

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 6, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/04/06
 [Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, before we proceed with the proceedings of the evening, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature a group from the Edmonton-Glenora constituency, the 146th LDS Scout troop, eight scouts accompanied by their leaders, Eric Petersen, Keith Fields, and Kurt Kronebush. They are in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

head: **Government Motions**

Special Sitting for Royal Visit

16. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that notwithstanding whether or not the spring sitting of the Assembly has concluded, a special sitting of the Assembly be called the day of Tuesday, May 24, 2005, at such time as the Speaker may determine, for the sole purpose of the attendance by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the Assembly and any normal sitting scheduled for that day be suspended.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a historic occasion in which the Queen of Canada will be attending on Alberta to help celebrate Alberta's 100th anniversary, our centennial. It's an opportunity that we will only see once in our lifetime, and it's an honour and a privilege for members of this Assembly, in my view, to have the opportunity to be members of a Legislature, a parliament, where the Queen visits in person.

We've had the pleasure and the honour and the privilege of having our past Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole, attend on this Assembly and represent the Queen many times and our current Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, now in place, but we rarely and few parliaments ever have the privilege of having the Queen attend. We have that opportunity on May 24, subject, of course, always to confirmation by Her Majesty's office, but as we understand it, it will be possible for her to attend on the Assembly on Tuesday, May 24.

In the context of the motion we've left the time at the Speaker's discretion in order to accommodate the scheduling of Her Majesty and also have indicated, because of course we currently have a session on and normally Standing Orders would prevail, to suspend the normal sitting of that day if, in fact, there is one or to call a sitting for that day if, in fact, we're not sitting at the time so that we can have the honour and the privilege of the attendance of Her Majesty on the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am rising to support Government Motion 16. More than that, I agree with the

hon. House leader: it is a special opportunity for all of us and one that I know we're all looking forward to. I'm hoping that I am going to be able to bring my 8-year-old niece to attend and perhaps watch from the gallery, which would be a very special occasion for her.

I know that the Member for St. Albert is very excited about this special sitting and has spoken at length about how proud he is of his granddaughter. I believe that she is performing for the Queen at some occasion in Calgary, and we've all heard a lot about that in our caucus because he's a very proud granddad. I know that he was looking forward to speaking to this motion, so I wanted to make sure that I put on the record how proud he is.

It's one of the great privileges and the great treats of being an elected member in this Assembly that every now and then you get to do something really special. This is something that I qualify as being really special. I'm very much looking forward to it.

I certainly appreciate all the efforts of the many people that have pulled together to organize the visit of the Queen and the special sitting and, I'm sure, thousands of hours of volunteer time. We're very good at volunteering in Alberta. We've showed that to the world over and over again, starting with the Calgary Olympics and the Universiad and the Commonwealth Games and the Masters Games coming this summer. We're exceptionally talented there, and I think we all need to be very grateful, I'm sure, in advance for the many thousands of hours of volunteer expertise that's going to be brought to this event and others around our centennial.

As I said, I'm rising to speak in favour of the government motion. I'm very much looking forward to the special sitting, and I will support the motion. Thank you.

Mr. Hinman: I also would like to speak in favour of this motion. It seems like the members of this Legislature are often accused of having a little bit of nepotism. I'm going to be guilty of grandmatism. My grandmother is 90 years old, and she's very excited about coming and meeting the Queen. She came from England, and she drinks her tea three times a day. It is exciting for all Albertans, and it is definitely a privilege to be here. I'm grateful that the Queen would take the time to come and visit this Legislature. We're very much looking forward to it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I, too, rise to support this motion. The age of a number of members in this Legislature I think is very similar to mine. We all went through school starting off quite often with *O Canada*, followed by the Lord's Prayer, and in any kind of assembly we did, we usually ended that program with *God Save The Queen*.

Like a previous speaker, my grandparents were – I guess you'd have to call them monarchists because my grandmother had the Queen's plates, the Queen's teacups. She came from Armagh, just outside Belfast, Northern Ireland, and was very much in favour of the royalty, almost possibly to a fault. Likewise, my paternal grandfather played semipro soccer for the Norwich-Norfolk team. So my ancestry stretches from Northern Ireland through England, and it is with great pride that I support this event.

I'm looking forward to again seeing the Queen. It's been my privilege to have seen the Queen and been a participant at least as a spectator in a number of royal visits.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill during a member's statement yesterday recounted the heroic activities of his father during the Second World War. My father had similar experiences as well flying in Burma and managing to land his plane. He was the only one in 12 flights that managed to make it through a monsoon

and land safely along with the crew. He was ferrying victims from the front with the Burma-Japanese war going on at the time.

The reason I bring up my father in connection with the Queen is that we were stationed during the '50s at Namao, just outside the city of Edmonton. My dad was the pilot of what was called a Flying Boxcar, a C-119. These were the big, old, fat planes that were the forerunners of the Hercules. My father had the honour of being the person who transported the Queen's vehicles throughout that particular Canada tour at that time.

When the Queen landed at Namao air base, we were lined up just outside the hangars on the tarmac anxiously awaiting to see the Queen. My father, who had had personal contact and had been able to speak with her, was anxiously awaiting to see her and present his family at the time.

I doubt very much that there's still any resemblance, but back when I was about 8 years old, Prince Charles' proboscis and mine were very similar. So when the Queen and the Prince were walking along the tarmac and came to myself and my brother – of course, we were both wearing our little blue blazers with the British ensign on it and the matching caps with the ensign and the Union Jack – the Queen and Prince Philip both did a dead stop. They looked down at me, and it was like: I thought we left him with the Queen Mother back at home, but he seems to have made his way onto the tarmac. So this royal tradition that we follow within our system within this Legislature, I am very glad that we're honouring.

8:10

We've been very fortunate, as was mentioned, with our former Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole, and all the wonderful aspects and qualities that this very kind and loving lady has provided us. Throughout our nation we've had a series of Governors General, and lately there seems to have been a great deal of controversy about selections, but with Lois Hole there was no doubt about it whatsoever. With Normie Kwong we have another wonderful Alberta example worthy of the Queen and her representation.

The thought of being able to bring my wife and my daughter and my grandson to speak with Her Majesty is absolutely exhilarating for me, and I consider that one of the pluses of being elected.

I'm also very thankful to the Speaker, who sent out a notice to all the constituencies saying that we're allowed to bring one outstanding young person and one senior citizen obviously of worth. In my case, the young person that I was able to select was a student who I had taught, a young man by the name of Vin Mahtani. He demonstrated tremendous leadership throughout my experience at F.E. Osborne, my old junior high school. He was a great wrestler. He never gave up. He was a top academic throughout all his subject areas. It was wonderful when I had the opportunity to phone him this past week and ask if he would like to participate. Here we have a very young generation, but this individual was absolutely thrilled and excited about the opportunity to be in the presence of Her Majesty.

Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity. We are so fortunate to be in this province to celebrate our 100 years and to have a monarch of the great stature of our Queen Elizabeth to come and speak to us. Thank you very much.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I want to just briefly add my support for this motion, and I want to do it on behalf of the rural members of our caucus. I had the honour and the privilege of meeting Her Majesty when she visited our province a few years ago, and the things that struck me were, first of all, her personal interest in each and every person that she met, and secondly, but dear to me, her interest in all matters of agriculture and rural affairs and her knowledge of agriculture and rural affairs, particularly animals,

cattle and horses. The horse is a favourite of hers. She had such a keen interest in the agricultural community in Canada and in particular, at that instant, in Alberta.

I, like the member opposite, recall most of the community occasions that began with the singing of *O Canada* and closed with *God Save The Queen*, and I'm pleased to note that many of our rural agricultural organizations still hold that tradition. I've attended a number of functions where the singing of *God Save The Queen* closed the function, whether it was an annual general meeting or a conference. There's a lot to be said for holding those traditions, especially with our close ties to the Commonwealth.

It's wonderful for our province to have Her Majesty visit us in our centennial year, wonderful for all of our citizens and for our sister province of Saskatchewan. I've indicated that I live about 15 miles from the Saskatchewan border in sort of the south central and had many opportunities to visit with people from that area, and they're very excited as well to have Her Majesty visiting their province. It's wonderful for our province, it's wonderful for all of our citizens and certainly special for us that she will attend upon the Assembly, but I think it's especially wonderful for the schoolchildren of the province. It will remind them of our history and of our close ties with the Commonwealth.

Others have mentioned this, and I will too. It's going to be sad for us that the late Her Honour the Honourable Lois Hole will not be with us for this occasion. She was so looking forward to the Queen's visit. We are privileged that we have our Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, who will, I know, find this a very special occasion as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those brief comments, I want to add my support to the government motion.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in this debate?

The hon. Government House Leader to close debate?

[Government Motion 16 carried]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I had a note, and I just forgot about it. May we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for Sherwood Park a group of young Pathfinders from Ardrossan. There are 14 Pathfinders, and they're accompanied by their leaders Ms Shannon Stannard, Ms Dawn Sutton, and Mrs. Bernadette Villeneuve. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Could I add to the introductions? Have we moved on from that?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, you may proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. On behalf of the Member for St. Albert I would like to introduce Kaley Pederson, who is the identical twin sister of one of our pages, Jenelle Pederson. Could I ask Kaley to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 12

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 5: Mr. Backs]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I will continue the debate on Bill 12, Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005. Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to this act with a great deal of eager anticipation, and I have to say that I'm disappointed when I actually read the bill because this bill was supposed to be so much more.

We had a victims of crime review, that was charged by the previous Solicitor General. It was put under the leadership of the Member for Calgary-Shaw, and that, I believe, was in 2001. The report itself was actually in the hands of the minister in about September 2002. I asked about that report repeatedly through 2003 and 2004, and the Solicitor General would not release any information or details or, in fact, the report itself.

8:20

I now see that the report has been released because I finally have at least a copy of the executive summary. So obviously it got released in late 2004 or 2005. I've gone through it, and some of what's been recommended by the review is, in fact, in this bill, but a lot of it is not. Considering the things that I was led to believe would be covered, would be dealt with, the outstanding issues that I kept asking about that I was hoping would come to some fruition and was led to believe would, in fact when we saw the results of the review and the accompanying legislation, it's just not here. I mean, Mr. Speaker, this bill is a page long, two pages long if you stretch it, including the principles. So it's mostly principles, and at the end it says, "Victims should report the crime and co-operate with law enforcement authorities." And that's the bill.

When we're looking for the action that the government would take around this and the changes that the government would make to facilitate better flow of information, more action, and directed funding, even the definition of victim, none of it happened in this bill. This is pretty thin stuff. Why the heck did we spend four years on this? There was a year in the development of that report, and then the minister carefully sat on it. Why? I mean, yes, the principles are important, but what about all the rest of the action that was supposed to happen?

I've spoken with a number of members on the other side, and I know there was some quiet frustration over there about the need to move this stuff forward. I repeatedly asked about the victims of crime fund that the Solicitor General was hoarding – I think it was up to \$13 million the last time I looked; it's probably about \$16 million now – money that was supposed to be directed towards some of these new plans that could be made possible because of the changes in legislation. Well, nothing that's in this legislation is going to enable that.

So I'm disappointed, really disappointed, because there are a number of people that were counting on the victims of crime fund review and on changes in this act to really make a difference in their lives, and it's not there. I get angry when I see that the government

has pussyfooted around something. If they've got a reason for it, then stand up in this House and tell us why they won't be doing those things. But to just come forward and give us, you know, the principles – as I said, very nice but lacking completely the action that we were anticipating and that we had been led to believe would flow from this review – it angers me, and I know it angers others in the community.

I haven't counted, to be honest with you, but I think there were something like 39 recommendations, and all of them could have been funded from that money that has been accumulated and set aside – I kept calling it hoarding – by the Solicitor General. So I guess that now I'll be told I have to wait until the budget on the 13th to see if any of it is going to flow. But I don't know what it would flow to.

An Hon. Member: You'll have to wait until the budget.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, I'll have to wait until the budget. Thank you.

There's no change in the definition of victim. I know I've been told that part of what was holding up some of the funding for other programs was that the definition of victim was too restricted. Well, that hasn't been changed here. There's no change in the definitions in this amending act at all. So that log-jam, that problem, still exists. Well, why? Tell me why. Why didn't you change that when you had the opportunity, when this act is before us? Why are you not doing that when it's something that clearly needed to be done? That's coming from the community, so if you've got a reason for it, get up and tell me. Put it on the record here, and explain why you've chosen not to do that.

That money that's been collected, that is sitting there targeted for this, is money that came from fines that were levied against people that have been convicted of certain crimes. It flows from the federal government, it comes to the provincial government, it is tagged for victims of crime, and it is sitting there. Every year the government spends less than it receives, significantly less, like at the 50 per cent mark, and every year I ask why you are not spending it all, and I've had a number of different answers. [interjection] Well, I'm hearing from the Solicitor General, and I'm looking forward to him participating in this. This is his bill. It's been sponsored by another member, but it's coming under his auspices. So let's hear the answers to the questions that I'm asking here. I want this done in public so those groups can understand why these choices have been made.

There was \$13 million the last time I looked, and that had been accumulated over four years, so that means it's accumulating to the tune of about \$3 million a year. That's significant money for the organizations that we're talking about here. I want to know: what is this legislation? Is it going to make any difference? Are these programs going to flow from it in any way?

I want to know why there was no change to the definition of victim that came through in this bill. Why were those choices made? Why was that not followed through on?

I want to know why there is nothing here that will facilitate the funding of sexual assault centres. Those sexual assault centres do not get operational funding from this government. They get piecemeal funding if they go and apply for a project grant from Health and they apply for a project grant through FCSS and they apply for a special temporary funding of some sort; you know, a volunteer co-ordinator through Wild Rose. There's a little bit of funding that comes through the victims of crime fund. It's for the counselling of victims, and it's only for the counselling of victims who have gone to court.

Well, in sexual assault cases there's no guarantee that they are ever going to choose to go to court. So those sexual assault centres apply for that money and get a little bit of money to counsel, but they can only use it in counselling. Out of their entire roster of clients, they can only pay for counselling for those that are actually proceeding through to court or proceeding through to court in this fiscal year.

So it's useful money, and they're really glad to have it, Mr. Speaker, and they wouldn't want to see it disappear, but it's not fulfilling what this government should be doing for sexual assault centres, and I want to know why the government is choosing not to fund sexual assault centres in a fully operational way. You know, they're not even funding them to the tune of what they're funding battered women's shelters. They're not even coming up to that mark, and frankly I would argue that that mark is not high enough. But they're not even coming up to that by a long shot.

I want to know why the government is refusing to fund sexual assault centres for operational funding. They make the administrators, who are there as good administrators to administrate a sexual assault centre – they put those administrators in the position of spending 80 per cent of their time scrounging for money. Is that really what we want these trained professionals doing: writing grant proposals to five or six different government departments and agencies, trying to cobble together enough money to operate? Is that a good use of these people's time?

This is the kind of short-term, poor planning that I'm getting increasingly frustrated with from this government. You've got agencies out there that know how to do this work. They're trained at it, they're good at it, they're delivering a good service, they have accountability up the wazoo for it, and they're happy to give you their audited financial reports. They're doing exactly everything the government says they want to see happening and not getting support. There's a choice that's being made here, and I want to know why that choice is being made. So a couple of questions I've raised then. Why did we get no action being brought forward? Why have we had no change in the definition of victim as far as meaning for funding out of the victims of crime fund?

See, part of the problem with the funding of the sexual assault centres, Mr. Speaker, is that nobody is taking them on; nobody is their champion. And every time I ask, I get bounced around. "Go to the Solicitor General because they're in charge of victims of crime." "Yeah, but they're only going to fund for people that are in court." "Okay, well, maybe try Health." So I go to Health. They are supposed to be the lead ministry in the intergovernmental agency or co-operative committee or whatever they call it. The cross-ministry initiative; there we go. So I go to them and say: "Okay, how are you leading? What's happening here? Where are you driving this to?" "Well, we're not really doing that. Go and check with Health." So I go to Health, and Health goes, "Sorry, we can't fund them because of the way . . ." "Well, okay. Fine. Where do I go?" "Go to Justice; see if Justice can fund them." Excuse me? Why am I doing this? I thought that's why you had an interdepartmental, cross-ministry initiative happening here.

8:30

Nobody is taking responsibility for this, and the buck has got to stop somewhere. If the Solicitor General is that interested, I'm asking him to step up to the plate and do something meaningful and make this happen because bouncing the ball around and constantly punting it to someone else is getting real tiresome. The truth of the matter is that this is primarily women's lives that are being punted around from ministry to ministry here. We are not providing the kind of programming support that we should be providing as

legislators, and I want to know why. I want to know why that choice is being made by the government to fail these people and to fail these agencies. I've been talking about it for three years now. I want to start hearing some answers from the other side.

So when I look at the executive summary of the things that were suggested, I look for things like "Explore the feasibility of providing emergency funding for victims of crime where critically needed," and that's not in the bill. You know, there's some good supporting information about it. When they're a victim of crime, especially those people on limited income, they may not have the wherewithal to find some emergency dollars or to borrow emergency dollars to get themselves through. Excellent idea. Why isn't that in the bill? How is that supposed to come into being? This isn't even a shell bill, where everything is being empowered to the minister to do something whenever they feel like it behind closed doors later on. There isn't even that happening here. I never thought I'd be proposing that as a step up or a step forward, but there you go. So what happened to that? What's the update on that?

"Increase funding to police-based victim services units." Okay. Is that coming in the budget? I guess I'll have to wait, but there's nothing that's being funneled through this bill that's indicating that that's going to happen. They acknowledge victim service units as "the backbone of support for victims of crime in Alberta." I'm on page 2 of the executive summary for the Alberta victims of crime consultation. Yeah, good. Absolutely good point. They've obviously been out in the community. They found out what people want, so where is it?

They talk about developing "standardized training for those providing services to victims of crime." Well, that doesn't necessarily have to be in legislation, Mr. Speaker, but where is it? What's happening here? Where's the rest of the announcement? I mean, I have certainly seen that in legislation, so they could put it in if they wanted to. It would have fleshed the bill out past a page anyway.

They're also talking about helping "communities develop, promote and support effective programs and services that assist victims of crime who have unique needs, particularly Aboriginal communities." They acknowledge that "'one size fits all' does not apply to victims of crime. Certain groups of people (e.g., children) have specialized needs that are not always met by current programs and services." Excellent point. Good consultation. Where's it reflected in the bill? It's not.

I mean, it talks about providing information, information being made readily accessible. Okay. Yeah, fine. Good idea. It doesn't cost very much at all, but where's the meat of what was supposed to happen out of this consultation? Why was all that time spent and, one presumes, government resources and interest? Why? For this? There were so many people that have waited so long for it. In 2001 we started on this road. Why are we still waiting? And we are still waiting. It's 2005, and we've got principles that say that people should be treated with respect and dignity. Absolutely. I would have thought that went without saying. Okay, you want to put it in your preamble. Okay. Good. But let's have the rest of the action.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Standing Order 29(2)(a). Hon. Solicitor General, did you want to rise on a question and comment? Any questions or comments? The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to clarify for the hon. member across the way. The purpose of these amendments as they were brought in at first reading was to clarify the basic principles of justice for victims of crime. The lead regarding the principles that we introduced was led by the federal

Liberal government with regard to these recommendations that have come forward. So what we're doing is that we're clarifying the picture here.

Now, the hon. member spoke as well about the lack of assistance to sexual assault centres, and I want to disagree with her on that because I've worked with the provincial Association of Sexual Assault Centres as well as the Calgary Sexual Assault Centre very closely. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I've investigated over 600 sexual assaults in my career. It's not just money that they need. It's not just money. It's the issue of working with them: different aspects in the community, different organizations working together to provide a service for those victims. It's not just dollars and cents. It's organizations working together to provide services for those victims, which we do, and we will continue in the future.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you so much. So I'll put the question to the minister again. Why was the choice made not to follow through and implement the action that was recommended from the victims of crime consultation? There is no action in this bill, and we waited four years for this. Where's the action? Where's the funding? And I take your point that . . .

Okay. That's my question one. For the second question I'll come back.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, again, I'll remind the member across the floor that the reason this bill was introduced was to clarify the principles which were led by the federal government and the federal Minister of Justice and the provincial and territorial ministers of justice to make it standard across the country.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. If that's the reason, then what is the result of the victims of crime consultation that was done by this government? Because if that is not reflected in this bill, and that seems to be now what the minister is telling me, why is it not reflected in the bill, and when are we going to see the action from the victims of crime consultation?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the report has been done. It was completed. It was provided to the Solicitor General some time ago, I believe two years ago. The report was taken into consideration and I believe has gone through the government process.

Mr. Mason: So, Mr. Speaker, to the Solicitor General: given that there's been extensive consultation among Albertans with respect to this, why is he instead taking his lead on the definitions from the federal Liberal government?

Mr. Cenaiko: We're not taking our lead from the federal government, but they did lead the process with regard to the federal/provincial/territorial meetings, Mr. Speaker. The issue was to ensure that each province and each territory had the same standards of providing services to victims across Canada.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. So the only purpose to this bill, then, was to follow up and to follow the lead of the feds. The minister seems to be clearly stating that there's been no attempt to move any of the recommendations from the victims of crime consultation into legislation and implement it. So when are we going to see the result of the victims of crime implementation at all, in any way? Who is going to take leadership on that side for the funding of sexual assault centres, which has been bounced around from all of the departments that I just talked about? Are you going to take responsibility for funding these people fully? I want an answer. All it does is get punted around.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I'd like to remind the hon. member across that the sexual assault centres have received funding from various government departments. They get funding from the community initiative program, from a number of programs throughout the province. There's a large association that just was formed last year, that I supported wholeheartedly, who are now organizing so that they can provide province-wide services and contacts throughout Alberta to ensure that victims of sexual assaults have the ability to have the needs that they require, whether it's psychological issues or whether it's the issue with assistance in attending court. These are some of the things that they need. It's not just dollars and cents.

She spoke earlier about volunteers in Alberta. Well, I can tell you this. The victim assistance units that are related to all the policing organizations throughout this province have in excess of 2,000 volunteers that assist police services here, and those are part of the resources that we use as well.

8:40

Dr. B. Miller: Now I'd like to ask a question. I raised this already in addressing this particular bill. In the report that's being referred to, there was a great amount of suggestions about restorative justice and the fact that restorative justice programs were also not funded anymore. The recommendation was that that funding be restored. You know, restorative justice is a new way of approaching the concerns of victims to not just stress retributive justice but restorative justice, to bring offenders and victims together to talk about reconciliation, sentencing circles, mediation. I wonder if the Solicitor General would comment about the future of the emphasis on restorative justice.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the five minutes allocated for this portion of Standing Order 29(2)(a) has run out.

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 12, Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005, does clarify the basic principles of justice for victims of crime and adopts the revised Canadian standards, our statement of basic principles for victims of crimes, that were endorsed in October 2003 by all the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers in Canada responsible for justice. Just before I conclude, I would like to state that it's very important that victims of crime be treated with respect and consideration along with the principles that are outlined in this act.

In Alberta there are 96 youth justice committees as well as 107 victims' services volunteer units and a number of restorative justice

committees for young offenders. These committees are beneficial for both victims and offenders. They bring healing when possible.

I think that it's important for this government to continue to lobby the federal government to support stronger sentences for violent and sexual crimes and that neither violent nor sexual offenders be allowed to serve conditional sentences in their communities.

The questions that have been asked from across the way came from a very passionate member who supports sexual assault centres, and I think that we'll be able to review more of those questions in Committee of the Whole.

I would like to address the question of prompt payment, which is referred to in 2(b) of this act, and 2(b) states on page 1, "Victims should promptly receive, in accordance with this Act and the regulations, financial benefits for the injuries that they have suffered."

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to call for the vote on second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

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

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 10
Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As I stated in second reading, there are only three different items that need to be corrected on this bill, that was previously done in the spring of 2004 and came into effect on November 1, 2004.

At this time I'd like to take the time to answer some questions that some of my colleagues asked. I guess the first one is from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. Government Services is working with stakeholders to create a dispute resolution service to offer a user-friendly process other than the court system for hearings that will focus on resolving relevant residential landlord and tenant disputes. This service will be user friendly in that it will strive to offer consistent and fair decisions combined with cost-effective, informal, and expeditious resolutions of residential landlord and tenant disputes.

Now for the answer for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. We have been advised that landlords experience a 40 to 50 per cent turnover rate during a year. Security deposit refunds are without problem in most instances. Landlords with large rental inventories advise that the high cost of registering mail, which is \$6.42 plus considerable time spent filling out postal forms and trips to the post office, compared to 50 cents for regular mail, is unfairly punishing the majority of landlord and tenant relationships. Requiring registered mail will not resolve the two usual causes for nonreturn of security deposits within 10 days: tenants not leaving a forwarding address and bad landlords who do not want to comply. All jurisdictions that have security deposits allow refunds by ordinary mail.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. Communications between both parties resolving issues of extending the due date for rent owed by tenants is a usual circumstance. Landlords can apply

to the court to give them 14 days' eviction notice to terminate the tenancy. Under the court process for these evictions it is more costly and time consuming for both the tenants and landlords. The notice is void if the tenant pays the rent due. The most important obligation is for the tenants to pay the rent when due. Landlords have significant challenges in dealing with ongoing delinquent rent payments. The proposed change will do nothing substantial to harm honest tenants.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. As noted earlier, an alternative service is being worked out, and there will be a stronger stakeholder support for this option, including Alberta Justice.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

8:50

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think probably one of my main objections is that I feel that the landlord doesn't have enough – what's the word? – power or enough permission to be able to actually get rid of a tenant. There are many tenants that we don't want, and I think the process is far too long. Being able to give 14 days is fine; however, if it's because of no payment, they can give you the payment, and then it starts all over again. I would like to see something a little bit stronger in this bill to protect the landlords.

Sending back the security deposit by regular mail. I have a little bit of experience with tenants, and, gosh, I have never known a tenant that was willing to wait for their security deposit to be returned by mail. They wanted it the minute they walked out the door. So I'm not altogether sure that that makes any sense to me. Registered and certified, of course, take far too long, and it's an expensive proposition when it can be done in cash. I think that just the fact that they could return it in cash should be more than sufficient.

I think those were just my few comments on that bill. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

**Bill 11
Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First off I'd like to thank the hon. members for the questions they asked, and I'd like to answer those questions for them. There were several.

The first question was: is this bill a one-time intervention, or will it lead to permanent interbasin transfers, and how are the communities going to maintain themselves until they address a sustainable water supply in a particular area? Well, the water is authorized under a special act, and a licence will be issued that permanently assigns the right to that water until the licence is either cancelled or

transferred to another user. Sustainable water supplies in particular areas are difficult to predict and subject to variability. The smaller the area, the greater the variability. Under the Water for Life strategy Alberta Environment is embarking on water use reporting initiatives that will provide greater certainty to the amount of water used and greater predictability of the water remaining in use.

On the question regarding whether this new transfer would affect the rights of existing licences. The new transfer and subsequent licence does not impact existing licence-holder rights. In the current system of priority set by date that the water is licenced or applied for, this water will be junior to the other existing licences. Existing licence holders are protected under the Water Act and will be respected.

What is the impact of the transfer on the health of ecosystems? Because the transfer is treated water only through the Stettler drinking water treatment facilities, there is little risk of the transfer of any organisms.

On the question regarding whether this bill could force Canada to export water under NAFTA. No. The Water Act, in fact, prohibits the export of water outside of Canada. That's under section 46. We are not selling water or exporting water even outside of Alberta. We have done this before, and we have said before that it will not force us to export water into the United States or any other country either under NAFTA or not.

Regarding the question of what percentage of this water that is going to be transferred will be used for domestic residential purposes, farms, or irrigation. The water is treated drinking water, and the proposal is that it be used for domestic purposes only and does not consider uses like irrigation, large livestock operations, or industrial uses. The volume wouldn't allow for that anyway. It would not preclude the use by small hobby farms, et cetera, for watering a few livestock, but the intent is for human consumption and daily needs.

With regard to the question: are there documents that show that the treatment of water is eliminating all organisms, including any that could come up in a transfer? Treatment is to the level of the Canadian drinking water guidelines and the Alberta standards and guidelines for drinking water, waste water, and storm water systems. The type of organisms, if any, that pass through the treatment system would not be a risk to the natural environment of the Battle River basin.

With regard to the question: is the water that's being transferred being treated, and is it at a tertiary treatment level before it goes back into the rivers? The water is supplied from the city of Red Deer drinking water facilities – we were talking about the Red Deer system at this time – and is treated to a very high standard. Any waste water from the municipalities undergoes a high level of treatment. Not all communities require tertiary treatment plants but can provide treatment equivalent to that with existing facilities.

With regard to the question: why is there nothing in the bill that starts to measure underground aquifers? The bill only authorizes Alberta Environment to issue a licence. The licence is where terms and conditions require reporting and monitoring of water diversions and would require flow measurement. A strategy under Water for Life is to further the collection of information on groundwater resources in Alberta.

With regard to the question: why is Stettler facing the water shortage? Water shortages occur for two reasons: number one, growth of the communities and, number two, drought conditions result in the loss of temporary water bodies such as sloughs for livestock watering, which increases the dependence upon wells, which further increases the impact.

Next question: when these water pipelines were created – and we're talking about the one from the city of Edmonton to Ryley – did it involve an interbasin transfer, or was it from the same water table or area? The line to Ryley and the regional system supplied by EPCOR is still in the North Saskatchewan River basin.

To the question: are there any communities that use a two-water system that could report on how that's working between treated and untreated water? Mr. Chairman, no municipalities have a two-water system in Alberta. We have areas with irrigation systems separated but not a two-water system in residences.

The next question: is there a need for a water inventory so we know what kinds of resources we have? How could this be developed? Well, Mr. Chairman, through Water for Life, water use reporting and an inventory of groundwater and surface water supplies, an inventory or understanding of available water, is being developed.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I welcome any further questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the hon. member about the use of water resources in that region by the petroleum industry. He mentioned two causes for a shortage of water. One was the growth in population and the strain that that puts on available water resources, and the other one was ongoing drought. But we also know that the oil industry, in order to recover additional oil from depleting wells, is increasingly using fresh water down these wells as a means of recovering the remaining oil. I'm asking the hon. member if in fact there is any of this activity in this area and if he could comment on that as a potential third source of shortages of water in this province.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There may be a potential for using groundwater or surface water for enhanced oil extraction in that area, but to my knowledge the use of that water is going down. I think that there's every indication that it's going to be looked at and perhaps be reduced more.

[Mr. Lindsay in the chair]

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.
9:00

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much to the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for clarifying some of the questions that have been plaguing us around the issue of interbasin transfers. I'm reassured by some things and not others.

I guess a more specific question would be: if the existing agreement with water users is entrenched in legislation, how could we possibly make the changes that are needed to make the system more sustainable, in other words to actually require users to review, to reduce, and to possibly change their use of water at the present such that it might be more sustainable in the future?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, I think that in order to be able to do that, further development of the water strategy would address that very question.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All life needs water. It's transparent to say that where there is shortage, we have to replenish it. Why would anyone oppose this? The danger here is in allowing

not once but repeatedly this extraordinary practice and expensive practice and environmentally risky practice of interbasin transfer to become the new normal, which seems to be happening here in Alberta.

I quote the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, who Monday night indicated: "You can't stop development, so there are more and more people," and there is going to be "more and more demand." We have to start mining the aquifers, and "the aquifers start to go down. This affects . . . outlying areas." So we have to continue to build dams, and this we will continue to do for many years. If there's not enough water in the river, then we have to begin to drill, and the cost of water is going to determine – well, this sounds to me, Mr. Chairman, as if interbasin transfer is the new normal for Alberta. This is not what many of us had hoped to hear.

What I hear being discussed is the establishment of pipes and storage tanks and pumps. Far from being an extraordinary measure, interbasin transfer is now a way of life planned into the future of a number of communities in Alberta. The old saying is: technology will solve it. Well, technology has created the problem and unsustainable expectations of what we can have, how much we can consume and continue to manipulate nature in the interests of short-term, self-centred lifestyles. We need to look at the bigger environmental pictures. We have choice. We can continue to misuse and overuse our resources, and we will kill the very source of life if we don't learn the lessons.

I want to just quote a study from the University of Arizona. Karl Flessa reported that in his examination of the Colorado River and the expenditures on the damming and water diversions, he calculated that society is losing \$2.4 billion per year, and it's drastically reduced water flow and productivity in the river system. Using the monetary values that other researchers have applied to services provided to society, he compared the dollar value of ecosystem services provided by the Colorado River delta region before all the dams and after to current land-use types. The difference between the two figures is the benefit lost to society, and in this case he calculated it at 6 cents per 100 gallons of water, or \$2.4 billion annually.

Upstream dams and diversion projects trap and divert much of the Colorado River sediment load, important for growth. The day-to-day functioning of ecosystems in the absence of diversions provides benefits: waterfowl, fishing, et cetera. "The original ecosystem services provided are worth more than the ecosystem services we now get from the transformed landscapes" downstream.

He indicated that these types of projects fail to consider three critical elements, Mr. Chairman. The in-stream flow needs and how a critical level may be easily reached at which the ecosystems begin to decline in that area. In this article he referred to the Red Deer River Basin Advisory Committee. The in-stream water conservation objectives have to be clear, and they have to be consistent with the Water for Life strategy, which is in contradiction of these very activities.

The second aspect of appropriate cost-benefit analysis is full cost accounting. The full cost of the project needs to be assessed, including the loss of ecosystem services. "There would be limited economic return for the public commodity of river water."

The third has to do with ecological integrity. Portions of the river basin become degraded and further impacted as the proposed project gets more and more demanding over time due to unsustainable practices that are depending on it.

I appreciate the comments earlier with answers to some of the questions, but if drought is the new normal in Alberta, with the expectation that climate change and global warming is producing, we have to create a new normal expectation around some of this and

look for new ways of living and new ways of land use and new restrictions on water use. It does mean government taking leadership. Are we overallocating the resource? What is the management plan, including growth projections? What do we know of the full inventory? It was alluded to earlier that an inventory of the water is being established, but when is that going to be done? How can we make decisions now that have long-term implications under law and under community expectations if we don't have that to plan with?

We should be very cautious about making these decisions without that information. How will this interbasin transfer affect the whole ecosystem? Are we robbing Peter to pay Paul? Surely this will perpetuate an unsustainable management plan as long as we continue to fulfill the expectations of local regions. Have we examined ways of reducing the demand and improving efficiencies, changing the land-use practices, or do we simply carry on with whatever is being done at the present time? What would be the cumulative impact of this practice? Why are we not beginning to measure the cumulative impact of each of these technological events that we're implementing in our society?

The Water for Life strategy is a direction; it is not a plan. We need to see concrete funding, intersectoral planning as if people's lives and livelihoods matter and we depend on it. This is the test of government leadership. When we face the limits of growth, which we are doing very clearly in these particular areas, do we persist in the blind belief that we can defy nature, or do we recognize the limits to human intrusion on finite resources and learn to live as we all must do in our personal lives, within our means?

The environment is increasingly in debt, and there are few to speak on behalf of sanity and sustainability. Technology is a false solution. It is human beings that must change and commit ourselves to reduce, to reuse, to recycle with renewables as well as nonrenewables, Mr. Chairman. What is the plan for this? Will we be voting on this again next year, another special bill? Interbasin transfer is an emergency last resort. It must continue to be that.

I want to be on record as giving only provisional support, conditional on the government committing to further legislation, number one, to ensure that interbasin transfers are only for emergency situations and, number two, to require from all such communities requesting this assistance a regional plan to ensure sustainable water management in the future.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate, Mr. Chairman, and with that, I'll sit down.

9:10

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and answer some of the questions that were raised here by the hon. member. The only way any additional water projects such as these can be approved or even considered is if, in fact, there is more water in the system than is presently allocated. This is the case in this system here. For a matter of record also, if there was not any more water to be allocated, there would be a moratorium on any further allocations as happens in southwest Alberta in the three rivers system.

The Water for Life strategy. In that committee the basin advisory committees have very much input into the very things that the hon. member mentioned, the in-stream needs and the aquatic environment.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I think that given the strategy that's there – the basin advisory committees that are set up to address some of the concerns that he has, the moratorium on further allocations if, in fact, in the minds of Environment there is no additional water – these do go a long way to answering the concerns that the hon. member has.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question, again, that gets raised is that we are making decisions assuming that we know something about the resource. We clearly do not know what the capacity of the resource is. We haven't done the inventory yet. So I'm speaking about surface and groundwater, and as you indicated, that's being done. But we are making long-term decisions on the basis of inadequate information, it seems.

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, in this case here we are talking about surface water, and in fact to the best of my knowledge there is a method of determining how much water is available, how much the stream flow is at any particular time, including the measurement of the snowpack on a year-to-year basis. So with that and the fact that they do know that there is an unallocated portion in this river system, that is why this project is even being considered.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First off, I want to thank the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. As a teacher I give my kids a whole series of questions and hope that they answer them. I give you an A on your effort. I'm holding back the plus because there are still some questions to be answered, but I do appreciate your efforts.

To me the interbasin transfer of water is really another example of robbing Peter to pay Paul, and in the end both Peter and Paul lose. What I still don't understand – it goes back to Monday night, and the understanding may be my problem, but I believe I heard the figure of the water transfer being somewhere in the nature of .1 per cent. Am I right in that? I'll sit down just to give you a chance to collect your thoughts on that.

The Acting Chair: Is the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat ready to respond?

Mr. Mitzel: I'm just trying to find the number. It is .1 per cent of the average annual flow of the Red Deer River. That's correct.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. The point I'm trying to make here is that if it's such a small percentage, could that water, that small amount that's being transferred not be allocated from the existing basin source? This is what I'm wondering. You know, is the transfer necessary? Could we get it somehow from existing water?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, to answer that question, I think that what we're looking at is water from the town of Stettler, potable water which is treated. There is no other treatment facility anywhere near any of that area, the nine small towns and perhaps some of the farms and in between. There's no other source of treated water. In that case, it doesn't transfer all of it there, but there are two or three of the small, little communities that are in the other portion of the basin.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman. You've heard me go on at great length in this Assembly about the Fort McMurray water treatment plant, and what I'm getting at is that you were mentioning that there weren't sufficient treatment facilities in

the surrounding Stettler area to treat the necessary amount of water. It made me think: is there the possibility of fixing the problem by creating greater water treatment potential within the Stettler community and then drawing from the local river and resources?

Mr. Mitzel: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that's exactly what we're doing. The town of Stettler actually does have the capacity to supply that extra amount of water, and it is treated. What I meant is that there aren't any treatment facilities anywhere near that. I'd have to get the map out to find the next town that would have a facility. Drumheller perhaps would be the next town, and that would certainly be a lot farther away.

Mr. Chase: The point that my hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and I were trying to make: we look at the idea of a water basin transfer as an absolute last resort. I was thinking that if we could improve the facilities within that regional basin from which Stettler normally draws its water and then supplies it out to the surrounding communities that depend on Stettler – I gather that Stettler is the nucleus of the supply – could we not, by upgrading that system, avoid the transfer or at least – sorry; if I could offer another option – avoid future transfers by solving the problem locally?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, it would be nice if they possibly could, but the fact is that the town of Stettler actually resides almost right on the edge of the basin between the Battle River basin and the Red Deer River basin. It's almost right on the dividing line. You've got communities in one basin and in the other, so it would be rather difficult to try and even consider something like that because what you'd be looking at, to answer that question, would be actually having to have two more systems: one to cover these three or four communities, which take a very minimal amount of water in the big scheme of things, and four or five communities in the other region, that take, similarly, a minimum amount of water.

Mr. Chase: I want to follow protocol. This is not to prolong the discussion. It's brainstorming, and we're participating in it as members of the committee.

I'm urban based, and I'm not familiar with rural growth other than, you know, the bedroom communities developing around urban centres because the quality of life is often more enjoyable in rural centres. Do you think that for any of these small towns in the area of Stettler there is sufficient resource, sufficient energy, sufficient economic drive for them, that expansion is expected or is being promoted to the point where we could then justify another water treatment plant within the area?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, that's a good question, and it's a very, very short answer. It's what is happening in all of rural Alberta, rural Canada, rural North America. The very simple answer is actually no. What this water is going to be doing is actually perhaps sustaining those communities that are presently there rather than having them deteriorate any further. Especially in our lifetime I don't see a big economic boom in a lot of those smaller communities.

Mr. Chase: Thank you for helping me to understand that. That's always the hope of revitalizing rural areas, by having tertiary industries or whatever, and I would certainly promote that idea.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood brought up the point that seemed to be missing as to the amount of water that was potentially lost due to oil well injection, and my understanding

is that when you inject water – and my big concern is fresh water – this water is lost forever. Would you be able to comment on that concern?

9:20

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is correct. That is exactly the case. But as I mentioned before, that problem is an issue. It is being addressed, and hopefully the amount will continue to be reduced.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I don't know if you can push for it within this basin transfer Stettler water agreement or not, but the sooner we outlaw the injection of fresh water into wells as a method of recovery, the better we'll be. My understanding is that we have a tremendous amount of saline water. At this point it's of considerably less value than fresh water. Is it not practical to use a saline water alternative so that we don't draw from this fresh water?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, I can only speak personally on this here, and it's really not to the transfer. In fact, yes, you're probably right. But at the same time – and this is my personal opinion – it is probably not economical at the moment, and this is maybe why there is some reluctance for industry to consider this. Also, in some cases it is not as easy to be able to acquire this type of saline water.

Mr. Ouellette: You know, I'm not exactly sure what saline water or any of this stuff has to do with this bill on a basin transfer. I think you've answered the question, and I guess I'm asking you again. You've stated that fresh water in use for oil flood systems or whatever has gone way down. I think the reason for that is they are using brackish water or saline waters, but I don't know if it has anything to do with this actual bill on basin transfer.

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, the hon. minister is right. It does not. The question that was brought up really was asking an opinion, and I stated my opinion on this.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Mr. Chair, the reason I brought up the need to reconsider this potential for water transfer and the reason I bring up saline water is that if we can conserve the existing water within the basin by using alternatives such as saline water – or CO₂ injection seems to be another method of withdrawing oil and at the same time getting rid of CO₂ emissions – it seems to me that we should use our modern technology to every extent that we can to preserve what we have in the way of water. That's why I made that comment with regard to saline. To me it is directly related to this interbasin transfer.

The question I would like to know – again, I'm not familiar with waterworks, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is considerably more knowledgeable – is: how is this proposed transfer of water to take place? What will be the vessel or the methodology used to do the transfer?

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that just to follow up on the comments regarding saline water, if the people could find a way of desalinating the saline water that's there, perhaps that's an alternative. But, in fact, the question is with regard to how this

water will be transferred. It'll be done by pipeline. I believe it'll be done by pipeline. It's a water pipeline transfer. It is a closed system. It is closed to holding facilities within these communities and at the farms.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask if the hon. member is aware of a plan to prevent this from happening again next year? In other words, we can't control droughts, but is there a plan in relation to these communities to reduce the chances of this happening again next year in the particularly drought-stricken areas?

Mr. Mitzel: As I mentioned before, Mr. Chairman, the allocation is there. The allocation will be a transfer of allocation of the licence of water. Is there a plan to not do it again? It certainly depends on the need of the community, it depends on the needs of the area, and it also depends on the amount of water allocation that would be available because these people also have to be able to live in their community. Water, as the hon. member mentioned, is what sustains life.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Dr. Swann: Just a quick follow-up. What I'm asking is: is there any reason to expect this community to change the way it's using water in the future such that it won't be as likely to require a transfer next year, or are we simply going to continue to follow the same plans?

Mr. Mitzel: Well, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned, the water allocation is there. The ability to move the water is there. The ability to actually treat the water is there. The pipeline will be in the ground, and in fact those people will be receiving water from the treatment plant from Stettler for years to come.

Chair's Ruling Relevance

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, just as a caution. When we are in committee stage, the intent is to go line by line. While I appreciate that we have a fairly open latitude to try and ask many questions, generally we deal with line-by-line items of the bill. So we should try to stay within the scope of the bill, but you may make comments about issues that you do have. Okay?

The hon. Government House Leader.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening carefully to the exchange on this bill and am moved to make some comments relative to the fact that it would appear from the questions and comments that have been made that members of the opposition have a significant misunderstanding or perhaps a wilful misunderstanding of what's actually being contemplated by this act.

This is a very simple process. We have a law in this province and we have a policy in this province which says that we don't have interbasin transfer. The only way that you can have any interbasin transfer is if a specific act is brought before the Legislature. So here we have an act, which is being sponsored by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, to allow for a specific transfer of water on a licensed annual basis. It would be expressly for the sole purpose of allowing municipalities in a particular region of the province to enjoy a safe water supply.

It's not an interbasin transfer in the context that seems to be discussed here. It's not an interbasin transfer. Nobody ought to be alarmed about piping water from one basin to another on a regular and continuing and expanding basis but, rather, talk about municipalities in our province, the people who are living in those municipalities needing a supply of adequate, appropriate, and treated water and the fact that the water is drawn from one basin but serves communities who are in the other basin and that the outfall or the excess of water that results from a domestic water supply might end up in a basin other than what it was drawn from.

It's a very simple act, but because we have such strong protection against interbasin transfer in this province, it requires that it come to the Legislature to deal with it. I think members opposite are missing the point on this rather dramatically.

9:30

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'm compelled to enter into this particular debate based on the comments of the Minister of Advanced Education. I would argue that the members on the opposition side do not misunderstand at all what is happening here. The government has repeatedly said to us that it's so important that we understand that interbasin water transfer should not happen that there is therefore special legislation brought before the Assembly in order to deal with it. Our concern is that we are seeing a trend. This is the second application, the second piece of legislation brought before us within a very short period of time, and that causes us great concern.

We hear that this is so important they have to produce special legislation. Yes, we understand that, and we very much agree that extreme caution should be taken. We would prefer not to see interbasin water transfer. It's part of our policy around water management. Our concern is that this is the second time we've seen this in about as many years. That to us starts to say that this is being used more often as a solution than we are comfortable with.

Our questions are around: what else are you doing to make sure that this is not before us in a third piece of legislation next year? It's the demand side. So in the context of what's being discussed here, that is why we are expressing such concerns, and we are broadening and asking the questions around: what other issues have you looked at? What other methods have you looked at to address the reason, the demand for this interbasin water transfer becoming necessary? Because if nothing else is done in context here, if nothing else is done to address the demand, if nothing else is done to address the conservation and we end up with a third request coming forward, then we definitely have a trend. Then I would argue that, in fact, that has become the government's solution to dealing with this issue.

It is around conservation. It is around water use. It is around involving the municipalities. It is around the saline water. It is around how we are using water for industrial use and how we are using water in the municipalities. So this is a much larger discussion because we're agreeing with the government that this is so vital that we be so careful with water management and with interbasin water transfer.

We are concerned because what we see is the government starting to use this legislation as the solution, as a simple answer to a complex problem, as the norm, and that's what our concerns are around. So we're questioning the government closely, and I have to commend the hon. sponsoring member, who has been game to get up and do his best to answer back. That's why we're doing it.

You know, this is why we discuss this line by line, clause by clause, because what's being discussed here leads to a larger context, and this is the forum to be deciding that in. Second reading is on

principle. Third reading is on effect. Committee is line by line, clause by clause, and that includes all of the context that's being discussed here.

I sense that the government is annoyed with us, but frankly that is why we have a forum to discuss this in large and small detail, and that's why we're doing it. Thank you. [interjections]

I'm sorry. Now there are more people involved in the discussion.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I just want to draw everyone to *Beauchesne* 688. If you take a few moments to read that, it will clarify the purpose of committee stage.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, I just want to enter the debate and hopefully can be of some help and clarify some of these issues. I think it would be extremely useful for the members of the opposition, particularly the urban members, to familiarize themselves a bit more with some of these rural challenges and talk about solutions because the solutions are very limited.

I am as guilty as anyone. While I am in the city of Edmonton, I know that I can turn on the tap. There will be water. We sit on the North Saskatchewan River. When I'm in the city of Calgary, we're sitting on the Bow River. I am proud of the conservation efforts of our cities, as I am of our rural communities'. I recall in the drought years when the city of Calgary implemented voluntary restrictions on the use of water. I did not hear complaints from the citizens of that centre when that occurred.

When you move out of the urban areas – and particularly those of us who are in southern Alberta are maybe very conscious of this because there really are not any natural lakes. They are man-made. It would be extremely beneficial and I think everyone would enjoy understanding what wonderful things have happened in water conservation and water management, and I speak more about the south because, of course, I am more familiar with that.

You look at the McGregor Lake irrigation project. You look at the Newell Lake water conservation wetlands. Look at the Kinbrook park water conservation wetlands projects. None of these are man-made lakes. They are done, many of them, with PFRA, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, in days gone by – unfortunately, they're not involved in that as much anymore – and with Ducks Unlimited and other groups that are interested in this.

It is a real issue. The interesting thing is that it is expanding across the province, and one of the things that we want to ensure is that wherever you live in this province, you have the opportunity to have quality potable water for domestic use in particular. That is really what this is for.

This is an area of my constituency which came into my constituency just in the last election, and I can assure you that the challenges that the people who live in those communities have on quality water for domestic use are huge, and they have every right to have a solution to that. We've done extensive work with Environment Canada over the years through PFRA again in doing what we called monitoring wells to see if we could find better groundwater solutions for some of these issues. We were fortunate in a few, but unfortunately not as fortunate in many.

So for these communities this is the solution, and what we are talking about is utilizing about .1 per cent of the flow of a river. I think in every year we pass more through than we need to pass through under our agreements on interprovincial transfers. There's no question that in this province we have got to take a very serious look at how we manage our water supply. That's what the Water for Life strategy is all about. We are going to have to find more ways of capturing water in peak flow times for utilization when flows are lower.

I think that if one studies the water management practices in this province, one could be very proud. My predecessor, Henry Kroeger, who was the MLA for the area, minister of transportation, did extensive work particularly on the South Saskatchewan basin, left me all of his materials, and it's fascinating to see what types of water management projects have happened. We had a lot of discussion around the Oldman River, and it was startling for some people to understand that if it wasn't for water management, the fish in that river would die because there would be no constant flow.

You look at the Red Deer and what the dam has done for that. There is no flooding in the town of Drumheller. Well, very little. There's a ravine that sometimes in a heavy rainfall causes us a little problem, but the river doesn't. That's managing that flow, and while it manages the flow, it also affords opportunities for recreation and quality of life that people appreciate and utilize.

9:40

This is a small amount of water, but I want to assure the members that in this project and in the other one that was the Lacombe area, there is the greatest and utmost care taken in how that water is transferred and the disposition of the waste water that would come off of that.

I think it's important that when these do come forward, they need to come to this Legislature. I think it's important that we have the opportunity to discuss them and understand how we're managing this water, and I compliment everyone who has come to their feet in this discussion to try and better understand that this is a safe way to transfer water, and that all – all – other opportunities to supply that water have been looked at. But this is a life and death matter to these people, and it is for many, many of our rural communities.

I happen to be in the area where one of the first major pipelines was done. Water was brought up from the Red Deer River to the plant at Sheerness, and again through the foresight of my predecessor, the hon. Henry Kroeger, a large, oversized pipe was brought from Sheerness to the reservoir at Hanna, where there was a treatment plant that could treat all of the water that would be required to service the communities east of that. That pipeline originated and started, fortunately, mainly on a gravity flow so not a high-cost one to operate. It takes water to communities right down the line to Oyen. That has expanded since and has gone west to communities like Delia, Craigmyle, and so on.

I can tell you that at times our hospitals in Oyen could not develop X-rays. We had to close schools because there wasn't sufficient water to flush toilets to operate washrooms. That's something that for those of us who are here and will go home tonight and have a shower and not think about an interruption or not be concerned about the quality because we know that the treatment systems here – we may get a little odour once in a while from heavy runoff or something. But we're confident that when we utilize that water, it's safe. For these other communities, unless we do projects like that, they don't have that confidence.

It shouldn't matter where you live or what nature has done in the makeup of our province. To say to people: well, you can move or move your town. Well, I can tell you that you can't move this area, and we shouldn't. It contributes in a huge way to the economy of this province, and this project will allow those citizens to have what many of us take for granted.

So I support it. I hope that some of my comments have been helpful to the members opposite to understand this and would invite them, certainly, at any time to visit those communities and try to understand the challenges that they have and the depth that they have gone to in looking at other solutions. This is the only solution in this instance that makes any economic sense, but more than that,

probably the only way to deliver water to those communities that is safe and reliable.

I have every confidence in the people that will manage this supply, that they will do it with great integrity because nobody understands the value of water more than those of us who don't have much of it. If you look at the efficiency of the water management – and I said again that I speak mainly about the south – it is one of the greatest stories that could ever be told, and we should be so proud of it. Four per cent of our land is under irrigation, provides almost 25 per cent of the crop product in this province, and has allowed us to go into new crops and diversify our economy such as two potato plants to provide jobs and economy. I look at what the irrigation community has done in efficiency of utilization of that water, and it is an amazing story. For those of you who live in the south – and I know one of your members does – and look at the aqueduct, which was really maybe the beginning of water management in the south, we've come a long way, and we're always searching for new ways.

The hon. member who brings this bill forward has many examples in his area in the greenhouse industry of wonderful utilization and conservation of a very precious resource. Again, if you ever have an opportunity to see the utilization of hydroponics in that area and understand how every drop is important, it would be a useful experience for any of you.

So I urge you to support it. I urge you to continue to question how we utilize water. When we move along this path of the Water for Life strategy, we should all be involved. We're very fortunate in this province to sit on perhaps the greatest supply of fresh water there is in North America. It is in our best interests, and in fact it's our responsibility to manage that resource well.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to echo the minister's comments, but I'd like to assure the hon. members who asked the questions tonight that I truly appreciate the questions that they've asked. From my dealings with the environment and everything else I really appreciate the fact that this legislation is here so that we can debate like this any project that may come up on a case-by-case basis. I think that is so important.

One of the things with regard to this project is the fact that I think there are four main factors that have been considered by Alberta Environment that make the passage of this bill a requirement, a need, and I think it should be approved. First off, is the water available? Secondly, would any existing licence holders be affected? Thirdly, will we still maintain enough water to meet our agreements with Saskatchewan and Manitoba? Fourthly, will we still have enough water to meet the needs of the ecosystem? Those questions have been answered, and the answer is yes. In fact, the Red Deer River does have the amount of water that answers all those questions, and the town of Stettler does have the ability with their infrastructure to provide the water that's required in order to meet the requirements of this project.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I very much appreciated the discussion on this bill from both sides of the House to this point. I think that there are some very reasonable questions that have been answered. Whenever we consider a piece of legislation that authorizes an interbasin transfer of water, it should be carefully scrutinized, in my view.

I recognize that in this case, like the previous case that we debated in the House, we're talking about water that is for human consumption that will be filtered and chlorinated according to national standards. Essentially, the water from the tap comes from one basin, and when it goes down the drain and it's treated, it ends up in the other one. That's the type of interbasin transfer that we're talking about.

I think that as we see changes in rural Alberta, we're going to see more rationalization of our water systems, and we may well see more of these. But I do draw a distinction between that type of interbasin transfer, which makes the transfer of organisms or different life forms from one basin to another extremely difficult, if not impossible – it's different from the wholesale transfer of raw water through pipes that may completely cross-contaminate the biological ecosystem of one to another. So we draw a distinction in this particular case, and we recognize the importance of providing safe potable water to Alberta communities. In this case, we're in a qualified way prepared to support this bill.

9:50

Nevertheless, there are real, significant challenges facing Alberta in terms of its water supply. I have to disagree with the hon. Minister of Finance about sitting on the greatest freshwater resources in the country. I think, in fact, Alberta is perhaps the driest province in Canada and has more challenges relative to water supply and surface water than some other provinces. There are some significant problems. We've touched on the whole question of using fresh surface water in order to bring up depleted oil wells. I know that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has talked about his hope that this is continuing to decline. Mr. Chairman, we need more than hope on this question. We need a clear policy and strong direction from the government because this is water that we cannot afford to use in this way, and it should be completely eliminated as a practice as quickly as possible, in our view.

There are real challenges with the continuing growth of the population of this province and continuing urbanization and changes to agriculture. The demand for water is increasing very rapidly, yet the ability to meet those demands is declining. Not the least of the challenges is that posed by global warming. The government has admitted that global warming exists. That took some work on the part of the opposition during the last term of the Legislature, but they have acknowledged that this is fact. In fact, one of the problems that we have is that the droughts are becoming longer, and they're becoming more sustained and deeper. So that dries out the province. It dries out forests. It dries out agricultural regions as well. And that trend will continue if not accelerate.

Furthermore, much of the water in Alberta comes from rivers that are glacier fed, and it's the fact that they're glacier fed that makes them all-year rivers rather than seasonal rivers. In fact, the glacier feeding the Bow River is expected to be gone entirely within 35 years, I was told, and I think that's correct. Other rivers in this province that are glacier fed, like the North Saskatchewan, are going to become seasonal rivers within 50 to 100 years when the glaciers feeding them are completely melted. So what we're heading for, as demand for water increases and supplies of water decline, is a very serious crisis in this province sometime in the future, and we need to be very aware of that.

One of the things that we can do aside from eliminating fresh water use in oil recovery is to become stronger in terms of conservation. I'm not in any way attempting to suggest that the Stettler area has not taken vigorous conservation methods, but I think there's an example from my experience with the city of Edmonton that's very interesting. About 1995 the administration of the city of Edmonton proposed a very large expansion of the E.L. Smith water treatment

plant, something, as I recall, in excess of \$200 million to expand that and to build a large treated-water pipeline from the Rosedale water treatment plant as well, which added another 50 or so million dollars.

A number of councillors got together and pushed council for an alternative. The alternative was a water conservation program in the city of Edmonton. It was voluntary in nature but involved some changes to standards for construction, new homes and so on, and it talked about the reduction of water in a number of ways, including for the watering of lawns and so on. The result was, Mr. Chairman, that we were able to defer the construction of this plant, which has never been needed since that time, and we're looking now almost 10 years back.

Not only did we defer that cost, which would've been passed on to ratepayers in their monthly bill; we were able to save ratepayers over a five- to seven-year period about \$3 a month on their bill by simply implementing a voluntary conservation program. So not only is water conservation important for preserving our water supplies and meeting our needs into the future; it's a very important way of saving money for ratepayers as well.

I think the government could go much farther in encouraging industry and municipalities to implement these kinds of water conservation programs and may allow us to postpone or completely eliminate the need for some of these projects. Again, I'm not saying that this particular project would necessarily qualify under those terms, but it is something that we should be vigorously pursuing because it's the kind of policy that doesn't cost the government money. It actually saves the government and taxpayers and ratepayers money right across the board. I think that the government should pursue this kind of approach most vigorously as one element in a water strategy for this province.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will indicate that we'll support this bill although we are concerned about the direction here, and I take my seat. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one comment to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood that, indeed, in the case of this project and for perhaps all of eastern Alberta and all of southern Alberta the people who live there are in a water conservation mode at all times. That's a way of life for them.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I'll wrap up very quickly. I want to again thank the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for being so willing to answer what we believe are important questions. These are not intended to be clock stallers.

I also want to thank the Minister of Finance for providing the type of clarification that helped me with the decision. It is my intention to do just as you've recommended, to visit a number of the rural communities both in the south and the north. I'm looking forward to it in terms of the parks and protected areas as well as in my role in infrastructure.

The other quick reason for standing up is that I didn't want to appear in tomorrow's question period as: according to the debate last night, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity wants to keep Stettler from having a viable fresh water supply. I want the quality of life throughout all the municipalities maintained to the highest degree, keeping in mind the conservation methods I'm very pleased to hear about. I never suspected that Stettler wasn't, you know, being very responsible in its water usage.

There is a temptation when something is said – for example, when I talked about sustainable resources and ingenuity, I made a comment with regard to a specific forestry practice which I was concerned about. I've since had some interesting chats with members from the forestry association, who have assisted me with my understanding of the global process in Alberta. I still have concerns about the specific area of the Kananaskis, but I do appreciate the clarification. I do appreciate the offer to have a complete discussion. I wouldn't say tonight was debate; I would say it was more along the lines of discussion.

We're the members that the people of Alberta have entrusted with the well-being of their futures, and if we don't hold these discussions within this Legislature, my concern is that the discussion doesn't get held.

Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

10:00

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report bills 10 and 11.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 10 and Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

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

[Motion carried; at 10:02 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]