

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 9, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/09

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant us daily awareness of the precious gift of life which has been given to us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and of our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Excellency Mr. Sadaaki Numata, ambassador of Japan to Canada, and his wife. Also joining us today is Mr. Takeuchi, Japan's consul general to Alberta, and his wife.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was pleased to host our honoured guests at an official luncheon, and I was very pleased to learn that one of His Excellency's hobbies is folksinging. He quoted in his speech today Alberta's songwriter laureate Ian Tyson with a verse from *Four Strong Winds*. He commented on the weather and how the winds had brought him here to the province of Alberta. I had suggested to him that there might actually be another song that Ian Tyson wrote that would be most appropriate. It's called *Springtime in Alberta*, and it goes something like this:

Just like springtime in Alberta
Warm sunny days and the skies of blue
Then without a warning
Another winter storm comes raging through
And the mercury is falling
I am left all alone
Springtime in Alberta
Chills me to the bone

Mr. Speaker, Japan is Alberta's largest overseas trading partner. Annual two-way trade between this province and Japan totals nearly \$2.5 billion. But of course our relationship goes far beyond commerce. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Alberta's sister province ties with the prefecture of Hokkaido.

I would ask that our honoured guests please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: I sit in apprehension of St. Patrick's Day, March 17.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't sing, so we're not going to be hearing me sing in this Legislature.

I have two introductions this afternoon. First, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a very accomplished young man, Mr. Robert Dixon, who is with us today in the members' gallery. Robert is the 2004 4-H Premier's award recipient, the highest honour the Alberta 4-H program bestows on a member. This award recognizes young Albertans that demonstrate strong project management, leadership, and communi-

cation skills plus dedication to their community. Winners are selected based on their 4-H and community involvement and performance at the Alberta 4-H selections program. Like many 4-H members Robert is now pursuing a future in agriculture. As a past 4-H member it's a pleasure to introduce Robert, his mother Barb, Mark Muchka, and Corinne Skulmoski from our 4-H branch. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and be recognized in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure also to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Miss Krista Wurz, a grade 5 student from the Morinville Colony school. Her poster on farm safety was selected as the winning entry in a recent farm safety poster contest organized by the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre. Miss Wurz is accompanied today by her family members. Also in the gallery I'd like to introduce two women who organized the farm safety poster contest, Mrs. Jeanette Smith and Mrs. Judy Kesanko of the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre. They are all seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 45 students, parents, and teachers from the Boyle school in my constituency. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly here today a 17-member advisory group of principals and vice-principals who are serving as volunteers on a committee that was appointed by the former minister of learning to conduct a review and to make a recommendation regarding Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 78, which asks the government to consider establishing a new council of education executives.

I will ask each guest, as I call their names, to please rise and to remain standing until I have introduced all 17: from Lethbridge, Carol Steen; Joe Lepage, Strathmore; Mark Francis, Athabasca; Carol Grant-Watt, Airdrie; Ross Tyson, Edmonton; Rob Cowie, Vulcan; Larry Albrecht, Okotoks; Dave Elwood, Rocky Mountain House; Karen Bartsch, Brooks; Ray Battochio, Stettler; Marc Frey, Fairview; Gord Walters, Red Deer; Bob Tredger, Edson; Dianne Yee, Calgary; Dave Brecht and Irene Washylk from Edmonton; and the group leader from Rocky Mountain House, Mr. Jimmy Clark. Please welcome our guests.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly guests from Edmonton-Mill Woods. We have 75 students from Meyonohk elementary school along with their teachers, Mr. Victor Wang and Mrs. Trudy Warkentin. I ask our guests to please rise and receive the traditional and warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you

and through you to the members of this Assembly two influential members of the Alberta Women's Liberal Commission, Mary Amerasinghe and Trudy LaRose, who are seated in the public gallery. I'd like them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today and it is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Rob Burton, an extraordinary young man from my constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner. This young man is studying in a home-based self-education program and this June will be going to Europe on a study tour of 13 countries. He has raised his own money for this educational trip by starting his own business. He is both a talented basketball player and a skilled pianist. He has a keen interest in constitutional law and a strong desire to make a difference for the good. This fall he'll be attending George Wythe college on an early entrance Andel character prize scholarship, which is awarded to one youth leader per year. For the last two weeks Rob Burton has been a volunteer here for me at the Legislature and has been a great asset. I would ask Rob Burton to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition. The first Official Opposition question.

Electricity Deregulation

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day, another scandal. An Enron commissioned report on Project Stanley in Alberta states that "strategies by many players to influence prices appear to have been fairly common." Engage Energy Canada was active in Alberta's electricity market during the time Enron was ripping off consumers. To the Premier: knowing that market manipulation was common in Alberta, why did the government employ a former executive of a company that cashed in on electricity deregulation, Engage Energy, to be the market surveillance administrator?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the answer to that, and I'll defer to the hon. Minister of Energy.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first and foremost say that during the transition period when this was happening, all Albertans were protected by legislative mechanisms, that despite any price volatility or even if there were alleged manipulation, hedges were in place that Albertans would not be paying the price of any price volatility during that time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister of Energy then saying that there was no price manipulation during that time in the development of Alberta's deregulated electricity market?

Mr. Melchin: What we are saying is that during a transition it was anticipated that as you're adjusting to new rules, everybody has to get used to what the rules are in a new marketplace versus the

regulated marketplace. To allow that, Albertans would be protected for a number of years, and that went through to August of 2000 before the power purchase arrangements were sold. Through that time of transition Albertans would pay a legislated hedge protected on what they were paying in the past for the old generation since Albertans had paid for that generation in the past. In that sense it is possible that some – they are alleged at this stage; investigations are going on. That is why Enron has been referred by the market surveillance administrator to the Competition Bureau. They are taking this seriously, and the matter is now before the Competition Bureau.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, that should be a simple yes or no question. Is the minister saying there was no market manipulation during that period of the development of Alberta's deregulated electricity market? Yes or no?

Mr. Melchin: Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is being investigated, has been investigated in the past with respect to Enron, and we are and will take it very seriously if any evidence is found rather than just allegations. We are seeking to find and support that there is evidence to support abuse, and the market surveillance administrator along with the Competition Bureau take that seriously on behalf of protecting all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Market Surveillance Administrator Review of Enron

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the background of the market surveillance administrator, will the Minister of Energy replace him with someone willing to investigate Enron's scandalous price gouging on behalf of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This still is about protecting all Albertans. The market surveillance administrator has acted and continues to act on behalf of Albertans. In this sense it's important to see that we do look for the facts and the evidence as presented. At this stage that's being reviewed.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interest of looking for the facts and the evidence, why isn't this government and this Minister of Energy directing the market surveillance administrator to investigate Enron's price-fixing?

Mr. Melchin: The market surveillance administrator has been in front of this. They have been asking and requesting information from the Snohomish utility with respect to allegations made against Enron.

You've got to remember that the Snohomish utility in Washington is being sued by the bankruptcy trustee for Enron in that they owe a substantial amount of money to Enron's bankruptcy trustee. They are going to continue, I suspect for some time, to look for all evidence, allegations, or otherwise to support their case. In that light, we are also interested in any evidence that they bring forward, and we're staying on top of it.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why do the people of Alberta have to depend on the county of Snohomish, Washington, to defend their rights and dig up the information into Enron's price gouging of the people of Alberta? Why aren't we doing this under this province?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't get involved in the mechanics of an investigation. Relative to why this particular county is involved, I'll defer to the hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: The market surveillance administrator is acting as a watchdog to protect all Albertans. They are acting in their role just in doing that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Nonsmoking Legislation

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has entered the debate surrounding a private member's bill on a workplace smoking ban, but instead of protecting the workers, the Premier has announced the government's intention to put workers' health at risk by introducing amendments that will create exceptions to a workplace smoking ban for bars, casinos, and bingo halls. My questions are to the Premier. What justification does the Premier have in protecting the health of workers in some workplaces but not protecting the health of workers in bars, casinos, and bingo halls?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of procedure this issue is now before the Legislature, and the hon. member along with all members of this Legislature will have the opportunity to debate the bill and whatever amendments might be introduced.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is the government prepared to create a policy for an unlevel playing field, especially for small business, by allowing some establishments an exemption from the smoking ban?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, the bill is before the Legislature and will be duly debated in due course.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is government policy or government proposed policy focused on smokers' rights rather than on workers' rights to good health?

Mr. Klein: Again, Mr. Speaker, the bill is before the Legislature, and this member will have an opportunity to debate it at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No question today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development talked about Alberta's six-point recovery strategy. One of the elements of the strategy is inventory management; that is, compensating producers who are willing to set market-ready cattle or calves aside in exchange for compensation for their feed costs. While this program has admirable goals, could the minister please explain why some producers have yet to receive a program payment even months later?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question, and we are getting calls on this issue. The uptake that we had on the calf set-aside program and the fed cattle set-aside program has been very, very high. It's been tremendous. So far there are 502 registered bidders for the national fed cattle set-aside program. The auctions are held almost every week of the program. In addition, more than 13,000 producers applied to set aside 2004 calves. That represents 675,000 animals.

So far we've paid more than 7,000 of the 13,000 applications, and we're sending out more payments twice weekly. However, there may be some producers who have not yet received their payments, and if this is the case, I would urge all hon. members to let them know to contact the rural services division of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is for the same minister. Another key element of the six-point recovery strategy remains the CAIS program. What is the minister doing to ensure that this program is reacting appropriately to the needs of Alberta producers?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta continues to work with our federal and provincial counterparts on the CAIS program, and all of the provincial ministers as well as the federal minister want to ensure that it's responsive to producers' needs. In that light, today we announced that we have extended the election deadline for the 2005 program year from March 31 to May 31, 2005. That will give our producers more time to consider the benefits of the program and allow them to make the right decision for their farming operations.

We also addressed an inequity that exists for CAIS participants who made their deposits before the requirement was reduced to one-third for the 2003 and 2004 program years. Now producers who contributed over the one-third level can access those deposit funds almost immediately, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is for the same minister. Are there any additional changes to the CAIS program in the works?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are, as I said, working with our industry and federal counterparts to develop alternatives to the current deposit requirement. All federal and provincial ag ministers will review these alternatives later this year. Alberta is hosting the federal/provincial meetings in July of this year, and we have asked our departments to work with us on alternatives. Alberta wants to be a leader in setting this program's direction, and we're going to

continue to strive for that by working with our federal/provincial counterparts as this is a fed/prov agreement.

I might add that all of the provincial ministers regardless of party stripe, Mr. Speaker, believe that this is the program for the farmers of the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Government Investments

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Conservative government has a history of allowing the heritage savings trust fund to be invested in companies that are deemed to be dangerous to human health and even human rights, such as Talisman Energy, numerous tobacco companies, and now even Lockheed Martin corporation, a leading weapons manufacturer. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Is there any company that this government would not invest in?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, we have very competent investment managers that are investing billions of dollars on behalf of Albertans. Our first priority, obviously, is to gain the greatest return on those dollars for current and future generations, and we look for investments to do that.

Investing billions of dollars is very complex. We entrust that to our investment group. It's not simply a matter of buying a few shares of this and a few shares of that. We have a very, very small amount of the heritage fund that's invested in tobacco companies.

I would remind the hon. member and this House that the heritage fund in particular has its books reviewed by an all-party committee of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister then: would the minister please explain to Albertans why this government believes that the bottom line is more important than moral or ethical standards?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't agree that that's the case at all. What I do agree with is putting the investment into the hands of very competent investors to ensure that Albertans get the greatest return.

I will remind the hon. member one more time that the heritage fund books are reviewed by an all-party committee of this Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the same minister: will this minister please commit to establishing a firm strategy to deal with ethical investment of public funds?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I will commit to ensuring that we invest wisely and that we invest well, and I will also commit to any recommendations that I receive from the standing committee on the heritage fund.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution-related Offences

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that prostitu-

tion activities are harmful to the safety and security of residential neighbourhoods. Nearly two years ago a bill was introduced by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and this Assembly passed it. It gives police the power and authority to seize the vehicles of johns soliciting prostitutes. Reflecting the wishes of my constituents, my question is to the Solicitor General. It's been two years. Why haven't there been any seizures yet?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. In the year 2003 I did introduce a bill in the Assembly, which you're very aware of, and at that point in time the bill did pass unanimously in this House. I have seen the devastation that the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort has just described in his community as well as in my own of Calgary-Buffalo. These are tremendous issues that not only deal with the causes of devastation to a community and neighbourhoods but as well to young women that are addicted to drugs and alcohol abuse.

I understand that Alberta Infrastructure and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation have set up a review of the seizure of vehicles with regard to this bill as well as all seizures of vehicles, and I'd ask the minister to supplement this answer, please.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you. In fact, my next question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. When can we expect the enforcement of this piece of legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the advent I would say that the legislation that was brought forward was very good legislation and continues to be good legislation. It's legislation that I as Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation strongly support.

One of the issues that we're having, Mr. Speaker, is quite simply the constitutionality of how this is going to work. We're also looking at the logistics, exactly, as to how this is going to work. The seizure of vehicles is under my department – it is under infrastructure – and we are currently looking at this. I sincerely hope, through to the hon. member, that we will have closure on this issue consistent with the hon. Solicitor General's initial bill that will be put forward very, very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: No more questions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

School Utilization Formula

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Edmonton public school board voted to begin the process of closing four schools, yet yesterday in this Assembly the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation indicated that he's busy evolving the formula. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: why are you allowing these school closures to proceed when you've stated publicly that a new utilization formula for urban schools is in the works?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton public school board has taken a very difficult step for a school board, which is that they are looking at potentially closing some schools. I believe that the Edmonton public school board has done it for the right reasons. They're looking at programmatic changes, and I believe that even last night – and I apologize for saying this in the Assembly, but I actually watched the news – one of the principals said that it would be very, very difficult to provide the programming needs when the number of students in the school is getting down so low. I believe that they are doing it for programmatic reasons. There also is the potential to save \$700,000, which is taxpayers' money, after all, from the operation and maintenance for the Edmonton public school board.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: will the development of this new formula delay further approval of new schools such as the Lois Hole elementary school, proposed for St. Albert's underserved northeast quadrant?

Dr. Oberg: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about two separate issues here: operation and maintenance versus the building of new schools and new capital construction.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister enlighten the public as to what this new formula for urban schools will look like and how it will better the community school proposal for rural areas?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm a firm believer in elected officials, and I'm a firm believer in school boards. I think it is their prerogative, being closer to the grassroots than anyone else. They're ultimately the ones that should be making these decisions on opening or closing of schools. The formula that we're designing will give much more flexibility to the school boards as to what they need to do and what they should do.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will commend the Edmonton public school board for their decisions because they are looking at how they can provide a better learning environment for their children, and ultimately that's what a school board's responsibility is.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

2:00 Foreign and Non-union Workers

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. In December 2004 the government gave Canadian Natural Resources Limited major project status for the Horizon oil sands project. Building trade unions say that the company may be attempting to reduce project costs at the expense of union members and fear that their members will be displaced by foreign workers. To the minister: what does the division 8 designation granted to Canadian Natural Resources Limited mean?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are blessed here in Alberta with a good, diversified economy that's booming and a good government to run the province also.

A division 8 designation allows the parties to negotiate terms and conditions of employment that will be specific to the project only. If an agreement is reached, no strike or lockout could take place until the agreement expires. Mr. Speaker, this designation, of course, is only allowed on projects that have a major economic impact to the province. As you are no doubt aware, the oil sands project is a \$10 billion project. There are going to be about 6,000 jobs during construction, and once the operation starts, it will be about 2,000 jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Union members are upset because they feel that their jobs are at risk as a result of the special project status granted to the Horizon oil sands project. Therefore, is it true that the designation granted to the Horizon oil sands project is a union-busting exercise?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker, of course not. You know, like I said earlier and the same yesterday in question period, I mentioned that our economy is well diversified in Alberta. It's very strong. There are jobs for everybody. In fact, the designation assumes that there is a unionized environment. It has no application to non-unionized workers, of course. Again, the purpose of this designation is simply to facilitate a special bargaining process, and the negotiations are voluntary. The Alberta government does not get involved in the process.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that in 2004 about 5,500 temporary foreign workers came to Alberta through the federal government's temporary foreign worker program, will the Horizon oil sands project open the door to cheaper foreign labour in Alberta?

Mr. Cardinal: No. That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker. Definitely not cheaper because all the workers that come to Alberta have to meet the Alberta standards we have in place. Of course, I mentioned yesterday during question period also that the employers that are looking at workers and foreign workers first of all have to exhaust their attempts to hire Albertans, Canadians, aboriginal people, people with developmental disabilities. That is the number one priority. If they cannot find the employees they want, then they are allowed to make an application. It is a complicated process and costly, but the application actually goes through the federal government.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to hear the questions from the previous member.

In looking at how the provincial cabinet granted this quick and quiet, rare labour code exemption to CNRL for that huge Horizon oil sands project in early December, Horizon was given this power to impose these terms for union and non-union workers under the same long-term contract. My questions today are to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Will this minister release the documents that led to the decision to grant this controversial division 8 exemption?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't class this as a controversial decision. The process took a long time to arrive at the decision. It doesn't happen overnight. I will review the submissions and what was reviewed and advise you further.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why didn't the minister consult with major stakeholders such as the Alberta building trades, for example, on a matter so important to Alberta's economy and the development of our precious oil sands resource?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I know the previous minister consulted with all parties that were interested. Since my appointment to the ministry I've met with a number of these groups: the unions, non-union members, company officials. I've had meetings constantly with these people, and I don't see any conflict in this issue. Only the Liberals would see it as a conflict and negative, like they always see everything negatively. Any jurisdiction in North America would love to have the challenges that we have here in Alberta: a strong economy and a good government.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: are there any other division 8 applications pending?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, only the opposition, thinking negatively, would assume that there are things happening that we don't know of.

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

Dr. Pannu: With respect, Mr. Speaker, no question today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. McFarland: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was taken aback – to the back of the row.

To say that agricultural producers in Alberta are facing challenging times is quite an understatement. I know that the Canadian agricultural income program and the Alberta hail and crop program are designed to alleviate income issues, but a lot of the producers in our area are expressing frustration with the CAIS program in particular. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. If the CAIS program is supposed to alleviate and moderate some of the income coming into a farm, why are some of the producers still waiting for the finalization and the processing of their applications for this program, particularly those who applied back in September of 2003?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again a very, very good question. I know there are a number of producers out there with concerns on the CAIS program, and as with all programs that are national and have various agreements in them, we've had some growing pains in the CAIS program. It's no exception. It has had overwhelming interest from producers, and for the 2003 claim year alone more than 24,000 Alberta producers submitted applications and almost half of those in the last two-month period after the original deadline was extended. So getting CAIS payments and advances out to producers took longer than we'd hoped.

AFSC has spent a great deal of effort trying to improve their system. We recognized the acute cash flow problems and went with the advance payments, which some other provinces don't do, Mr. Speaker. We're about 80 per cent complete on the 2003s as I stand today. I know that on Monday I mentioned we were at 70 per cent. We're moving closer to the 100 per cent. So far \$186 million in payments for the 2003 year. We're anticipating about \$256 million to complete final payments for 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, some of the frustrations that particularly grain producers are passing on are their concerns with eroding margins, where PROs for barley have fallen 20 per cent and yellow mustard is down maybe 33 per cent. Could the minister tell us if changes to the CAIS program could be implemented to more accurately reflect the gradual, steadily diminishing margin that we experience?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings up a very, very important point, and that is that Alberta's agricultural industry has been hit hard in the BSE sector, but that's not the only sector that's being hit hard. Certainly, we should remember to focus on our grain and other sectors of agriculture. They are being hit hard.

When we were in Ottawa last week with the federal/provincial ministers' meetings, the issue of margins and the reference margin was brought up. As I mentioned, we are reviewing the CAIS program this summer with federal and provincial counterparts. Our intent is to address those issues and try to come up with some alternatives that will not, Mr. Speaker, cause us undo stress under the World Trade Organization because agriculture support has to be based either on a producer's most recent three years or on what we call the Olympic average, which is where we are.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

2:10

Government Aircraft

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister of infrastructure has repeatedly refused to table the government flight logs, citing privacy and security reasons. Would the minister please explain through this House to all Albertans what concerns contained in month-old, year-old flight logs are more important than transparency and accountability?

Dr. Oberg: Oh, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I'm not in any way meaning to lecture the hon. member, but there was a freedom of information and privacy act that was passed in this particular Legislature that is paramount to what has happened here. So the answer to the question is the FOIP legislation. I believe strongly in transparency, and for that reason we gave the Liberal opposition access to the flight manifests, and indeed they were even able, I believe – they may not have taken that ability – to photocopy them.

When asked by the New Democrat opposition about whether or not we would make the flight manifests public, I said quite simply: certainly, anything that we can. We are limited though, Mr. Speaker, as you yourself would know very well, by the FOIP legislation.

Mr. Chase: Will the minister quickly table the flight logs, not the manifests, from May through December 2004?

Dr. Oberg: Again, Mr. Speaker – and I do apologize for having to say this again – we will table anything that has been through the FOIP process.

Mr. Chase: Will the minister follow the transparent example of the federal government in publishing its flight logs?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, transparency and federal Liberals: I'm just having a really difficult time in dealing with that right now.

But we certainly will make our effort. If I do remember correctly, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is absolutely minimal information that is put on from the federal government about their logs. Indeed, our manifests, I believe, have more information than the flight logs that were actually put on the Internet by the federal Liberals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

High School Completion Rate

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Higher education is increasingly necessary to enable our young people to compete in a global economy. However, many of our students are failing to complete their high school studies, to the detriment of their own success and that of our province. In fact, our high school completion rates are amongst the lowest in Canada. To the minister: can the minister advise the House what steps are being made to address the question of high school completion rates in view of the recommendations of the Learning Commission that 90 per cent of our high school students complete within four years?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to clarify that it's the three-year high school completion rate that rates amongst some of the lowest in Canada. I'm not proud of that, but I just wanted to confirm the fact. In fact, however, our five-year high school completion rate is on the increase. It's up around the 75 per cent mark. I recognize that there's work to do, but that at least shows that some of the initiatives we are undertaking are working.

I will conclude by simply saying that the completion rate isn't just up to the school system. It's also up to the individual and to the individual's family and the community. Some people, Mr. Speaker, do leave the education system in around the grade 10 or 11 level perhaps for one year to earn some money or whatever it is that they wish to do, or they're facing other socioeconomic or related community factors. So it's not just the education system that is a stakeholder in that outcome.

Dr. Brown: Can the minister advise the House when Alberta will achieve the performance goals recommended in the Learning Commission report of 90 per cent completion within four years?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, our target is to increase our high school completion rates every year, and that's why I'm happy that we're on the right trend so far.

But I also want to just say quickly that we have a number of initiatives that we've either taken on that are ongoing or some that are new. For example, I instituted an internal task force just a while ago to review this issue completely and thoroughly with our stakeholders to see what new strategies we can add to enhance our high school completion rates. At the moment, however, we have a number of things that are impacting that question in a very positive way such as our Alberta initiative for school improvement, such as

our First Nations/Métis/Inuit strategy, such as the class size reduction initiative, which is increasing our students' abilities to learn, and a number of other things.

I expect, Mr. Speaker, that the short answer will be that it'll happen sooner than later.

Dr. Brown: For the same minister: why are Alberta's high school completion rates lagging behind those of the other provinces?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's the three-year rate that I'm not pleased with. I think that if you read the rest of the StatsCan report, you would probably find there where something in the order of 89 per cent of Albertans in the age bracket of 25 to 34 have completed high school. So there's a period of time that sometimes evolves during which people do return to finish their high school, and that's a very good thing.

The specific answer of why is a very complex one, and it's one that we're studying now to try and, in fact, answer in some detail. I don't think that any single jurisdiction out of the 62 school boards that I've met with would give you an exact answer to that, and I say that having surveyed almost all 62 of them. But the fact is that it has been brought to their attention, it has been brought to mine, and there will be more information within a few weeks on how we're going to address improving our high school completion rates, and we will do that.

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

Canadian Forest Products Ltd. Mill Closure

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 3 Canadian Forest Products Ltd. announced that it was ending operations at its Hines Creek sawmill. The closure of this mill will mean a loss of over 100 jobs and \$6 million in yearly salaries that will have a devastating economic impact on Hines Creek and surrounding communities. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. In the throne speech the government stated, "Vibrant rural communities are vital to this province." Then why is the government not ensuring that Hines Creek remains vibrant?

Mr. Dunford: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did make that comment in the throne speech, and I want the member to know that the rural development strategy is part of the top three initiatives that we have under way within Economic Development. Certainly, the Hines Creek situation is at the forefront as we speak, and thank you for raising that particular issue. I mentioned yesterday on a question from another hon. member that the Peace region economic alliance was involved currently with that situation as well as our Grande Prairie office.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. This minister stated yesterday: "What other economic . . . opportunities will there be? We look into things like tourism." Can this government tell us what tourism opportunities can replace the lost jobs at Hines Creek? [interjection]

Mr. Dunford: I didn't hear that, so I don't know what took place.

In terms of the comments that the hon. member has neatly picked up out of *Hansard*, certainly we're looking at tourism as one, of course, of the obvious economic development activities that we look

at throughout Alberta and particularly want to look at beyond just Calgary, Edmonton, Banff, and Jasper. You know, there are value-added areas in terms of secondary manufacturing. The value-added strategy that we have in terms of our number one strategy inside Economic Development is really to look at developing secondary manufacturing as it relates to wood products. So we think we have opportunities there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will this government commit to taking action to protect Hines Creek from becoming a ghost town?

Mr. Dunford: Well, I wish the hon. member wouldn't be so pessimistic. I mean, there are good people in Hines Creek, as you know if you've taken the time to be there as our Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has. These are good people, they're Albertans, they're ambitious, they are inventive, and we think that in working with them, we'll be able to reorganize the Hines Creek area so that they'll continue to be a viable part of Alberta. I'm actually disappointed and disturbed that a rookie MLA would walk into this place and start talking in such a disparaging way about a fellow citizen.

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

2:20 Capital Grants for Major Fairs

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents have expressed interest in and I might say support for the capital grants for major fairs that were announced in the 2004-2005 third-quarter fiscal update, released on February 28. Some are curious to know which fairs will be funded and what this means for them. My first question is to the Minister of Gaming. As the minister responsible for the Alberta lottery fund which fairs are going to receive grants, and what will the grants be used for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that my first question in the House allows me to stand and talk about the wonderful things that flow from the Alberta lottery fund. It was announced in the third-quarter fiscal update that \$40 million is being provided to seven regional fair and agricultural societies. They're located in Camrose, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Olds, and Red Deer. These funds will be used to upgrade buildings and facilities at these regional facilities. They're extremely excited about it, and I know that they're all looking forward to putting this money to good use.

Mr. Johnson: To the same minister then: why did the government identify major fairs as a priority for this \$40 million in funding?

Mr. Graydon: These seven boards are very regional in nature. You know, I can remember as a young lad – I can remember back that far – living in Lacombe, Alberta. The highlight of the summer was to go to the Red Deer fair, and it's still going on to this day. This weekend I am returning home to my constituency and attending the 20th annual Agri-bition at the Evergreen Park in Grande Prairie. It's a huge regional agricultural fair and provides tremendous economic benefit to the region, allows the rural community to come in and show their stuff.

Mr. Johnson: To the same minister then: why are only these seven fairs getting this money?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, these seven are just the tip of the iceberg, if you will. For the past several years this government has provided the 283 additional ag societies – they're in smaller communities. There's not a small community in Alberta, I think, that doesn't have an ag society or fair board or something. There are 283 of them, and each year Alberta Lotteries provides funds to Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, an unconditional base grant of \$17,500 for operating. That's unconditional, but on top of that, they submit the list of activities that they've hosted the previous year and are allotted extra money based on how busy they were in the previous year. As well, Edmonton Northlands and the Calgary Stampede receive more than \$7 million each for their activities over the year.

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

School Utilization Formula (continued)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Edmonton public school board, to the bitter disappointment of parents that attended the public school board meeting, voted to begin the process of closing four public schools. This government must return authority for public school structures to the Minister of Education, where it properly belongs. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Why doesn't the government provide block funding for public school buildings and get out of the job of counting spaces?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Edmonton public school board does a very good job against some very unique circumstances, and I've followed with interest and I've met with them and discussed with interest some of their initiatives. Unfortunately, these things, like declining enrolments, do happen from time to time, and in this case they're faced with some very, very difficult decisions, which I think the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation answered a bit earlier.

But I think the key part in the question is with respect to the utilization rate in that formula, and that's one reason why we are reviewing that rate formula right now. Perhaps some relief will be forthcoming that will address this problem from that point of view.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. To the same minister: how can this government support a policy that tears the heart out of the communities by closing their community schools?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't exactly consider the high regard in which North America holds the Edmonton public school board as tearing the heart out of anything. They're the number one school board, and that's why they frequently receive visitors from around the world to come and have a look. So they are doing a very, very good job. But the fact is that we do need to review some of these difficulties where we see student enrolment going down and costs skyrocketing upwards, and the school utilization formula is the key part of that, regardless if it's done in this ministry or if it's done in the ministry of infrastructure.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: has this

government considered moving some of its offices in the capital city to share space with underutilized public schools? Save some money.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Save some money. Well, there are a number of initiatives that the school boards are looking at that might bring that very thing about. In fact, that's part of our renewed funding framework, which I'm sure the member knows about; that is, to allow maximum flexibility. Under the renewed funding framework school boards have asked for and they have received that particular flexibility formula to work with. Now, I am reviewing those budgets as we speak to see where some additional support might or might not be possible and see what kind of utilization we can have for these schools.

I would tell you, though, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that the new schools that are coming on stream do have a fundamentally different approach to their design that will make them quite useful in later years for either continued school purposes or for some other community use purpose, and that in the long run will save all taxpayers money.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, while this may be the only time that we do get to question 18, unfortunately I have no questions today. Thanks.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, and I have six additional members beyond that. No shortage of members.

Edmonton City Centre Airport

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton City Centre Airport is a vital facility to my constituents and indeed, I believe, to all Albertans. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Can the minister inform this House as to the government's position on the importance of the Edmonton City Centre Airport?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, some time ago there was a committee that was put together to look at the City Centre Airport and some of the issues that were surrounding passenger flights in and out of that airport, and that committee presented a report then to the board of directors of the Edmonton Airports Authority. Unfortunately, not all of the recommendations were accepted. So it's put the government now into a position, in terms of economic development, of now taking those recommendations and looking at it in the juxtaposition of what the authority actually did and trying to determine what is in the best interest now of all Albertans.

I've charged my deputy minister with that responsibility as recently as this morning, as a matter of fact, and we'll have to develop, then, a strategy from an economic development perspective and then, of course, take that through the internal process to try to develop a government position as to the City Centre Airport.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. To the same minister: can the minister offer Albertans any assurances that we'll be able to access our capital city through the City Centre Airport in the future?

Mr. Dunford: Well, yes we can. Again, as far as the recommendations made that were accepted, I've been assured by the airport

authority through its chair and its president that the business model that the City Centre Airport will be working from indicates that those airlines that are currently bringing passengers in and out of that City Centre Airport will be allowed to continue to do so off into the future as long as the individual airline's business model makes sense for it to do that.

So they have assured me that they're not in a position and will not take the position of removing any further airlines from that airport. The difficulty, of course, is that they've already removed a couple, and that's where the tension continues to circulate between members of this House, including myself as the representative of Lethbridge-West, and the airport authority.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. To the same minister: can the minister inform us as to the current status of the City Centre Airport and what changes, if any, we can expect with respect to this vital facility in the near future?

Mr. Dunford: As we speak, there's a meeting that's taking place at a hotel here in Edmonton. It's been organized by a group now called CAANA, and I believe that stands for Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta. Many of the people here on the floor of this House will remember a previous member that we had with us, Gary Friedel. We have a situation where Gary has organized this group. There are players from all across the province, including Edmonton's city council, the representatives of the airport authority, and mayors of various communities including my own community of Lethbridge. I was part of a panel there this morning.

We're trying to get the issues dealt with, and the call that I made, hon. member: it's time for us to be candid. There's been too much of this talk, parallel talk where, yeah, maybe people are happy; maybe they're not happy. Let's get all of the cards on the table over this issue, and let's get it dealt with.

The Speaker: Hon. members, something very historic happened today. This is the first time in the history of Alberta that the chair was able to call on 19 members to participate in the question period. My apologies do go to the eight additional members who sent me notes wanting to get in the question period. Perhaps Monday we'll be able to do just a bit better.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: I indicated before that I would provide a historic comment of the day. I want all hon. members to know that in March of 1941 the Legislative Assembly under the leadership of Premier William Aberhart amended on this day in 1941 the provincial School Act, making it illegal not to salute the Union Jack.

In 30 seconds I'll call upon the first of several members to participate. Hon. members, prior to introducing the first of several members to participate in Recognitions, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you

and through you to this Assembly my lovely sister Susan Backs and my dear dad, John Backs. Susan has acted on many stages including London, New York, Toronto, Calgary, and of course in Spruce Grove. My dad recently received an award from the Crown Prince of the Netherlands for his work as a member of the Stootroepen regiment in the Second World War. That, of course, was the crucial regiment that was formed from armed underground resistance fighters that fought with the Canadian army to help liberate the Netherlands in many crucial battles that ended the Second World War. I'd like you to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: Hon. members, as per the ruling yesterday, today we'll be proceeding with four recognitions from government members, two from the Official Opposition, and one from the third party. I guess that I have to ask for clarification. Is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona proceeding this afternoon with a recognition, or should we fill it with someone else?

Dr. Pannu: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are going to proceed?

Dr. Pannu: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Youth Science Month

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year thousands of young Albertans take part in local and regional science fairs. Each of these young scientists works diligently to develop projects that demonstrate innovation, initiative, and imagination. This year the very best of our province's science fair participants will represent Alberta at the Canada-wide science fair to be held in Vancouver in May.

Mr. Speaker, one only has to attend one of the many regional science fairs held throughout the province to meet the many exceptional young science students of Alberta. They are truly the innovators and leaders of tomorrow. It is vitally important to nurture a generation of scientifically literate young people who will push forward the boundaries of our knowledge and improve the culture of innovation in our province. This is why I'm happy to join the Youth Science Foundation Canada and the Alberta Science Fair Foundation in recognizing March 2005 as Youth Science Month in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Western Canadian Blind Curling Championship

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the Calmar Lions Club for once again successfully hosting the Western Canadian Blind Curling Championship. This championship was originally born in 1971, when a rink of blind curlers came down to Calmar from Edmonton to challenge the Calmar Lions Club in the first blind curling bonspiel. This quickly turned into an annual event, which expanded a couple of years later to include teams from both Edmonton and Calgary. A few years later it expanded once again to include two blind curling teams from each of the western provinces, thereby creating the Western Canadian Blind Curling Championship.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the curling you may be watching at the Brier

this week, blind curling allows five-member rinks, with one sighted skip and one sighted sweeper. At least one member must be completely blind; two others may at the very most have partial vision.

This year's western Canadian championship was won by a B.C. rink, with an Alberta rink placing fourth.

I would like to commend the Calmar Lions Clubs and surrounding clubs for their decades of commitment to the sport of blind curling. Mr. Speaker, for what the participants might lack in sight, the Lions Club more than makes up for in vision.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Ken Flesher

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again in this the week of the Brier in Edmonton it gives me great pleasure to recognize a very exceptional senior from the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. Mr. Ken Flesher of Devon was recently successful as the Alberta champion in the provincial Masters Curling Championship, and Ken will be representing Alberta in Brandon, Manitoba, the weekend of April 8 to 10 as the skip for the Alberta rink. I would like to recognize Ken on behalf of this House.

Thank you.

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

British Commonwealth Air Crew Memorial

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 3, 2004, a six-metre high statue of a uniformed airman was unveiled by the Premier at McDougall Centre in Calgary. This memorial pays tribute to the more than 1,600 Albertans in the air service who lost their lives during the Second World War. This unique group of individuals were all graduates of the British Commonwealth air training program, with 18 of the 360 training schools located right here in Alberta.

I am honoured and humbled, Mr. Speaker, to remember their service to this province and to their country. I find it appropriate during our centennial year to recognize the sacrifice these Albertans and their family have made. They contributed to making this the prosperous province it is today and made these centennial year celebrations possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those involved with the establishment of the memorial, notably former Member of Parliament Mr. Arthur Smith, who was a strong voice for the air crews and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:40

Youth Emergency Shelter

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride that I ask this Assembly to recognize youth shelters in this province for the invaluable service they contribute to our society. I especially want to recognize the Youth Emergency Shelter Society in Edmonton.

This program helps youth between the ages of 15 and 18 who are homeless. Over 68 per cent have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, an increasing number with serious mental health problems. Most attempt to numb their inner pain by using drugs and/or alcohol. The youth come from every neighbourhood in Edmonton and surrounding communities. They all have different

economic backgrounds and are of every race and religion. Some are high school dropouts while some are honour students.

The Youth Emergency Shelter provides basic necessities along with opportunities to become strong, independent, and learn life and decision-making skills, giving youth at risk a chance to become productive and successful individuals.

Thank you.

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

Democratic Process in the Ukraine

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the people of Ukraine. This past fall when Ukrainians felt that the presidential election had been tainted, they stood up despite the threats of violence from the government, and they refused to accept the results. Ukrainians showed the world that peaceful change is possible. We do not have to accept corruption, and when our political process fails us, it's up to each and every one of us to stand up and correct the wrong.

I want to recognize Ukrainians who supported either candidate in the presidential election. I heard from Canadian election observers of the amazing commitment to the democratic process from the supporters of the candidates on both sides. I've heard of friendships being forged between political adversaries and the desire to make democracy work regardless of the outcome.

Ukrainians showed that it is possible to right a wrong, to stand up to injustice, and to work together as one for the good of all. Ukrainians have taught us how to make democracy work, and their lessons should never be forgotten.

Thank you.

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

International Women's Day

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to take this opportunity, the earliest one available to me, to recognize International Women's Day. International Women's Day is a time to recognize and celebrate women's struggle for equality and women's ongoing work to build a more just and compassionate world.

On behalf of the NDP opposition I would like to reaffirm our commitment to women's equality. We will continue to work with child care advocates for low-cost, high-quality child care centred on early childhood learning and development, for laws and policies that prevent harassment and discrimination, for adequate funding for women's shelters, for community policing and safer communities. The NDP opposition will also continue to work with women's groups and others for public health care that includes a full range of women's health needs including midwifery and reproductive choice and will stand up for women regardless of their sexual orientation, country of origin, or economic status.

This International Women's Day, Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposition reaffirms its commitment to bread and roses for all Alberta women. Thank you.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions

for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places as well.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Bill 14

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 14, the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005.

Just so that there is no confusion, Mr. Speaker, this does not embody the new and improved formula for student finance or student affordability but really is just housekeeping with respect to items that have been left over in the past. We can look forward to more and better new, exciting legislation later on the other topics.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

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

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move first reading of Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill clarifies wording around immunity for the board of directors of the Workers' Compensation Board, the WCB. It confirms that the WCB can regulate the fees charged by private lawyers working on third-party civil actions, and it permits WCB to pay cost of living increases to workers who are on extended temporary partial disability benefits.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 15 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 16

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request the leave of the House to introduce a bill being the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005.

The bill proposes amendments to the Alberta Business Corporations Act which will modernize the act and bring it into conformity with the Canada business corporations act. It will also for the first time allow the incorporation of unlimited liability corporations.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 16 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Bill 17
Agrology Profession Act

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to request leave to introduce Bill 17, the Agrology Profession Act.

Mr. Speaker, this act will help to clarify and strengthen the agrology profession by ensuring that its governing legislation is consistent with the current government policy on professional legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 17 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Bill 18
Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and request leave of the House to introduce Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow the movement from five members to the order per year to 10.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 18 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 20
Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a bill being the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Personal Income Tax Act to parallel recent federal amendments including easing the eligibility requirements to qualify for the disability tax credit, to improve fairness with respect to the treatment of part-year residents, and to ensure that the act is consistent with the current administration.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 20 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: 2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups of tablings today. For the first I would like to table the annual reports for the year 2003-2004 for the following health authorities: Chinook regional, Palliser regional, Calgary health region, David Thompson regional health authority, and East Central health. That's the first tabling.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the requisite number of copies of the annual reports of the following colleges and associations: the Alberta College of Optometrists' annual report 2003, the Alberta College of Pharmacists' annual report 2003, the Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists' annual report 2003, the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists' annual report 2003, and, finally, the Alberta Opticians Association annual report 2003.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the liberty today to table four copies of a document entitled Projected Government Business for the week of March 14, 2005. Given that we will not be sitting on Thursday of this week, I thought it appropriate to table the document and would ask, if it pleases you and the Legislature, that perhaps on this occasion only it could be printed in the Order Paper in the same manner as it's normally printed when it's asked for and read out on Thursdays.

The Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, no difficulty with that, is there? It's a unique situation: we're not sitting tomorrow.

Ms Blakeman: It is indeed unique, and I appreciate the efforts of the Government House Leader and would appreciate having it printed and shared orally, if possible, at the end of the Routine.

The Speaker: No disagreements with any members? So be it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter dated March 8, 2005, from the constituency office of Edmonton-Gold Bar to the chairperson of the Edmonton public school board, and it's CCed to all school board members. This is requesting that there be a stop put to the closure process until the provincial government introduces its new utilization formula.

The second tabling is a letter that I received as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts dated June 9, 2004, from the Auditor General of Alberta. The Auditor General is explaining to me why he cannot release to me information in regard to management letters that reference both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter from a Mr. Don Lind – he's an outfitter in High Prairie – regarding his concerns over the Métis harvesting agreement.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a news release issued by the University of Alberta Students' Union on March 2 of this year which expresses serious concerns about whether the government's proposed measures

for postsecondary education will satisfactorily address issues of affordability and accessibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Projected Government Business

The Speaker: Hon. members, a minute or two ago under Tabling Returns and Reports the hon. Government House Leader rose and did something. The reason he did it: if you look at Standing Order 7(1), it says that it is only on Thursday that we can deal with Projected Government Business. There's no provision to deal with it without unanimous consent on Wednesday because it is a Wednesday. So the hon. Government House Leader used the opportunity to deal with the tabling. The hon. Opposition House Leader agreed to that, and you all agreed to it, so it's been done. We worked the rules, I guess, so to speak, as to how you can be efficient with respect to this matter.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mr. Lukaszuk moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 8: Mr. Oberle]

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure and a great honour to stand and deliver my maiden speech in the Assembly today on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Currie. I want to start by expressing a deep debt of gratitude to my wife, Martha, for her love, her support, her encouragement, and her patience – some of those who know us both are so impressed that she's put up with me for 22 years that they've nicknamed her Martha Theresa – to my nearly adult children Scott and Jenny for being everything a father could hope for, and to one of the most awesome teams of campaign workers in Calgary history: 146 dedicated volunteers, many of whom joined in without even being asked and few of whom needed to be asked more than once, who stepped forward to help me in spite of myself.

I spent a lifetime being politically aware and interested but as an outsider, a journalist and a talk show host. Although I've always considered myself a small "I" liberal, because of how I earn my living, I was never a member of any political party until I decided in September to run for the big "L" Liberals. Look, since I was old enough to vote, I voted provincially and federally for just about every political party there is at one time or another.

My dear old late Nova Scotia grandfather, Charlie Walker, was as dyed-in-the-wool Liberal as you could get. If the Liberals down there were running Elmer's dog against Nova Scotia Tory Robert Stanfield himself, Charlie Walker would have voted for the dog. When I won election, my Aunt Shirley, his daughter, said to me: if your grandfather were still alive, he'd be so proud of you.

Me, I've always preferred to take a different approach to elections and vote for the candidate or the party or the leader whose views and policies aligned most closely with what I as a voter thought the

country or the province or the city I was living in needed at the time. So my campaign team didn't exactly rally around me because I'd been a good big "L" Liberal. I hadn't. In fact, I counted among my friends hardly anyone who was politically active in any party. In my past life I spent a lot of time talking about politics at work, so over the years Martha and I have formed most of our friendships with decidedly apolitical people precisely to make a clean break from work.

So why did they rally around me? Well, because they picked up on the same appetite for change, the same desire to see things done differently in this province that I picked up on from the callers to my talk show in the months leading up to the election. It was a buzz that many of the pundits and many in the media missed. My own boss laughed at me when I said that I was going to run for the Liberals. But there was and is among the people of Alberta and the constituents of Calgary-Currie impatience with the status quo and a feeling that we can do better.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you and the hon. members gathered here today a little bit about the constituency of Calgary-Currie, the people who live there, and what they value and believe.

Calgary-Currie is an inner-city riding close in to the downtown core of what we modestly like to call the greatest city in Canada. It is an eclectic, diverse, vibrant, and interesting mix of communities from the old downtown neighbourhoods of Mission and Cliff Bungalow through the mansions of Mount Royal, the condos and apartment buildings of Lower Mount Royal along the Red Mile. Across 14th Street is Bankview, an established, funky collection of houses and apartment buildings, each different from the next, very much like the people who live there, built on a series of hills that exudes almost a bohemian atmosphere in the sense that you might be someplace in San Francisco.

To the south are the neighbourhoods of South Calgary and Richmond-Knob Hill, in the midst of rejuvenating and reinventing themselves, a mix of houses from the very old to the very new; the Marda Loop business district, like 4th Street and 17th Avenue a destination area with its storefronts, coffee houses, ice cream shops, and restaurants. Each one of those three areas is unique, but what they all have in common is that they attract people from the adjacent neighbourhoods and from the far-flung suburbs, people who park their cars, get out on foot, and explore, enjoy, and engage themselves with their surroundings at street level. These are not mall crawlers, at least not while they're in Calgary-Currie.

Further south, Garrison Woods, a new community built on part of the old Canadian Forces Base Currie barracks, which gives my constituency its name, has attracted families from other parts of Calgary as well as from big cities across North America who were drawn there because they wanted that close in to downtown, big city feel.

South of that is the mature residential community of Altadore, which itself is starting to see some new infill development and houses undergoing substantial renovation, and to the west the neighbourhoods of Killarney, Glengarry, Glenbrook, and Glendale, good neighbourhoods filled with good people.

Mr. Speaker, you can look at the demographics of Calgary-Currie and, depending on your point of view, take away different impressions of the makeup of the constituency. Some have noted that Calgary-Currie has a disproportionate percentage of young single residents. It also has a significant population of seniors. It's also home to a substantial number of married, two-career couples with children. There is some real poverty in my constituency and some unbelievable wealth and everything in between. It is in many ways a microcosm of Canada.

3:00

There is, however, one demographic that stands out no matter how you read the other numbers, and that is the incredible level of education in Calgary-Currie. The single biggest percentage of the adult population, 31 and a half per cent, has a bachelor's degree or higher. Another 17 per cent have a college certificate or diploma, and a further 10 and a half per cent have a trade certificate or diploma. In all, 77 per cent of the adult population of Calgary-Currie has at least some postsecondary education.

As I went door to door during the campaign, Mr. Speaker, I encountered deep concerns and great annoyance among my constituents with the declining state of postsecondary education in this province. That's not surprising. The people of Calgary-Currie understand that accessible, affordable, excellence in advanced education is crucial to the future success of today's students and tomorrow's Alberta. They and I will be watching closely to see whether the platitudes and promises about postsecondary education contained in the Speech from the Throne are actually acted upon, and we will be watching with the understanding that even if they are, the systemic problem in Alberta's advanced education system will not be addressed unless and until the government substantially increases base operating grants to the institutions and adopts a new, more equitable, and realistic way of calculating just how much a postsecondary student in Alberta is worth. There was no mention of this in the throne speech.

My constituents, many of whom learn, teach, and work in support roles at Mount Royal College or are friends or neighbours of those who do, are also watching and waiting for this government to do the right thing and make Mount Royal into a university. Calgary is the biggest city in North America without a second university. Mount Royal is ready, willing, and able to fill that role as soon as this government grants its approval. The proposal has been in the hands of the government for two years now. One wonders what possible reasonable excuse there could be for delaying this decision any longer.

Mr. Speaker, I said at the outset that I wanted to talk about what my constituents value and believe. Those values and beliefs are informed by an urban, inner-city, downtown attitude. These are people, by and large, who live close to the downtown core by choice, because they prefer it to the suburbs. They like being able to walk out their front door and down the street for a couple of blocks to shop or dine or go for a drink. They prefer being a short public transit ride away from work to spending an hour or more every day stuck in traffic. They like the proximity to arts and culture, to theatres, museums, the opera, ballet, the philharmonic, the folk festival. They understand that vibrant arts, entertainment, and cultural sectors add to the quality of life in a city and to that city's potential for greatness. Frankly, many of the constituents I met during the campaign think that this government has let us down badly in that department.

They value and embrace diversity for the way in which it enriches their lives. They have a tolerance for ways of doing things that are different from their own, and they have a hard time understanding what all the fuss is about over same-sex marriage. They care about fairness and equity, and to them politicians who are more concerned about blocking a loving couple from declaring their commitment to each other in front of friends, family, and the wider community than they are about improving the lives of the elderly, the sick, and the disabled by raising AISH payments and restoring seniors' benefits are politicians who have their priorities mixed up. The people of Calgary-Currie don't always embrace change – I mean, who among us does, other than the consultants? – nor do they always resist it. They do however understand that real progress is measured by more than just profit.

The people of Calgary-Currie value community. By definition community is a group of people with a common interest living together within a larger society, individuals bound together by common cause, if you will, for the common good. Community is about more than shared values, for if the only value people share is this self-interested pursuit of personal wealth and happiness, well, then that's not really a community. What you have there is a collection of strangers who agree to respect each other's property lines and stay out of each other's way.

Community is about caring about what happens to others and knowing there are people who care about you. It's about feeling safe when you go out for a walk, and feeling secure in letting your children out to play because you know the entire community is looking out for its own. It's about knowing the neighbours, understanding that we're in this together, and getting it that society works best when everyone has the opportunity to participate. Community allows us to leave this world a better place than we found it by combining our efforts through strength in numbers. The people of Calgary-Currie want a government that understands that common cause and common good sustain the human spirit and quality of life in a way that self-interest does not, a government that appreciates that its job amounts to more than merely creating conditions for the rich to get richer.

The people of Calgary-Currie care about the land. Why wouldn't they? They live on the edge of what is quite possibly the most beautiful place on earth, a land so beautiful that it pierces clean through to the soul. I've yet to meet a constituent, whether by birth or by choice, who doesn't feel a deep connection to the awesome natural beauty that surrounds us. It sustains us and can sustain our children and their children but only if we sustain it through conservation, responsible development, and caring stewardship. The notion of undeveloped, unexploited, undisturbed wilderness as sterile land must end.

My constituents were proud to send me to this Legislature. I'm proud to be here and to serve them. Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time today.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should any member wish to take advantage of it.

If not, then might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

Introduction of Guests (*reversion*)

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

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly this afternoon several individuals who are here to hear my maiden speech later this afternoon. I'd first like to recognize Mr. Stan Schumacher, a former Member of Parliament, a former member and Speaker of this Assembly. Thank you for joining us this afternoon, Stan. I'd also like to recognize that we've been joined by one of Alberta's newest Senators-in-waiting, hopefully soon to be appointed, Mrs. Betty Unger.

Like everybody else in this Chamber on both sides, I'm here partly by my own efforts but more because of the efforts of all the volunteers and friends. There are a lot of volunteers and friends here that I'd like to ask to stand in a moment, but, of course, like everybody else the person I owe the most thanks to and apologies, probably, for getting into this business, is my wife, Bambi. I'd like

to ask the rest of my family, friends, and supporters who are here today seated in the public gallery to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on an introduction, as well.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly my brother Stan Backs, who's in the public gallery. Stan, could you please rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

**Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**
(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to add my comments to those already offered by my colleagues in consideration of the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to congratulate you and offer you my best wishes on your re-election, and I truly hope that the fate that befell several Speakers of the British Parliament in the 17th century will not afflict you this session.

Mr. Speaker, Foothills-Rocky View is a new constituency. It is comprised of the territory from the former constituencies of Airdrie-Rocky View, Banff-Cochrane, and Highwood. Our territory lies to the west of highway 2 and the city of Calgary. It stretches from Crossfield and Madden in the north to Black Diamond and Turner Valley in the south. It includes the acreage communities that surround Calgary on the west: Bearspaw, Springbank, Elbow Valley, Priddis, and De Winton, and the beautiful hamlets of Bragg Creek and Millarville. It also includes the Tsuu T'ina Nation, one of the most dynamic and well-governed reserves in Canada. Our greatest asset, however, is the people of Foothills-Rocky View, some of the most successful, well-educated, and community-minded citizens of this province and whom I'm honoured to represent.

Mr. Speaker, Foothills-Rocky View is truly the crown jewel of southern Alberta. We're the gateway to the Rockies. The sweeping Canadian prairies end at our eastern doorstep. Our rolling foothills are nature's staircase to the craggy peaks that fence us on the west. We share this special place with the deer, elk, and moose, cougars and lynx, black bears and grizzlies, and hundreds of God's lesser but no less important creatures.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, living in Foothills-Rocky View is a privilege, and we're determined to protect and preserve the natural beauty and environmental integrity. So we're especially pleased with the throne speech's commitment to help in this effort. In Alberta our quality of life and life itself depends on having a healthy and sustainable water supply. Foothills-Rocky View straddles the central section of the eastern slopes watershed. A river flows through it; not one, not two, but three of the most important rivers in the South Saskatchewan River basin: the Bow, the Elbow, and the Sheep. Managing the waters of these rivers in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way is among the very highest priorities of my constituents, so we're pleased that Alberta will continue to implement the Water for Life strategy.

Foothills-Rocky View is also home to some of Alberta's earliest cattle ranching. The beef industry remains an important pillar of our local economy and has been hurt by the U.S. border closure. We

applaud the throne speech's commitment to increased domestic slaughter capacity, and we are proud that one of the most important new plants, Rancher's Beef, is being built in the MD of Rocky View.

Mr. Speaker, Foothills-Rocky View is uniquely tied to Calgary. The water that flows through the taps of Calgary flows first through the rivers and streams of Foothills-Rocky View. We have serious waste-water issues in Bragg Creek and Springbank. Our problems are also Calgary's problems, so we applaud the government's commitment to invest in water infrastructure to provide a safe, clean water supply.

The residents of Foothills-Rocky View value being close to Calgary but only close to, not part of Calgary. We do not want to be swallowed up by mindless urban sprawl. We value our working rural landscapes and open spaces, and we want to keep them that way. So again we applaud the government's commitment to a new land use management framework, and we encourage the government to embrace the concepts of natural capital and smart growth.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne informs us that "strengthening the postsecondary learning system is the government's top priority during this centennial year." As a professor who has taught at the University of Calgary for the past 24 years, nothing could please me more. Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, commits 4 and a half billion dollars to our universities, colleges, and technical institutes. These funds "will lay the groundwork for investments that will allow Alberta to continue to prosper in the increasingly globalized, knowledge-based economy." Much of this learning will be technical and scientific, but it will also include the humanities and social sciences, which include history and, specifically, Alberta's history.

As the throne speech declares, "As this province's 100-year history illustrates so unmistakably, Albertans have what it takes to be leaders." So I would like to take this opportunity to revisit the role of political leadership in Alberta's history.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the great occasion of our centennial, we should recall that provincehood did not come easily to Alberta. Sir Frederick Haultain, the Premier of the North-West Territories began in the late 1890s to push the idea of extending provincial status and responsible government for the western territories.

Initially, the Laurier Liberals were receptive, but for the first time but not the last politics in Quebec dictated Ottawa's treatment of the west, and Laurier rejected the call for provincehood as premature. Happily for us, Premier Haultain refused to take no for an answer. He abandoned his embrace of nonpartisanship and plunged into the 1904 federal election as a candidate for the Conservative Party. In that campaign he declared to his supporters:

Let us fight for our rights with all the energy we can command. The only way to show the Liberal government that we are in earnest is to turn them down at the polls. Give them a crushing defeat and we will get the rights we demand.

I'm sure my Liberal friends are quick to point out that Haultain lost that election. But he won the war. The Laurier Liberals carried the west, but conceded on the issue of provincehood the very next year.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to Frederick Haultain's spirited defence of democracy, Alberta achieved provincial status in 1905 but not on the terms demanded by Haultain and the other western autonomists. Ownership of natural resources was not granted to the two new provinces. This was a radical departure from the practice in the rest of Canada, under which all existing provinces did control their own natural resources. Thus right from our birth equality of the provinces has been the battle cry of Alberta. The transfer of natural resource ownership to Alberta was pursued in virtually every session of this Legislature for our first 25 years. Not once but twice this Assembly enacted mineral taxation legislation to try to recoup the

revenues that were supposed to be coming to this province but were being denied, and not once but twice these laws were disallowed by Ottawa. Did Albertans become discouraged? Did Albertans give up? No. We persisted, and in 1930, under the persistent leadership of Premier John Brownlee and the United Farmers of Alberta, ownership of natural resources was transferred back to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the prosperity that Albertans enjoy today did not happen by accident. It happened on purpose. It happened because of the bold leadership of men like Frederick Haultain and John Brownlee.

No decade was as harsh and cruel for Alberta as the Dirty Thirties. The Great Depression forced thousands of Alberta families off their farms and into bankruptcy. The government was forced to default on its bond payments, and into this breach strode William Aberhart and the new Social Credit Party.

Premier Aberhart enacted a suite of Social Credit policies designed to stimulate consumer spending and revive our prostrate economy. These acts, however, were quickly disallowed by the Liberal government in Ottawa. Undeterred, the following month Premier Aberhart reconvened this Legislature and passed the same three acts again, only slightly amended. Within weeks these new acts were struck down again, this time by Alberta's own Lieutenant Governor. Aberhart immediately challenged in court this striking down as an unconstitutional attack on responsible government and provincial rights, and to make sure the Lieutenant Governor and Ottawa got the message, in the next budget, in the spring of '37, the Aberhart government cancelled all provincial funding for the Lieutenant Governor, including his residence, his car, his driver, and his secretary. They got the message.

Writing in 1954, 20 years after this, J.R. Mallory, one of English Canada's leading constitutional scholars, observed: "One of the most significant facts which emerges from a study of the disallowance power is that the power has been used primarily against the West . . . The disallowance power [was] an imperial device for holding other provinces under the sway of the predominant economic interest of the central provinces." These words were written in 1954 not by an Alberta separatist but by a revered McGill University professor, but the message they conveyed was understood 20 years earlier by a strong-willed Alberta preacher. To his credit and to our benefit William Aberhart refused to accept the antiwestern bias of the political status quo.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps William Aberhart's greatest gift to Alberta was his second-in-command and Alberta's longest serving Premier, the Hon. Ernest C. Manning. Ernest C. Manning was the Moses of Alberta. His steady hand guided Albertans from the economic desert of the '30s to the promised land of economic self-sufficiency and prosperity in the '60s.

Today I want to draw attention to only one of Premier Manning's many important legacies, provincial control of natural gas transmission. Premier Manning saw that the economic value of Alberta's emerging natural gas industry depended on export markets. He also understood that every time a gas pipeline crosses a provincial or international border, it falls under federal jurisdiction. Thus, in 1954 Premier Manning created the Alberta Gas Trunk Line, the AGTL. The AGTL was designed to transport Alberta gas to provincial borders and the U.S. border, thus keeping gas shipment under provincial jurisdiction. In later years Premier Manning explained this strategy. "Theoretically . . . if we'd ever had a constitutional hassle over the export of gas under that arrangement, you could just simply turn the tap off at the border."

Contemporary Alberta's prosperity and control of its resources did not happen by accident. It was made possible by far-sighted decisions of leaders like Ernest C. Manning. Ernest Manning mused

about the possibility of conflict with Ottawa over Alberta's oil and gas revenues. For his successor, Peter Lougheed, this was not mere speculation. During his 15 years as Premier Alberta was constantly under attack by a rapacious federal bureaucracy. Thankfully for us, Peter Lougheed rose to the occasion. He had hardly been in office two years when in September of 1973 Mr. Trudeau surprised him with the announcement of the federal oil export tax. Lougheed's response was direct and unequivocal.

This appears to be the most discriminatory action taken by a federal government against a particular province in the entire history of Confederation. . . . The natural resources of the provinces are owned by the provinces under the terms of Confederation. The action taken by Ottawa strikes at the very roots of Confederation. And why just an export tax on oil? Why not on lumber from British Columbia, potash from Saskatchewan, nickel from Manitoba, pulp and paper, asbestos, and gold from Ontario and Quebec? Why only Alberta oil?

3:20

But Premier Lougheed was not anti-Ottawa; he was pro-Alberta. This explains why over the protest of the oil and gas industry he raised provincial royalty payments in March of 1974. Peter Lougheed wanted all Albertans to share in the province's resource wealth, but this was too much for Ottawa. Less than two months later, in May of '74, the Liberals brought in a new federal budget declaring that provincial royalties would no longer be deductible from federal corporate income tax. This punitive measure provoked a sharp rebuke from Peter Lougheed and also sent a lot of drilling rigs out of the province immediately. Lougheed denounced the Liberal budget on nondeductibility of royalties as "the biggest rip-off of any province that's ever occurred in Confederation's history."

Premier Lougheed's unflinching defence of Alberta resources brought several years of peace, but the energy wars erupted again in October of 1980, when the Liberals announced the national energy program. Lougheed lost no time in responding. In a televised speech that same afternoon the Premier told Albertans, "We have made it abundantly clear to the federal government that we would not, as a matter of principle, accept a . . . royalty upon Alberta's oil."

Lougheed did not just talk though; he took action. He announced the shut-in of 60,000 barrels of oil daily. He also launched a constitutional challenge to the natural gas export tax, a challenge, I might add, that Alberta won in the courts. This strategy worked and forced Trudeau back to the bargaining table. Lougheed subsequently cemented this victory over natural resources into the Constitution. Trudeau gave in to Lougheed's demand for a new and strengthened recognition of provincial responsibility for nonrenewable resources. Lougheed also shaped the new constitutional amending formula in a way that protected Alberta. From 1970 Lougheed had fought for the principle of provincial equality of all provinces with respect to a made-in-Canada amending formula.

Premier Lougheed took the lead in opposing Mr. Trudeau's attempt at unilateral patriation in 1980, and his persistence was rewarded in the final amending formula adopted in the 1982 Constitution in which no province received special treatment, thus ending the de facto constitutional veto enjoyed by Quebec. No Alberta Premier has achieved more for our province in the constitutional field than Peter Lougheed.

Last in time but first in responsibility for our province's current financial strength is our own Premier, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. When he assumed the reins of leadership in 1992, our province was drowning in debts and deficits, but the Premier led this province out of the annual operating deficits in just three years. The Alberta model, first scorned by political and media elites, soon was being copied by other provinces and eventually even by Ottawa.

This is the ultimate kind of leadership, leadership by example.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) applies. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Standing Order 29(2) does allow for up to five minutes of further comment and debate, I'm just wondering how the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View would conclude his speech had he been given another four and a half minutes.

Dr. Morton: I'll abuse the privilege. I'll go back to a section of the speech that I left out.

The Rutherford scholarships recognize the role that Premier Alexander C. Rutherford played in the establishment of higher education in Alberta. Today in the spirit of nonpartisanship I want our Liberal friends to know that I am wearing an original campaign pin from the 1905 campaign with the likeness of Alexander C. Rutherford on it. I'll be happy to let you see this afterwards. It will remind you of the distant days a century ago when the Liberals governed this province.

Returning to my conclusion, which will take 75 seconds, Premier Klein's prudent fiscal management soon produced a second and even greater legacy. He paid off our \$24 billion net debt. The result, as the throne speech notes, is that Alberta enters its second century with a strong economy, no debt, nation-leading rates of growth and employment. What a way to turn 100. When the history books are written, they will show again that Alberta's enviable status was not by accident but on purpose, and it was the legacy of the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Foothills-Rocky View are happy with the government's throne speech. We are excited about Alberta's second century because we agree with the throne speech that this province's 100-year history illustrates so unmistakably that Albertans have what it takes to be leaders. A society that forgets its past has no future. The path to our present can serve as our guide to the future.

Our Alberta strong and free did not happen by accident; it happened on purpose. It happened because of the wise and deliberate choices made by the statesman who has served as Premier of this province. I congratulate the government for a throne speech that proposes a plan of action that will continue this proud legacy. As Peter Lougheed liked to challenge his adversaries in Ottawa, how do you make Canada stronger by making a province or region weaker? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is: you don't. An Alberta strong and free is the best way to ensure a Canada strong and free.

Thank you.

The Speaker: My congratulations, hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar. That's the second time today that innovative use and knowledge of the Standing Orders allowed certain things to happen. This is good.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with tremendous pride and with a sense of great honour that I rise today to present this my maiden speech to this Legislature.

First, of course, I thank the voters of Edmonton-Manning. Edmonton-Manning is a diverse riding. It's one of the largest urban ridings in the province. Even though being in the city of Edmonton, it has a very large rural component, with many families whose

homesteading history goes back to the late 1800s and with farm families on those places for generations. There are also many diverse communities of very different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, there are many languages heard, and it is an extremely vibrant community. It is their support, those voters of Edmonton-Manning, that made me their voice in our Alberta Legislature.

I also thank the many volunteers that helped put me here, and I hope and pray that I can live up to their expectations. It is incredible the amount of work that goes into an election. The tens of thousands of pamphlets dropped, the tens of thousands of phone calls, the thousands of signs erected, the money donated and raised, and the many other volunteer activities all attest to the huge amount of work that was done to put me here. I cannot give enough thanks to those that helped.

It was a hard and difficult campaign in some ways. I extend again my sympathies to Premier Klein for the loss of his mother in the early stages of this campaign. It is extremely difficult to have such a difficult event in the middle of the emotional extremes of an election battle. I also give condolences to the family of our dear departed Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole. Also, my own dear and much beloved mother, Helen Backs, passed on to her heavenly reward on November 7, 2004, just 15 days prior to election day. I don't know if I've quite personally accepted that yet. I thank my extended family and friends, who provided great support for me in that difficult time, and I'll dedicate these humble words to my mom. I offer prayers to our Lord to all those who have lost a loved one in recent times.

I am a proud Albertan. I was born in Calgary and grew up on the city's west side. My dad immigrated to Canada from Holland in 1948. My mother's side of the family came to western Canada in 1871. Dad learned a trade, attended night school at SAIT, and developed a successful construction business and a lumberyard, which he later sold to go ranching in the Peace country near High Prairie. But he got design awards, a 12-page spread in *Better Homes and Gardens* for his houses, and he did well.

3:30

I went to the University of Alberta in Edmonton but always helped him in his businesses both in the south and the north of this province. We broke 140 acres of bush for a couple of years, and I've worked countless acres of land and worked on equipment, tended cattle, and ridden herd for many days. I even had five quarters myself for a while. Like most young guys on the farm I went off to work in construction except in the peak seasons. I got into industrial construction and pipeline. In Alberta I worked at many sites including Suncor, Syncrude, Sundance, Kepphills, Genesee, Joffre, Dow at Fort Saskatchewan, Hardisty, many other sites, and I pipelined from Brooks to Rainbow Lake. It's an experience that many Albertans have worked in and enjoyed.

Like most farm families and with an offer that really couldn't be refused, we eventually sold the farm. There's maybe one family living and farming on the old road, where there were probably 10 a quarter of a century ago. That's what's happened to farming in Alberta. I ran crews and later moved on to a lot of work in labour relations representation and labour market analysis. I've been an operating engineer for nearly 30 years. For many of those years I also had a place in Edmonton.

I've also travelled and worked in 45 countries in Europe, Africa, and South America. I've done a lot of wildlife photography. I've been to every province in Canada as well as the territories as well many of the states in the U.S. and Mexico. A year and a half ago I even made it north of Ellesmere Island and Greenland on an icebreaker expedition.

I've been involved in many election campaigns and have done some political work. I first door-knocked in what is now Edmonton-Manning nearly 20 years ago. I have great respect for the memory of Bettie Hewes, Laurence Decore, and Percy Wickman, all of whom I helped extensively and draw inspiration from. I hope that those varied experiences and knowledge of those people will help me in my work as an MLA.

We are in a tremendous process of change. Technological advances, environmental challenges, globalization, international terrorism, and the demographics of the baby boom all pose tremendous challenges which cry out for leadership. Albertans in the last election told me that they do not want a smug, self-satisfied, and complacent government. They want a government with a sense of purpose and a mission for our future.

In going door to door, I was told that even with our well-earned prosperity, people are afraid for their future and the future of their children. It is good to see this government finally wake up and begin to recognize the value of education and the real justice of investing in the future of our people. Such investments will pay dividends a hundredfold if only this government could fully and completely understand the idea and provide the full-meal deal called for by Alberta Liberals for education and postsecondary education in the last election.

Many seniors supported me in the last election, and I am indebted to them. Indeed, the huge increase in long-term care rates foisted on fixed-income elders led me to decide to join the race in Edmonton-Manning. My aunt was hit like a sledgehammer with that particular money grab. I couldn't believe how any government with one bit of a sense of respect for its pioneers could pull such an act. It's all about dignity; it's all about respect. We must show and our government must demonstrate that respect to those people that have built our province.

We must also be compassionate to those that are less fortunate. AISH and other supports are embarrassing. I heard that loud and clear.

There are some things that government has done well over the years. Our apprenticeship system still holds up against any in the land, even though there are some unscrupulous and exploitive types, I think, that would have it degraded. We must maintain and improve the apprenticeship system and decrease the cost of access to trades apprenticeship. We must also have a multifaceted approach to ensure that those who take up a trade stay in it. Many trades – and I've talked to many of them – lost a majority of their new apprentices in the last few years because of mass layoffs in industry after projects were finished and intermittent work, and the people just couldn't keep their young families provided for by that apprenticeship. There has to be change in the way that is done.

There is also too much hype and misinformation on the demographic time bomb of the baby boom. Do the arithmetic. World War II ended in 1945. It took a while for the boys to get back, get families started, and there's this common thing of a nine-month delay. Boomers started coming on in about 1947-48, and the baby boom lasted until the mid-60s. The first boomers will be 65 in 2012, the middle boomers in 2022, and the late boomers are still having kids. I really wonder how many will actually want to retire at 65.

There has certainly been far too much one-sided hype on shortages in the trades, yet there are shortages in health care occupations. So many health care professionals were let go in the government-led purges of the last decade that it's no wonder that it's hard to find nurses and doctors who want to work in our system. There are shortages in residential construction because this government downgraded the trade of carpenter. Yes, there are shortages from time to time in some trades, but Alberta can handle it, together with

a proper and paced development, without recourse to temporary foreign workers to take their jobs.

There has been a working trades labour mobility system in place in Canada for generations. Immigration has also been an important part of that process. Oft reported studies speak to demand, like Todd Hirsch's excellent survey of employers/organizations for the Canada West Foundation. These do that, though they only speak to demand. To only survey demand from employers for workers down the road is like surveying a grade 3 class on the supply of candy in two months: there will never be enough. There have been precious few public reports on the supply side. Some pending studies have been kept private or delayed, but I personally asked many of the trades organizations just last week if they could supply now and in the future. They said that they have no problem in supplying the major oil sands projects, and they said that there was availability from the traditional areas in the United States as well.

The temporary foreign worker program can only be one huge mistake. It will drive away apprentices. It will grab the best jobs and take the wages away. It will not work. You cannot treat labour like a commodity. I have heard some foreign companies come in and say that they should be able to come up to the tar sands and build their plants, like they do in the Persian Gulf or in Indonesia, and just grab 10,000 workers away from some country, just come up here and do that. Well, I don't think that that's right for Alberta.

Over 20 years ago, after the failure of the Alsands project – and there were great difficulties at that time in Alberta – I lobbied to grant royalty holidays for oil sands developers. Eventually this took hold, and I believe it has been a great success for Alberta and the development of our oil sands. For many Albertans and certainly for tradesmen there has always been a trade-off, a quid pro quo, so to speak. That quid pro quo for many Albertans is that in exchange for support for deferred royalty holidays for oil sands development there must be opportunity for Alberta businesses, opportunity for those top wages and benefits for Alberta workers, and development of our own economy for the benefit of Alberta. These opportunities provide taxes, develop our economy, and pay for the many advantages that we hold dear in our Alberta.

There's also the environment. Albertans want clean, clear water. Don't give us a water disease disaster like Walkerton in Ontario. Albertans want clean air. Clean up the pollution hanging increasingly over our cities. Why is it that the air quality in the pristine eastern slopes near Rocky Mountain House is worse than in downtown Vancouver? What about sour gas? What about agriculture? Do something for Albertans, not just the big American outfits. We must have fiscal responsibility. Enough said. But I wonder about the supplementary estimates released just yesterday.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are looking for a government of decision. The throne speech did not reflect that. Albertans are looking for change. I suspect that that will only happen in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

3:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should there be questions.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to a Member by Name

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair did not intervene when the last two speakers gave their remarks when they mentioned the name of a member in the Assembly, and he did that in deference to the fact that these were their maiden speeches. But it is against the rules to mention the name of an existing person in the Assembly, and there's

a reason for it. There's a reason for it. Every once in a while there arrives a name that perhaps can be pronounced in a number of different ways and if slurred improperly gives the wrong impression, at which point in time the phones in my office would light up incredibly. So the tradition is set to protect everyone. We mention only the name of the constituency.

Now the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure and pride that I rise today to give my maiden speech in this the 26th Legislature of Alberta before you, whom I congratulate on your re-election, sir, and before our hon. colleagues on both sides of the House, whom I also congratulate on their recent election.

I would like to begin by saluting the pioneers of our fine province, who have taught us all that we can turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones, obstacles into opportunities, and, yes, even bust into boom if we choose to. Our forebears were dealt many raw hands in the past 100 years, and because they played their cards right, we have all benefited. To their credit they applied the advice of Winston Churchill, "If you are going through hell, keep going." In many ways those who have come and gone before us have turned our small corner of the globe into a little piece of heaven, perhaps because they truly understood Charles Darwin's notion that it is not the strongest that survive; nor is it the most intelligent. It is those who are most adaptable to change. I believe, as our grandmothers and grandfathers must have, that the sky is the limit as long as we develop and implement the right attitudes, actions, resources, personnel, luck, and dreams.

Mr. Speaker, we've had dreams in the past, we have dreams in the present, and we will have dreams in the future. As such, I would like to thank all the residents of Calgary-Lougheed who have made a dream come true for me by electing me to this Legislature. I applaud all of my constituents in the extreme southwest corner of our city, which includes the communities of Woodbine, Woodlands, Shawnee Slopes, Millrise, Evergreen, Bridlewood, and the western half of Canyon Meadows, those who exercised their democratic right to vote during the last election. Whether they cast a ballot for me or for one of my political opponents, they participated in one of the most fundamental aspects of a free society, and I appreciate that they took their precious time to do so.

In my travels over the years I've met people around the world who struggle daily for the kinds of opportunities that many of us take for granted in this great province and country. We take it for granted all too often. As an example of this, we recently watched on television as the people of Iraq turned out in record numbers to risk their lives to line up at polling stations, even as they were being bombed, just to cast their single ballot. Such images of great human perseverance to participate in our electoral process should remind us of the great responsibility that we have been bestowed with by those who have elected us to represent them here today with honesty and with integrity.

I appreciate that the people of Calgary-Lougheed have put their faith in me, and I'm honoured with the great task of representing these wonderful people. It's a rather daunting proposition, but it is not in my nature to back away from a challenge. As some of you may know, it was certainly an uphill climb to earn three university degrees, work with the federal government for three terms, serve as an educator and administrator at all grade levels in three countries, and run my own business internationally, as well as climb Mount Everest twice. [some applause] Thank you.

I'm certainly grateful for these opportunities as they've led me to

this place right here right now. I'm very excited to utilize the insights I've gained for the benefit of those in Calgary-Lougheed and the rest of the province, and I cherish this monumental mandate as I pledge to do everything possible to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people. I will do so by drawing upon the many lessons I have learned quite humbly over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I've often been asked what I have gained during some of my so-called Everest experiences. I can tell you that I've learned how tiny and insignificant yet how powerful each of us is. I've learned a little bit about how to relate to and encourage and empower others facing huge obstacles in life, whether they be mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, or financial mountains in life. I know first-hand that no one can climb a mountain for anyone else, and at the same time we never climb a mountain all by ourselves.

When I compare mountaineering expeditions to political endeavours, I note that both require calculated individual application as well as well-planned teamwork. They're both very time-consuming projects and are difficult missions that some would never, ever care to even attempt. I'd also like to point out that, interestingly enough, it is the descent, not the ascent, that is the most dangerous part of an expedition.

Similarly, in Alberta, although we have scaled to the summit of our mountain of debt, I really believe that we have to watch our steps very carefully right now. We need to continue to power the engines of small and big business that got us here, and we need to reinvest in education, health, infrastructure, and transportation. That's exactly what I heard my constituents in Calgary-Lougheed say, and thankfully that's exactly what our legendary new Lieutenant Governor, Normie Kwong, shared in his inaugural Speech from the Throne.

This brings to mind one of my favourite quotations from our dearly beloved and recently departed Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole, who once said: "Money is like manure. If you spread it around it does a lot of good. But if you pile it up in one place it stinks like hell." Why would we do well to spread it around? Well, as the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises stated: "Those fighting for free enterprise and free competition do not defend the interests of those rich today. They want a free hand left to unknown men who will be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow."

Mr. Speaker, our future is at least partially influenced by our past, and I will share a short personal reflection along these lines. In my youth I was both attracted and repelled by politics. I can relate to social activist and rock star Bono, who said: in my teenage years I just despised politicians, but now I have more faith in them than I ever could have imagined.

I was first attracted to politics as a teenager as a delegate to Youth Parliament and the model United Nations. I suppose that in certain ways I may have been looking forward to this day ever since my high school social studies teacher imparted the idea that politics, when done well, is perhaps the greatest agent of positive social change that is available to us on this earth. Perhaps for this reason I have long believed that being a public servant is a mission, a vocation, an honour, and an obligation, something that gives meaning and purpose to life.

As politicians I believe that we're in a perfect position to help facilitate the incredible conditions under which we can create a new and improved province together. In my vision of Alberta's next century we will create and maintain a sustainable balance between industry, environment, and recreation. Alberta will be the best place in the world to live, learn, do business, and raise a family.

In the 21st century we will cultivate a diverse economy, with much more than just oil revenues to keep us from running a deficit.

We will never allow the next Alberta to go into debt. We will tax reasonably with huge return on investment for ourselves and the future of our children and our children's children. The Alberta of tomorrow will quite simply see us provide those children with the best education system in the world. We will plan the development of our communities together much earlier than we have in the past, and we will not spend hours sitting in traffic on our way to and from work.

I see a province in which we will all have equal access to excellent health care, and we will also have options to choose from in this regard. No one, especially seniors, will ever have to wait 18 months for an operation. I see an Alberta in which we treat the less advantaged with dignity and grace. We not only allow but we encourage and empower them to be the best that they can possibly be. In the microcosm we will live by good old-fashioned family values – we'll take care of ourselves, and we'll take care of each other – and in the macrocosm we will enjoy an even stronger Alberta within Confederation.

I believe that my Progressive Conservative colleagues have a similar vision, and I know that they have many more wonderful ideas to share, as well. As such, I would like to thank my PC brothers and sisters for sharing their incredible gifts and talents with our caucus and with our province.

3:50

I would also like to thank the members of our team who have represented Calgary-Lougheed before me, Judge Marlene Graham and the hon. Jim Dinning. These two have left very large shoes to fill, but it is affirming to follow in such great footsteps, and I wish them nothing but the best in their future endeavours. These predecessors have helped to lead us into these interesting times that we now enjoy, and I believe that it's only going to get even more exciting.

To address this future reality, our forward-thinking agenda, as laid out so well in the throne speech, is a testament to the tireless work of all former MLAs, current colleagues, and of course our esteemed Premier. As was outlined in the speech, I know that the people of Calgary-Lougheed are very excited about working towards an Alberta with the best educational, economic, health, and social systems in the world.

While my team and I knocked on 8,000 doors in our riding during the nomination and election, thousands of my constituents shared their thoughts with regard to how they think this government should tackle the issues of our time. But it was also what my constituents did not say that I think is worthy of note. I did not hear my constituents say that they wanted to be average citizens, and I did not hear them say that they wanted an average government. My colleagues heard this message as well, and as such they have planned a very ambitious agenda: to be national leaders on the issues that matter most to Albertans. While this is a tall task and while there is a predominance of doom and gloom in the news and in the beliefs of certain interest groups, I believe that we have a world-class system here in Alberta and that it will only improve with time. But from what people tell me, we need to do more now, and we will.

As this government pledges to open up 60,000 new spaces in our universities and increase training in nonacademic career paths, we will have the most-educated and well-trained workforce in all of Canada. Thankfully, this spending will not only benefit those who wish to attend postsecondary education in the next few years, since Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, will create an endowment fund to ensure that the youth of this province continue to benefit for decades to come. This is a reminder of one of the most endearing legacies to come from the Speech from the Throne, that being the Lois Hole

digital library, based at the University of Calgary but providing vast knowledge to all Albertans, that will help them overcome their educational obstacles.

However, there is one thing that the library cannot completely help us overcome, and that is our individual health status, which doesn't necessarily improve with a strong economy or great returns on the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Instead, it is dependent on people making informed choices on how to live their lives in a positive manner and being able to quickly access quality health care when they really need it.

As the newly-appointed chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission I look forward to the challenges and rewards of acting as the liaison between the health minister, AADAC, the Premier, cabinet, and my fellow colleagues in the Legislature. Substance abuse leads to a great number of health problems, as we all know, not just for the individual but for the family and friends of those who are addicted. We can spend a huge amount of funding in health facilities to treat the secondary symptoms that result from substance addiction, but unless we focus on the causes of these types of addictions and abuse, we'll never see the light at the end of the tunnel with respect to the elimination of substance abuse. I know that that is exactly what AADAC and its fine personnel strive to do every day.

So I believe that there are many reasons for hope. I anticipate that great strides will be made for those involved with substance abuse partially because of the commitment that the minister of health has made toward Alberta being the healthiest province in Canada, and I look forward to working with the minister, our Premier, and my colleagues on this.

Together we are faced with very innovative opportunities with regard to health care delivery. Many Albertans have told me that they want a health care system that provides them with the services that they need, with very careful attention as to how their health dollars are spent. As someone who has used our health system in the past, I honestly believe that we have very good people in the health sector, who provide Albertans with the best possible care that they can. Is our system perfect? Of course not, but we'll continue to make it the best it can be.

As we plan for the future of our health care system, I know that the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed want a system that works best for Alberta, one that includes aspects of a wide variety of models. The proposal to amend legislation that will allow for innovation in the health care field will create a very healthy debate and will explore all of the health care delivery options so that we won't miss out on any of the excellent approaches that are being utilized in systems across the world. The people of this province will be watching very closely as we make very important decisions on this matter, and I will be watching very closely, as well, to ensure that whatever systems we choose, every single Albertan will continue to receive quick and high-quality health care, regardless of their ability to pay.

In addition to these issues, I know that the people in Calgary-Lougheed are concerned about a clean and protected environment. Like many constituents and colleagues I also put a great amount of value on environmental conservation.

Sorry. Am I out of time? I'll sit down.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to hear what the concluding statement of this maiden speech would be, please.

The Speaker: Hon. member, proceed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, hon. member, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. One minute to go.

As I've mentioned, in addition to health care and education, I know that people in Calgary-Lougheed are concerned about a clean and protected environment. Like my colleagues and constituents I put a great amount of value on environmental conservation. Perhaps this is at least due to the close proximity of our fine riding to the beautiful Fish Creek provincial park.

When I draw attention to this, please note that I'm not speaking out against all industrial development. I believe that we sometimes pit environment and industry against each other, sometimes very unfairly. While future generations of Albertans deserve to have a healthy environment passed down to them, I believe that this does not need to be at the expense of this province's great economy. I am very proud to say that I believe this government has performed a great balancing act with regard to environmental protectionism and industry growth. Through strong government policy I'm confident that this relationship will grow even stronger in the future.

The last concerns of Calgary-Lougheed residents that I will mention today are those of transportation and infrastructure. I certainly share this concern, as well, but after speaking recently with the hon. minister in charge, I have never been more optimistic in this regard. Additionally, with the city of Calgary receiving \$1 billion recently and considering the arrangements for the southwest portion of the ring road being closer to reality than ever before, as evidenced in today's paper, I'm confident that we will continue to move in the right direction at an even faster pace than before.

Mr. Speaker, I maintain that the future is bright for all of us, and I look forward to the challenges ahead as we move onward and upward, building the legacy of Calgary-Lougheed and the future of Alberta together.

In closing, I would like to thank my personal hero, my wife, Jennifer, who is also the co-founder of our organization entitled the Mountain of Heroes. I'd like to thank my assistants, my campaign teams, my campaign manager, who is a 22-year-old former student of mine named Keith Marlowe, and of course my family and friends for their support and inspiration.

I would like to once again express my appreciation to the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed for the opportunity to be their representative, and I very much look forward to their continued feedback over the years. I want to assure them that I will do everything possible to keep their issues at the front of the Alberta agenda.

Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me an extended period to share my thoughts on the past, present, and future of our fair province.

The Speaker: Before I call on the next speaker, hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, you have a special introduction? Proceed.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It makes me extremely proud and pleased to rise today and acknowledge the one person I love the most in this world, more than anybody else except for our two children: my wife, Marwa, who is sitting in the public gallery. I would like her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Wow, you earned points.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the hon. Member for

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

4:00

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I get the chance to congratulate you on your re-election as the Speaker of this esteemed Assembly, and I would like to also convey congratulations to the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committees.

I'm extremely pleased to have the privilege of responding to the Speech from the Throne and delivering my initial or inaugural address, and I thank you for this opportunity today. It is with great pride that I stand before you today representing my constituency and the constituents of Edmonton-McClung.

My constituency is named after Nellie McClung, of course, one of the Famous Five, a visionary, a brave person, a person who fought for equality and fairness. She was an individual who had the courage and resolve necessary to challenge the status quo. She had the courage and vision to change people's lives for the better. I am honoured to be representing a constituency named after her.

I am also proud to be living in a neighbourhood by the name of Lymburn, which represents a sizable portion of my constituency and is named after the hon. J.F. Lymburn, this province's Attorney General between 1926 and 1935.

Edmonton-McClung has a population of about 38,000, and about one-sixth of them, Mr. Speaker, are school-aged children and youth. The people of Edmonton-McClung live in both rural and urban settings, and they are predominantly middle- to upper middle-class citizens, where the average household income exceeds \$80,000 per year.

I plan to work hard to ensure that the residents in my riding, in my constituency, continue to have prosperity and enjoy a good quality of life. Whether they're still working or retired, they are or were hard-working individuals and families, and for that they deserve recognition and support. Their achievements have to be highlighted and their contributions to society rewarded.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Having said that, we also have an incidence of low income in our riding of about 12 and a half per cent. This is 1 in 8 families, Mr. Speaker, so obviously this is an area which requires our immediate attention, and I plan to work on finding a solution.

The population in Edmonton-McClung is generally on the younger side. However, we highly value and recognize our seniors. It is a growing group, and more and more households in Edmonton-McClung now have at least one elderly person living with them. Mr. Speaker, I have always had a soft spot in my heart for both children and youth and for senior citizens, and that's probably going back to my years of community pharmacy practice, where most of my patients and clients were either young people or elderly. The seniors of this province have worked very hard to get us where we are today, and they deserve our recognition and care. We should be asking them for advice and input, and we ought to build on their wisdom and expertise. The young people, on the other hand, represent our future, and looking after them today is a sound investment for a better tomorrow.

Next I would like to congratulate all members of this 26th Legislature, new and returning, and wish them well in carrying out their duties. I remind them and myself that we chose to be servants of the public. We answered the call for a life of selflessness and dedication. May you all have the courage and insight needed to help the people of this great province, and may you gain satisfaction and pride in the work that you do for all Albertans.

I need to take a moment now to recognize my dear wife, Marwa, my two children, Zeyad and Jana, my parents, my brother, my sister, and my sister-in-law. I would not have made it this far without their love and support. To my family, thank you sincerely for being with me, by my side, and behind me.

It's important that I thank the many volunteers who believed in me and worked tirelessly day and night on my campaign. The youngest person on my campaign team was 12 years old, and the oldest person was in his 80s. Without my committed team of volunteers, without the community support I would not be standing here today.

To my volunteers, my friends, and my neighbours in Edmonton-McClung, I want to tell you all: thank you very much. I love you all, and I appreciate all you have done. We ran a spirited and structured campaign. We had a message to deliver, and my team and I delivered it effectively and efficiently. We kept to the high road, and we stayed above board throughout the writ period. It was undeniably difficult, and the task seemed enormous at times, but we had fun, and we made many friends. Our hard work and dedication resonated very well throughout the riding – and it's not a small riding – and the people of Edmonton-McClung reacted very favourably.

It is those people, Mr. Speaker, who I would definitely and ultimately like to thank and appreciate, the voters of Edmonton-McClung. They have put their trust in me to be their MLA. I have lived in this constituency for the past 15 years and have come to know many of its people, young and old. I am blessed to have also worked in the constituency for 11 years, and I am proud of the many wonderful people who have frequented my pharmacy and entrusted me with their health. Now they've hired me to represent them here and defend their interests.

I quote H.L. Mencken's remark when he said: "It is inaccurate to say that I hate everything. I am strongly in favour of common sense, common honesty, and common decency. This makes me forever ineligible for public office." Mr. Speaker, this is where we differ. Many people, including myself, who are in favour of common sense, honesty, and decency are recognized by people around them and are voted in. The people of Edmonton-McClung wanted a hard-working MLA to represent their points of view and deliver their ideas to the higher circles of government, so today I am going to repeat and renew my promise to them. I will always tell you the truth and share all the facts with you, I will honestly work for you and wholeheartedly defend your interests, I will constantly seek your input and direction, I will always be visible in the community, and my team and I will remain accessible to all of you. Again, to the voters of Edmonton-McClung, thank you and God bless you and your families.

Further, I would like to thank and congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, who led our campaign with class and style. We are a party with a vision, and our platform is full of ideas for a brighter future. I am honoured and humbled to be a part of this wonderful team. As the Official Opposition we promise the people of this province that we will leave no stone unturned. We will ask the hard questions, and we will advocate for their causes. As the youngest caucus member I promise to be a quick study. I'm looking forward to working alongside my esteemed colleagues to restore accountability and transparency, bring back faith in politics and politicians, and revive the democratic process in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the following quotation by George Jean Nathan with the people of Alberta. "Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote." Voting is a right and a privilege people in other parts of the world, as my hon. colleague there alluded to, fight for and die for. So it cannot be stressed

enough that all of us as electors and as voters exercise this right and use the tool that's available to us to decide our own destiny and future.

When I moved to Canada 15 years ago, I knew this was a great land. When I chose Alberta, I felt this was the one part of Canada with the most potential. When I embraced Edmonton, I knew its people would become my big family, and when I picked Edmonton-McClung, I was sure it would be my neighbourhood and the people in Edmonton-McClung would be my friends. Mr. Speaker, I was right. I'm proud to be a Canadian, an Albertan, and an Edmontonian.

Four months ago I was a successful health care professional and a businessman. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am an MLA, a legislator, and a critic. I assure you that I will work to serve all members of this Assembly, the constituents of Edmonton-McClung, and all Albertans to the best of my ability regardless of their political affiliation or ideology. I will do my best as an MLA and as the Official Opposition critic for Government Services and Innovation and Science.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this privilege of speaking today. I look forward to working with you and learning from you.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a new member it is a pleasure and an honour to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Foothills and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne. This is my first opportunity to formally address the Assembly, and in doing so, I would like to provide some background information on both the constituency of Calgary-Foothills and myself.

4:10

First, I would like to begin by congratulating all of my colleagues in the Assembly on achieving the opportunity to represent their constituents and to represent Alberta.

I would also like to congratulate the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for his election as Deputy Speaker of the House for the 26th Legislature. I'm well aware of the distinction you bring to the chair and the House, and I look forward to participating in what will be a constructive and meaningful session under your watch as well as the watch of the Speaker, the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Speaker, as a new Member for Calgary-Foothills I have some extremely large shoes to fill. Calgary-Foothills has been held by Conservatives for the past three decades. The late hon. Len Werry was the first member to serve our constituency, from 1971 until his untimely death in 1973. His thriving political career was cut prematurely short by a tragic automobile accident. The hon. Stewart McCrae then served the constituency from 1973 to '82; the late hon. Janet Koper from '82-89; and of course the former Finance minister, the hon. Pat Nelson, who served with remarkable diligence and distinction from 1989 to 2004.

I'm honoured, Mr. Speaker, that the constituents of Calgary-Foothills have provided me with the opportunity to represent them here in the Legislature, and I look forward to carrying on the tradition of virtue and integrity established by those past members, that helped establish Calgary-Foothills as the best constituency in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, today is an especially proud occasion for myself and my family. It was almost 30 years ago, on May 21, 1975, that my father, Dr. Neil Webber, rose in the House to deliver his maiden

speech as the Member for Calgary-Bow. He served 14 years in the Legislature under the Lougheed and Getty governments and served with honesty and integrity. There are two hon. colleagues in this House, the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw and the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, who, I am sure, feel as I do today, and that is feeling tremendously proud of our fathers and tremendously proud to carry on the family tradition of public service.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading through my father's maiden speech recently, and I came across a portion that I would like to share. In the education segment of his speech my father made a reference to Bertrand Russell, a noted English author, mathematician, and philosopher. Lord Russell felt that education is, as a whole, "the strongest force on the side of what exists and against fundamental change."

My father went on to explain that although many tend to agree with Russell's philosophy and that educators have never come to grips with what education should be, he believed Alberta's education system needed to be geared towards helping people progress toward their own goals of self-fulfillment. This meant support for research in our universities and colleges for the improvement of the quality of learning, support for well-planned programs for early childhood education, support for continuing educational opportunities for adults, and support for specialized programs for the handicapped and the gifted. He concluded his remarks on education by stating that "we cannot overlook the challenge to provide for future generations the best educational opportunities possible."

Mr. Speaker, while I read that, I could not help but think about how far we've come in 30 years but at the same time how far we have yet to go. During the Speech from the Throne my father's remarks kept coming to mind. Through Bill 1, the commitments to keep tuition fees affordable and increase spaces for students in Alberta's postsecondary institutions, the government is ensuring that future generations of Albertans are provided the best educational opportunities possible.

Mr. Speaker, before I address some other specifics of the throne speech, I feel it is important to bring some attention to some unique qualities of Calgary-Foothills. As a born-and-raised Calgarian I have watched the constituency change from rolling hills of native grassland and grazing cattle to the thriving residential communities of Edgemont, Citadel, Hamptons, Hidden Valley, and Sherwood. With the recent boundary changes citizens in the far south were shifted to the Calgary-Varsity constituency while the riding was expanded west to take in an area formerly of Calgary-North West. From a bird's-eye view the riding is located at the top northwest corner of the city limits.

Calgary-Foothills has a population of just over 40,000, the majority of which are families which have achieved a college or university education, own their own house, and have an average annual family income of close to \$100,000. It is interesting to note that more than 70 per cent of individuals residing in Calgary-Foothills are postsecondary graduates. That's the second-highest percentage of postsecondary graduates in Alberta. I know what most members are thinking: the June and Ward Cleaver family, including Wally and Beaver, live in Calgary-Foothills. But I can assure you that these are mere statistics. Calgary-Foothills is very much an economically diverse constituency with many hard-working families of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. We have representation from almost every profession. Professional and retail services are the most common jobs in Calgary-Foothills. Six point eight per cent of the residents are low income, with 4 per cent of the riding's income coming from government transfer payments, the third lowest rate in Alberta.

My background in construction and in the trades has brought me especially close to the many tradesmen and women living in the constituency. These individuals are the backbone of our vibrant economy, and I feel privileged to represent them here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier how far we have come in 30 years but that we have a ways yet to go. That sentiment rings true throughout remarks made by past Calgary-Foothills members. In 1983 the member for Calgary-Foothills mentioned that it was not uncommon for students at the University of Calgary to line up even in the middle of the night for time on computer terminals. Many classes were filled to overflowing, and some were even conducted by closed-circuit television. That was over 20 years ago. Today the majority of Albertans and students have computers in their home and do the majority of their class work through the Internet. Obtaining class notes, contacting classmates and professors, submitting assignments, and even obtaining graduate and master's degrees can all be accomplished on line.

The technical advances that are being introduced daily only strengthen the enormous possibilities for what the future has in store for education in Alberta, and the Supernet is a large part of that. Alberta is one of the most wired jurisdictions in North America, and that is instrumental in ensuring that Albertans have access to the information and possibilities they deserve.

Yet there are still not enough spaces in Alberta's postsecondary institutions, and the limits placed on registration have increased the competition to a level beyond anything most Albertans can conceive. The effects of these limits are closing the door to advanced education for a number of Albertans. Tuition fees are rising at a rate that is making it extremely difficult even with funding assistance for some Albertans to attend postsecondary institutions. I was pleased to hear that the Alberta government is taking action on tuition fees across the province, freezing them this year and working towards a tuition policy that will strengthen the Alberta advantage.

As was the case 20 years ago and the concern of my father 30 years ago, individuals that want to advance their education are not always provided that opportunity due to a lack of open spaces at Alberta's universities, colleges, and technical institutions. The government's commitment to increasing the number of available spaces by 15,000 in the next three years, 30,000 after six years, and 60,000 by the year 2020 is something that Albertans can be proud and excited about. These commitments, along with the promises made in Bill 1, a long-term plan to keep Alberta's education strong and successful, an endowment fund, the creation of a centre for Chinese studies, and the Lois Hole digital library are an incredible centennial gift for a debt-free Alberta and all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Calgary-Foothills are also extremely excited about the \$3 billion committed to municipal infrastructure. I'm sure that my colleagues will agree along with our constituents that it will go to good use and is a very welcome addition to the future of the great city of Calgary.

In conclusion, I would like to also quote Lord Bertrand Russell.

Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth – more than ruin – more even than death . . . Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man.

I thank the hon. members for their attention, and I encourage a debate deep in thought culminating in an Alberta that will ensure another hundred years of greatness. I look forward to a fruitful session.

Thank you.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar in regard to the Speech from the Throne which was delivered by His Honour Norman Kwong, Lieutenant Governor, in this First Session of the 26th Legislature.

Certainly, this is a wonderful year for the province as we celebrate our 100th anniversary. I certainly hope that there are not many dark days this year like we had last Thursday. I have a great deal of confidence, as the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar do as well, in the future prosperity of this province. We still have a lot of work to do to make this province better for each and every citizen.

I'm pleased to see at this time that the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House is reading, but I would remind that hon. member that newspapers, as I understand the rules of the House and the decorum in this House, are not to be opened and read in that matter in this Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this province and we look at all the constituents that are represented by the 83 of us, we have to stop and pause, and we have to reflect on exactly what is good for everyone. We have to look at all the issues, not just some of the issues some of the time but all of the issues all of the time. We can start on the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, which now is made up of communities on both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. We're looking at the communities of Cloverdale, Strathearn, Holyrood. We're also looking at Ottewell, Capilano, Gold Bar of course, Terrace Heights, Forest Heights, Hardisty, Fulton Place, Riverdale, Boyle, McCauley, Commonwealth areas. Edmonton-Gold Bar is a diverse constituency. I am proud to now represent the neighbourhood around Commonwealth Stadium. I'm proud to represent the neighbourhood that's affectionately called Little Italy in the city of Edmonton and parts of the Chinese community east of 97th street. In fact, all hon. members of this Assembly, if you're looking for any good restaurants with extensive menus and varied prices, I would urge you to visit some of the finer establishments in Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mrs. McClellan: I've never seen you in any of them.

Mr. MacDonald: Even the Minister of Finance. Certainly I know that the hon. minister is very busy, but she, too, would be welcome in the eateries in Edmonton-Gold Bar.

An Hon. Member: Are you buying, Hugh?

Mr. MacDonald: No, I'm not buying, but certainly hosting budgets don't seem to be limited with this government, and I'm sure arrangements could be made.

Now, I would like to formally thank the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar for re-electing me as their representative. I was joined by many people who worked very hard on our campaign, and during the campaign the citizens told me that they would give me another opportunity to represent them in the Legislative Assembly if I would hold this government to task, hold this government accountable, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to do my utmost to keep in mind exactly what they told me. In a democracy there has to be government and there has to be opposition, and the opposition has a duty and an obligation to hold the government accountable. I was given instructions to hold this government accountable.

On behalf of all the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, I would like to congratulate each and every member of this Legislative Assembly on their election victory. I would also like to congratulate the Speaker and all others that were successful in the internal elections that were recently conducted in this Legislative Assembly. It is very important that we always remember during this term the citizens, the taxpayers.

Now, Edmonton-Gold Bar would be no different than a lot of other constituencies in this province. People are doing very well economically, yet there are some people who are not. There are issues around poverty. There are many people in the constituency who during the last election certainly wanted AISH rates increased. They did not want to wait and have this studied any further. They wanted an immediate increase in AISH rates. People in this province can no longer afford to get by on as little as \$855 a month, and I don't think it is the right thing to do to expect people on fixed incomes in this day and age to try to get by on as little as that. Certainly the minimum wage needs to be increased.

There has to be, also, more work done on the whole issue of homelessness. People have remarked to me that in the last 10 years the number of homeless people not only in Edmonton but also when I visit Calgary has increased. We can do more, and we can do it better. Regardless of whether it's in the middle of the winter or in the summer, if any Albertan wants to go somewhere to seek shelter and perhaps have a shower and get a meal, those facilities should be available for them.

I had an interesting opportunity to visit one of the faith-based charities in Edmonton-Gold Bar that provides breakfast for citizens, a hot breakfast, three mornings a week. I was astonished in the time that I was there to observe the number of elementary-aged school-children who came in, and that was their first meal of the day. I certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that it wasn't their only meal of the day, but it was their first meal of the day before they went off to school. I don't think that that is part of what we all talk about in this province as being the Alberta advantage. I just don't think it is.

Now, the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, doesn't address, in my view, this whole idea of importing temporary replacement workers in Alberta. Certainly I was as astonished as many others were to hear last June that this was going to be a way that we're going to deal with these perceived labour shortages in this province. I would ask respectfully of this government to have another look at that policy.

Youth unemployment in this province is double the provincial average. Close to 10 per cent – 9 and a half per cent – of Alberta youth between the ages of 16 and 24 are unemployed. Why are these people not getting apprenticeships? Why are they not going up to Fort McMurray and participating in the economic boom? That's one group. Alberta First Nations citizens have a chronic rate of unemployment. They are not included in this. There are other Canadians. There are many different groups that should be contacted and should be encouraged to take out apprenticeships, if we have this perceived trade shortage, before we resort to importing temporary replacement workers into this economy.

4:30

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have here from the Legislature Library the Employed Labour Force in the agricultural sector of Alberta. There has been a significant decline, a 23 per cent drop between 2002 and 2003, in the number of employed people in mixed farming. Where did those people go? Who knows? But I think that before we have seminars at NAIT and SAIT and dream up ways to get temporary workers into this province, we have to have a sound policy to encourage farmers to get certification in some of the compulsory

trades so that if they want during these difficult economic times to work out off the farm, then they can get the maximum amount of money for their labour. I would encourage the government at this time, in light of the BSE issue and the fact that farm incomes in this province are declining significantly, that that would be an initiative that we could implement before we allow these guest workers from who knows where to be imported at what wage rates.

Also with the agricultural sector, and I certainly hope that we will address this sometime. I don't see directly mentioned in the throne speech the money that we're investing in BSE scientific research. I would urge the government at this time to take, whether it's part of the \$30 million package – I would hope that part of that money is going to be used for scientific research into a live blood test to detect BSE, a live test that could be conducted for a modest amount per head, maybe \$5, maybe \$7, maybe \$10 a head, an accurate, live blood test for BSE. Maybe that's what some of this money is going to be used for, and this hon. member is not aware of it.

Now, in the time that I have left, there are a number of issues but certainly education. Many hon. members in this Assembly have talked about public education, postsecondary education, and I'm glad to see that the government has at least taken some plays out of the Alberta provincial Liberal Party's playbook and are now finally recognizing the seriousness of the underfunding of postsecondary education in this province. Don't declare it a victory that after allowing tuition fees to skyrocket for the best part of 10 years, to freeze them and think that that is enough. It's not. I know that this government did that with health care premiums, allowed them in the last term to go from roughly \$600 million to well over \$900 million and then used that tax increase – and it was a tax increase – to allow a modest reduction for some citizens. Seniors certainly welcomed that tax reduction, but don't forget about the rest of the citizens.

Now, the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar is a settled community. It is well established, and it's going through transition. Because it's going through a transition, it is not necessary to be forcing the public school board because of this government's utilization policy to close neighbourhood schools. An hon. member earlier in his speech talked about Peter Lougheed and some of Peter Lougheed's views and Peter Lougheed's visions. Well, Peter Lougheed's vision was also a community school, the idea that a community school was a part of the community, a big part of the community and was not necessarily just open from 8:30 in the morning until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and once the children and the staff left, that was it. A school was part of the community, and it could be used for many things other than the routine school day. This has been forgotten by this part of the Progressive Conservative dynasty.

I'm disappointed that my time is up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As seems to have become the tradition in the House this afternoon, I too very much would like to hear the conclusion of the remarks from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: I had many issues I was hoping to discuss this afternoon on behalf of the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar. Certainly, education and the closure of our schools is an important one, but also during the campaign whether I was at the Capilano Mall or I was at the Italian Centre, people would come up to me and say: we realize the government is spending money. I would say: they certainly are. In my time in the Legislative Assembly the provincial

budget has increased by over 50 per cent, and constituents and voters would look at me and they would say: "Where's the money going? We still have problems. We still have long lists for health care access. We still have potholes bigger than hubcaps in our streets. We still have bridges that need repair. We still have major roads that need to be built. We need hospitals in Calgary. We need schools on the outskirts of Edmonton." All this money is being spent, but the citizens don't know where it's going. They demand accountability from their government, and they feel at this time that they're not getting it now.

For instance, how fast this government spends money, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is a valid example. We've expanded the size of government.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, you're rising on a point of order?

Point of Order

Question and Comment Period

Mr. Hancock: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 29 with respect to time limits on debates, 29(2) provides for the five-minute question-and-answer period. I think both the strict wording of the rule and the intention of the rule was that there be an opportunity for members to ask questions and get brief answers.

Now, I can appreciate that one might read into the comment by Edmonton-Rutherford, "I would like to hear the conclusion of the debate," a question as to, "What was the conclusion of your debate?" It certainly didn't invite a lengthy continuation of the debate. It asked for the conclusion, and a brief answer to the request for a conclusion would have been appropriate, but a lengthy conclusion is certainly not under that rule.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you want to respond to that?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, briefly. I'll be brief because I would certainly like to conclude my speech whether the hon. member wants to hear it or not. Certainly, a precedent was set this afternoon, not by members on this side of the House but by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor and by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. The Government House Leader perhaps should discuss that with them privately, not on the floor of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Did you have anything more to add, hon. Government House Leader?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, if nobody objected earlier, that's not my problem. The fact of the matter is that there is a rule, and it ought to be interpreted appropriately. Just the fact that the practice was let go, perhaps, earlier this afternoon is not an answer to the question of whether the rule is being appropriately used.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, thank you for the opportunity to make my first ruling as Deputy Speaker. I would believe that the Speaker has ruled on this earlier today by allowing this, and I would allow the hon. member to take up the rest of the five minutes. That may be very short by this time.

Debate Continued

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, an example of government spending and the growth of government is the creation of the new ministry, affectionately on this side of the

House referred to as RAGE, Restructuring and Government Efficiency. This department has only been in existence, by the time this quarterly report came out, for a little better than six weeks, yet we have a \$38 million line item associated with it. Thirty-eight million dollars. That is just one example of government spending that in my view is out of control and not accountable. We don't have \$200,000 to keep a school open in the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar, but we can spend money like this.

4:40

Also, electricity deregulation is an ongoing concern for the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and it's not addressed in this speech, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker. We need, really, to get to the bottom of electricity deregulation, and we're not, unfortunately. I would urge this government to unplug electricity deregulation and take another idea from this side of the House and adopt our low-cost electricity plan. Consumers demand it.

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has elapsed, hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: It's up?

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize, hon. member. Apparently, it's not. You have two minutes. I was in error. Please carry on.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Electricity deregulation is a very complex issue, and I appreciate the extra time.

Now, when we talk about electricity deregulation, we have to talk about what has happened in the last seven years in this province. We have seen time after time after time citizens expressing their outrage at the cost of electricity. What caused these prices to go up? We had one of the stablest, one of the most affordable electricity generation and distribution systems in North America, and it just went crazy starting in 1999, year 2000, year 2001. It was just before the 2001 election that this government capped electricity prices and then returned money to the citizens. However, it was the citizens' own money.

This system that was developed by this government, this government is totally responsible for. It had big loopholes in it. Outfits from across the border, Enron in particular, looked at the rules that were set up by this government and, as far as my research indicates, came up with this whole notion of Project Stanley, which was . . . [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired] I'll get to that later.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Deputy Speaker: I would just like to, before I recognize the next speaker, also point out to the hon. members that Standing Order 13(4)(b) says, "When a member is speaking, no person shall . . . interrupt that member, except to raise a point of order." There were a number of interruptions there that could have been called as well.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Debate Continued

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to respond to the Speech from the Throne, given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. In his address the Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, reiterated the government's commitment to a superior education system in this province. This year the focus is on making adjustments to the postsecondary system so that it is more tailored to respond to the changing environment.

There have been many exciting events in the Wetaskiwin-

Camrose constituency since we last sat in this Chamber. On July 1, 2004, Augustana University College became the Augustana Faculty, the newest campus and faculty of the University of Alberta. This partnering with the University of Alberta creates a centre of education that will provide greater opportunity for students to study in rural settings as well as increasing the number of university seats in Alberta. As a result of this change, my constituency is fast becoming a hub of learning, with the University of Alberta campus in Camrose, the NorQuest College campus in Wetaskiwin, and Maskwachees Cultural College in Hobbema. The Wetaskiwin NorQuest campus is their largest outside of Edmonton and provides students with the opportunity to study high school credit courses as well as computing, financial, and other job preparation programs.

Leading in learning is one of the four pillars upon which Alberta's 20-year plan is built. The plan to expand Alberta's postsecondary spaces by 15,000 in the next three years, with more to follow, and the announcement of Bill 1 of this Legislature will mark the start of Alberta's reinvestment in the postsecondary education system. By continuing to invest in the education of Albertans, we will be strengthening our workforce by providing the opportunities for them to increase their skills. We will also be providing the human capital necessary to build on the next pillar of the 20-year plan, namely unleashing innovation.

Mr. Speaker, the research and development industry is growing at a fantastic rate in this province. We have world-class universities where leading-edge research is taking place in a variety of fields from medical technology to agricultural research to nanotechnology. However, research in this province is not conducted solely in our universities. Industry partners with government agencies to conduct research and develop innovative ideas in the province.

In particular, I would like to speak today about the Alberta Research Council, or ARC, an organization of which I am pleased to be the chair. ARC was created in 1921 to help Albertans harness its resources for greater economic impact. Over its more than 80-year history the organization has leveraged public investment to create economic opportunities designed to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of Alberta industries. It was this principle that led ARC to understand how to use aspen poplar to create an oriented strandboard, OSB, industry in the 1980s, a \$2 billion industry today, and now has ARC looking at doing the same with straw and other agricultural fibres to help establish a strong bioproducts industry in Alberta.

Today ARC continues to work hand in hand with industry and in collaboration with governments and universities to make Alberta a leading centre for technology development and commercialization. The organization supports the growth of innovative companies by providing research and development services and helping companies apply and commercialize technology. Its close to 500 highly skilled scientists and engineers work in key sectors that drive Alberta's economy: manufacturing, energy, life sciences, forestry, agriculture, and environment.

Energy and life sciences are key strategic economic thrusts for Alberta, and the Alberta Research Council is contributing with the technical underpinnings and applied research and development to move these industries forward. In energy ARC's activities are driven by the need to build government/industry/academic collaboration across the research continuum to acquire, develop, adopt, and adapt transformational energy technologies.

ARC has aligned its energy, integrated resource management, and enabling technology activities to deliver on the six core programs of Alberta Energy's innovation network, known as the EnergyINet strategy. These include clean coal, resource recovery, carbon dioxide management, water management, and alternate energy.

ARC has also identified a number of crosscutting themes to enhance the impact of the EnergyINet process. These are advanced materials, flow sensors and controls, economics, risk assessment, process integration, system engineering and modelling, and technology commercialization.

In the area of life sciences ARC's focus is on helping local companies get their new products and processes to market more effectively and on creating value-added opportunities for future business built on life sciences. ARC's nutraceutical and pharmaceutical services business has adopted a new model to support local biotechnology companies realize their product development goals. The organization also acts as a catalyst in helping to create a strong regional bioproducts cluster in the greater Edmonton region.

4:50

In this regard the organization is providing a gateway for bioproducts development in Alberta, which is one aspect that enhances value-added industry in Alberta. For instance, ARC is a founding member of the new institute for agricultural sciences Alberta, sometimes known as IFASA, along with the University of Alberta and Alberta Agriculture. Bioproducts are one of six priority research areas for this institute.

ARC has also recently initiated construction of an agricultural fibre pilot processing facility, expanding its existing physical infrastructure to support the growth and development of an agricultural bioproducts industry in Alberta. This new bioproducts processing and scale-up facility is expected to be on stream and operating early in 2006. It will include laboratories and pilot scale processing capabilities that will support collaborative bioproduct based research and product development between the three founding partners of IFASA, industry, and others.

While the initial focus will be on agrifibre-based products such as paper, fibreboard, and plastic composite materials, the facility will also provide a critical building block to the infrastructure and capability required to add value to Alberta's agricultural crops. This facility will also serve to support existing and emerging industries as well as the training of new graduate students from universities and other educational institutions.

Mr. Speaker, this is but a glimpse of the work that ARC is currently involved in, and ARC is but one of several institutions within the province that are designed to drive research and development in key areas in Alberta. By supporting our postsecondary institutions and nurturing research centres such as the universities of Alberta and of Calgary and of Lethbridge as well as ARC, we can help Alberta continue to move towards a knowledge-based economy. The advanced education agenda discussed in the throne speech is vitally important to my constituency and to the research initiatives and programs in our educational institutions of higher learning and research centres such as the ARC. Surely, this will ensure success and prosperity in Alberta for our next century.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to rise and address the hon. Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne, given on March 2. First, I would like to congratulate His Honour on this appointment to the Lieutenant Governor's position. The speech His Honour gave was done very well, and I would like to commend His Honour on the fine job that he did. I look forward to working with the Lieutenant Governor in the coming years.

As well, I will take this time to pay tribute to his predecessor, Lois

Hole. She was a remarkable lady who brought so much dignity and warmth to the Lieutenant Governor's office. Her Honour was such a beloved Albertan, and she loved this province greatly. It was a delight to work with her, and she is surely going to be missed.

I would like to begin by thanking the people of West Yellowhead for returning me to serve here in this Legislature. I appreciate the support, and I'd like to thank you all for your confidence in me. I will represent you to the best of my ability and will always assure that the interests of West Yellowhead are heard at the government table.

I would also like to thank those who helped me with my campaign this year. I especially wish to send special thanks to Darlene Beckstrand, who took time off to assist me with the challenge of seeking re-election. I greatly appreciate her help, and she has decided to return as my assistant here at the Legislature, which shows me that she is extremely strong to be able to keep me in line. I look forward to working with her over the next four years. As well, I wish to thank all the volunteers who helped me. Without them I would not be here today.

Mr. Speaker, the West Yellowhead constituency has been through its ups and downs over the last six years. I think that the region is a great representation of the entire province and a fine example how diversification is so important for economic sustainability.

In the Speech from the Throne His Honour mentioned that the next Alberta will have a diverse and growing economy, and I could not agree more. Diversity is the most important economic strategy that this province must take hold of. Dependency on one industry to continually maintain an economy is just too risky for any economy. I was very proud to hear that this government is pushing for more diversification, and I think this government realizes the importance of this strategy.

Diversification is something that West Yellowhead is greatly involved with right now. Grande Cache, an extremely beautiful community in the West Yellowhead constituency, shows the importance of diversity. The town of approximately 3,800 people is moving forward and developing other industries outside the mining industry to ensure that there will be long-term sustainability. Long-term growth is at the forefront of their minds, and they are developing industries such as tourism to keep themselves moving forward in this province's new century.

West Yellowhead constituents also encourage diversification through the development of the Grande Alberta Economic Region. The Grande Alberta Economic Region is an alliance of 13 rural municipalities, towns, villages, and one associated member, Jasper national park. This is a nonprofit corporation. It's made up of businesses, government, and industry stakeholders as an agency on behalf of its member municipalities. It began in 2001 and has been strengthening every year since.

The goal of this partnership is to ensure that the region can take what industry it has and make it better and diversify. The alliance realizes the greatest opportunity to diversify the five major industries: agriculture, oil and gas, mining, forestry, and tourism. For instance, the oil and gas industry is extremely hot in the constituency. The industry is providing so many jobs not only in the oil and gas industry, but the spinoffs for small business have been remarkable. Alberta as a province depends on the oil and gas industry, as do many in West Yellowhead. It is an important economic driver but not the only one. Many communities are looking to develop other opportunities to supplement the industry.

I mentioned tourism a few minutes ago, and with the development of the tourism levy West Yellowhead is in great shape to market itself to the world. The levy is a great example of how the Alberta government is committed to diversification. The entire constituency

will take advantage of new funding, encouraged that they have another industry to draw on. There are so many opportunities for the communities in West Yellowhead, and I am excited to see how they take the challenge of them over the coming years. The levy will also strengthen the municipality of Jasper, which relies on tourism as their main industry because of being in the national park. Hopefully, more tourists will head to the Jasper region because the more that go, the more business it will bring.

The Speech from the Throne also mentions how important postsecondary education is to the diversification process. I agree because a highly educated society means that there are more advancements made in research, and research is very important to West Yellowhead and to this province. The oil and gas industry has allowed the economy of West Yellowhead to grow at a rate that it has not seen for many years. Because of solid research in the forest industry the Edson, Hinton, and Grande Cache economies are growing, and the towns are booming. It is because of this that West Yellowhead is more and more excited about what the next Alberta has to offer.

5:00

Even though the constituency is diversifying, it is also expanding traditional resources. Coal mines around the constituency are rebuilding and providing many jobs for the people of West Yellowhead. This is a welcomed development for everybody that depends on that industry. I know that the research that is being done includes research into clean coal technology, and it is beneficial to Alberta as a whole. It is important that the government of Alberta continues to push research. New technologies are allowing small communities across Alberta to become stronger and better able to serve their people. Those small communities around Alberta, all similar to those in West Yellowhead, are rural Alberta, and this government is showing its resolve in this speech to ensure that rural Alberta is strong.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne was met with optimism by the people of West Yellowhead. We are all looking forward to the new century of this province and what it's going to bring to us. We love this province, and we're not afraid to move outside of what we know to ensure that we are sustainable. We look forward to seeing how this government is going to continually build this province, and the people of West Yellowhead are very excited at the prospect of helping. We are looking forward together, and we'll strengthen ourselves and this province.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today, and I look forward to the years to come. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on 29(2)(a)?
May we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and through the members of this Assembly I would like to extend a welcome to Mme Lillianne Maisoneuve, a leading member of the communauté Franco-Albertaine here in our great province. I would like to have the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly extended to her, the centennial ambassador for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Thank you.

head:

**Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**
(*continued*)

Mr. Lindsay: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today in response to the Speech from the Throne. I'm privileged to be delivering to the House my maiden speech in this Assembly. I'm honoured to have been elected to represent the people of the Stony Plain constituency.

I'd like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for delivering his Speech from the Throne, which outlined how the government will deal with the many issues that are facing the province. I commend His Honour in doing an excellent job in delivering his maiden speech to this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker. I would also like to congratulate the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock on his acclamation as Speaker of this House. I would also like to congratulate the Premier on his re-election to his fourth term in office and in leading our party to another majority election victory. I would also like to congratulate all other members of this House on their election or re-election. I look forward to working with all of my new colleagues to ensure that Alberta remains the best place in Canada to live.

Mr. Speaker, the last election has shown us that Albertans still have confidence in their government. The current government has a strong record of responding to the desires of everyday Albertans. Alberta leads the country in economic development, education, and health care. In Alberta we are enjoying all of these benefits while paying the lowest taxes in the country. This is a record that any government would be proud to have. However, as outlined in the throne speech, I am pleased to see that the government is not content to rest on its laurels and is proceeding with a bold vision for the future.

I would like to begin by thanking the previous Member for Stony Plain, which was Stan Woloshyn, for his many years of service. The people of Stony Plain have seen a true example of what representation is and what effective representation can do. I look forward to following in his proud tradition and will represent the people of the constituency of Stony Plain to the best of my ability. Mr. Woloshyn leaves big shoes to fill.

I am honoured to be the 730th person to be sworn in as a member of this House and one of only 753 Albertans to have had the privilege of serving the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I would not be here today addressing this House without the support and encouragement of my family, and I would like to thank them all for what they have done for me. I would especially like to acknowledge my father, George Lindsay. My father immigrated to Canada in 1905 from Scotland and contributed in his own way to the development of this province. My father was also proud to serve our country in the First World War. My father was a great role model, and I hope to be able to emulate his success as a contributor to the community.

I would also like to thank everyone who came out to help with my election campaign. I appreciate the effort and dedication that all of my volunteers displayed. Their countless volunteer hours are the main reason that I am standing in this House today.

Mr. Speaker, the Stony Plain constituency covers a significant part of the area between our capital city and Jasper national park. My riding runs for 85 kilometres west from Edmonton to the Pembina River, with the Yellowhead highway shadowing its northern boundary and the Saskatchewan River as the southern boundary. This region of our province is home to both a very diverse landscape and people, just like Alberta.

My constituency mirrors Alberta. All of the industries that make up Alberta's economy are present in the Stony Plain constituency. Agriculture, power production, mining, tourism, retail, construction, small business, and oil and gas are all present and contribute to the local economy. Because of the diverse local economy often what is happening in Stony Plain is happening all across Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, having a diverse economy is important for all rural areas of the province. In order to maintain the economic successes of rural Alberta, proper transportation infrastructure needs to be in place. With proper roadways we are able to ensure that inputs are able to reach rural areas and that finished goods are able to reach the market. The key to sustainable rural development is the ability of the province to provide infrastructure. That is why I am pleased to see that the government has made such a strong commitment to infrastructure in the throne speech that His Honour read on March 2.

The government's new rural development strategy contains a plan for action to provide real assistance to rural communities like Entwistle, Tomahawk, Seba Beach, Fallis, and Wabamun. These communities are struggling to remain economically viable and watch as young members of these communities leave for larger urban centres. The rural development strategy will help to provide young people with a reason to remain in their communities by helping to develop the infrastructure and services that currently draw youth toward the larger urban areas.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Stony Plain are hard-working, but despite the relative prosperity of their region, there are still those who are in need of some assistance. There is a real need in our communities for affordable housing and assisted-living accommodation. By providing affordable housing to people, we're helping to provide them with a hand up and not a handout. Assisted-living accommodation will address the needs of an aging population in my constituency.

I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work that the government has done in limiting class sizes. The government's goal of leading and learning is certainly something that I support wholeheartedly. In order for Alberta to remain as strong as we are today, it is important that our education system be strong. However, Mr. Speaker, there is more to providing a quality education than ensuring that our students are in small classes and instructed by world-class teachers. School facilities are important to students' overall educational performance. The composite high school in my riding is showing its age. Built in the 1950s, the school is in need of replacement. Replacing aging schools such as Memorial composite high school will help us to be a leader in learning.

Just as the Alberta economy is becoming more knowledge-based, so must our education system. The opportunities available to young Albertans are endless, and our education system must reflect this. Facilities are important to the learning process. Without a proper computer lab students cannot learn a skill that all employers are looking for. In order for our system to continue to produce the best graduates in the world, schools like Memorial composite must be updated to keep pace with their excellent teachers and curriculum. Having quality education facilities in rural areas also makes it easier to recruit and retain quality professionals that are needed in our community.

5:10

Mr. Speaker, nearly 1 in 10 people in my riding are aboriginals. As the first inhabitants of Alberta our aboriginal people have made great contributions to the Alberta mosaic. Their culture has enriched Alberta. I'm pleased to see in the throne speech that government is developing measures to increase the supply of skilled labourers and that these measures will contain an aboriginal component. We need to continually work with our aboriginal communities like the Paul

band and Enoch to improve their socioeconomic conditions. Increasing training facilities will help to increase their socioeconomic standing.

Mr. Speaker, energy is another concern to the people of my constituency, which is currently home to three coal-burning power plants. Together the plants in my constituency contribute approximately 40 per cent of installed generation in this province. These plants have provided many years of reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly electricity to Albertans.

We are now at a time when we need to begin examining ways of moving electrical production forward. A major focus of the government should be placed on joining with industry to develop new technologies that will allow us to burn coal more efficiently and cleanly. Concern needs to be given to both the environment and the cost of producing electricity. Coal is an important economic source of energy for the province of Alberta. Through research and development of clean burning technologies Alberta can be a leader throughout the world in environmentally safe electrical production.

Emerging clean coal technologies will allow for coal to be used to produce electricity in a manner that is as environmentally friendly as using natural gas. If we are able to invest in clean burning technologies and expand their use, then we can reserve the use of natural gas for higher value uses without suffering a negative environmental impact. Using cleaner production methods will allow Alberta to maintain its energy advantage, that has benefited all Albertans. The government's energy innovation strategy and innovative technologies program is an important step in the right direction. There is an economic opportunity for the use of clean technologies. Further research will help us to develop newer and cleaner energy-generating technologies.

Mr. Speaker, the ranchers of the Stony Plain constituency, as I am sure all Alberta ranchers, are anxiously awaiting the opening of the U.S. border. The recent court decision was certainly a setback. However, I'm glad to hear of the commitment that the Premier has made to continue to help our ranchers and farmers. In the history of farming in Alberta there has not been a single more devastating event to the agriculture industry. As a result of BSE our economy has lost hundreds of millions, and countless lives and dreams have been shattered. I'm extremely pleased to hear His Honour mention in the throne speech that the government is fully behind our cattle industry and is committed to continuing to help ranchers to improve their economic viability.

As Alberta begins her journey into her second century, it is important that we lay a foundation that will allow future generations to prosper. Being debt free is an important component of that. The 20-year strategic plan that the government has laid out provides us with a long-term vision for the province. Unlike the path taken by many governments, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that the throne speech has focused on building the future.

Both the people of Stony Plain and I are looking forward to celebrating the province's centennial, knowing that we have not had to mortgage the future of Albertans. The strategic plan provides our province with a framework for growth that will ensure that Alberta continues to be a leader in education and health, is a province with strong and viable communities both large and small, and is a great place to live, work, and play.

Mr. Speaker, the agenda laid out in the government's strategic plan and this throne speech captures the spirit of Alberta. Like the people of this province the government is committed to ensuring that all Albertans share in the Alberta advantage and the quality of life we maintain today is not only maintained but enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I take my place as a member of this Assembly. Although I have had the opportunity to hold public office before, being a member of this House supercedes

those honours and responsibilities. I would like to thank again the people of the Stony Plain constituency for entrusting me with the privilege of representing their interests.

I would like to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying to the people of Stony Plain that I'll represent their interests with the honesty and integrity that is expected of an elected official.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

If not, the hon. Deputy Premier and Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this first opportunity to congratulate the Speaker, to congratulate yourself as Deputy Speaker and, of course, our Chairman of Committees, and to congratulate His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor on his presentation of our throne speech. Of course, congratulations on his appointment, and appreciation for his ability to take what might have been an awkward situation with our sound system during the speech and make the whole atmosphere more comfortable for all of us. I'm sure that we will enjoy more opportunities to get to know our new Lieutenant Governor, and he will serve us well.

I certainly appreciated in our throne speech the tribute to Her Honour the late Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Lois Hole, who was not only our Lieutenant Governor but a friend to many of us, a personal friend known to all of us through her works for libraries, for education, and of course for her love of the land, the love of agriculture, and the great contribution that she has made to this country nationally and, I'm sure, internationally with her expertise in nurseries. Much of our province is much more beautiful today because of the efforts of the late Mrs. Hole and her family.

I want to add my congratulations to all members that were elected in the recent election, and this is, of course, our first opportunity to come together in this House as elected members. I want to make just a few comments. I have not heard all of the speeches in the Legislature on the throne speech, but I've been impressed with many. I want to add my most sincere congratulations to the new members who have made their first speech in the Legislature, which we affectionately call your maiden speech. You've done a fantastic job. Some of the best speeches I have heard in this Legislature in 18 years have come from you new members, and I wanted to comment on that.

I'm not going to take a long time to talk about the speech. Many have been very eloquent. But what really impressed me was that this was a speech that reminded us of how humble beginnings with people of talent, determination, and grit have made this province in a short 100 years a place to be proud of, a place to be proud to do business, to raise your families. It spoke of the people who came here who didn't really have an understanding of how difficult it would be to tame this wild, wild west, if you wish, how difficult it would be to build bridges.

I'm reminded of the Rochfort bridge just out of this city, the longest wooden trestle bridge, I think, in the country and maybe in others, and I'm reminded of the bridge at Lethbridge that takes the railroad across. I'm sure that people who came here to start this process had no idea how difficult this would be. I'm reminded of the aqueduct, which is now an interpretive part of our history. But the importance of that work that developed southern Alberta and the irrigation systems and the water management systems that we have in this province – and, you know, all of us can go around this province and see those things in every corner of the province.

We owe an incredible debt of gratitude to those who came here

with their hopes, their dreams, their talents, their commitment to make this a place to live, work, and raise their families. I think the province of Alberta today is what it is because those people had that determination, had that pride, and were convinced that this was a land that could contribute to future generations and families. We are seeing those results.

What a wonderful year to be in Alberta and to not just celebrate the year but to celebrate the past and look with great optimism to the future. The people who left this province to fight in wars because they believed in freedom – and we have, of course, on our grounds and in our building a commemoration of members who joined in that – is indicative of the commitment that the people in this province have to the province.

5:20

But we move on to the next Alberta, the new Alberta, the continued Alberta, the wonderful future of this province, and we look to continuing to be, I believe, leaders in learning. I'm proud that our students in this province today score the highest in almost every subject not only nationally but internationally. That's due to the dedicated men and women who teach in our schools. I admit to a little bias there; I do have somebody who was educated at the University of Lethbridge that I think contributes to that on a daily basis. We look to continue that excellence in learning and to ensure that our students have a place for postsecondary education. We know that a great deal of what has brought us success is an educated workforce and an educated people, and we have to continue that to reach our potential in the future. So I applaud and support the commitment to advanced education, to the people who work in that field, to the researchers that come to our province.

I should mention that we attract a great number of researchers. In fact, at the University of Alberta – the minister might correct me – I believe there might have been 26 new research chairs that came here in the last year. That's phenomenal, it's fantastic, and it's indicative of the commitment that we have to learning. I just mention this university – we are in this city – but we have similar opportunities in all of our fine institutions.

The work in wellness is incredibly important. We know that the best way to make our health system sustainable is to concentrate a great deal on wellness, prevention, a healthier family. I believe you start with the very young. You start in the very early years in school. I can tell you of some experience with my children and now grandchildren. When they come home from school after they've had a lesson, we get very politely, usually, told that maybe some of the things we're doing are not quite appropriate. It came home to me in a farm safety session, when we had a farm safety person at our little school, and we quickly understood that there were some hazards around our farm that we just hadn't really been paying attention to. Children are the same with healthy eating and healthy living if they learn it at an early age. I support that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see wonderful opportunities ahead for our province. The first steps of the new century, the new mandate are in this throne speech. It's really up to every one of us in this Legislature to see them fulfilled.

I thank you for your time, and, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]