course, is part of government. On that basis MR 160 can be rejected at this time.

[Motion for a Return 160 lost]

Electricity Deregulation

M161. Mr. Bonner moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all business plans or business models prepared by the government regarding electricity deregulation between January 1, 1995, and March 16, 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister will be rejecting that motion.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 161 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I understand that earlier this afternoon unanimous consent was granted in the Assembly that we'd now move from this particular order of business on to an additional order of business.

head: 5:00 Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 203 Canada Pension Plan Credits Statutes Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Ms Kryczka: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've already heard substantial debate surrounding Bill 203, and I would like to thank all my colleagues for their support and for their comments.

To summarize Bill 203 very briefly, Bill 203 provides ex-spouses and separated couples a choice in how best to divide their assets pertinent to their individual circumstances. The current problem in Alberta is that when a signed agreement between ex-spouses or ex-partners waives the right to future claim on each other's CPP credits or pension, this contract agreement is not enforceable. This does happen because we don't have provincial legislation in place to ensure that an ex-spouse will not renege on the waiver in the agreement already agreed to.

Bill 203 prevents an ex-spouse from applying for a credit split without the other ex's knowledge and especially after both had mutually signed a divorce agreement to waive future claims to each other's CPP benefits. Bill 203 prevents the effect of creating a future entitlement for an ex-spouse. Only one of the ex-spouses or ex-partners needs to apply for this split, with the consent of the other individual not being necessary. An appeal can be made that can only challenge the information provided on the application such as the time the couple spent together. One of the exes could make an application to split the other ex's CPP credits many years after the

original agreement was signed, up to 10, 15 years later.

The Canada pension plan allows for the provinces to opt out of the credit-splitting program through section 55.2. However, the provinces must enact legislation allowing for spousal agreement. This legislation must make specific reference to the CPP. Without provincial legislation spousal waivers with respect to CPP credits may not be upheld. Bill 203 provides the provincial legislation necessary to legitimize spousal agreements. Section 55.2 of the CPP act grants provinces authority to opt out of CPP credit splitting.

Bill 203, as I said, would provide that legislation. Agreements back to June 1986 will be honoured. Bill 203 allows both parties to make sure that they resolve all assets when divorce or separation proceedings are done, even CPP benefits. Bill 203 brings closure to a divorce or separation.

An important point regarding splitting CPP benefits: a credit-split decision is never changed or returned to an ex regardless of a change in circumstances. An ex who discovers later that he or she didn't receive any CPP benefits is still entitled to those benefits as long as he or she did not sign an agreement that stated no future division of CPP credits.

Other jurisdictions have recognized the importance of choice. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Quebec all have legislation to opt out of the CPP credit-splitting program. Manitoba plans to introduce a pilot project this year.

Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 203, the Canada Pension Plan Credits Statutes Amendment Act, 2004.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a third time]

Bill 204 Blood Samples Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It's an honour to begin debate in third reading of Bill 204. Before I comment on the bill, I would like the record to show my gratitude to my researcher, Mr. Matthew Stepan, who has worked tirelessly on this bill, Barb Letendre and Cherry Robinson in my respective offices, and definitely Ms Diane Paltzat from the Edmonton Police Service, who has provided us with a great deal of technical information.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of taking blood samples to help infected and injured health and emergency workers was formally presented by the Alberta federation of police chiefs. Although they are big supporters of this legislation, they are not the only professionals that will benefit from this bill. I have presented petitions from the Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Taber, and Camrose police services; also the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police. The Blood Tribe police have also sent a letter and a petition urging this Assembly to support Bill 204.

This bill is a necessary response to the trend by some people to use the threat of disease as a weapon. The deputy chief of the Blood Tribe police has stated that some police officers have been exposed to bodily fluids in the past and that this bill could have helped them access the appropriate information to assess the severity of their injury.

The Alberta Fire Fighters Association and the Lethbridge Firefighters Union have also voiced their support for Bill 204. Firefighters, as we know, are often the first to arrive at the scene of an accident. As a result, they also face the same dangers as police officers.

I have also tabled supports from the Alberta correctional officers

and the correctional services workers as a great deal of debate has focused on police officers, firefighters, and health care providers; however, the chair of the AUPE Local 003 has expressed gratitude for this bill because it will help create safer working conditions for those people who work in Alberta's prisons.

The bill will also assist in the treatment of correctional staff victimized by inmates with blood that could be contaminated with a blood-borne disease. Correctional workers are often engaged in hostile and violent situations with inmates. This bill will help workers understand the extent of their injury when they are bitten, scratched, or spat at by an inmate.

Emergency workers in Calgary and the Alberta College of Paramedics are also supportive of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, all of these groups are faced with the growing problem of people using blood or the fear of potentially fatal disease to torment these workers. It is true that most of the support for this bill comes from personal experiences of emergency workers; however, this bill will help infected workers understand the severity of the exposure. I am confident that most reasonable, caring Albertans will support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is also before this House because of the growing danger of people using the threat of disease to abuse or torment the men and women who keep all Albertans safe and healthy. The order for taking a mandatory blood sample is not a knee-jerk response to a few isolated cases. This bill is part of a co-ordinated response to the danger of blood-borne diseases. The order is one of the most important pieces of a system that effectively addresses the danger of these diseases.

There are those who believe that this bill is an infringement on the privacy or the rights of anyone who comes into contact with an emergency or health professional. Mr. Speaker, nothing is stopping someone from challenging this legislation in court; however, before proceeding, they should realize that the taking of a blood sample to help health care or emergency workers understand the significance of their exposure is within the parameters of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is worth repeating that the Charter of Rights is not absolute. It is not above the law, and it cannot be used as protection after harming another person.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will help ensure that exposed persons and their medical staff are given enough information to assess the severity of their exposure. I encourage all members to support Bill 204, and I look forward to the debate on this floor.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to third reading of Bill 204.

This is the third time I've risen to address the bill. In the second reading debate I indicated that I would be opposing the bill. Then, during the discussion in committee stage I indicated that I was undertaking some contact with some of the groups that were in support of the bill and was, I guess, in a position of being undecided based on some of the things that I've heard.

I can tell the House, Mr. Speaker, that I have had discussions with the police association of Alberta. I have discussed this with the Local 003 leadership of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, which represents correctional staff in provincial facilities, and I have discussed this with the Edmonton Fire Fighters' Union local president over the weekend.

It's clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that all of those groups support this approach, and all of them have indicated to me that this is not a theoretical problem for them. This is a real and recurring issue that

their members face on a regular basis, that is extremely difficult for their members to deal with – for police officers, firefighters, and correctional officers – that it has a serious impact on their personal life, and that it is indeed an issue that warrants some serious measure.

5:10

Now, the concern, of course, Mr. Speaker, is that some of the other groups that have contacted us are opposed, and certainly HIV Edmonton is one of those organizations. There is a real concern that people's civil liberties may be infringed upon or that particular groups in society, particularly low-income people, people on the street, people of aboriginal descent, and people from the gay community, may in fact be unfairly targeted under the provisions of this bill. That is the dilemma that I find myself in today.

I will be paying very close attention to whether or not this bill, which is clearly going to be passed today, does in fact infringe upon those groups. I think all members of the Assembly need to monitor that situation, and if those types of things occur on a frequent basis, if there are patterns of abuse that exist under this legislation, then I think we have a duty to amend or rescind the legislation.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced for the moment that this bill is in fact necessary, so I will be prepared to support the bill at third reading. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort has risen.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to join in the debate in support of Bill 204. Most of the time the potential carrier of blood-borne disease who infects a worker with their bodily fluids will agree to a voluntary blood sample. They may take time to prolong the intimidation and taunting, that was mentioned. Most of them agree eventually.

The intent of this bill is for the relatively few occasions where the suspect absolutely refuses to agree to a blood sample. In these cases the reason for not submitting a blood sample has nothing to do with the Charter of Rights or privacy violation. The reason they refuse is to make life difficult for the potentially infected person.

As I see it, there is a process for taking and analyzing a blood sample already existing in Alberta in the health care system. The process for issuing a court order at any time also already exists in Alberta's justice system. The circumstances for forcing a blood sample from someone, as explained in section 4, will hopefully never need to be used. On the other hand, the mere presence of this bill will help convince people who are not co-operating to agree to provide a blood sample.

I say that this bill's intent is to address new dangers to these professional workers on a daily basis. We know for a fact that criminal suspects or inmates currently use biting or spitting on police officers, law enforcement officers, correctional officers as a form of intimidation. This isn't something that the average Albertan would deal with in their normal workday, but for the professions defined in section 4(2), this is becoming an area of constant concern.

So looking at this, I want to express my support and call on other members to vote for this bill.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make a few comments with regard to this bill. I have listened intently to both sides of the argument: why we should pass this legislation and why we shouldn't. While I, too, certainly respect the concerns that those who are opposed to this bill have, I have to say that on the whole at

this particular time I'm going to be supporting this legislation.

It seems to me that our first area of concern has to be for those people in the services that are protecting us. If they are spat on or bitten or have needle punctures or are helping individuals who are covered in blood, they have the right to know as soon as possible whether or not they are infected with any particular diseases. In fact, AIDS doesn't concern me as much as hepatitis C does, and that's a real concern for us in this day and age. So not only should those people who are serving Albertans know quickly but their other family members as well – their spouses and their children and those who might otherwise be infected – so that they can take the proper precautions as soon as possible.

I, too, have some concerns about how this bill may unfold, and we'll be watching intently to see that it is not abused in any capacity. I'm expecting that it won't be, and I'm hoping that it won't be, and certainly there will be a huge outcry of concern if it is. So at this point after due consideration I will be supporting this bill at third reading.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few brief comments, as well, to Bill 204, the Blood Samples Act. I want to commend the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for the amount of work he put into this bill and certainly commend the great efforts that our police officers, our peace officers, our firefighters, our emergency workers, and even good Samaritans do in order to assist people that are injured, people that are in violation of the law. This bill shows that we in this Legislature have a strong support for families. With the increase in the incidence of hepatitis C, with the increase in other communicable diseases this is a bill that's certainly going to give confidence to those families, particularly when one of the members in that family has been exposed to bodily fluids, which could potentially cause the spread of AIDS.

I do think it is a very good bill. I'm certainly glad to have heard the input that others in the Assembly have given in regard to the comments made by those particular organizations that have members who are involved in these types of situations.

In closing, I think it's an extremely good bill. I would certainly hope that all members of the Assembly would support this particular bill and that those emergency workers or police officers or firefighters or whoever is exposed to these types of situations will definitely be able to have some confidence that when they return to their families, their families will not be infected with these diseases. So, once again, thank you very much for the opportunity to make some comments.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs to close the debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a third time]

head: **5:20 Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 206
Alberta Wheat and Barley
Test Market Amendment Act, 2004**

[Adjourned debate May 3: Mr. Hlady]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I believe there are about two minutes left.

Mr. Hlady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be quick.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak because we can implement this bill with no change to the Canadian Wheat Board Act. This is about getting our farmers an export licence. Today our farmers are forced to buy back their grain before they can get an export licence. Farmers in the designated area, which is Alberta, must sell their grain to the board at an initial price. Then they have to buy their own grain back at a board-set price. Well, the board sets the price at an international price or the best market price out there, so any value-added money that the farmer could have made actually goes to the board. They don't get that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak quickly to what I did last week, which was the \$85 million deficit that the board had last year. That is just the tip of the iceberg. That deficit was created because they missed a marketing opportunity when the highest prices in history were not taken advantage of at the time. Our farmers, too, lost at that time: \$60 per tonne on 5 million tonnes across this country, \$300 million that the farmers did not receive last year because of the poor marketing of the Canadian Wheat Board. That's the fundamental. Then they come back asking us for money or needing money because they can't make it because of the poor marketing happening out there.

Mr. Speaker, marketing choice is the only choice to allow us to get to the \$20 billion in farm receipts, which is a target of this government, and see value-added increased in Alberta. I sure hope we get a chance to have a vote on second reading today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have an opportunity, at least for a couple of minutes, to speak on this bill. It is an important issue. It's incredibly important to me just as an individual. I spent time not only in agribusiness but in the actual grain business.

One of the things that I want to say is that the Wheat Board has been problematic for a very long time, and anybody that has spent any time in the grain business knows that. The reality is that I'm not sure that this bill will get us where we want to be or where we should be, and that's what concerns me, not the intent of it but just the legality or the constitutionality of it. There isn't anybody more willing to want to take a chance to try and do the right thing by our grain farmers than I am, but I want to make sure that I don't end up being responsible for having somebody sitting in a jail. I think that what happened to our barley growers and our wheat farmers was horrendous, and I don't want to see a repeat of that.

The truth is that a couple of years ago we passed a bill called Bill 207, and the sponsor was the sponsor for that one. It's an outstanding bill. What it did was it said that our minister was to go to eastern Canada to meet with her federal counterparts to try and get us marketing choice, and she has been working on that. Mr. Speaker, it's really unfortunate that we got a little bit sidetracked by an issue called BSE for the last year, trying to sort that out and hopefully get our border reopened for our cattle to be able to be exported, but that doesn't mean that the work for this has not been going on. Marketing choice is something that does matter.

One of the things I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, was that a number of years ago when I was involved with Palliser Grain, we worked very hard with the farming community to get oats out of the Canadian Wheat Board. One of the reasons we were successful in getting oats out from under the board and keeping canola out from under the board, which they were also trying to take control of, was because we had thousands of farmers in this province writing letters

not only to us but to our federal counterparts saying that this had to change. In fact, the Wheat Board didn't have much interest in oats, so that was a great thing. They finally let it go, and oats now is a great crop in Alberta again.

On the other side of this my hope would be that if we can move further down the marketing choice train, we could in fact get our domestic barley and our domestic wheat use out from under the Wheat Board, if not all of it out from under the Wheat Board at least select something that we could possibly work on. My understanding is that the federal ministers have agreed to continue to meet with our minister on this issue in the hopes of developing a marketing option plan, a trial market for 10 years. Yes, I agree that a bill like this puts pressure on them, and I'm not averse to putting pressure on them, but I have to caution my colleague across the way that I am very much averse to passing a bill that might see some of my fellow ranchers and farmers going to jail because we did something that led them to believe that it would be legal when, in fact, we can't implement it this way.

So, hon. member, I'm very concerned about that, and I do not think it should be downplayed in any way, shape, or form. I'm not afraid of a good fight with the feds or the Wheat Board. I am afraid of leading anybody in this province down a path that indicates that it's okay for them to do something when, in fact, it might not be.

On that, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this bill.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 206, the Alberta Wheat and Barley Test Market Amendment Act, 2004. I think that the hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View has put her finger on something that's seriously flawed with the bill, and I urge her to live to fight on another day. Don't do yourself in just because you find me agreeing with you, hon. member. It's really just not worth it.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if there's any guidance that any member of this Assembly can provide, yourself or anyone else, about what to do when you feel that a bill before the Assembly is ultra vires. If you feel that it is unconstitutional and it is outside the powers of the provincial Legislature, what do you do? Do you just let them pass it and then wait for the courts to overturn it? I don't know what the appropriate approach is.

I would say that I believe that this bill is outside the constitutional powers of the province to enact and outside this Assembly's area of responsibility. I also know that the provincial government takes great exception to the federal government when they intrude on areas of provincial jurisdiction. They are always talking about that. They talk about firewalls. They talk about different things. Former Premier Lougheed used to talk about moving them off the porch, you know, get them out of the living room, onto the porch, and then say good night and go in and lock the door. Here we have the provincial Legislature of this province being asked to do something very much the same, and I think that that's not correct.

Now, I also have another problem with the bill, and that is that I fundamentally don't agree with the approach. Members always talk about the Wheat Board and how it enforces, you know, a whole set of requirements on farmers and interferes with their rights and their choice and so on, and I don't think anything could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. The Wheat Board imposes this type of situation in order to support wheat farmers, and it does so as an organization that is democratically elected by wheat farmers, and despite the government's propaganda to the contrary those districts of the Canadian Wheat Board that overlap Alberta have in the

majority returned pro single-desk Wheat Board directors in the last election and before that as well. If the wheat farmers were to elect directors that were against the single-desk in a majority, then the Wheat Board could change the policy. What people are asking to do here is to be able to undercut their fellow wheat farmers and sell their wheat into the United States on their own, and the result would naturally be a decline in the amount that the other farmers, the majority of the farmers, were able to receive for their wheat.

For example, when oats dropped out of the Canadian Wheat Board

single-desk selling in 1989, the value plummeted by 47 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in the first year alone, while over the same period barley values jumped 61 per cent. Statistics . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Assembly stands adjourned until 8 o'clock tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

