

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 13, 2005**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 05/04/13

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

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

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's official visit by Her Majesty the Queen isn't taking place until next month, if it takes place at all. Today we have a different kind of royalty in the legislative Chamber. The Ferbey Four have just returned from Victoria, B.C., where they captured the 2005 men's world curling championship. They are truly the kings of curling, having now won three world championships and four Brier titles.

If this past week was an emotional roller-coaster ride for Canadian curling fans, it must have been more like a tornado for the members of the team, but like true champions they fought through to the end and delivered a virtually perfect gold medal game. They certainly earned a day of fishing, although I understand they didn't catch anything, the first day of what I hope will be a relaxing summer for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, it's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Team Canada skip, Randy Ferbey; third, David Nedohin; second, Scott Pfeifer, who, incidentally, works for Alberta Energy as a policy analyst; lead, Marcel "Shot" Rocque; alternate, Dan Holowaychuk; and coach, Brian Moore, who couldn't be with us today. I see they're already standing. I'd ask that they receive the warm welcome and congratulations of the Assembly. [standing ovation]

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly His Excellency Mohamed Saad, ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia. With His Excellency is the honorary consul of Tunisia in Alberta and a former member of this Assembly, Mr. John Zaozimy, who is based in Calgary.

I was pleased to host our honoured guests at an official luncheon earlier today, and I want to say that it was a great pleasure. I want to let you know that it didn't matter what language you spoke when you were there, His Excellency is fluent in a number of languages. This is the ambassador's first visit to Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the ambassador is visiting Calgary tomorrow to formally install Mr. Zaozimy as Tunisia's first ever honorary consul in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that our honoured guests stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you 16 seniors from the Club 60 Roses in Legal, which is located in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency. They are accompanied today by co-

ordinators Mrs. Georgette Cyr, Mrs. Lucille Dube, and their bus driver, Mr. Normand Cyr. They are participating in a tour of the Legislature today and are seated in the members' gallery, I believe, this afternoon. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

**Ms Calahasen:** Yes. They are here, Mr. Speaker. I would like introduce to you and to members of this Assembly 26 students who are here again from Mistassiny school in Wabasca, a different group this time. With them are teacher/group leader Christine Gullion and parent helpers Aline Auger, Angie Holt, John Houle, and of course the other is Don Tessier, who is the principal and the bus driver as well. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour on this historic budget day to introduce to you and through your to all members of this fine Assembly a group of young women who work miracles every day with all of their colleagues and clients across the province. They work in AADAC's Edmonton executive offices and in the information services division. After I announce their names I'll ask them to stand. They are Sara Elliott-Erickson, Sandee Greatrex, Jennifer Hourihan, Susan Hutton, Sheryl Kapy, Trisha Keetch, Jenine Safioles, Habi Shariff, Clara Sinfield, Brandy Spence, Jan Tworek, Michele Watkins, Laura Wignall, and Cathy Work, and joining the group on their Legislature tour today is Shirley Noel, who is from the Ministry of Environment. I would ask all these amazing young human beings to stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I introduce somebody to you and through you by the name of Greg Pasychny. He's the very energetic and young mayor of Edson with lots of enthusiasm to bring this town into the 21st century. I'd like him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two individuals from my constituency. Jeannette Giesbrecht is a former editor of a local newspaper and currently serves as my constituency assistant. Mr. Peter Byrne is president of the Devon Chamber of Commerce and a Leduc/Nisku ambassador. Mr. Speaker, this gentleman takes his democratic privileges so seriously that at last November's election he was gravely ill in the Misericordia hospital and got a three-hour pass just so he could get home to Devon to vote in the election. They're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise today and to introduce somebody who is well known to this House.

Of course, it is budget day, so he'll be watching the budget very closely later this afternoon. I'd ask him to stand as I introduce him: the director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, John Carpay.

1:40

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

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 41 students from Northmount elementary school. They're accompanied today by Mrs. Gloria Arsenaault, Ms Charmain Francis, and Miss Michelle Ellison, a student teacher. They're seated in the public gallery. I would ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The 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 members of the House four seniors from the Glenora riding, the executive of Groat House Tenants Association: Jean Gateman, president; Allan Stacey, vice-president; and Esther Morgan, treasurer. With them also is Maria Garcia. I'd invite them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the assembled host Brian West, president of the Students' Union of the University of Calgary, the heart of Calgary-Varsity. Would Brian please stand, if he's arrived, and receive the traditional greeting from this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ms Ireen Slater, a resident of St. Albert since '69, a tireless worker. She was the original founder of Stop Abuse in Families and was the executive director for 13 years. She has received many recognitions: the Queen's jubilee medal in 2002, the commemorative medal of the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada in 1992. She was recognized by the United Nations with an International Women's Day award in 1998. Ms Slater is currently the vice-president of SUN for Alberta and chair of the St. Albert chapter. Would she please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly my guest who is seated in the public gallery observing proceedings. He will also be joining us later in the gallery for the presentation of the budget to see what the government has in mind for Alberta seniors. He's representing a very vibrant and active group called Seniors United Now. He is Ron Ellis. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Bryan Harvard. Bryan is the chairman of the Lloydminster exhibition association, Lloydminster also being home to the Wayside

curling classic. It's Bryan's first trip to the Leg., and I'd ask that Bryan rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature the mayor of Rocky Mountain House, Jim Bague. Of course, he's very interested in what's in the budget because the taxpayers of Rocky have to spend just about \$150 per capita on policing. So he's interested in the budget. Jim, if you would stand and get the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

**Mr. Dunford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two outstanding Albertans who, like the Ferbey Five, personify what the Alberta advantage is all about. Dr. Jacqueline Shan is the co-founder of CV Technologies, a spinoff company from the University of Alberta, and the co-discoverer of Cold-fX and currently the company's chief executive officer. She has double doctorate degrees in pharmacology and physiology and led the company's product development effort which resulted in the discovery of its lead product, Cold-fX, which is today found on pharmacy shelves in more than 4,000 retail outlets across the country. She was chosen as BioAlberta's 2004 entrepreneur of the year as well as a Global TV woman of vision. Therefore, it's not surprising that in January of this year Alberta *Venture* magazine named CV Technologies one of the 50 fastest growing companies in Alberta. Accompanying her today is Warren Michaels, who is the vice-president of communications for CV Technologies. I would ask the two of them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two wonderful ladies that work very hard on making sure I don't get into any trouble. That's Mrs. Jan Wasylshyn and Mrs. Lorna Willert. They're both constituency assistants of mine, and if anybody in the House would like to learn how to make sure that everything is streamlined for their constituents, they could have a meeting with them later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me today to introduce two elected officials from my constituency who share the same constituents as I do and who work very closely with me. It's a pleasure to have them here today: the reeve of the county of Mountain View, Al Kemmere, and Murray Woods, the reeve of Kneehill county. That is a position I once held. They're seated in the public gallery. Please give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly municipal leaders from the constituency of

Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Joining us today is the mayor, Ray Prevost, from the town of Bonnyville; mayor Johnnie Doonanco of the village of Glendon, home of the world's biggest perogy; and reeve Ken Foley from the municipal district of Bonnyville. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask my guests if they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Well, then I'll introduce two of my distinguished visitors today in the Speaker's gallery: Brian Schultz, the mayor of the town of Barrhead, and Bob Jackson, the chairman of the Aspen health authority.

head:

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. Member for Red Deer-North made a passionate plea to this Assembly in support of her private member's bill addressing treatment for crystal meth addicts. The Liberal opposition supports this bill. In fact, our critic of Children's Services has worked with the Member for Red Deer-North in a combined effort to advance the bill. But as a private member's bill there are no guarantees it will be passed or proclaimed. My questions are to the Premier. Given the support for an amended version of Bill 202 on both sides of this Assembly, do you as Premier support Bill 202 with its proposed amendments?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I do wholeheartedly support Bill 202, and I appreciate the phone call from the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition relative to seeing if it can be brought forward as a government bill at this late stage. We're looking into that right now, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Justice and House leader respond.

**The Speaker:** Let's go on to the second one. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Dr. Taft:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Well, given that the Liberal opposition is prepared to work hand in glove with the government to pass such a bill on an urgent basis if it were brought forward as a government bill, will the Premier have the same issues brought forward as a government bill?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know the procedures involved, and I'll have the House leader speak to this issue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. House leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an interesting issue because I'm not aware of a mechanism within our Standing Orders to move a private member's bill onto the Order Paper as a government bill. So we would have to either look at the opportunity as to whether the bill can be withdrawn at this stage and replaced with a government bill or whether it may be more appropriate just to simply complete the process. Private members' bills are bills in this House which private members own, which have the opportunity of being debated, and, in fact, are the only bills in this House which are subject to automatic closure or time allocation at each stage of passage.

So it may be appropriate to ask the hon. members opposite to use

that full co-operation that they've suggested that they'll so willingly grant so that this bill can proceed through the process that it's already in, which would be the easiest and most straightforward way of making sure it became law in this province.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: will the Premier give this Assembly his personal commitment that his government will undertake best effort – absolute best effort – to bring this forward as a government bill?

**Mr. Klein:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we will use all of our best efforts to make sure that this bill is passed. Now, as the Government House Leader said and pointed out to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, there is an opportunity for this to proceed as a private member's bill and be passed, but if that can't be done, we will look at all the rules to see if there's any possible way that this can be brought forward as a government bill.

#### Speaker's Ruling Voting on Bills

**The Speaker:** At this point I'd like to caution all who participated today, including the Premier and including the Leader of the Official Opposition. If any member in this Assembly chose to rise on a point of privilege believing that their right to determination of a vote on a bill was now being compromised because of positions taken by leaders, that point of privilege would most certainly be upheld by the chair in this Assembly. Every member in here has the right to make his or her own decision and his or her own determination on the basis of every bill before this Assembly.

Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Standing Policy Committees

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing committees in areas of policy are standard in all the provincial, state, and federal governments in Canada and the U.S. These are all multiparty committees except for one province, Alberta. Issues like the crystal meth bill could have become a government bill with proper input from the opposition. My first question is to the Premier. When will the government make standing policy committees truly representative of all Albertans by making them multiparty?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has to understand how standing policy committees came about. It was after the leadership in '92 when we decided to change the way government operated and to have a bottom to top decision-making process that involved MLAs, private members, and cabinet members meeting as equals to decide and make recommendations on government policy. Hence, the policy committees came about. These are committees of cabinet and are government committees, so there is no need to follow the federal system, which is their prerogative. They can have any system they want, and we can have any system we want, and the system appears to be working. As a matter of fact, as a participant and president of Executive Council I know that the system works very well indeed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: why did

this government shut down opposition MLAs at a standing policy committee from asking questions of stakeholders on a multimillion dollar issue, as it did last week to the members for Calgary-Varsity and Edmonton-Manning?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I have no idea. That decision is entirely up to the chair. Perhaps – and I underline the word “perhaps” – the questions were frivolous. I don’t know. But that decision is entirely up to the chair.

**Mr. Backs:** Again to the Premier: when will this government begin a review of the standing policy committee process to make them truly democratic?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, they are very democratic. The process is thus. You know, I’d like to explain this to the Liberal opposition because that’s what they’re always going to be.

**An Hon. Member:** In your dreams.

**Mr. Klein:** No. Believe me; we’re going to leave the government in very good shape, in very, very good shape, so my successor can take over a good government and continue with the process we now have in place.

Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, items go to A and P, the Agenda and Priorities Committee. They’re steered to a standing policy committee, the appropriate standing policy committee. That committee then makes a recommendation to cabinet. The chairs of those committees sit around the cabinet table to speak to the recommendations. If a recommendation is approved, it’s reported to cabinet. If there’s no recommendation, then it’s reported to caucus.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### School Utilization

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the highest dropout rate for high school students in the entire country. Meanwhile, many high schools across the city of Edmonton are overcrowded. Students are packed into classrooms like sardines into a can. Strathcona high school has a utilization rate of 116 per cent, McNally is at 108 per cent, Ross Sheppard is at 104 per cent, and W.P. Wagner is at a 99 per cent utilization rate. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Is this chronic student overcrowding the reason why the three-year high school completion rate is the worst in the country?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, we don’t have the worst high school completion rate anywhere in the country. However, suffice it to say that the three-year high school completion rate is very, very low, and we are working on improving that. In fact, one of the first things I did when I became minister was I struck a task force to examine that question.

I think it should also be pointed out, however, that our high school completion rate for the four-year and five-year windows is about middle of the pack. It’s about 75 per cent. Then when we get to the actual age range of students, who are now young adults in the 25 to 35 year age range, we have an 89 per cent high school completion rate amongst that population, which is very good. So I think there’s a disconnect in the linkages that the hon. member is trying to make.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: if there’s so much surplus space in public education facilities, surplus space that is unfortunately being used to force schools to close, why is this government not using the surplus space for continuing high school education programs and saving thousands and thousands of tax dollars in the process? Use that space.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** You know, that’s an interesting thought, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I think the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation would like to augment the answer I’m going to give because I know that he and I have been looking at new ways of utilizing school space, underutilized school space, and school space that might become available after the normal lifespan of that school has been exhausted.

So I’d ask the other minister to augment briefly if he wishes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the city of Edmonton and Edmonton public there are roughly 160,000 square metres of unused space, which is the highest percentage anywhere in the province. They are not necessarily in the right place, and indeed one of the issues that we have in the province of Alberta is that the school space is not necessarily in the right place where the students are because of the change in demographics.

I can tell how anxious you are to have the next question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: how much does it cost to lease all the current commercial space used for continuing high school education in Edmonton? Why are we renting space when we already own good facilities?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ll have to take that question under advisement. I don’t carry that statistic in my hip pocket, and if there is an answer such as the hon. member is looking for, I’d be happy to try and dig it up for him. I don’t know if the hon. minister of infrastructure might wish to comment further.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Dr. Oberg:** Sure. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The simple answer to that is that it is up to the Edmonton public school board. Edmonton public rents space in a couple of buildings downtown, where you have specific issues such as Amiskwaciy Academy, which is a rent-to-own type of space. You also have metro high school, I believe it is called, which again is a specific centre high, which is a specific type of school that is used for a specific purpose. As a general rule Edmonton public is very cost conscious about where they rent space, especially when there is space that is available elsewhere.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

2:00

### Women’s Shelters

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government announced funding for 55 new spaces in Alberta’s women’s shelters this week. That’s welcome, but it’s a drop in the bucket when set against the shocking fact that 3,800 women and families were turned away from shelters last year for lack of space. Edmonton will get a grand total

of three new beds, while Calgary will get none. This is simply not good enough. My question is to the Premier. Will Alberta women and families only get crumbs from the grand banquet that you call the Alberta advantage? When will this government commit to appropriate funding for services for abused women?

**Mr. Hancock:** Point of order.

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to await the budget. But relative to policy as it affects women's shelters, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say that this isn't about Edmonton or Calgary. This is about serving the needs of all women and children in this province. I'd also like to indicate that the announcement that we made this week is servicing nine beds at Hope Haven in Lac La Biche. We're going from one end of the province on this announcement.

The other thing I would like to say is that we're facing a budget in an hour, and I'll ask the hon. member to stay tuned on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier again: given that almost 4,000 abused women and their children were turned away from the shelters last year, is it this government's policy to turn a blind eye to family violence?

**Mr. Klein:** No, Mr. Speaker, it's not this government's policy, intent in any way, shape, or form to turn a blind eye to family violence. As a matter of fact, a lot has been done to combat family violence, and I'll have the hon. minister respond.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, no one in crisis gets turned away in this province. Let's be very, very clear. I think it's also important: if there is a crisis situation and the beds are full, we find other accommodations for them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second supplementary to the Premier: given that Alberta has the fewest supports in Canada for women fleeing abusive relationships, including paltry affordable social housing programs and disgraceful social assistance rates, is it this government's policy to make it as difficult as possible for women to escape the cycle of violence?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I take great offence to those statements in the preamble. This is a wonderful province in which to live, and we look after those who are the subject of abuse and look after those who are less fortunate in society. Notwithstanding what some critics and the NDs would like to see, this government and my colleagues have a conscience that is so socially responsible that it would make their heads turn. You know, sit down and examine exactly what we are doing and the millions and millions and millions of dollars we pour into support programs for the less fortunate in society.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Border Closure to Canadian Cattle

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our hon. Premier indicates that his government represents Albertans, yet they seem to be scared of a little court challenge on important issues. Given that Alberta beef producers are Albertans and that the U.S. border cattle closure is devastating to many of them and on March 3 a U.S. district judge blocked the lifting of the ban on live Canadian cattle to the U.S., my question to the Premier: who from this government was representing Alberta in that Montana courtroom on the 3rd of March?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anyone from Alberta was at the court hearing, but I'll have the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations respond because this is his bailiwick.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Klein:** Or minister of agriculture.

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. Horner:** Indeed, the judgment out of the court case was somewhat biased, to say the least. There were a number of representatives in the courtroom that were feeding us information on probably a minute-by-minute basis. The Agriculture Canada representatives and their legal counsel were also working hand in hand with the USDA during their presentation and, in fact, were working on the amicus briefs that were presented to court, which were rejected by the judge. We all know where he stands.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: why was this government's own official U.S. representative, Murray Smith, not in the Montana courtroom when such an important case was being made?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know if Murray had his feet firmly on the ground at that particular time when this ruling was made.

I can tell the hon. member that we have been very aggressive on this file, and we feel that the actions – Mr. Speaker, just to qualify. I don't know the rules and regulations and the legalities surrounding a Canadian lawyer appearing before a U.S. judge. Notwithstanding that, we feel that the judge's ruling should be challenged. I understand that it is being challenged. The federal government, of course, has a responsibility in this regard, as do other provinces. We are not the only beef-producing province in Canada, although we produce the most beef and the best.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we have consistently said that this has nothing to do with animal health or human health. It has a lot to do with protectionism and a lot to do with politics.

**Mr. Hinman:** Three months to land is a long time.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why were the Alberta beef producers not represented in this courtroom on the 3rd of March, when they could have been?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. minister of agriculture respond to that question.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, it wasn't up to this government for that to happen. They could not have been involved in the court case because the judge – Cebull, in this particular instance – is the one that decides that.

I would like to point out to the hon. member, though, that the representative in Washington that we have has been invaluable to us in accessing senators and congressmen to solidify our support in the United States. He's been invaluable, actually, in connections between the CFIA, the USDA, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, even our federal government is accessing some of the contacts that he has.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government has legal counsel engaged in Washington because we believe that's the best way for us to fight through their own legal system.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government is working closely with both the federal government and the USDA on the amicus briefs and the filings of the appeal currently going on in a California courtroom.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing more and all that we can to help this court case become overturned.

### SuperNet Hookup Cost

**Mr. Webber:** Mr. Speaker, schools in my constituency are concerned about the implementation delays regarding the SuperNet project and also whether or not the Ministry of Education is going to offset hookup costs. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Will the minister provide monies to all school jurisdictions for SuperNet hookup costs?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the SuperNet project is one of the most outstanding projects that our government has ever undertaken. In fact, I think the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency would confirm that our total package price for this particular new endeavour is about \$193 million. As the new hookups come on stream, yes, is the short answer. We did provide for that funding, anticipating it to have been completed in the '04-05 budget, and I hope to be able to continue that through into the next budget to help with those hookup costs on a monthly basis.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: how soon can schools expect to have those SuperNet hookups completed?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are several sites already set to go, and I expect, if I can remember the Minister of RAGE's comments correctly, that we will have the balance of the sites ready sometime later this year, perhaps even in time for our centennial in September. So the short answer is: very, very soon.

2:10

**Mr. Webber:** Again to the Minister of Education: will the minister be helping to offset hookup costs for those schools that have already chosen some other form of broadband carrier other than the SuperNet?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, we did have some unusual circumstances last year, and we did our best to help them, but our project is specific to the SuperNet, the broad bandwidth that is provided specifically by the SuperNet, the partners that we have with the government of Alberta. If there are some unusual circumstances out there beyond that, then perhaps the hon. member could direct them

to my office, and we'll take a look at them, but at this time we are concentrating and focused much more on SuperNet exclusively and those costs involved therein.

### Mountain Pine Beetle Control

**Mr. Bonko:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's \$23 billion forest industry stands threatened by an infestation of the mountain pine beetle. This tree-killing pest has already cost the British Columbia economy millions of dollars. As usual, the Alberta government is waiting for the threat to be a clear and present danger before acting. My question for the minister of sustainable resource: given that the threat of the mountain pine beetle has been evident for years, why is this government in reactive mode instead of proactive mode?

**Mr. Coutts:** Mr. Speaker, the question is about being reactive. We're doing anything but being reactive. For the past five years Sustainable Resource Development and this government have known about the threat of the pine beetle coming across from the British Columbia side, where it was first started, and we've seen the spread of it over the past five years.

We have been in consultation every year with the B.C. government in identifying the areas where the pine beetle may have come across. We do aerial surveys. We work with the B.C. government. We do on-the-ground surveys to find out where those beetles are, and we put the financial resources to make sure that the beetle is going to be eradicated at that border.

As a matter of fact, during the joint ministers' conference in Cranbrook we had a very thorough discussion about the pine beetle and the threat of it, and the B.C. government has put a million dollars into eradicating the pine beetle at our border. As well, we just put a million dollars in this last March to eradicate the pine beetle to protect our sustainable forest industry.

**Mr. Bonko:** Mr. Speaker, the devastation caused by the pine beetle in B.C. was described by NASA scientists as one of the biggest North American ecosystem disturbances ever observed. Can this government explain their ability to foresee this threat and act to protect Alberta's forest industry?

**Mr. Coutts:** I pretty well explained that in my first answer, so I will be brief. We will continue to monitor the threat of the pine beetle coming into Alberta along with our industry partners, the people that are actually out in the forest. We will make sure along with the federal government, that the research that is being done by British Columbia and the participation of the federal government for \$100 million to help them with their pine beetle will certainly be a benefit to us as well. So we're well aware of the issue and the situation.

**Mr. Bonko:** Third question, Mr. Speaker: why has this government concluded that a million dollars and a cut-and-burn solution of one area is the logical course of action?

**Mr. Coutts:** Mr. Speaker, the best thing that we can do to get rid of the pine beetle, unfortunately, is to have about three to four weeks of very, very cold weather, minus 30, minus 40, where it doesn't deviate from that temperature. That will eradicate the pine beetle faster than any clear-cutting or any burning whatsoever. That's the best way to do it. But in the meantime, when we don't have that provision – we don't have the climate to do that, and B.C. doesn't have the climate to do that – we must take the measures that have been proven over the years, and that is, one, identifying; secondly, taking clear-cuts; and the third, burning it.

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

### Gambling Addiction

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very few of us in this Assembly who farm understand why gambling is an accepted practice when it comes to weather and pests, but I don't truly understand how or why anyone wants to indulge in the habit of putting coins into gambling machines that are programmed to beat you, particularly our youth. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I would like to know if the minister could indicate how many of our Alberta youths currently today have gambling problems or are developing some form of gambling allergy.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, this is a good question. AADAC identified in 2002 that almost 40 per cent of Alberta youth from grades 7 to 12 were actually experiencing some form of gambling, whether it's on a sports bus going to an activity, whether it's at school at recess time. We noted that there were actually about 3.8 per cent of youths that were considered to have a serious problem. Another in excess of 5 per cent were at risk of a problem. In total 9.5 per cent of Alberta's youth in the 2002 survey were identified as either being at great risk or potentially having a severe problem with gambling, a concern not only to this government but, clearly, to their parents, who know that children who are gambling are doing so illegally and developing a habit that is detrimental to their growth and development.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what's the government doing to address the emerging trends and problems associated with these gambling activities, especially amongst our youth?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, there are several things that we are doing. Briefly, on the heels of that survey this is the next year for a follow-up by AADAC with a survey that will be conducted this fall. I am at the present time cosigning letters with the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who is the chair of AADAC, to all of the schools and to community groups and authorities that would make them aware that we consider this a problem, that would put them on the alert to remind their circle of influence where youth are gathered to put up posters and really re-energize parents and community members to watch for youth that are engaged in gambling problems.

Currently AADAC has over 560 beds, and most of these beds are involved in treating detoxification and drug-related problems, but there are beds available for stabilization of youth with severe gambling problems and addictions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### Highway 28

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Ribbons of tar are not holding together the asphalt puzzle pieces which for this government pass as highways. The deterioration and lack of timely government maintenance have led to an alarming increase in Alberta road fatalities. In May 1989 17-year-old Tara Grainger, 17-year-old Elizabeth Timmer, and seven-year-old Kelly Formanski were killed on highway 28. My first question, Tara's mother's unanswered question, is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

What upgrading has taken place on this stretch of highway since 1989 to prevent further deaths?

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. member, I'm not sure that we have the kind of an opportunity and time factor in question period to go back to 1989. That's 16 years of highway construction.

The hon. minister, as briefly as possible.

**Dr. Oberg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess as briefly as possible I will say that we have received one complaint on highway 28 in the last year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: why did the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation choose to ignore highway 28 for upgrades this past March 22 when the 2005 federal/provincial agreement was announced?

**Dr. Oberg:** Mr. Speaker, when we choose which highways to do, it's purely by a priority list right around the province, and there are a significant number of highways that are, certainly, at issue. My apologies and my heart go out to the families who lost their children on this in 1989, but the issue, realistically, is that we look at the whole province, and we subsequently decide which roads to do on a priority by looking at the whole province and doing the roads that are the most important.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: why doesn't the government follow the Liberal opposition idea of a legacy fund to set aside sufficient funding for infrastructure?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question under advisement for the hon. Minister of Finance.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Sour Gas Well Safety

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new initiative to develop sour oil and gas wells in the Tomahawk-Drayton Valley area is causing safety concerns among residents in the area. It is anticipated that hydrogen sulfide, H<sub>2</sub>S, levels ranging from 15 to 25 per cent could be encountered in the Nisku formation. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Has exploration of a zone containing H<sub>2</sub>S concentration at this level ever occurred in the province before?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that over the last 50 years the development and exploration of sour gas and oil has occurred safely, and there are numerous areas throughout the province where concentrations of hydrogen sulphide are higher or just as high as the amount in this area of Drayton Valley. In respect to that, I would say that a lot of that safety is in large part because of the priority that the Energy and Utilities Board does place upon safety as being paramount in developing this resource.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again to the same minister: how can these concerned residents be assured their safety is not at risk?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that anyone and all Albertans can participate in hearings of the Energy and Utilities Board if they are directly or adversely impacted by a proposed drilling site. So they should, if in the area and have those concerns, participate in those hearings when the applications come forward. I should also mention that in this particular instance the Energy and Utilities Board officials have met with the local community in the Drayton-Tomahawk area, and as part of the application process local residents will have the opportunity for input on this sour gas drilling.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again to the same minister: will the government consider increasing the no-drilling safety zone around residential areas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Energy and Utilities Board undertook back in 2000 a very large consultation on safety with sour gas, and 87 recommendations came out of that review. Part of that is they're developing a hazard risk dispersion tool that's going to help more accurately calculate the emergency planning zones that are required. That tool should be available sometime in 2006. That will only help increase and further improve the safety record when they're modelling and looking at setback zones in residential areas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

#### School Closures

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education stood in this House yesterday and took no responsibility at all for school closures. He blamed it all on the school boards. However, this government's policies create the problem because the government could have a different capital plan and a different utilization formula. They did this in Ontario in 2003, where their Education ministry will "no longer recognize closed schools as creating eligibility for new school grants." My question is to the Minister of Education. When will Alberta stop holding school boards hostage and do as they have in Ontario and stop recognizing closed schools as eligibility for new schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member is confusing me with some member from the opposition who was asking a question and affixing blame. I did not affix any blame, as the hon. member obviously knows, and I think he should review his comments and withdraw them because I did not blame anyone for some of the difficulties that are being experienced in the system.

The point in yesterday's question period, Mr. Speaker, was to indicate very clearly where the responsibility lies for the difficult decisions that school boards have to make. As a former member of the school board the questioner should know that first and foremost. Secondly, nobody is holding anybody for hostage either. I would take exception to that comment. What we do is provide funding to the school boards, who then have the flexibility to apply it to the best of their abilities. From time to time we see changing demographics; we see changing population counts. School boards have to adjust to that just like everyone else.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the minister conveniently ignored the

question. My question is simply this: why does the minister refuse to follow the lead of the Ontario government, where it's now against the law to tie funding for new schools to the closure of existing schools?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's been clearly indicated in the House on several occasions – I'll indicate it again – that the minister responsible for the utilization rate formula, for example, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, has said that he is reviewing that particular formula. I am part of that review with the minister, and as soon as it's ready to come out – if he would just stay tuned, the hon. member will have it very shortly.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, they talked about the utilization. I'm talking about a school closure process coming from the provincial government.

I guess that my question, flowing from the minister's answer, is: why is the minister leaving this to the bean counters in Infrastructure and persisting with a policy that's a how-to guide for closing schools and gutting communities?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in one part of the comment, and that is that there is a school closure guideline procedure that is referenced in the School Act. Perhaps it is time to review that particular school closure procedure. I would undertake to have a look at it and see if there are places where, perhaps, it can be streamlined or smoothed or somehow else fixed up, and we'll be doing that in tandem with the utilization rate review which the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is doing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

#### Women's Shelters

*(continued)*

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new money for women's shelters that this government announced in a press release on Monday, April 11, includes 55 beds. This is still grant funding which can be removed next year. Once again this government is giving shelters and our vulnerable a one-time transfer of cash, leaving them to beg for adequate funding next year. To the Minister of Children's Services: are the 55 beds announced new beds, or were they existing beds previously funded through donations?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we did is that we provided the money to the shelters, and it was stable funding. In regard to her other question when she said "one-time" funding, I ask her to stay tuned. The budget will be done in about 30 minutes.

**Mrs. Mather:** To the same minister: what amount of this new money that was announced in the press release is for capital expenditures versus operational costs such as staffing, utilities, and maintenance to aid agencies to keep their doors open?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I think it's important that we understand this: this is a good-news story to the shelters that did receive the funding. We have provided them some funding for the beds that they currently have in place and then some, so they can fund raise for other initiatives. Again, you know, it's a good-news story. The shelters that we're hearing from are pleased with the initiative. They're pleased with the money that they're receiving. Again I ask her to stay tuned to the budget coming up.



**Mrs. Mather:** To the same minister: what policy does this ministry have to deal with transitional housing so that women and children will have a safe place to live after they leave the shelter and try to start a new, productive life?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition we provide some second-stage housing projects that receive operational funding support for about 40 self-contained units in the province.

You know, this government is very concerned about the women and children that live in this province and has been for some time now. We had the forum that provided us with lots of ideas. We're continuing to work with all the shelter providers on the issues that they seem to think we need to address. I'd like the hon. member to know that we're also hosting the World Conference on Family Violence in October, which is very exciting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Climate Change

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government announced today their long-awaited plan for implementing the Kyoto accord. My question is for the Minister of Energy. With the federal climate change plan will it make any change or any difference in climate in Alberta or the rest of our country?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member said, today just at 1:30 our own time, so we haven't had the chance to review in any details the work that the federal government has now announced on the Kyoto accord. In general I would say that, clearly, there are some aspects that can help facilitate the climate change improvement in this country, yet I would say that the Kyoto accord itself is a flawed accord. It will not actually solve the problem that it's purported to on a global basis. We need to have more partners, the larger countries such as the United States, China, India, and those, working co-operatively with us. We are pleased that they have taken some direction from us though very concerned about some of the suggested methodologies.

2:30

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, again to the same minister. Alberta is the first in Canada to pass greenhouse emissions. What else is the government of Alberta prepared to do on climate change?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, we are the first as a province to actually introduce an act to talk about climate change. We have the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. It's that act that takes a very technological approach to solving the issues, to turning maybe a problem of carbon dioxide, which is not a pollutant – and I want to emphasize: is not a pollutant – into potentially an opportunity. As an example, even within the Department of Energy there's a \$200 million technology royalty credit program, that's driven towards technological improvements, some very specific pilot projects. You're looking at carbon dioxide sequestration that will help both enhance oil recovery as well as sequestering carbon dioxide.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the federal plan calls for sectors, like the agriculture industry, to create and sell emissions. Is this in our Alberta plan as well?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are companies, there are certainly people in the agricultural and other sectors' industries that are already looking at trying, in anticipation of the federal government's plan, trading emissions credits for carbon dioxide. The problem we have is that we do not and, I would say, should not support any dollars from Alberta or this country going anywhere for just buying carbon credits. It does not solve the problem.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

### Corrections Officers

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 22, 2004, Kyle James Young fell to his death down an elevator shaft at the Edmonton courthouse while in the custody of two provincial protection officers. This tragic incident and the resulting public inquiry have raised serious issues about the training received by provincial protection officers. My questions are to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Can the minister explain what level of training courtroom officers receive to deal with such situations without resorting to the use of force?

**Mr. Stevens:** Well, my first comment, Mr. Speaker, is that the fatality inquiry with respect to this matter is still ongoing, and the issue of responsibility regarding these court workers is that of the Solicitor General.

**The Speaker:** Briefly.

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question, and the issues with regard to training I'm sure will come out. As the Attorney General mentioned, the case is still before the courts, and the recommendations haven't come out yet.

**Dr. B. Miller:** Again to the Minister of Justice: given that a former courtroom officer has testified that he was concerned about the faulty elevator door that gave way prior to Kyle Young's death and was told to keep quiet by his superiors about these concerns, can the minister tell us if he is going to fully investigate these allegations of intimidation of employees by senior staff?

### Speaker's Ruling Sub Judice Rule

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, there is a sub judice rule. Now, I have to be guided by the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. If this matter is still before the courts, then it would seem to be only prudent to wait for the final resolution by the courts by whatever document or whatever report they would give. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora wants to entice the minister to comment on something that's before the courts, that is not within the purview of the rules of this Legislative Assembly.

**Dr. B. Miller:** Can I ask my third supplemental?

**The Speaker:** Please proceed with your third one.

### Corrections Officers (continued)

**Dr. B. Miller:** Can the minister explain – and this has happened before – why there is no protection available for employees who complain about safety in the workplace? In other words, why is there no whistle-blower protection in Alberta?

**Mr. Stevens:** Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the employees in question, those are under the auspices of the Solicitor General.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Training is made available to all of the corrections officers and all of the provincial protection officers as well. In light of this incident, of course, those training issues are going to be reviewed as there is a parallel investigation going on within the department to ensure what our procedures are, to ensure the safety and security of not only our officers but, as well, those in custody.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### **Economic Benefits of Snowmobiling**

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has many summer attractions – the Edmonton Fringe festival, the Calgary Stampede, for example – that attract millions of tourists every year. However, we need to promote Alberta as a four seasons destination, which means highlighting the activities available throughout the year and seasons. Alberta's winter culture includes snowmobiling, which is a great tourist attraction that supports hotels, restaurants, and other facilities. The province has more than 5,000 kilometres of snowmobile trails, roughly the distance from Edmonton to Halifax. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. What is the government doing to increase the profile of snowmobiling as a tourist attraction for the province? [interjections]

**Mr. Dunford:** I'm being asked what I'm doing, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to attempt to answer the hon. member's question as succinctly as I can. I see that we have a need for another member's statement about heckling, perhaps sooner rather than later.

I would agree with the hon. member that snowmobiling is an important recreation and tourism activity here in the province. Mr. Speaker, you might be as surprised as I was to learn, related to participation and to equipment purchases, that this is actually a portion of the tourism industry with about \$200 million of expenditures each year. So, certainly, Economic Development is not going to ignore this kind of participation in the province, and we will continue to work with snowmobile trail associations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one supplemental for the minister. What is the department doing to stem the tide of snowmobiling enthusiasts who head to other provinces to pursue this activity and taking the tremendous economic spinoff benefits across the borders with them?

**Mr. Dunford:** Well, this is a concern, Mr. Speaker. It's a concern not only, I might add, to snowmobiling but to our ski industry as well. We don't want to ignore, however, hon. members, that we have some excellent snowmobile trails in Alberta. We can talk about the Iron Horse Trail between Smoky Lake and Cold Lake. We've got the Golden Triangle between Whitecourt, Edson, and Fox Creek and, of course, in the Crowsnest Pass and some areas within Kananaskis.

I might inform the hon. member that the Bighorn access management plan, that was prepared by my hon. colleague in Sustainable

Resource Development, looked at the area west of Rocky Mountain House, and they also now have identified a number of snowmobiling opportunities.

So, hon. member, we're committed to this activity. We recognize winter sports as a Canadian thing, and of course we want it to become more of an Alberta thing as well.

head:

#### **Members' Statements**

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

#### **Victor Ringuette**

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to recognize a great Albertan. This past Saturday over 300 friends, relatives, and associates of Victor Ringuette gathered together to celebrate his lifetime of philanthropy and his 40 years as the owner of B & R – Eckel's Transport Ltd.

Beginning in 1965, working out of his home with his wife, Greta, as his only employee and his mother as his only investor, Vic Ringuette built a successful business through hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. Today B & R – Eckel's Transport Ltd. has over 300 employees across two provinces.

The road to success for Vic Ringuette has not always been a smooth one. In 1983 Vic lost 11 trucks and his entire maintenance shop due to a fire, and in 1986, when oil prices bottomed out, B & R – Eckel's nearly went belly up. Like a true entrepreneur Vic never gave up and always found the positive in even the most difficult situations. Vic held tight, and when the economy began to pick up steam in the late 1980s, so did B & R – Eckel's.

Although Vic has been an extremely successful entrepreneur, to the people of Bonnyville he is much more. He is first and foremost a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather. Vic also continuously gives back to the community that has given him so much. In his speech on Saturday evening Vic explained his philanthropy over the years by saying: "I believe a community is like a bank. You can't keep drawing without putting something back, and I like to give back to the community."

Mr. Speaker, without the commitment that Vic has shown to the community of Bonnyville over the years, Bonnyville would not be the place it is today.

Congratulations and best wishes, Vic, but most of all keep on trucking.

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

2:40

#### **ARFEX 2005 Culinary Trade Show**

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to speak about the Alberta Restaurant and Foodservices Association and the ARFEX trade exhibition taking place this week in Edmonton. It's the largest of its kind in western Canada. The ARFEX 2005 marks the 24th anniversary and also celebrates Alberta's 100 years of tastes. With over 350 booths, this culinary trade show promotes the development of a greater culinary industry in Alberta.

I want to thank the ARFA leadership and members for raising Alberta to high levels of culinary arts and science. Restaurants and food services have become an important and integral part of Alberta's booming economy. They also enrich Alberta's diverse culture through taste and sense of food.

I believe Alberta now has its own what I call 'culi-culture', if I may say such a word. The quality and the variety of food produce available in Alberta have made food dishes prepared in Alberta among the top in the world. The skills of our Albertan culinary

artists have brought home many prestigious world championship awards. People told me that our Chinese Peking duck dishes are better than the ones in China, that our Mexican and Italian dishes here are better than the ones in Mexico and Italy, that our Vietnamese beef noodle soup is better than the one in Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, the traditional advice of mothers to daughters is: the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. May I complete this advice by saying: the way to a woman's heart is to take her to a restaurant in Alberta.

#### **Braille Menu at La Ronde Restaurant**

**Mr. Lougheed:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize La Ronde Restaurant, the revolving restaurant located on the top floor of the Chateau Lacombe here in Edmonton's beautiful river valley. I had the sincere pleasure to attend the annual general meeting of the Alberta restaurant and food association yesterday in my role as chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

At the meeting I was presented with La Ronde's first menu printed entirely in Braille for the visually impaired. I also had the opportunity to speak with members of the hospitality industry about disability issues. Inclusion is not just about wider doorways or ramps. It's also about Braille menus, sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, and making other services accessible along with the facility. It's one thing to be able to get into a facility and another to access the same services as everyone else. The new Braille menu offered by La Ronde will now offer some people with visual impairment the same dining experience as the rest of society. Furthermore, it allows them to maintain their dignity and their independence.

Mr. Speaker, it's often small things we take for granted that greatly affect persons with disabilities. The ability to enter a building, easily obtain transportation, or order from a menu are examples of things that persons with disabilities have to struggle with every day.

I'd like to commend La Ronde's executive chef, Jasmin Kobajica, and Chateau Lacombe's general manager, Paul Stephens, for their leadership. I know that their efforts are appreciated by persons with disabilities, and they are a role model for the hospitality industry.

Full citizenship for persons with disabilities occurs one step at a time. Mr. Speaker, I believe we moved one step closer yesterday, and I would ask the members of the Legislature to applaud that step.

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

#### **City of Edmonton Archives**

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In January 2005 the City of Edmonton Archives completed two historical projects dedicated to the preservation of the city's heritage. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre for the recent completion of these projects.

The first project was a cataloguing initiative processing approximately 400 maps of Edmonton and Alberta. The catalogue acts as a guideline of the planning and development in residential, educational, recreational, and commercial areas of the city.

The second project consisted of mounting eight of the city's earliest tax rolls to the archives' website. These efforts were made to preserve the city's historical information and document Edmonton's development through the last century. The historical data acts as an informal yet important city census by detailing religious preference, family size, and education from Edmonton's earliest records.

Both initiatives hold considerable informational value for researchers and those interested in the development of the city of Edmonton. It is the continued support of the Alberta Legislature through provincially funded programs such as the Archives Society of Alberta that maintains and preserves Edmonton's and Alberta's documentary heritage.

Please join me in applauding the City of Edmonton Archives for their continued accomplishments in recording our city's history. Thank you.

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

#### **Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation**

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appeal to the members of this Assembly to pass Bill 202 as a provisional response to a clear and present danger that faces youth, families, and society at large. Jaded as we have become to alleged security alerts, to cries of wolf and code orange, some may feel that this language is exaggerated. I assure you that it is not.

Three elements justify this conclusion. There is the element of illness, which requires the same precision in response as other biological challenges. There is the element of addiction, which requires the same awareness as other chemical hazards, and there is the element of abdication of the self to a substance and its suppliers, which requires intervention to restore a user's autonomy.

The elements of danger to users beginning from a single experiment have been described and documented in earlier speeches in this Assembly. Moving testimony has been read and shared from families in distress. The need for some measure to cope has been amply demonstrated.

Another question that may arise from our cynicism of false alerts is this: whether calling "danger" may lead to a knee-jerk reaction in which the measures proposed are out of all proportion to the cause and may be used and abused for purposes for which they were not intended or foreseen. With the amendments that have already been made to Bill 202, some of which may be seen as watering down, there remain five days' detention and assessment for suspected users at risk. What remains is a limited, temporary measure that can be invoked when all else has failed and parents want the child's right to live to take precedence.

Mr. Speaker, let us dilute no more and delay no longer. The word "crisis" in the original Greek meant not panic but an opportunity to make a decision. This is such an opportunity. Let it not be said that we evaded when we could have acted.

Thank you.

head:

#### **Presenting Petitions**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling a petition signed by another 379 Albertans from Edmonton, Lac La Biche, Clairmont, Plamondon, Stony Plain, Blairmore, St. Albert, Devon, and Sherwood Park urging the government of Alberta to "introduce legislation that will allow parents the authority to place their children into mandatory drug treatment" and to fund urgently needed youth treatment centres.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present the petition of 105 Albertans from the good Alberta commu-

nities of Minburn, Wetaskiwin, Newbrook, Thorhild, Redwater, and Edmonton, which reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

head:

### **Introduction of Bills**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

#### **Bill 39**

#### **Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005**

**Mr. Magnus:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005.

The main objective of this amendment act is to make Alberta's roads safer for all road users. The Traffic Safety Act consolidated a number of statutes that have not been reviewed in many years, and since it came into force in May 2003, various requirements for clarification have come to light.

2:50

This amendment act will create new offences for speeding past parked emergency vehicles and past highway construction and maintenance workers. Too often, Mr. Speaker, the lives of fire-fighters, police officers, paramedics, tow truck operators, and construction workers are put at risk because motorists refuse to slow down. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, this amendment act makes many other legislative and regulatory changes to improve traffic safety, including increasing penalties for driving with no insurance, addressing the sharing of information to ensure roadway safety, addressing operational requirements of the Transportation Safety Board and appeals to it, and enabling the minister to make safety enhancements concerning the management of commercial motor carriers. Finally, Mr. Speaker, this amendment act also makes changes to provisions regarding the seizure of vehicles involved in prostitution-related offences so these provisions can be proclaimed into force.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this piece of legislation which reflects this government's very serious commitment to road safety.

[Motion carried; Bill 39 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 39 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head:

### **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 58(6)

the Leader of the Official Opposition may, by giving written notice to the Clerk and the Government House Leader prior to noon on the day following the Budget Address, designate which department's estimates are to be considered by the Committee of Supply.

With the permission of the Opposition House Leader I'd love to table an agreed-upon schedule in anticipation of the budget motion this afternoon in reference to Committee of Supply because we would anticipate starting Committee of Supply tonight, and I believe that all members of the House should be aware of the schedule as early as possible. I'd like to table the schedule and also provide copies for distribution to all members.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're in part of the Routine, and we need some time to set up for the Budget Address at 3 o'clock. Is there an immediacy to proceed with these other matters today?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, do you have a tabling?

**Mr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an appropriate number of copies of a document taken from Ontario Education: Excellence for All, 2004. The portion I am tabling details Ontario's policies on school closures, which is miles ahead of Alberta with its emphasis on the role of schools within communities.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today from Mrs. Hughena Grainger, the mother of Tara Grainger. The two letters were sent to her MLA, the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment, expressing her continuing concerns regarding highway 28.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling for the Assembly this afternoon. It is a document prepared by Marilyn Carlstad on behalf of the Strathearn Elementary & Junior High School Parent Advisory Association and Strathearn Community League in response to the Edmonton public school board's recommendations to force the closure of Strathearn elementary/junior high school. I would urge the Minister of Education and the department officials to read this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're going to declare a recess to 3 o'clock.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:54 p.m. to 3 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, could I bring you all to attention, please. The recess is now over.

head:

### **Transmittal of Estimates**

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

As well, the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province and of certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: **Government Motions**

18. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2005-06 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, the 2005-06 government and lottery fund estimates, fiscal and business plans, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, prior to moving Government Motion 19, I now wish to table the 2005-06 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, as well as the 2005-06 government and lottery fund estimates.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the government's consolidated fiscal and business plans for Budget 2005 as required under sections 4 and 7 of the Government Accountability Act. Also provided for the information of the Legislative Assembly are business plans for each ministry, which must be made public under section 13 of the same act.

head: **Budget Address**

19. Mrs. McClellan moved:

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

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to present to you and to all Albertans the first budget for our province's second century.

Two thousand and five is a special year for Alberta. It's a time to celebrate 100 years as a strong and vibrant member of the Canadian family. It's a time to look back at the contributions of literally thousands of Albertans who have built this province, a province all of us are so proud to call home, and it's a time to look ahead to build on the legacy of our first 100 years and invest in an even better future for our province.

As we enter this our province's second century, who can doubt the tremendous progress Alberta has made in its first 100 years? In our Premier's words we've gone from a remote, sparsely populated, untamed long shot to one of the most prosperous, highly educated, and lowest taxed places in all of North America. All that in just 100 years.

The best news for Albertans is that we enter our second century full of hope and opportunity with the best fiscal position in the country, an economy that's leading the country, and a clean slate for the future: no debt, just an unparalleled opportunity to build on all of the strengths Alberta has to offer. And I'd put a highly educated and talented workforce, an abundance of natural resources, some of the best minds in business, and that well-known can-do attitude of Albertans right at the top of the list of our strengths. Alberta and Albertans enter our second century with nothing to stand in our way, and the single overriding purpose of this year's budget is to invest in Alberta's second century, a century that promises even more opportunity for future generations of Albertans.

For people listening and waiting to hear about the priorities in this year's budget, the messages are very clear. This is an investment budget, an investment in Alberta's next century. It takes its lead

from the results of the It's Your Future survey, where an unprecedented number of Albertans told us what our priorities should be, and it follows through on the commitments that are outlined in this year's Speech from the Throne and our government's 20-year strategic plan.

Budget 2005 opens up new opportunities in advanced education. It reinforces our commitment to the best possible education for Alberta's children, and it supports our ongoing efforts and the efforts of health boards across the province to continuously improve Alberta's access to quality health care services. These are the priorities of Albertans, and once again our government is taking its lead from Albertans.

This budget substantially increases our investment in infrastructure to respond to and support a growing and thriving economy, and it increases our investment in a wide range of areas from improving safety in our communities to helping children, expanding benefits for seniors, and supporting Albertans that need our help.

Mr. Speaker, our province is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and thus revenues, and that has given us exceptional opportunities. But make no mistake; increases in spending must be affordable. In this year's budget we've been able to make significant investments because debt has been eliminated, our economy is strong, and because the medium-term outlook for energy prices is positive. At the same time, our spending must continue to be based on what is affordable over the longer term. So as we look ahead, the increases planned for future years will continue to be tied to the growth in our economy, and we'll avoid the temptation to let temporary spikes in oil and gas prices drive our spending decisions. It's the responsible course to take.

Yes, it means that there will be years when resource revenues are higher than expected. That is the nature of oil and gas revenue. When that happens, there are choices we can make about how surplus funds can be used strategically and deliberately to invest in Alberta's future. We could increase the sustainability fund. We could add to our current endowment funds or increase funding for capital to meet emerging needs for infrastructure. All of these choices are possible because of our strong financial position, and they will be made throughout the year as our financial forecasts are updated.

Mr. Speaker, 2005 is a year when we invest strategically in areas that build Alberta's future. It's also a year when we will challenge universities, colleges, schools and school boards, health boards and health providers, and all those who are entrusted with government funding to build on the legacy we've created, to invest the funding wisely, to embrace innovation, and to seek the best and most effective ways of delivering services.

**3:10**

Mr. Speaker, with Budget 2005 we'll aggressively move forward in three priority areas: firmly establishing Alberta as a national and international leader in learning; making sure Alberta continues to be the best place to live, work, and visit; and promoting innovation and positioning Alberta to compete and succeed in a global marketplace. This afternoon I want to highlight just some of the areas where Budget 2005 will make a real and lasting difference to Albertans and to the future of their province.

Mr. Speaker, there is no better investment we can make in Alberta's future than to invest in our children and youth and to make sure that they get the very best education we can provide, an education that lets them pursue their dreams and fulfill those dreams right here in Alberta. Strengthening advanced education is our government's top priority in this our centennial year and for good

reason. For our young people to compete and succeed, for them to have every opportunity to build this province and build their futures, we need an advanced education system that rates with the best in the world, and for Alberta's businesses and industries to compete and succeed, they need the best and the brightest, the most talented and highly skilled workforce we can provide.

With Budget 2005 overall program spending on advanced education will increase by 13.4 per cent. That will bring it to almost \$1.7 billion. The majority of that money will go to universities, colleges, technical institutions, and apprenticeship programs. It will open up thousands of new spaces and new opportunities for young Albertans. In the years to come we'll make sure no qualified young Albertan gets turned away because there's no space in the system. Over the next three years 15,000 new spaces will be added in our advanced education system, and that number will grow to 60,000 by 2020. With those new spaces stories about young people coming out of high school with high averages and no place to go will come to an end. There will be a place for everyone who aspires to advanced education. That's our promise and our commitment to every young Albertan.

To help fulfill that commitment our government introduced the new Access to the Future Act. With Budget 2005 we'll make the initial allocation of \$250 million in what will become a \$3 billion legacy to supports, innovation, and access to Alberta's advanced education system.

Mr. Speaker, our second promise to young Albertans is that money won't stand in their way. In our Premier's February televised address he announced a new centennial gift to Alberta's postsecondary students. If universities, colleges, and technical institutions must increase tuition fees in 2005, they won't send the bill to students; they'll send it to us. With Budget 2005 that promise will be fulfilled with a \$43 million one-time payment on behalf of all Alberta's postsecondary students.

On top of that commitment our government will invest an additional \$7.5 million in scholarships, grants, and bursaries, providing direct assistance to 30,000 students. As promised in the throne speech, a new Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship will be introduced to pay tribute to a truly great Albertan, a special woman who believed in our youth and in our province, who was passionate about education, and whose legacy will last for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, our government's investment in education certainly doesn't leave out Alberta's young children: the ones just starting out in kindergarten and the ones getting ready to finish high school and plan their futures. With Budget 2005 total program support for basic education will increase by just over 7 per cent to a total of \$4.3 billion. Support to school boards across the province will increase this year by 5.4 per cent. The best news for parents and students is that 1,015 new teachers can be hired over the next two years thanks to Budget 2005. That means that schools will be able to meet the class size guidelines recommended by the Learning Commission by the 2006-07 school year.

Mr. Speaker, investing in education is the top priority for Budget 2005, and it's the best investment we can make in the next Alberta. But investing in the next Alberta also means that we have to make sure that Alberta continues to be the best place in Canada if not in North America to live, work, and visit.

With Budget 2005 our government will invest in improving access and quality in Alberta's health care system, will lighten the load for Alberta's seniors, will increase support for persons with disabilities and expand programs for children, and will take important steps to improve the safety of communities all across the province.

Spending on health care will increase to over \$9.5 billion. That

means that 37 per cent of Alberta's budget now goes to support the rising costs of health care services for Albertans. Health regions across the province will see an overall increase of 11.3 per cent in base operating grants to allow them to bring quality health services to Albertans when and where they need them.

A new mental health innovation fund will be established. Targeted funding will be provided to increase nursing care in long-term care facilities, and support to the Alberta Cancer Board will increase by 25 per cent.

With Budget 2005 our government will also invest in information systems to help improve the efficiency and quality in health care and will move ahead with investments in new facilities such as the Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton, the Children's hospital in Calgary, the new health sciences ambulatory learning centre in Edmonton, and a new hospital in the south part of Calgary.

In May our government will host an international symposium bringing leading experts from around the world to Alberta. As the Premier has said, our goal is to make innovation a hallmark of Alberta's health system. We'll take the best ideas from here in Alberta, from across Canada, and around the world and use those ideas to continually reshape and improve our health system and make sure that Albertans get the services they need, when they need them, and at a price taxpayers can afford.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2005 also substantially increases our commitment to Albertans who need our support. This year's funding for social service programs will increase by 8.3 per cent to a total of \$2.7 billion. This government cares about Albertans, and Albertans can count on us for support when they need it.

With Budget 2005 nearly \$250 million will be invested in the Alberta seniors benefit to provide much-needed support for thousands of low-income seniors. Seniors with lower incomes will also be eligible for coverage for basic dental services and prescription glasses. Ten million dollars will be spent to protect seniors from increases in school property taxes, and steps will be taken to add affordable supportive living units in rural communities and increase support for lodges.

Support for Alberta's AISH program will increase by 20 per cent, or \$80 million, in 2005-06. The Minister of Seniors and Community Supports will be announcing details on increases in monthly support and other program enhancements in the coming days.

3:20

In Children's Services additional funds will be used to improve services for children with disabilities, to improve community-based protection and prevention services, and to follow through on the comprehensive strategy for addressing family violence and bullying. Mr. Speaker, family violence has no place in Alberta. Last year's round-table process captured the ideas and passion of literally thousands of Albertans, and with the support of Budget 2005 we'll transform those ideas into action, starting now. We'll also take steps this year to address growing concerns about safety in communities all across this province.

Mr. Speaker, the deaths of four young RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe was a devastating blow not only to their families and friends but also to the communities involved and indeed to our entire province. It drove home the reality that Alberta is not immune to horrendous acts of violence, and it reminded us that crime doesn't happen just in our big cities. Every community in every part of the province is vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, with Budget 2005 we will take direct steps to support police efforts to tackle crime and ensure the safety of our communities. Nearly 200 police officers will be added in 2005-06. Funding for provincial policing programs will increase by 16 per

cent this year to \$153 million. This will provide over 100 additional RCMP officers under the provincial policing agreement and another 60 new police officers whose single purpose will be to fight organized crime in Alberta. Funding will also be provided to expand the Solicitor General's courtroom security and prisoner transfer programs, freeing up another 30 RCMP officers for front-line policing duties. In addition to all of this, we will increase municipal policing grants by 16 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the next Alberta will be a safe Alberta, a place where people feel safe in their homes and communities, a place where people get help and support when they need it, a place people are proud to call home.

Mr. Speaker, the next Alberta starts with the tremendous foundation Albertans have built in our first 100 years. We'll work together to foster innovation, to maintain and strengthen all the advantages Alberta holds today, and to make sure our economy continues to thrive and continues to offer more and more opportunities for Albertans to succeed here and around the world.

In the Premier's televised address earlier this year, we heard people say: "What isn't the Alberta advantage? Why wouldn't you want to live in Alberta? Everything I need is here in this province." They're right, and with Budget 2005 we'll take steps to ensure that it stays that way, starting with the lowest overall taxes in Canada bar none.

This year Albertans will benefit from targeted steps to strengthen that tax advantage even more. Albertans have always been generous people, willing to support those who need it the most. Steps are being taken to reduce the tax burden on seniors, exempting them from health care premiums and protecting senior homeowners from increases in school property taxes. Mr. Speaker, Alberta seniors have made a tremendous contribution to Alberta's first century, and we won't forget it as we begin our second century.

Mr. Speaker, we won't forget that young families sometimes struggle to make ends meet, especially those with low and middle incomes. Effective July 1, 2005, we'll expand the Alberta family employment tax credit, and that means direct benefits to low- and middle-income families in the order of \$25 million.

With Budget 2005 we also reduce the hotel room tax from 5 per cent to 4 per cent and convert that to a levy to support tourism marketing and development across this province. School property tax mill rates will be reduced by about 5 per cent, and the personal income tax system will continue to be indexed to inflation, saving Albertans a total of about \$35 million just this year. This year's package of tax incentives provides tax relief to those who need it the most, and it strengthens the tax advantage that makes Alberta a magnet for businesses and individuals all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the biggest announcements in Budget 2005 is our strong commitment to investing in Alberta's infrastructure. With Budget 2005 Alberta's investment in capital infrastructure will increase to \$9.2 billion over the next three years. That level of support is unmatched anywhere in Canada. In fact, it's more than double the average percentage of capital spending in other provinces, and it continues the significant investment in infrastructure our government has made in the last five years.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud of our investment in Alberta's infrastructure, and that investment is possible because of the steps we took to clear the books, get rid of the debt, and free up dollars to invest in Alberta's future instead of the past. First priority for capital funds will go to municipal infrastructure programs. In 2005-06 provincial support for municipal infrastructure will increase by more than two and a half times. Our government understands that the pressures of a growing and thriving province are felt in our big cities and our smaller communities across this province. We understand,

and with Budget 2005 we're taking action. In addition to municipal infrastructure projects, capital funds will continue to be invested in hospitals and health centres, schools and postsecondary facilities, and in the provincial highway network.

Mr. Speaker, investing in Alberta's next century means investing in innovation, research, and new ideas. We're blessed with an abundance of natural resources, but more and more Alberta's future will depend on making the best use of those resources, adding value right here in Alberta, seizing new opportunities to build a strong and diverse economy, and preserving our environment. Over the next three years over \$300 million will be provided for water management, including Water for Life initiatives, municipal water treatment, irrigation rehabilitation, and reservoir improvements.

With Budget 2005 we'll turn innovation into action. We'll step up our investment in research endowment funds. We'll forge Alberta's strong reputation as a leader in health, medical, and engineering research. We'll provide up to \$200 million in royalty relief as part of the Alberta energy innovation strategy to enhance oil and gas recovery. We'll support energy and climate change research with a priority on oil sands upgrading, clean coal technology, water management research, enhanced recovery of conventional oil and gas, exploring alternative energy sources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Drumheller-Stettler I'd be remiss if my first budget speech didn't address what is perhaps my first love, and that's rural Alberta and the future of Alberta's agriculture industry. It's been a tough time for Alberta's farmers and ranchers, and those tough times are being felt in rural communities all across our province. All of us had hoped the U.S. border would have been opened by now. We hoped the worst would be over. That wasn't to be. In spite of that blow, we're not giving up now, nor are Alberta farmers and ranchers. One farmer described it this way: a farmer has to be a particular kind of person to take on God, the weather, the international market, and a whole bunch of other stuff and say, "I'm going to survive." Well, Mr. Speaker, that will to survive has certainly been put to the test, but Alberta farmers and ranchers aren't quitters, and neither are we. We'll keep on fighting for a better deal, for better markets, and for a better return for their investment and hard work.

3:30

With Budget 2005 we continue to invest in developing new export markets. We'll step up our work in prion research to get to the cause of BSE. We'll continue our monitoring and surveillance programs and continue to assure the world that Alberta beef is safe and it's the best beef in the world. Mr. Speaker, we'll work with Alberta's farmers and ranchers to explore new ideas and new opportunities. We'll move ahead with the new rural development strategy. A new Alberta school of veterinary medicine is expected to begin accepting students in September of 2006, and together we'll strengthen rural Alberta and make sure that the rural way of life continues to thrive in the next Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, 2005 is a special year for Alberta. It's our centennial, and it's the year we turn the page on our first century and invest in the foundation for the next Alberta. A special year like 2005 deserves special recognition, and this year Albertans will see celebrations, events, and projects all across the province. In just over a month Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth will visit Alberta and join us in what promises to be a very special part of our celebration.

In September we'll officially celebrate 100 years in the Canadian Confederation. In the fall we get to see the brand new look of the renovated Jubilee auditoria in Edmonton and Calgary, and, Mr.

Speaker, I understand they are outstanding. Across the province over \$300 million is being invested in the construction and upgrading of community, historic, and cultural facilities. Alberta's centennial will also be marked by a substantial increased investment in upgrading and maintaining our provincial parks.

Mr. Speaker, let me close today by thanking our Premier, my colleagues, and all Albertans for the honour of presenting Alberta's first budget in this our second century. When our Premier came to office, he made a pledge to Albertans. He said that if Albertans helped us to get rid of the deficit and debt, they would reap the rewards for their hard work. Today our Premier delivers on his promise just like he always has. Budget 2005 is an investment in Alberta's future, and it's only possible because the hard work, sacrifice, and determination of Albertans put us in the strong position we enjoy today. Budget 2005 reflects Albertans' priorities, and it positions us for an even greater success in the years to come.

As I look ahead to the future, there is no doubt that this is a great time for our province. If we could talk to Alberta's earliest pioneers, the people who came to our province at the turn of the 1900s searching for a better life and a better future, I'm sure they would be amazed at what our province has become: the most prosperous place in Canada, a thriving hub of action, ideas, and opportunity, a driving force in the Canadian Confederation, and the best place to work, to live, to raise our families, and to build our futures.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great time to be an Albertan, and we've only just begun. As someone once said, the toughest thing about success is that you've got to keep on being a success. In typical can-do Alberta style our first hundred years have been marked by determination, hard work, and a strong belief that anything is possible in Alberta. We've stared down adversity, we've taken on the toughest

challenges, we've stuck to our principles and our values, and together Albertans have built a province that is an outstanding success. There's no stopping now. We have to keep on being a success.

We have one more promise to keep, a promise to Alberta's children, a promise to make sure that Alberta's next 100 years are even better than our first. Mr. Speaker, with the hard work and support of Albertans, I have absolutely no doubt that that promise will be kept.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to begin debate on Motion 19. The fiscal plans and policies proposed by the government will receive vigorous discussion by members of the Liberal opposition, and I look forward to leading the debate tomorrow.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I now move adjournment on Motion 19.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly do now adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we'll reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:37 p.m.]