

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 14, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**  
 Date: 05/04/14  
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Let us pray. We give thanks for the bounty of our province: our land, our resources, and our people. We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a parliamentary delegation from Malaysia. Our Malaysian visitors are engaged in a dialogue on parliamentary reform, counterterrorism, regional security, and economic relations with Canadian parliamentarians. They are in Canada on the invitation of the Speaker of the Senate of Canada. Malaysia and Canada have much in common, including an economy rich in natural resources and membership in the Commonwealth. The mission is led by His Excellency Dr. Abdul Hamid, the President of the Senate of Malaysia, and his wife, Elham Hamid. The delegation includes Senator Wong, Deputy President of the Senate; Senator Benedict; Nora Hardin, spouse of Senator Benedict; Senator Osman; Senator Norsimah; Mr. Zamani, Secretary of the Senate; Mr. Salleh, secretary of the delegation. This delegation is accompanied by Mr. Mat Dris, the consul general of Malaysia, based in Vancouver; and Mr. Mahathir, vice-consul. Providing co-ordination and support are Mr. Tonu Onu and Ms Astrid Ratzel. I would ask that all honoured guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Assembly Kimberley Coulter and Ronda Bellerose, who are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. Both Kimberley and Ronda work for the Deputy Minister of Human Resources and Employment, and they do an excellent job. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly on behalf of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Minister of Environment some 38 students and 9 adults from the Westview school in Fort McMurray. This is a grade 6 class. They're accompanied by helpers and parents Mr. Janes, Mr. Stephen, Mr. Hobbs, Mr. Boehmer, Mrs. Whittaker, and Mrs. Foster and their teachers, Miss Laura Lewis, Mrs. Laura Rogers, and Mrs. Pearl Field. I'm not sure which gallery they're in, but I would ask them to please rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a large group of grade 6 students from the Lacombe Christian school. They're accompanied by some teachers and parents, and I'd like to name them: teachers Mrs. Stephanie Littel and Mr. Tim Van Doesburg. The parent helpers are Darcy Dyck, Claire Talsma, Henry Luymes, Carolyn Vanderhoek, Sherry Vink, Willy Hoogenboom, Joanne Walls, Betty Scholing, Angie Salomons, Anneke Kassies, Lisa Ellens, Kim Walls, and bus driver Nick DenOudsten. This is a large group. They're bright students, but they're also vocalists. I don't know if you heard them singing a while ago. They came with a whole stack of birthday cards for me, and they serenaded me in the rotunda. So this was a great thing from the students. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House most of the board of directors of the hard-working Northwest Corridor Development Corporation, who are working to sustain and enhance the economic base and trade potential of the northwest corridor, linking the northwest to Prince Rupert and to the world. Today we have with us the chair, Mr. Jeff Burghardt; executive director Mr. Graham Kedgley; accompanied by boards members Mr. Wayne Ayling, the mayor of Grande Prairie; Mr. Mike Mihaly, the mayor of High Level; Graham Dallas from CN Rail; Marylin Davies, who is a councillor with Terrace; Jim Eglinski, a councillor from Fort St. John; Kelly Glazer from Prince George; Carolyn Kalebaba, who is a councillor with Northern Sunrise county and who I promised to introduce nicely; Don Krusel from Prince Rupert; Dave Menzies from Terrace; Bud Powell, a councillor from Dawson Creek; Ron Vanderlee from Terrace; and Ron Wiebe from Grande Prairie. They're seated in the members' gallery behind me, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar, Mr. Merle Schnee. Mr. Schnee has been a resident of Edmonton-Gold Bar for over 40 years, is a former president of the firefighters. He is very active in the community and is a keen observer of all levels of government and the politics involved. Mr. Schnee is in the public gallery, and I would now ask him to 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. Today I am honoured to introduce four guests from the community of Warburg in my constituency. They own and operate a company called North End Oil Industries Ltd., and I would ask them to rise as I call their names and please remain standing: first of all, Arnold Bryant, Audrey Bryant, Kevin Hagel, and Bill Jewett, who is also a councillor for the village of Warburg. I'd ask the Assembly to please give them the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Justin VannPashak. Justin is a young man who resides in Vancouver but was born and raised here in Alberta. He's here to observe the Assembly's proceedings as well as visit family and friends in Edmonton. He also happens to be the grandson of my distinguished colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I would ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Deanna Fuhlendorf. She is the project co-ordinator for the Fort Road & Area Business Association, a tireless worker and driving force behind the effort to revitalize the Fort Road area. One such initiative is the historical town area, which will greatly enhance Beverly-Clareview for residents and businesses. I applaud and support her efforts and hard work. Accompanying Mrs. Fuhlendorf today is Mr. Tony Jones. Tony is my constituency assistant in my very busy office in Beverly-Clareview. I truly appreciate his efficiency and hard work in keeping things running smoothly. I would ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an outstanding Edmontonian, Liz Iggulden. In 1984 Liz began working for the Old Strathcona Foundation, whose mandate, many of you will know, is to preserve and restore the historic assets of the area, making it a place where people would want to live and where businesses would prosper. She was hired on for a temporary two-week position way back then. Last month she retired after 21 years of service with the foundation, the last 10 years serving as its executive director. I want to take this opportunity to thank Liz for all her hard work and dedication and amazing service to the community of Old Strathcona. She is here today with her husband, Lee Iggulden. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. Also, Mr. Speaker, here with Liz today to honour her accomplishments and wish her well in her retirement is Old Strathcona Foundation executive director Karen Tabor. They're all seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly my first group of students from the city of Fort Saskatchewan. They are 28 students from Win Ferguson school. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Joanne Simpson, Miss Carrie Sannerud; parent helpers Mrs. Sandra Smorenburg, Mr. Mark Smorenburg, Mrs. Heather Cnockaert, and Ms Mary Couper. I would ask them to all rise – I believe they're seated in the gallery opposite – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

### Oral Question Period

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

### Health Care Premiums

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government refuses to eliminate or even reduce health care premiums. These are a tax by any definition of the term, and they have soared in recent years, making a mockery of this Premier's claim that the only way taxes in Alberta are going is down. Likewise, this government takes more and more revenue from Albertans by allowing tax creep in the education portion of property taxes. My question is to the Premier. Will this Premier finally admit that health care premiums are a tax that hits middle- and lower income Albertans and small businesses the hardest?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that we have removed the health care premiums for seniors. The premiums are a way to have people understand that there is a cost to health care. Having said that, the amount the government spends on health care aside from premiums, the small amount that people spend on health care premiums, is in excess of 9 billion – billion – dollars. That is a huge amount of money.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that health care premiums just go into general revenues, not into the health department, why does this government refuse to give all Alberta families a tax break of over a thousand dollars a year by eliminating health care premiums? Why refuse to do it?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, whether it goes into general revenue or not, it still finds its way to support health care. It's part of that \$9.5 billion. That is a very large amount of money.

The opposition quite naturally are critical of the government.

**An Hon. Member:** Rightly so.

**Mr. Klein:** Not rightly so. It's their job. They have no other function, no other justification for living other than to criticize.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, then, I'll ask the Minister of Finance. How much do health care premiums cost to provincially funded organizations like school boards and regional health authorities and children's services authorities and the like?

**Mrs. McClellan:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to raise that question during estimates, and I'd be happy to bring the amount forward for him. But I want to reiterate that our expenditures in health far exceed our premiums, by about 8 or 9 to 1, obviously. We very deliberately in Budget 2005 did some very targeted tax reductions to low-income and middle-income persons and to seniors both on the school property tax side and on health premiums. I would also remind the hon. member that we have reduced taxes in this province by \$2.5 billion over the last half a dozen years, and I would remind him that health premiums have not soared. In fact, they were frozen in this province until about two or three years ago, when there was an increase.

**The Speaker:** Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Speech from the

Throne, the Premier's televised address, and during the introduction of Bill 1 Albertans were given the impression that the Conservatives had actually turned over a new leaf, were taking it off autopilot and were about to build a world-class advanced education system. But in yesterday's budget the government made a modest 8 per cent down payment on its \$3 billion access to the future fund without a commitment to make any future payments into that fund. To the Premier: why won't the government officially guarantee that it will continue to invest in the fund next year and each year after that?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, it was in the budget speech. I don't know if the hon. member was paying attention or not, but it certainly was in the budget speech.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very interesting to note what other people, especially those in the education field, say about Budget 2005, and I quote Carl Amrhein, who is the provost of the University of Alberta, where the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is a postgraduate student.

Since my grad school days, I have not seen a government here in Canada or even in the U.S. announce a three-year funding package for post-secondary institutions that will accomplish so much . . . I haven't seen anything like this in my entire professional life. This has to be seen as bold and visionary. This is just a wonderful thing, not only for the people who run universities, but it has got to be seen as wonderful news for the parents who have been worrying about where their children will go.

**The Speaker:** The document will be tabled later for the benefit of all members.

Proceed.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given all that accomplishment, can the Premier explain how a 6 per cent increase in base operating grants will build a world-class system when our colleges and universities experienced that big an increase in their operating cost last year?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's question, again I have to quote, and I quote from the president of the University of Calgary, who understands, by the way, these issues, as opposed to the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. Dr. Harvey Weingarten said:

"It will make a huge difference in the number of spots we have, in the quality of educational experience we can offer students, also in how affordable post-secondary education is," he said. "All those things are good."

**Mr. Taylor:** Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. This is not about good; this is about excellence. Can the Premier comment on the fact that students can generate as much income per student next year as the access to the future fund will by each taking three empty pop cans a day back to the bottle depot?

1:50

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, that's the level to which the Liberals will sink: pop cans. But I take my lead from those in the teaching profession, especially in the postsecondary system. I quote from Bill Cade, the president of the University of Lethbridge, who said: never in my 27 years in Canada have I seen an increase of this amount.

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

#### School Closures

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March of this year a

concerned parent from Sangudo had to go to court to stop the public school closure process at Sangudo high school. The local school board failed to provide the parents the information required by section 4 of the closure of schools regulation. In August 2004 this regulation was amended to mandate that school boards across the province provide to all parents information on their long-range capital plan. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Why did both the Department of Education and the Edmonton public school board district No. 7 use an outdated closure of schools regulation to force the closure of four good public schools in Edmonton?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't believe any schools have been forced to close, at least not to my knowledge. Perhaps the schools being referred to are still open. I'm not sure if he's named them, per se.

However, I would have to say this with respect to the regulation. There was a regulation change made last year under the ministry of learning, and as people who deal with legal matters would know, you should really consult the *Alberta Gazette* or the Queen's Printer to get the most up-to-date and most current regulations or regulation changes, similarly with statutes. Information that exists on websites, regardless of whose they are, always carries a disclaimer to that effect.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. The parents have consulted the *Alberta Gazette*. The Minister of Education has not.

How can the parents of the students enrolled in Wellington, North Edmonton, Terrace Heights, and Strathearn – these are all parents that are affected by these closures – make an informed decision when the board, the public board, has failed to provide them with all the information required by law?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not intimately familiar with exactly what documentation the Edmonton public school board provided to whom at what time. But there are specific regulations that govern what has to be provided, and I'm assuming that the Edmonton public school board has done that through one form or another. So that question would be a very good question to ask the Edmonton public school board, and I assume the hon. member will do that.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: given that parents were not provided all the information they are entitled to by law to prepare for the school closure meetings, will the minister now immediately stop the school process of closures that was initiated by the Edmonton public school board district No. 7 on March 8 because they broke the law?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anybody broke the law or not. I suspect that they haven't. The school board has its legal people who look after these matters. If they provided the type of information that is required surrounding a rumoured school closure or a rumoured set of school closures, those issues are dealt with at the local level, and I would seriously ask the hon. member to please put that question forward to the public school board. Until I see information to the contrary, there will be no need for me to intervene whatsoever.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Health Care Premiums (continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's budget did little to reduce the burden on hard-working and middle-income Albertans. In fact, using the government's own figures, an Alberta family of four making \$60,000 a year will pay \$1,057 more in combined personal income and health premium taxes than the same family with the same income in Ontario. My question is to the Premier. Why won't the government accept the NDP opposition proposal to give a \$1,056 tax break to middle-income Alberta families by scrapping health care premiums?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, we don't take our lead from the NDs. That's for sure. As the hon. Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier pointed out, we chose to make targeted tax reductions that would benefit those who need tax reductions the most. The family employment tax credit has been enhanced. Seniors, of course, are now exempt from paying any health care premiums at all, and senior homeowners will receive relief from increases in school property taxes. We've gone a long way to address the needs of those who are classified as being low income in this province.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, why is the government then punishing Alberta families with yearly incomes between \$50,000 and \$150,000 by forcing them to pay, according to the government's own figures, a thousand dollars a year more in combined personal income and health care premium taxes than the same families in either B.C. or Ontario?

**Mr. Klein:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Finance respond relative to the details, but I will say this as a preamble. If we had the tax system of the next most competitive province, which isn't Ontario – it is British Columbia, and he mentioned British Columbia – Albertans and Alberta businesses would be paying almost \$7 billion more in taxes, or over \$2,000 per person.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; I thought the Treasurer was going to respond.

Will the Premier admit that the reason middle-income earners pay more tax than those in some other provinces is because of Alberta's flat tax, which hits the middle class the hardest?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I just pointed out that if we had the same tax system as our most competitive province, British Columbia, Alberta taxpayers, including businesses and individuals, would be paying almost \$7 billion more in taxes, or \$2,000 per person.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Traumatic Injury Rate in the Aboriginal Community

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A study published by the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* stated that First Nations people in Alberta are four times more likely to suffer a traumatic injury. These injuries are often the result of motor vehicle collisions. My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. What is being done to address traffic safety issues in aboriginal communities?

**Ms Calahasen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, four times is really very traumatic when you think of the numbers. One of the recommendations in the McDermid report was to include and engage aboriginal leaders and elders in developing strategies to reduce highway traffic fatalities. Of course, the government accepted that recommendation. My department has been working with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to be able to see what we can do in terms of developing an Alberta traffic safety plan. What we're trying to do is make sure that we reflect all the importance of addressing the high rates of traumatic injury and death from motor vehicles.

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

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are some of the contributing factors causing these high rates of traffic-related injuries and fatalities in Alberta?

**Ms Calahasen:** Well, there are a number of contributing factors, Mr. Speaker. Number one is poor road conditions on reserves. Number two is the lower seatbelt usage rates. Number three is the higher number of passengers in vehicles. Number four is, of course, increased highway travel due to the remoteness of aboriginal communities.

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

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Solicitor General. Given that the same study found that First Nations in Alberta are also more likely to sustain injuries from stabbings and assaults, what steps is the Solicitor General taking to enhance policing services in these aboriginal communities?

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

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We take these issues very seriously. We have 59 trained and skilled professional First Nations police officers that are serving on five different First Nations police services now in northern Alberta. These arrangements have been made in a tripartite agreement with Canada, the province of Alberta, and the First Nations band. We're providing these services through the First Nations themselves, who are taking a lead role regarding policing in their communities, and we are working on three new tripartite agreements with them. First Nations officers are expected to and do meet the same training standards as any other police officer in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

### Environment Budget

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Repeatedly Albertans have told this government, including the government's own pre-election survey, that environmental protection is a top priority, yet well below 1 per cent of the budget continues to be committed to Alberta Environment. Indeed, there's no ability to implement the vital Water for Life strategy despite commitments in the throne speech, the rural development strategy, and in this House. My question to the Premier: as the third top priority to Albertans why has there been no significant increase in proportion of funding to this ministry in over a decade?

2:00

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member says is not quite

true. If he examines the budget documents carefully, he will find that our commitments to infrastructure, including the Water for Life strategy, are ostensibly in infrastructure. That will be spelled out by the Minister of Finance, and I'll have her comment further.

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, there is, in fact, a significant amount of budget allocated to Water for Life. First, there are budget dollars in Environment's budget on the operational side, whether they're used for monitoring or watersheds and so on.

Secondly, there are significant capital dollars that are in this budget. I outlined some of those yesterday. I invite the hon. member to debate this issue in the House.

Thirdly, we have a Water for Life strategy. It's a tremendous strategy, and we have approved that as a government and accepted that. The Minister of Environment is working with his cabinet colleagues on putting together a very comprehensive work plan on all aspects of this very complex study.

**Dr. Swann:** My only supplemental, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: with a fivefold increase in applications for oil and gas development in this province in the past decade, how can anyone believe that Alberta Environment has the capacity to ensure compliance with environmental protection regulations without a commensurate increase in monitoring, compliance, and enforcement staffing?

**Mr. Klein:** This is a very interesting question, Mr. Speaker. It's one that the hon. Minister of Energy and myself addressed with representatives of the oil industry just recently. We need to revisit the whole issue of land reclamation in light of the number of wells now being proceeded with.

Mr. Speaker, it is not as simple as the hon. member points out. There are matters of reclamation that go to, well, the situation of the landowner being satisfied that the land has been reclaimed and that go to the situation of streamlining regulations and setting out rules, very specific rules, for the proper reclamation of land.

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

### Cougar Management

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The recent report of a cougar attack on one of my constituents in Highwood is just one more example of how common these predators seem to be now. With a largely urban population in Alberta many of those who go out to our backcountry are not aware of the dangers they may face. What is the minister's department doing to ensure that Albertans are aware of the threat of these animals?

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

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been an increase in wildlife in the province of Alberta, and particularly we've seen a slight increase in cougar activity in our province. Our staff work with a cougar management provision as well as with our partners in Community Development in parks.

Because cougars can be found anywhere in this province and because they are available almost all 12 months of the year, particularly our fish and wildlife officers are out there trying to educate people year-round in terms of how to deal with cougars when you come upon them. We go into communities, and we do information sessions. We're there seven days a week, 24 hours a

day, to make sure that when these cougar attacks exist, we're on the spot and look at the situation.

We're really relieved that the folks that ran into the cougar in the backcountry in the member's constituency only received a few scratches and that they're okay.

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Does any of this management of cougars include relocating these predators to areas closer to the communities, which some rural Albertans have been alluding to?

**Mr. Coutts:** Definitely not, Mr. Speaker. We've heard these rumours as well, and we have to be clear here. We never relocate cougars in any way, shape, or form because there's a real chance of affecting their mortality when you relocate a cougar. But if we do need to move a cougar, we have expert biologists that go in and take public safety in mind when they do that. We have shown in cases in our history, in the past, that we would also close to human access areas where we felt there was a particular danger of cougar advances on human activity.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, my final question is for the same minister. What guarantees do Albertans have that they will be safe in the backcountry?

**Mr. Coutts:** Mr. Speaker, public safety is a key priority in wildlife management, everything from vehicle collisions to aggressive moose and elk and bears coming to garbage cans and that type of thing. Wildlife is a part of Alberta, and we can't guarantee their behaviour. Innovative education programs are necessary to make sure that industry and the public understand, and we have programs out there like Bear Smart and Living with Cougars. Many of our fish and wildlife officers are in communities, as I've said, to make sure with year-round programming in reducing encounters. We also manage vegetation on trails. We have programs that keep animals away from livestock in high-use areas. We're well served by our fish and wildlife officers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder was identified as a medical condition in 1973. There is no cure, and the damage is irreversible. A child with FASD becomes an adult with FASD. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Given that many, many adults with FASD end up in the criminal justice system, has the department identified whether this is attributed to the lack of community support as an adult or a missed diagnosis when the individual was still a child?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that first of all the hon. member should realize that this province, Alberta, is leading edge on the issue of FASD, and I think that's very, very clear in all the work that we've done in the past.

I also would like to let her know that I have just taken over the chair of the Canada northwest fetal alcohol spectrum disorder partnership, and we're working on and researching some of the issues that she's brought forward.

FASD is a disease or an illness that this government is very, very vigilant on. We've got numerous pilot projects looking at what we're doing in regard to the children in this province plus the adults.

**Ms Blakeman:** I just wanted an answer to the question.

The second question to the same minister: would the province consider a pilot project for adult FASD specialized housing, group homes, with support workers and counselling services included in the model?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for Children's Services it's something that we could look at. I would be pleased to work in partnership with my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. My final question to the same minister: what is the timeline for the implementation of the strategic plan dealing with FASD composed by the cross-ministry committee?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think you can get into timelines on this initiative. I think it's an ongoing process. To have any timelines, period – I can tell her, though, that we are working very, very hard on the issue of FASD and would be pleased to sit down and show her what we're doing and explain to her. We've just increased the budget of one of the centres of research by \$2 million, and they're very, very excited about it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

#### Rural Police Services

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With the tabling of the 2005-06 budget yesterday by the hon. Treasurer, I would like some clarifications on items in the Solicitor General's budget. My first question is to the Solicitor General. Rural municipalities have been calling for more front-line policing in their communities. How does the budget meet the West Yellowhead constituency's concern, especially in Edson and Hinton?

2:10

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

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2005 was really an investment in the Solicitor General's department as in every other ministry in government. We know that the cost of policing puts an unusual strain on some of those municipalities that have a smaller tax base, and they don't have the funds that they can put into policing. Some of those smaller communities, like the hon. member mentioned, have their tax bases where up to 45 per cent goes directly to policing.

Thirty towns and communities with populations between 5,000 and 20,000 received significant increases. For the town of Hinton the new amount that they'll be receiving is \$275,000 a year, which is almost double what they received last year. The community of Edson will receive about \$262,000, which is more than twice the amount they received last year.

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

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Can he tell the House

where the additional police officers promised for rural Alberta will be placed and how soon they will be able to look after the streets and highways?

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Mr. Speaker, this government recognized the need for additional officers in rural Alberta, recognized the fact that criminal activity takes place in rural Alberta, as it does take place in every larger urban centre. The additional 100 RCMP officers will be located throughout the province. Community needs will be looked at with regard to criminal activity. Those decisions will be made by Assistant Commissioner Bill Sweeney. But we have also been reassured by Commissioner Zaccardelli in Ottawa that the RCMP will be providing those officers to Alberta as soon as they can. There are officers in training in Regina right now that will be coming to Alberta, and new classes as well will be starting up, with them coming to Alberta.

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

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question: the production of and traffic in illegal drugs, particularly crystal meth, is a growing problem in rural Alberta communities. Can the Solicitor General tell this House what he is doing about this?

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

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In our budget announcement yesterday 60 additional officers, 20 RCMP officers and 40 municipal officers, will be funded through the Solicitor General's office to provide enforcement with regard to our integrated response to organized crime throughout the province. These will provide officers that can work in an intelligence-based operational format as well as the enforcement format, all in undercover positions that can be mobilized and utilized anywhere in the province, from Grande Prairie to Medicine Hat to Fort McMurray to Crowsnest Pass.

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

#### Horse-racing Renewal Program

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's budget produced another winning ticket for the horse-racing industry in the form of a \$45 million lottery-funded subsidy. The horse-racing renewal program is entering into its fifth year and will have given out well over \$150 million to the government's friends in the for-profit horse-racing industry. My questions are for the Minister of Gaming. How much longer will this government continue with this extraordinary subsidy for this one for-profit industry?

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

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased he's so interested in my budget that he's bringing it up today as opposed to waiting till May 4 in the evening, when we will go into the details.

Briefly on this point, it's not a grant. It's an amount of money that could be earned at the racetracks. Depending on the amount of gaming activity at that racetrack, in addition to the money that goes back to the industry, 33 and a third per cent of the money earned at the racetracks in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie goes into the Alberta lottery fund, which benefits every single Albertan.

**Mr. Tougas:** Again to the Minister of Gaming: how can the minister justify giving more money to the benefit of the for-profit horse-racing industry than to the community facility enhancement program, which benefits all Albertans?

**Mr. Graydon:** As I just said, the 33 and a third per cent of the money earned at the racetrack goes to all Albertans through the Alberta lottery fund. As well, we need to know that there are between 7,000 and 8,000 people working full and part time in the racing industry. As well, this industry contributes \$300 million a year to the Alberta economy.

**Mr. Tougas:** Same minister: given that this government is supposedly out of the business of being in business, why does this not apply to the horse-racing industry in Alberta?

**Mr. Graydon:** It's a rural-based industry. It goes all the way from the people who raise hay and grain to the people that breed horses to the jockeys that ride the horses. I think the hon. member should saddle up and move on to a different topic.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

#### Capital Investment in Schools

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's touting of its increase in infrastructure spending is misleading and disingenuous to say the least. When you look at the actual numbers, capital investment is being cut quite severely in many key areas. Capital investment on schools is down 10 per cent compared to last year, capital investment on hospitals is down 30 per cent, and capital investment on postsecondary facilities is down more than 50 per cent. My question is to one of these ministers over there; I'm not sure. Maybe the Minister of Education: he's here. Given the threatened closure of dozens of schools throughout the province, why was the capital investment for new or renovated schools cut by 10 per cent in yesterday's budget?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation would like to comment on this at some later stage, but let me say this in a general sense specific to the school question, at least that part of the question that has been asked. We are looking at a new way of providing funding for new school construction or for major school renovation projects or for additions to schools, be that through the use of portables or modules or other forms of temporary accommodation for students. What we have found over the last several years is that because of the tremendously fast way in which costs related to steel, for example, and gyproc and labour and so on are increasing, it's very difficult to provide one single budget item at the beginning of a budget year without having to amend it several times later on. So we're looking at moving to a new way of doing that, perhaps on a quarterly basis, and the first announcements in those respects will likely come out in June of this year.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, it means this budget doesn't mean anything.

My question to the minister, then, is simply this: given that over half the schools in Edmonton are over 50 years of age, how can it make sense to cut 10 per cent from this year's budget for capital investment in schools? How does that make any sense at all?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have the exact figure in mind,

but I think it's something like \$644 million will be provided over the next two, three, or four years for the types of school projects that I just indicated. I am sympathetic, as all members here would be, to schools that are aging and to the fact that there are declining enrolments in many of those areas whereas in other parts of the province there are some rapidly escalating student population counts. We're doing our best to come forward with a new formula that will address those realities.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the new reality is that we cut 10 per cent from the budget. How can we, then, Mr. Minister, have new schools in Edmonton and fix up the ones we have with a 10 per cent cut in the budget?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation along with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and myself and the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs attended a very interesting press conference this morning at which the announcement was made of how the \$3 billion in brand new monies are going to be rolled out to all municipal districts in the province of Alberta. That's all part of a \$9.2 billion capital infrastructure plan, and schools are going to be included within that bigger picture very soon.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### Climate Change

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although they likely won't be around much longer, yesterday the federal government announced their long-awaited plan for implementing the Kyoto accord. My constituents were happy to see that it was taken out of the budget documents; however, we still have a lot of questions. My first question is for the Minister of Energy. How does this federal plan address the large final emitters, many of whom are industries based here in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to first state that this government has been the only province, really, that has taken a very proactive approach along with industry in trying to address and find solutions to climate change. In that light, though, I must state that the Kyoto accord continues to remain a flawed agreement, and this implementation plan of the federal government continues to remain a flawed methodology of application in trying to resolve the problem.

With respect to the large final emitters, they have reduced the megatonnes emission question to 45 megatonnes – I'd say that's at least in the light of trying to find a practical approach – yet only about 20 per cent of that commitment can be put towards a technology solution. The solution is all about technology. It's technology, technology, technology.

**Rev. Abbott:** Again to the Minister of Energy: given that the federal plan talks about a number of funds, including the climate fund, the partnership fund, and the GHG technology investment fund, what difference will those funds make?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of funds which are being outlined, potentially \$10 billion worth of funds, money that is going to come from somewhere to implement this plan. One of the

funds mentioned was a technology fund. That'll be upwards of about \$2 billion. That is at least in the direction we would suggest that it ought to go. Companies then can apply to that fund with respect to their applications and solutions to climate change.

There's a climate fund, however, that's the largest fund, probably in the magnitude of \$5 billion to \$6 billion, and it remains focused on hot air. That is their solution: a lot more hot air.

**Rev. Abbott:** Sad.

Mr. Speaker, my final question is also to the Minister of Energy. Given that the federal plan calls for the automobile industry to have a voluntary approach to climate change, is this something that the oil and gas industry can also look forward to?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, an application, once again, very inconsistent across the industries in this country. We do support that there ought to be a voluntary approach with the auto sector. I think that is a right. Those industries in that area have the best understanding and expertise to address the question in their provinces. However, when it comes to the energy sector the expertise, the regulatory environment, the ability to address the question remains in Alberta, and the federal government's approach is to enact the Canadian environmental protection act and to somehow, through their own regulation, regulate and take control of an issue on which they don't even have the expertise.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

#### Securities Commission

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance continues to try and bury the serious concerns regarding the enforcement of regulations at the Alberta Securities Commission. She continues to take the advice of the part-time commissioners, who are investigating their own work and actions. My question is to the Minister of Finance. On Tuesday in this Assembly the minister inferred that it was acceptable for one or two enforcement breaches at the Alberta Securities Commission given the number of files that they deal with. Is the minister, in fact, aware of one or two enforcement breaches?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to take that information under advisement on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the same minister: how many enforcement breaches would be considered acceptable at the Alberta Securities Commission?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, I would give the same answer as to the first.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why is the minister afraid to follow the lead of Ontario, where when the Securities Commission came under controversy, an independent inquiry was appointed? Will she call an inquiry into these allegations?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Finance is a very brave and courageous individual that acts to protect all individuals in this area of securities regulation, and she will continue to do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

#### B.C./Alberta Transportation Issues

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In northern Alberta there has been a significant increase in oil and gas activity, forestry, wood products, tourism, agriculture value-added products. This has taxed not only our road infrastructure but our weak and deteriorating railway system as well, with the majority of our exports in northern Alberta destined for the west coast. We are therefore required and should be encouraged to co-ordinate with the B.C. government to expedite our transportation schedules. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What is the government doing to increase the export opportunities for our industries shipped for the west coast?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, trade, of course, is very vital to Alberta's continued economic well-being, and even though 90 per cent of our export trade is with the United States, as we look around at how the world is changing, especially the increase in value-added products and the growth in the Asian economy, we have to seize those opportunities. One way to seize those opportunities is to increase port capacity. We are working with the B.C. government. In fact, we're jointly co-sponsoring a northern corridor study, and that information will be coming forward to both governments as both governments are intensely interested in expanding port capacity.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental to the same minister: what is the government doing to co-ordinate transportation policies and regulations between the two provinces?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this had been on the top of the discussion list between the two cabinets, B.C. and Alberta, in the last three meetings. Both Premiers instructed ministers in charge to come back with a plan as to how we will continue to harmonize transportation regulations between the two provinces. We have moved, small steps but measurable. I believe the largest accomplishment of the two governments is a joint vehicle inspection station that will be on highway 1 at Golden. Rather than the truck stopping on the Alberta side and being inspected and then driving across the border to the B.C. side, we will now have one station, jointly manned. It will save this province about \$3 million in capital costs and about \$300,000 to \$400,000 in manpower costs in the future.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much. My final supplemental, again to the minister: what investment does Alberta have in the port at Prince Rupert, and what are the future plans?

**Mr. Stelmach:** The file in Prince Rupert is rather complex, but very quickly: our original investment was in the area of about \$106 million; I believe one of the loans with respect to the grain port sits in our GRF at about a dollar. There are other issues there in terms of the ownership of the port authority in Prince Rupert, the grain-handling facility, and those, of course, in Vancouver, and we are working with all the parties involved. I believe there are about four grain-handling companies. I'll definitely have the Minister of Finance give a much more detailed answer to the member.

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



### Government Efficiency

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What happened to this Conservative government's less-is-more mentality? This government has bloomed from 17 ministries in 1993 to a bloated 24 in 2004. The last addition was ironically created to make government more efficient. An expanded government is not an efficient government. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: can the minister please explain how adding seven new ministries since 1993 and more than 1,000 new employees to the public payroll this year alone has made this government more efficient?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, in all the different articles you read out there, we run the smallest government in the country, the most efficient government in the country. We've got the busiest industry in the country, we've got the highest rate of population growth in the country, and therefore we are running the most competent government in the country.

2:30

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency commit to making the government so efficient that he risks restructuring himself out of a job?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we have 24 ministries in this government, and they're all very, very competent. Hopefully, we can get so efficient that I can sit with my feet up.

Thank you.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Mr. Speaker, given that this ministry is spending over \$3.3 million to assess opportunities for restructuring, how many millions does the minister promise to return to Alberta taxpayers through more efficient government?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I'd love to be able to return all kinds of money to every Albertan there is, but we all know that we have to look after the business of government.

### International Delegations

**Mr. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, for our province to grow economically and culturally, it's important for Alberta to develop and maintain close relations with other regions, other provinces, and countries around the world. My first question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I understand that there's a delegation from the Chinese province of Shandong in Edmonton. What is the nature of the delegation's visit?

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a 26-member delegation visiting Alberta. They're here to reaffirm a memorandum of understanding that was signed some time ago between Shandong University, the University of Alberta, the Alberta government, and the government of the province of Shandong, mostly centred around exchange of students, some technology. We hope that this relationship will lead to even bigger and better relationships with the province of Shandong.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you. My first supplemental and final question is to the same minister. Does Alberta have many types of these delegations come to our province?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question, the reason being that Alberta is certainly much more prominent on the world scene. Today the Speaker of this Assembly, yourself, hosted a very large Malaysian delegation. Roughly about 60 to 65 delegations visit Alberta on an annual basis, but I expect that number to increase in the future. As the province grows in size, we will see much more interest in what Alberta has to offer in terms of trade and investment.

head:

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in just a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Sara Renner  
Thomas Grandi**

**Mrs. Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today and recognize an extraordinary couple from the constituency of Banff-Cochrane. Canmore's Sara Renner and Thomas Grandi are both remarkable athletes, and this past ski season they proved to be among the best not only in Canada but in the world in each of their respective sports.

Sara, a two-time Olympian and Canadian cross-country skiing veteran, excelled in both distance and sprint events and started the season by claiming a gold medal at the Haywood Canada Cup pursuit race in Canmore. Thomas also had an incredible season as a giant slalom skier and captured World Cup gold medals not once but twice this year, in Italy and Austria. His win in Italy gave Canada its first victory in 10 years and was the first in the discipline by a Canadian male in the 38-year history of the World Cup circuit. Following on her husband's successes, Sara went on to win a bronze medal at the world sprint event in Germany, earning Canada's first-ever medal at the world Nordic ski championships.

What a breakthrough season for both: Sara's first world podium and Thomas's first two World Cup wins. The excitement back home after each of these wins was immediate and contagious.

Besides being inspirational to Albertans young and old with their athletic endeavours, Sara and Thomas are also inspirational with their community work. In fact, Sara donated all of the prize money she earned at the Canada Cup towards relief efforts for victims of the tsunami tragedy in south Asia.

Mr. Speaker, Sara and Thomas are great role models for our youth, wonderful ambassadors for our province, and true heroes to the Bow Valley residents. Please join me in congratulating these two exceptional athletes and individuals and wishing them well as they train for the upcoming season, World Cups, and 2006 Olympics.

Thank you.

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

### Legislature Committees Structure

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we look back into the last century and celebrate Alberta's history, we must look at the importance that most of the governments in our history placed on select standing committees. There were many established for different areas of policy. Indeed, in the first days of this session we paid homage in this Assembly to former members who had passed on in the last year. In our dedications to these former members, including many who were in opposition at their time of service, we remembered their membership on standing committees like Agriculture, Education, and Railways, Telephones, and Irrigation.

The governments of those days valued contributions from all viewpoints even if they didn't agree with them and obviously considered multiparty committees as fundamental to democracy. Indeed, that remains the practice on much of this continent.

I will draw attention to the process in British Columbia. The Legislature of B.C. website clearly states that these types of committees are creatures of the House. There, they do not give these over to one-party caucus committees. These committees are comprised strictly of members of the Legislature, usually excluding the Premier and other cabinet ministers, and the membership mirrors as closely as possible party representation in the Legislative Assembly.

Some of the committees there are Health, Education, finance, and other committees. In these committees matters are allowed a more detailed and thorough examination than in the larger, more formal environment of the House. Opposition involvement ensures as full a spectrum of analysis as possible.

I submit that this process is responsible, representative, and speaks to the fundamental operation of this democratic Assembly and must be reinstated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Project Discovery

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. February 13, 1947, was a day that transformed Alberta and propelled our great province into the unimagined prosperity that we enjoy today. Today I rise to recognize Project Discovery, an expansion to the Leduc No. 1 oil interpretive centre, which is located one kilometre south of the town of Devon at the site of the Leduc No. 1 discovery well.

The Leduc/Devon Oilfield Historical Society, which is a partnership supported by the town of Devon, Leduc county, and the city of Leduc as well as industry and a host of volunteers, built an interpretive centre to capture the history of energy development in Alberta. The centre has evolved from its humble beginnings, and now, with \$1 million in funding from the Alberta lottery fund, a planned expansion called Project Discovery will be completed to highlight the ongoing evolution of the energy industry. This expansion will assist in increasing our opportunity to educate the public in understanding the value of Alberta's energy industry to the province and to all Albertans. As well, the expansion will be a great addition to the outstanding tourist attractions in the area, enhancing and promoting the local economy.

I would also like to recognize some key individuals who were instrumental in developing and maintaining the interpretive centre: Dan Claypool, Gord McMillan, and Don Hunter. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, Don Hunter is the son of the Leduc No. 1 driller, Vern "Dry Hole" Hunter. Along with these individuals, this project could not have been accomplished without the support of the Alberta lottery fund.

Hats off to the members of the Leduc/Devon Oilfield Historical Society for their dedication and hard work in telling a great Alberta story. Thank you.

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

### Old Strathcona Foundation

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty years ago in my constituency an area known as Old Strathcona was plagued by urban decay. Historic buildings had been run down, and the neighbourhood had a terrible reputation across the city. On November 13, 1974, the Old Strathcona Foundation was incorporated to turn things

around. By the mid-1980s the foundation had begun to work with various partners to transform the neighbourhood into the vital and dynamic community we know and love today. They were overseeing the restoration of historic buildings and the development of a pedestrian-friendly retail district that is the envy of the communities across the city.

**2:40**

The foundation has also played an integral role in the development of Edmonton's famous Old Strathcona Farmers' Market, the Fringe festival, McIntyre park, End of Steel park, the Silly Summer Parade, the merchants' association, and the Whyte Avenue mural. I have a particular fondness for the Silly Summer Parade, Mr. Speaker, in which I have participated for a number of years. When else do I have the opportunity to masquerade as Jimi Hendrix and Elvis Presley?

I have been truly fortunate to have the Old Strathcona Foundation as neighbours to my constituency office. The staff and volunteers there have always been helpful in keeping me up to date with what's happening in the neighbourhood and have always met me with a smile and a warm greeting.

One staff member in particular stands out in my mind. Liz Iggulden, who is now retiring after 20 years' service to the foundation, has been a hard worker, dedicated community activist, and good friend. I want to thank Liz and the entire Old Strathcona Foundation for all they have done for the neighbourhood and the city.

I would ask my colleagues in this House to join with me to truly wish Liz all the best in what I know will be an active and enjoyable retirement. Thank you, Liz.

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

### National Wildlife Week

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. National Wildlife Week is being celebrated across Canada this week. Protecting Alberta's natural spaces for wildlife has been a priority for the past 100 years. Parks and other areas protected by law conserve important habitat for many threatened or endangered plant and animal species. Of this, more than 12,000 square kilometres protect core woodland caribou habitat.

Hay-Zama Lakes wild-land provincial park is another protected area that conserves important habitat for the migrating waterfowl. During the fall migration 130,000 lesser snow geese, 47,000 Canada geese, and 200,000 ducks have been recorded at this site.

I would like to recognize all the dedicated provincial government staff who do an outstanding job of managing Alberta's lands, forests, fish, wildlife, and parks and protected areas. Natural resource management requires a balanced approach to ensure all values and uses are considered, including economic, environmental, and social values.

Over our last century science and technology have come a long ways, and at every stage Alberta has continued to use the best and latest science in managing our natural resources. Our centennial year brings to mind the fact that Alberta has been committed to managing our resources for the long-term benefits of Albertans.

Albertans have demonstrated their strong support over the years. It is the Alberta way to emphasize a collaborative approach to protecting and managing our natural resources. Albertans have worked co-operatively to protect and preserve wildlife. Alberta is indeed fortunate to have many residents who serve as co-stewards for the sustainability of our wildlife.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night  
East Coulee Spring Festival**

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently my wife, Heather, and I had the privilege of attending two cultural events, one in an urban setting and the other in a rural.

On Monday, March 28, we had the privilege of attending Alberta's Centennial Multicultural Gala Night at the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Calgary. I wish to recognize in particular the efforts of the India Canada Association, the Southern Alberta Heritage Language Foundation, and the Calgary Federation of Filipino Associations for organizing such a colourful and entertaining evening of awe-inspiring cultural music and dance. The program included performances from talented artists of various ages from the Aboriginal, Ukrainian, Irish, East Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Colombian, Tibetan, and African communities.

It is through important events such as this that Albertans who have originated from across the globe can come together and share their rich heritage and traditions and celebrate the cultural diversity that contributes to the character of our great province. Congratulations to all the hard-working, dedicated organizers, volunteers, and performers on a tremendously successful event showcasing Calgary's vibrant cultural kaleidoscope.

This past weekend we once again had the pleasure of attending the annual spring festival in East Coulee, which is just east of Drumheller. East Coulee was once a thriving coal mining town, which had a population of over 3,000 people, primarily employed by the Atlas coal mine. The approximately 200 remaining residents, led by a variety of dedicated local volunteers including Marcel and Bev Deschenes, Antonia and Andy DeJong, Linda and Robin Digby, Vivian Deitz, Gillian Murray, and Lynn Van Kleef to name a few, organized this year's musical event. Numerous talented musicians from throughout Alberta volunteered their time to raise funds for the East Coulee school museum and the Atlas mine wash house. Alberta author Lawrence Christmas through his book *CoalDust Grins*, which immortalized the history of coal mining immigrants who came to Canada, serves as an inspiration for this annual event.

Among the talented local performers was the band Willow Creek, led by Don Howard. The show stealers, however, were five-year-old Tyler Ferguson, eight-year-old Jordan Ferguson, six-year-old Rachel Robinson, eight-year-old Jesse Robinson, and six-year-old Kaylie Peak. Three generations of the Peak family were represented, including Kaylie's mom, Velma Peak, and her granddad, Ed Peak.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Vignettes from Alberta's History**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, by way of an historical vignette today I'm going to tell you something that's really, really odd, and it may be of particular interest to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. On this day in 1898 a sailor by the name of Charles Walker, who was a mate on a sailing ship, the *Orca*, arrived at what was then known as the Saddle Lake Indian reserve, which is located near St. Paul, after a walk of 2,500 miles to report the loss of his ship on the west coast of British Columbia.

head:

**Presenting Petitions**

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present a petition from good Albertans from the communities of

Kikino, Enoch, Wetaskiwin, Morinville, Bowden, and Edmonton. It 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.

There are 102 on this petition.

head:

**Notices of Motions**

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 12 through 23.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 14 through 26 inclusive, noting, of course, that 14 through 18 inclusive were left over from this previous Monday.

head:

**Introduction of Bills**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

**Bill 37**

**Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005**

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I request leave on behalf of the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance to introduce Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Bill 37 amends the Fiscal Responsibility Act so that debt retirement funds can only be used for that purpose and to increase the nonrenewable resource revenue that can be used for budget purposes from \$4 billion up to \$4.74 billion. This bill also amends the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act, and the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act to clarify the transfer of money into these particular funds.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

head: 2:50

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the report completed by the internationally recognized London Economics group which concludes that Alberta's move to an open, competitive electricity market puts the province in an enviable position amongst the provinces. The report, commissioned by the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta, was undertaken to review residential electricity rates across Canada while taking into account real factors, not considering comparisons by other organizations.

The price analysis suggests that the rates in other provinces would be 25 to 30 per cent higher if consumers were charged the full value of electricity they use and that the rates in those provinces can be expected to rise much more rapidly than those in Alberta over the next decade.

Copies of the report will now be tabled. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today before the House and table five copies of the Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board annual report for 2004.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings, and I'm going to anxiously await the chance to read the hon. Minister of Energy's tabling. My first tabling is a letter I wrote on Friday, April 8, 2005, to the hon. Minister of Education. This is a letter indicating that the closure process for the Edmonton public schools is not in accordance with the closure of schools regulation 238-97, consolidated up to 170/2004.

The second tabling I have is a parent- and community-based solution to maintain the long-term viability of Strathearn school. It's a report to the Edmonton public school board of trustees. It's prepared by the Strathearn Community School Parent Advisory Association, and it is written by Deanna Dixon, president of the Strathearn Community School Parent Advisory Association.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have seven letters to table today from deeply concerned representatives of a variety of hunting and conservation organizations who call upon the government to re-evaluate its position on the interim Métis harvesting agreement, which they feel far exceeds the points of the Powley case and does not take the best interests of Alberta's wildlife into account.

The first two are from Tom Foss of the Alberta Bowhunters Association, followed by letters from Dr. Gerrow of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Brian Rufange of the Spruce Grove Fish & Game Association, Kevin Williams of World Class Alberta Trophy Outfitters Ltd., Pete Mountain of the Alberta chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, and, lastly, Ron Watt of the Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table an op-ed piece written by Ricardo Acuna and Diana Gibson of the Parkland Institute. The piece argues that the budget tabled yesterday by this government does nothing to promote a sustainable and equitable Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Forsyth, Minister of Children's Services: pursuant to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act the Social Care Facilities Review Committee annual report 2003-04.

head: **Projected Government Business**

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Subject to Standing Order 7(5) I would ask the Government House Leader to please share the projected government business for the week of April 18 to 21.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Zwodzdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to do that. On Monday, April 18, in the afternoon we will begin with private members' business, including Written Questions and Motions for Returns, followed by Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders. On Monday evening at 8 we'll continue with private members' business. At 9 p.m. we will go to Committee of Supply, which will be the department of aboriginal affairs – that's day 2 of 24 – followed by second reading of Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 35, Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005; and Bill 39, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005; and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday afternoon in Committee of Supply we will review the Department of Advanced Education as day 3 of 24. At 8 p.m. we will go to Committee of Supply and look after Seniors, followed at 10 p.m. by Committee of the Whole on Bill 37, followed by second reading of Bill 35 and Bill 29, the anticipated Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005, and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday afternoon will be dedicated to Committee of Supply, the Department of Energy. Wednesday evening at 8 will be Committee of Supply for Sustainable Resource Development. That would be day 6 of 24. At 10 p.m. we will proceed with third reading of Bill 37 and then with Committee of the Whole on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, April 21, in the afternoon Committee of Supply will deal with the Ministry of Finance, followed by third reading of Bill 37, and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**  
**Government Motions**  
**Provincial Fiscal Policies**

19. Mrs. McClellan moved:

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

[Adjourned debate April 12: Dr. Taft]

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to rise to reply to the budget as presented by the Minister of Finance yesterday and, frankly, to take an opportunity to present some of our own ideas for the budget.

I've come to think of Albertans as sitting on this amazing treasure chest of wealth quite unprecedented or unparalleled in the world. I've often said – and I'll keep saying it over and over – that this is probably the most valuable piece of real estate per capita, certainly, on the entire planet. Nobody in this world has the opportunities that we have here.

A few weeks ago I was going through a list of the metropolitan areas in Canada and the United States with populations over a

million people, and there are a total of 55 metropolitan areas in Canada and the U.S. with populations over a million. The very, very bottom of this list, the last one to make it on, is Edmonton, and the second-last is Calgary. So we have the two smallest populations of any cities in North America over a million; we just make it over that threshold. I studied the list for a while, and I realized that if you were to take every single Albertan and put them into one city, people from Rainbow Lake and Fort Chip and Elkwater and Milk River and everywhere in between including our big cities of Calgary and Edmonton and they were all in one city, we would only rank number 18 of cities in North America. That helps put it in perspective.

If you look at North America, we have a province here with a total population roughly equivalent to metro Seattle, yet we sit here on such wealth. We sit here with huge forests, a strong agricultural sector – struggling now but still strong, fundamentally – tourism, a hard-working, well-educated workforce. We live in peace and security next to the richest market in the world, the United States, and on top of all of that there are petroleum reserves that rival Saudi Arabia's, all of that divided among a population about the size equivalent to greater Seattle. Unbelievable opportunity.

It's our responsibility as legislators to make the most out of that opportunity, to recognize it for what it is and to steward it for future generations. I didn't feel or see that kind of spirit in yesterday's budget, although I'm sure the intent is good.

Some of the things we would do if it was our opportunity to present a budget, Mr. Speaker. First of all, put forward a surplus policy, put it down in black and white, and commit to it over the long term. Build up the heritage trust fund by taking 35 per cent of all surpluses and putting them into the heritage fund without capping it. Set up a second endowment fund and put 35 per cent of all budget surpluses into that and dedicate that to building the best postsecondary education system we can imagine. There's no reason that in this province we can't have the best technical institutes and colleges and universities in the country and, indeed, on the continent. Take another 25 per cent and put it into a capital account to address infrastructure. Finally, recognize the role and the importance of the arts and humanities to a fruitful and rewarding life, putting 5 per cent of surpluses into an endowment fund for the humanities, social sciences, and arts up to \$500 million. I didn't see any sense of that plan in yesterday's budget, Mr. Speaker.

**3:00**

On the health care front. Health care consistently is the first concern of Albertans and of Canadians. What we would aim to achieve in our budget would be a high-quality, sustainable public health care system based on bold innovation and steady management within a public framework. An accessible health care system is one of the top priorities for the Liberal opposition. We would like to bring in, we would propose to bring in a more extensive public pharmacare program, increase the number of residency training positions, proceed decisively with the new southeast Calgary hospital, eliminate health care premiums, and then some bold innovations because this isn't all about treating sick people. In fact, we need more and more to emphasize how to keep people healthy. So you would have seen a Liberal government here support a much stricter province-wide smoking ban in the workplace and taking tobacco tax revenues and putting them into a wellness fund to support building a healthier society.

We'd establish an independent health auditor to ensure that our health care system delivers value for money, a health auditor focused on asking the questions: what is the best way to deliver orthopaedic surgery or the best way to deliver cataract surgery or long-term care services, taking it and giving it a sound basis of a value-for-money

audit in our health care system? Frankly, we would require all major policies and funding decisions to undergo a health impact assessment to help us identify and plan for all major decisions of the government and understand their impact on our health care system.

We'd invest heavily and boldly in our education system, right from kindergarten to postgraduate studies. We'd introduce optional junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, with a special emphasis on children at risk. We'd follow the recommendations of the Learning Commission and decrease class sizes, eliminate the need for school fees for education basics, and return to the day when we and pretty well all MLAs went to school, where school fees were to cover extras like field trips, not to cover some of the basics. We'd plan for an orderly renewal of existing school buildings, something that we don't see at all in the current budget, and support community schools.

Of course, we would establish, as I've already said, an endowment fund for postsecondary education with the vision of making the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Athabasca University, and all the colleges and technical institutes rank among the very best in the country.

The municipalities would also get particular attention in our budget. One of our first priorities would be to address infrastructure problems by providing \$3 billion to municipalities to address infrastructure needs, and I was glad to see that in yesterday's budget. We'd like to develop a three-year rolling grant funding framework to allow municipalities to plan their infrastructure well in advance so that we don't have this year-to-year, on-again, off-again game of unstable funding for municipalities. I think that, very importantly, we'd like to increase the local autonomy and create some new tax room for municipalities.

The environment also consistently ranks as a top priority for Albertans. We need to be protecting Alberta's natural resources, and that's of all kinds: water, petroleum, coal, wildlife, land, and landscapes. Some of the measures we would introduce include establishing an arm's-length standing committee to develop a province-wide water management strategy, implementing strategies to protect Alberta's remaining wetlands, reviewing water-intensive industries to ensure that they're using the best available technologies. I suspect there are dramatic improvements to be made if we really put our spirit into it. We'd phase out, more ambitiously than is currently proposed, the use of fresh water for oil well injections, and we would – we would – prohibit bulk water sales of Alberta water.

There are other things we'd like to do to build forward on our environment: supporting aggressive research into renewable energy sources – wind, biomass, solar energy – supporting the growth of environmental technology companies; helping to diversify the economy as well as protecting the environment. We'd like to create a revolving fund for energy efficiency to help Albertans retrofit their homes, increase their energy efficiency; protect Alberta parks and special places from environmental damage; and halt the current plan to sell off public lands. We'd design a comprehensive land use policy for all public lands in Alberta based on principles of conservation biology, and we'd fund and publicly share a comprehensive scientific study to determine the impact of sour gas flaring on human and animal health.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of our ideas that we'd like to bring forward in a budget. We'd like to see some bold and dramatic plans here. What I would love to see from any government here and any party would be statements like: making Alberta's universities the best in the country or making Alberta the most energy-efficient jurisdiction in Canada or even in the world within a decade or making Alberta's population the healthiest population in the world.

Those are the kinds of lofty goals and ambitions that motivate and drive Albertans, and those are failing us here.

The thing about approaching these in a comprehensive manner, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not either/or. It's not that we invest in health at the expense of education or invest in education at the expense of protecting the environment or invest in the environment at the expense of our cities. Indeed, a comprehensive plan addressing all of these would create a virtuous circle in which higher education levels contribute to better health, stronger communities contribute to better health and a healthier environment, a healthier, cleaner environment creates a healthier population, and on and on, so we can have benefits across the board. This is not an either/or proposition. This is a way of building a strong, robust, well-educated, healthy, coherent community in Alberta for the future.

That's the kind of vision I would like to see and that my colleagues in the Liberal caucus, I think, have for Alberta. There were baby steps taken in that direction in yesterday's budget, but I'd like now, Mr. Speaker, to raise some of the specifics in response to the budget presented yesterday.

There is no long-term plan to seize Alberta's opportunity. We are on the cusp, maybe on the apex of remarkable opportunity here, and it feels like we're letting it slip through our hands. It really does. There are some good initiatives in the budget, and we're happy that some of our ideas have been borrowed and adapted. That's fine. We're all here, ultimately, to advance the quality of public life in this province, I'm sure.

We're pleased to see issues or ideas like increases to AISH levels appearing – and we look forward to the announcement tomorrow on the details – increases in health spending, inflation-proofing the heritage fund, and investing in municipal infrastructure. Those are all good ideas, but they are not enough on their own to inspire confidence. This feels – and I give credit for a good line to the New Democrats – like we're sleepwalking into the next century with this budget.

**Mr. Mason:** Now I have to change my speech.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, you can borrow from us.

My disappointments with the budget. One of them, Mr. Speaker, was the postsecondary education endowment fund. I was really looking forward to something clear and dramatic there, something that would really make a difference, and I was, I must say, sorely disappointed. That was my greatest disappointment yesterday.

The headlines for weeks, perhaps months even, had trumpeted a \$3 billion postsecondary endowment fund, and what was delivered was a payment, a down payment, of a quarter of \$1 billion, that when the numbers are crunched will produce \$11 million a year for the entire postsecondary education system, Mr. Speaker. Let's put that in perspective. That would not have covered the increase in the electricity bill faced by the University of Alberta two years ago, not the whole bill but even the increase. That wouldn't have covered the increase in their power bill, much less have made a significant contribution to the rise of quality across the postsecondary education system. That was a real disappointment.

**3:10**

To make matters worse, as we read the budget documents – and I hope we're corrected – the government actually cut the capital budget, indeed slashed the budget for capital spending for postsecondary institutions in half. So we're left wondering: where will institutions house those 15,000 promised new spaces in the postsecondary system within the next three years? Are those real spaces, Mr. Speaker? We're left wondering if they aren't virtual

spaces, if we're not actually going to see home offices and base-ments counted as spaces because students are having to log on and learn through the Internet instead of getting a direct, in-place education at a campus somewhere.

So there were some real disappointments with postsecondary education, and as I say, I hope that as we go through the numbers and the details, we're proven wrong on those, but so far it doesn't deliver what it ought to deliver, Mr. Speaker.

On the K to 12 education side clearly there were some things to be pleased about, depending on how the details work out. If it's actually a net gain of 435 new teachers this year and another 580 the next year, it's a good thing, clearly, as long as it's a net gain.

Reducing class sizes so our kids have space to learn in is something we've supported, and aiming at achieving the objectives of the Learning Commission is commendable. We support that, and we'll work with the government to do that.

But infrastructure spending, Mr. Speaker, as we read the figures, is down for schools \$20 million from last year. It doesn't add up. Where are these teachers going to go? Where are the students going to go? How are we going to reduce classroom sizes when we're not investing in school infrastructure?

I can tell you from my constituency that schools are in rough shape. I tour all the schools of my constituency, and I still remember – and I don't think this has been corrected yet – going through one of the schools. The ceiling in the gym was leaking. I checked the emergency exit in the gym in an elementary school, and the door frame was so rotten that I could pick the wood frame apart with my fingernails. There's another school in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, where the cracks in the walls are so extensive and so wide that I can run a pen through them for metres and metres at a time. How are we going to correct that when our infrastructure investment in schools is actually dropping? It's cold comfort to parents and students and teachers.

So that's a concern, as is the pressure to close schools when, indeed, we should be converting these to community schools and looking at creative solutions to these issues and remembering that those schools 10 years from now might be the heart of a rejuvenated community and might actually play a crucial role in halting the urban sprawl when people want to move back into the central part of the city and they're attracted there because there's a school in the neighbourhood. If we've closed those schools or sold them off, what have we done? We've made a long-term mistake for a short-term gain. No addressing of that issue that I saw at all in yesterday's budget.

Health and Wellness. The first impressions look good. Base operating grants to health authorities are going to increase. Funding for the Alberta Cancer Board looks like it's up about 25 per cent, and that's good. Nobody is going to argue with that. It's a good move. Unfortunately, the demand is there, but that's the reality of a growing population.

It also suggests to me, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be looking at the impact of environmental factors on the rise of cancer, and we actually need to get more serious about things like smoking bans. You can see this strange and ironic paradox in this Assembly being played out, where we have a 25 per cent increase in funding for the Cancer Board, and we don't have the guts to come in with a province-wide workplace smoking ban. It's a sad commentary on our mentality in this Assembly.

AADAC funding is up 12 per cent. I guess if we need it, we need it. Clearly, as we will be debating, perhaps, later this afternoon, there's a need for treatment facilities for drug addicts: crystal meth and other drugs. But we also need to take a long-term view and recognize the importance that strong communities and excellent

schools play in keeping kids from needing detox centres and treatment services because when those kids end up as addicts, it's not just a breakdown of a family, and it's not just because they're weak individuals; it's also a breakdown of a community. We need to pay attention to the strength of our communities.

Calgary and Edmonton, as I've often said in this Assembly, have the most overcrowded hospitals in the country, so we're glad to see some action, some funding available to allow things like the ambulatory care centre to move forward in Edmonton and apparently – apparently – a solid commitment to the southeast Calgary hospital. I just hope it's delivered. I hope it comes through. I hope it's done properly and efficiently as a public hospital because I can warn this Assembly right now – mark my words – that if we end up in a P3 for the southeast Calgary hospital, we will lose control of that budget just like we did with the Calgary courthouse, and we will pay over and over and over for that facility.

As I mentioned near the beginning of my comments, we're delighted that the funding for AISH is being increased by \$80 million and look forward tomorrow to the announcement that we hope will see the monthly maximum benefits for AISH recipients addressed and perhaps some of the other issues around clawbacks of the AISH benefits addressed as well.

We're pleased that there's over \$7 million provided to help seniors cover increases to the costs of school property tax. Of course, we would have liked to have seen a cap put on the total provincial take from the education portion of the property tax so that there's more room for municipalities if they need that tax room or that seniors or all families and all homeowners in this province can get a little bit of a tax break there. Funding for housing under Alberta Seniors goes up, I think, some \$43 million, and that's great. We've got to look after our people.

Housing is crucial. Affordable housing is important. As we see the cost of housing in this province climb dramatically, we're going to have to pay more and more attention to this. The cost of housing in Fort McMurray is out of the reach of far too many people, and frankly the same thing is happening in Calgary. I heard a story two or three days ago about a house being listed in Calgary at, I think it was, \$319,000 and being bid up and finally selling at \$350,000 or \$360,000. The cost of housing in Calgary is getting out of reach of too many people, so we're going to need to pay attention to that.

Minimum wage doesn't have to be addressed through the budget. It would be nice to see it addressed clearly and firmly somewhere in some mechanism before this session is over. It links back, Mr. Speaker, to that issue of the virtuous circle I addressed. One of the clearest indicators of health problems and strongest predictors of health problems is poverty. If we help people who are struggling to get by – you don't have to give them a handout, but let's give them a fair chance – we will see in the long term demands on the health care system diminish. We'll see happier families and healthier communities and, frankly, a stronger society. So I would have liked to have seen some addressing of the minimum wage. Maybe that awaits later legislation.

3:20

There's no clear plan for the surplus. There's been some sort of sketching out of what we might see. It's interesting that just a few minutes ago a bill was given first reading, I think Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, which allows, as I'm reading it, as I understand it, the government to increase the amount of revenue it spends from nonrenewable resource revenues, and I'm not convinced that's a wise step for us to take. Is that really a sustainable policy to bring in, or are we losing discipline in our long-term control of our resources? We have to remember that every

\$4.75 billion we spend out of the nonrenewable resource revenues is gone forever. We could have an interesting debate on that.

Beyond that, what other plans are there in here for the surplus? Well, we'll see how the postsecondary endowment fund plays out, that little down payment that's going to produce \$11 million a year that I hope gets augmented rapidly, but there's no clear evidence that that's going to happen. I hope we pay serious attention to diversifying our economy away from our dependence on petroleum.

There's no mention in here of investing in our democratic deficit and investing in overcoming our democratic deficit, which I'd very much like to see. I'd like to have seen funds set aside to launch a citizen's assembly on electoral reform. I'd like to have seen support in here for a lobbyist registry. I'd like to have seen some of the technicalities addressed of how we handle an account for our money such as replacing the current government-only accounting principles with generally accepted accounting principles, which is, frankly, a recommendation that's been made by the Auditor General for years and years.

Of course, there are a few things that are downright irritating in here. Once again the horse-racing industry is receiving \$45 million, and I know that draws a reaction from some members of this Assembly, but why? Why, Mr. Speaker, are we supporting the horse-racing industry? Why not some other industry? Why any industry at all? If this is a government that wants out of the business of business, why are we still in the business of horse racing? What is the exit plan? This subsidy has actually increased year after year, and it's well over \$100 million in the last three or four years. Where does this end? Forty-five million dollars is more than the new money budgeted to hire police officers. It's more than what's given to seniors to provide dental and optical assistance. What's the priority here? When do we give the human race some priority over the horse race?

**Mr. Mason:** Good line.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you. You can use it in yours, hon. leader.

We're pleased to see the investment in municipalities, in particular the infrastructure issues that the municipalities face. I think some exciting leadership is going to emerge in local government in Calgary and Edmonton and elsewhere to really turn our cities into jewels, globally, among cities, not to take their place among the list of, you know, the huge cities, the Tokyos and New Yorks and Londons of the world, but to stand proudly on a list that might include Geneva or Zurich or Austin or Helsinki, to have Calgary and Edmonton recognized globally on that same list. We're not there yet, but we could get there. Let's try. Let's work on that.

Environment consistently ranks as a top priority for Albertans. There was some debate about that earlier today, Mr. Speaker, and there will be more. I don't see enough in here about the environment. We'll see if there's actual funding in here for increasing the number of fish and wildlife officers and other initiatives to protect the environment. Let's hope that there is. We'll see how the financing and support for the Water for Life strategy really plays out.

We'll see what efforts, if any, and what resources, if any, are committed to helping Alberta address the issues of global warming because, frankly and clearly, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Liberal caucus accepts the signs of global warming. We recognize the need that something is going to have to be done, and it's going to have to be done boldly. It could be done. We could be leaders. We could take this problem and say, "This is not a problem; this is an opportunity." If we deal with this opportunity properly, 10 years from now people from around the world could be coming to Alberta to learn

how to live with a lighter impact on their environment, how to generate power without burning so much fossil fuel, how to insulate their homes or how to design their buildings so that they have absolutely minimal impact on the environment. We should be looking at that as an opportunity, not as an obstacle. I don't see any addressing of that issue in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

I applaud the government for adding up to 200 police officers to fight crime in Alberta. It's a positive step, ensuring a safe community. I also applaud the particular focus to fight organized crime because I do think that's a rising problem in our province. The commitment to increase our police services is long overdue.

Our parks and protected areas are suffering from neglect, and I don't think this budget comes close enough to providing the necessary funding to return those to the proud state they were once in and to understand that they're a key part of a tourism strategy, which is part of diversifying the economy.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. I'm concerned that this budget, frankly, doesn't do much at all for the arts community. It shows once again that this government does not value the contributions of the artistic community to the vibrancy of our province. It's particularly galling that we can find \$45 million for the horse-racing industry and so little for the arts community.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that there's going to be other special business and important debate today. I know that there will be day after day after day of debate, department by department, of the budget. I look forward to that. I will be following it, and we will all be following it closely.

I'd summarize by saying that this budget takes some good steps, but it's not clear what road map we're really following. There's no sense of saying: "Albertans, rise to the challenge. You have the opportunity here to be remarkable." There's no sense of that here, Mr. Speaker, so I'm disappointed. We'll debate it department by department.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members should be aware that under our Standing Orders the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has up to 90 minutes to participate, and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition left 57 minutes and 40 seconds on the table today.

Hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition, are you participating today?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, of course, get 15 minutes, and I intend to use all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in the debate on the budget for 2005. As I have said, and now I've been quoted by the hon. Leader of the Liberal Party, Budget 2005 can most aptly be described as sleepwalking into Alberta's second century. That's bad enough, but we all know that it's very dangerous to wake a sleepwalker, so we don't know what could happen then.

There's really so much more that this budget could have done for hard-working Alberta families. It could have scrapped health care premiums, which pose a particular burden on middle-class and low-income families. It could have scrapped the \$45 million annual subsidy for the horse-racing industry and got government out of being in the business of government, and then used the savings to cut tuition fees for postsecondary students by 10 per cent instead of providing students just a one-year stay of execution when it comes to tuition increases.

The budget could have kept the promise to implement full-day kindergarten and half-day junior kindergarten for disadvantaged

children. The government could have funded expanded kindergarten programs by scrapping the Alberta royalty tax credit, at a savings of almost \$100 million, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, Budget 2005 addresses none of these priorities.

3:30

Budget 2005 estimates a budget surplus of \$1.5 billion for this year, which is slightly more truthful than the \$300 million surplus claimed in last year's budget. We know, of course, Mr. Speaker, that last year's \$300 million surplus actually ballooned into a surplus of over \$4 billion.

Because the Tory government knows that they're underestimating the budget surplus to the tune of billions of dollars, instead of making appropriate provisions for expenditures in the budget, this government then gives itself permission to go on spending sprees later in the budget year, often after the ink has barely dried. Instead of properly budgeting up front, the government likes to throw money at problems in an unplanned way.

You know, the lowballing of budget surpluses has been a problem, Mr. Speaker, because the government quite consciously uses estimates for the price of gas and oil that are significantly lower than what they traditionally will be. Thus, instead of accurately budgeting the finances of the province, we get into the situation where we are used to having so-called unplanned or unanticipated surpluses. It's this, I think, that we would like to focus on a little bit.

The government should use accurate estimates for the price of natural resources and accurately forecast its revenues and its expenditures instead of using unbudgeted surpluses to fund things like the postsecondary education endowment. I think that the problem here is that we've opposed this approach of unbudgeted surpluses in the past, but now with this proposal, which the government has lifted from the Liberal Party's campaign book, they are institutionalizing the use of unbudgeted surpluses to finance ongoing government expenditures.

We think that that's a bad approach, Mr. Speaker. We disagree with it. By all means, we should put more money into postsecondary education, but we should not be creating the endowment fund from unbudgeted surpluses, as the Liberal proposal suggests and which the government has adopted. It should be budgeted money that goes into postsecondary education. So, by all means, let's spend a lot more money there because I think it is a good priority, but the approach is a bad one. I think that if the government is going to steal ideas from the Liberals, they should at least steal some of their good ones.

Mr. Speaker, this is a less than honest approach to government budgeting, particularly if infrastructure is taken into account. We think that it should be a priority, and it should be included in its entirety in the budget of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation rather than being doled out from the so-called sustainability fund at the whim of the Conservative government to meet their political needs.

Speaking of infrastructure, the monies being budgeted up front in Budget 2005 are actually quite disappointing. In fact, the capital plan outlined on page 46 of the budget's Fiscal Plan shows that while infrastructure transfers to municipalities are going up, capital investment in hospitals, schools, and postsecondary facilities is actually going down. In 2005-06, for example, capital funding for schools is actually 10 per cent lower than in last year's budget. The postsecondary sector fares even worse, with needed capital investment down more than 50 per cent compared to last year's budget. When it comes to health care facilities, capital investment is down some 30 per cent compared to what was actually spent last year.

Increased investment in municipal infrastructure is badly needed



and will help our municipalities begin to put a dent in their infrastructure deficits, but we should not be paying for it at the expense of infrastructure investments that are badly needed in other areas like schools, hospitals, and universities.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are crumbling schools across this province. We know that one of the things that's leading to the closure of inner-city schools is just the cost of catching up on their maintenance. It's time the government had a systematic plan to restore and protect these valuable community resources and to work with municipalities to revitalize the inner-city communities so that they aren't faced with a declining enrolment. We should be seeing these older schools as badly needed assets for our communities rather than as something that has to be closed before new schools can be constructed.

Mr. Speaker, if you're a parent and your child's school is facing closure, this budget will not help you. If you're a patient waiting for a hospital bed to open up so you can have needed surgery, this budget will not help you either.

I'd like to highlight another example of bad budgeting in this year's budget; namely, the \$55 million provided to municipalities for ambulance services. This government knows, based on documents provided by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, that it's at least \$12 million short, but instead of adding this shortfall to the budget, the Minister of Health and Wellness has tried to deflect the blame onto municipalities rather than putting the blame where it belongs, and that's with this Conservative government and its botched approach to ambulance transfer.

I must say that the NDP opposition is pleased that there were no further reductions in the general corporate tax rate. In last year's budget the NDP opposition stood alone in this Assembly to oppose the 9 per cent cut in the tax rate for larger corporations, from 12 and a half to 11 and a half per cent. This corporate tax rate was supported by the other parties in this Assembly, and we're pleased that the opposition that we have raised to this ongoing attempt to cut corporate taxes has succeeded again in preventing this measure from being introduced in this budget. Alberta's corporate tax rates are already by far the lowest of any province.

While I'm pleased that there were no further corporate tax cuts in this budget, I am concerned that the government still has not backed away from its eventual goal of cutting corporate taxes by another 30 per cent, all the way down to 8 per cent. The NDP opposition will keep up the pressure to ensure that the corporate sector pays its fair share for public investment in our schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, investments from which they are among the greatest beneficiaries.

Yet we do favour some tax reductions, Mr. Speaker. We favour a reduction in the tax burden for those for whom it truly is a burden, and that is for low- and middle-income families. Instead of cutting health care premiums and putting \$1,056 in the pocket of each and every hard-working Alberta family, the government is choosing to rack up a budget surplus of at least \$1.5 billion, and we know from previous experience that it's going to be a lot higher than that. Even going by the government's own lowballed revenue forecasts, the government could scrap health care premiums immediately and still end up with a sizable budget surplus of at least \$650 million. Why they don't do that is beyond me.

The refusal of the government to give hard-working middle-income Albertans a meaningful tax break means that they will pay significantly more in combined personal income and health premium taxes than if they lived in either British Columbia or Ontario. By the government's own figures on page 140 of the budget's fiscal plan, an Alberta family making \$100,000 per year will pay \$844 more in combined personal and health premium taxes than the same family

with the same income in the province of Ontario. Even worse, an Alberta family of four making \$60,000 per year will pay \$1,057 more in income and health premium taxes than the same family in Ontario.

On school property taxes this is the fourth budget in a row where the government is breaking a promise made in the 2001 budget to freeze school property tax revenues at a constant \$1.2 billion. In fact, when you cut through all the government's spin and talk about mill rates and look squarely at the bottom line, this is what you find, Mr. Speaker: next year Martha and Henry's school property taxes are once again going up, this time by 3.2 per cent. The government's take on school property taxes will increase to \$1.45 billion, or 20 per cent above the \$1.2 billion dollar property tax freeze promised in budget 2001.

As the government first announced on the eve of last year's election, Alberta seniors will get a provincial rebate to offset increases in their school property tax, but even there, Mr. Speaker, there's a catch. Seniors will only have their school taxes frozen if they remain in their existing home. This seniors-only freeze will cost the government a very modest \$7 million. By contrast, everyone else will have their school property taxes go up, and the government pockets \$40 million.

3:40

The same misplaced priorities as in previous budgets keep showing up; for example, the horse-racing subsidy is being kept at the same \$45 million level as last year. The multiyear horse-racing subsidy actually cost \$2 million more than a one-year tuition freeze for postsecondary students.

On K to 12 education, per-pupil grants to school boards are only going up by 2 and a half per cent, barely matching inflation. Moreover, the government is not expanding, only maintaining, funding for kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs. The government is breaking its promise by not providing funding for implementing the Learning Commission's recommendations to expand kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs for disadvantaged children, and I think that's a terrible shame, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of health care, the \$700 million funding increase does seem impressive at first blush. However, the government is not telling people that over half of this increase – that is, \$370 million – is being paid for by Ottawa as a result of increased health transfers resulting from last September's health accord. Moreover, the single biggest jump in spending is one of about 14 per cent in prescription drug costs for seniors and the poor. The government is keeping municipal ambulance funding transfers to municipalities at \$55 million and not funding the \$12 million shortfall identified by AUMA.

On policing, 200 new police officers is a good start. I'll recall the NDP election platform that would have put 500 police officers on the street in Alberta. I see that since we've been raising this, the Solicitor General has managed to squeeze a little bit more money out of the Treasury Board and bumped it up to 200. So that's a good start, Mr. Speaker, but I know that the people of this province want to have their municipalities properly funded for policing services. While these increases for mid-size communities are welcome, there is no increase in per capita police funding for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, where the need is very great.

While \$6 million for fighting organized crime and gangs with 60 dedicated officers is welcome, not all of this money should be going to the enforcement side alone, Mr. Speaker. We also need to make sure that some of the resources go into crime prevention; otherwise, the call on the government's budget for policing will go up and up.

In terms of the assured income for the severely handicapped,

actual monthly benefit levels are not going to be made public until tomorrow. Looking at the \$45 million being allocated to increased monthly benefit levels, it appears that it won't even be sufficient to keep up with increases in living costs over the past dozen years.

I'm running out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I want to say that with the billions of dollars of petrowealth flowing into provincial coffers, this budget could have accomplished so much more. It's easy to budget in Alberta given the money flowing in from our bounty of natural resources, but it's tougher to budget well, and it's tougher to budget for all the people. It's tougher to meet the needs of low- and middle-income people ahead of the wants of the wealthy and the corporate sector. In this critical sense this budget has failed abysmally.

With that, I will conclude and take my seat. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

The chair is prepared to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Pannu:** Mr. Speaker, I ask for the House's unanimous consent so that the leader of the NDP opposition could complete his comments given that there are no questions.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Well, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood suggested, at least in what I heard him saying, that he had concluded his remarks. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, before the question would even be raised, it sounds to me that unanimous consent would not be given, so I won't raise the question.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, shall I call the vote then, the question? I've been sitting here waiting for a minute. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you want . . .

**Dr. Pannu:** My request doesn't stand there anymore. I withdraw it. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. You had me nervous. I wasn't sure what the question was going to be.

I'd like to congratulate this Tory government on their budget and the excitement that they had in being able to do what they wanted to do and to express their view to Albertans. I'm very excited with the announcement of a health care facility that will be similar to that of the Mayo Clinic. That's exciting, and it will be a great addition to our province that we'll all truly benefit from.

I'm excited about the commitment, though at this time it seems more ceremonial than concrete, on the access to the future endowment fund. This has great potential. I hope that we will look at and want to have world-renowned institutions, like we will do with our health care system. I'm excited about the thousand teachers that have been announced being able to go out to help our youth, our future assets in this province. I was very pleased with the increased funding for law enforcement and the 200 new officers that are going out there. I commend them on all of these excellent programs. Albertans will truly benefit from that as we go into this new centennial century.

While this budget offers a peek into the future, it still leaves me

wondering what their 20-year plan really is. They say that they have one, but they just don't share it with us or the municipalities, and it makes it difficult to plan for the future. So I have a few areas of concern that I'd like to address today about the budget; namely, those concerning families and individuals, communities and small business, the role and size of the government, and the future and the direction of Alberta.

Help for families and individuals should be our first and highest priority. Past government surveys have shown that the number one desire of Albertans, after paying off the debt, was to reduce taxes. They're onerous and burdensome on the people of Alberta, and we've failed to look at that. But if we were to increase the basic personal exemption to \$20,000 in Alberta, we would not only be the best in Canada. We'd be a long way ahead. We need to leave the money in the pockets of the people, where it is needed and used best.

Tax cuts could have and should have been taken with the health care premium taxes for everyone. Property taxes and hidden taxes, fuel, and auto insurance are a few. Currently our Health and Wellness budget is huge. Our Premier is running out of time to present his much talked about reforms, and I have great concerns. Too often when it comes to essential services like health care and power, when we look at the reforms that he did in the power industry, it's been at the expense of small business and Albertans and didn't benefit them as a whole. I question his reforms, and I hope that he puts them and aims them toward the benefit of Albertans.

One of the things that I would like to see in their health care reforms is if funding was to follow the services provided. In my area, with the Chinook health region, they're desperately in need of an angioplasty unit, and if the funding was to actually follow the service, I know that we would have one down there. But right now, being micromanaged and being sent to two facilities, it's not serving the interests of Albertans.

The property 5 per cent education rollback is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. With the way our property assessments go forward, they actually have a net gain, I believe, of \$60 million, to the detriment of Albertans. Market value assessment is inflationary and adds to the problems. We only need to look back a few short years, 25 years, to see the real estate bubble of the past. We need to have a program where production value and purchase price must enter into the formula and have a higher weighting on the assessment to the economy. We could eliminate our health care premium tax, give a 50 per cent reduction in our education property tax, and increase our basic personal exemption tax to \$20,000 and still have a balanced budget.

We need to have more help for our communities and our businesses. We need to start downloading our surplus, not our debt, on our communities. We could do that. One example that I'll use is that currently we have the Community Development budget, \$247 million, that's been micromanaged, and applications were given and received, especially for this our centennial year. If this entire department was to be removed, we'd have \$247 million divided amongst Albertans, which would give a per capita of \$83 per person. The small town of Raymond, which I live close to and which was denied its centennial application, would receive a funding of \$250,000 for community development, and they would put that to very good use instead of being denied, which they were.

3:50

Communities with more than 5,000 people are very grateful for the increase in the funding from the policing dollars. This problem has been known for over a year. They've taken one step, but we need to take further steps. We need to have a higher graduated

program that will help benefit these areas. For the small town of Taber it currently costs their citizens \$150 per citizen for their policing costs. This will go forward to help them a great deal, but we need to take another step.

Businesses were promised a long time ago to cut the rate from 11.5 per cent to get it down to 8 per cent. This promise was also broken. We also have discussed in the province here a small business corporate tax threshold raised to \$500,000, which would truly give a boon to the economy.

The beef producers of Alberta need help protecting their assets. In the drought a few years ago the provincial and federal governments got together and realized that inventory replacement was hazardous to the industry because of the decimation to it, and programs like that could have taken place here and could have pushed the federal government to take that at no cost to the taxpayers. We need some incentives in the beef business.

This government understands the benefits to the oil business and has been very innovative and leading in its ideas there, yet there have been none presented in the beef industry. If we were to take the same principles that have been used in the oil and mineral exploration and put them into the beef industry and have those incentives – one would be as allowed in the tar sands – if there were no provincial taxes until the capital investment was recovered, it would truly be a boost.

This government could also take its surplus money and have a dollar-for-dollar loan match with a first mortgage fixed on that facility to be held by the province and, if in fact it was to go under, have it and sell it to recover the taxpayers' dollars. Such incentives would be a boost to the economy and help out the beef producers in this country.

Margaret Thatcher made a comment on the federal PCs, that they have become much more of an adjective and less of a verb. This government has grown at an unprecedented rate. We started at 17 ministries, as has been mentioned several times, and we've grown to 24. I imagine it will just be a short time before we reach Getty's full size of 25 ministries.

Efficiency would truly be increased if we were to eliminate the new ministry of restructuring and efficiency. As previously mentioned, the removal of Community Development and the downloading of those funds would truly benefit the local municipal governments. One Ministry of Education with deputy ministers would provide continuity and efficiency. With a good analysis we could easily reduce our numbers back to 16 ministers. That would truly serve Alberta with a lean, more productive, and efficient government.

The direction that we want to go in Alberta: we want a strong and diversified economy. We want to take those incentives – and we've seen how it boosts the oil industry – and give those incentives to other areas. If we were to have those capital expense programs where you don't have to pay until you've received your money back, then it would truly boost our economy in many areas, not just the oil and gas industry.

If this government would download the surplus to the people through tax cuts, it would not be compelled to grow and spend money. In 2000 their survey *The Future: Meeting Priorities, Sharing Benefits – It's Your Money*, Albertans were clear that after the debt was paid off, the surplus should go to tax cuts. If one-time spending is okay, why not one-time tax cuts? Or perhaps they could become permanent ones. But unless we try it, we don't know. The problem is that you say to the people, "It's your money," yet you keep it in your pocket, and you say that you know how to spend it better than the people do.

In conclusion, I guess I'd like to compare us to that of winning the lottery. We've been very blessed here, but that winning can be the beginning of our downfall. Too much money has often led to corruption, mismanagement, and flamboyant lifestyles. Can we sustain the huge influx of money without redistributing it and not cause inflation and possibly run into a brick wall in a few years?

The gap between our potential and our achievement grows with our added revenue. We are the envy of other provinces and even the world. It is my hope that we can strive to reach our ever-growing potential and not rest on our past achievements. We have seen not just good examples here in Alberta but excellent ones here in the province in the past. Wayne Gretzky was not just happy to be the top scorer; he shattered the previous records. The Sutter family was not just a good hockey family; they were outstanding. Let us follow our most recent example by not just saying that we're the best in the world. Let's clean the house, and let's score some perfect ends, like the Ferbey team just did.

It is not good enough to say that we are the best in the world. We need to rise to our full potential. We need to be hard-working, most innovative, and efficient. We need a formula that will restrain government growth, invest in our future and infrastructure and endowment funds, and truly put Alberta ahead of the race by reducing taxes and leaving as many dollars as possible in the pockets of the people to be used at their discretion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a most recent survey entitled *It's Your Money*, Albertans have clearly indicated that their priorities post debt payment were, one, health care; two, education; three, infrastructure; followed by environment. I'm wondering what version of *It's Your Money* this member is referring to in saying that Albertans' number one priority was tax cuts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member, if you wish.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you. I just need to pull it out. I was going by the 2000 version. Until we had all this money, the question was always asked: where did we want to spend it? It was the deficit. There was one in 2000 and one in '97. In '93 it was debt-reduction surveys. You've had several surveys. In all the previous ones, except for this last one, which to me was a push/pull – it wasn't an opinion one – we asked for tax reductions. It was always number two.

**The Speaker:** Others?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to participate.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would then move adjournment of debate on Government Motion 19.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could revert briefly to tablings.

**The Speaker:** I asked the House leader to do this, so please give him unanimous consent. Okay?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**  
(*reversion*)

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As offered by the Premier earlier today, I have two tablings on his behalf. The first is a tabling in which the quotes from Carl Amrhein, provost of the University of Alberta, and quotes from Dr. Harvey Weingarten, president of the University of Calgary, are contained. So there's that.

Also, a letter to the Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan, with respect to Alberta's and Saskatchewan's joint centennial celebration and, in particular, referencing tonight's hockey game, wherein a small wager is being placed and one Premier would wear the other Premier's jersey depending on the outcome of the game.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Red Deer-North, did you catch my eye?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. Following discussions between all sides of the House, I seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert to Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders to address my private member's bill, Bill 202, in Committee of the Whole. I understand that I will also need to seek unanimous consent, once back in Assembly, to have the bill proceed to third reading today should the Committee of the Whole approve Bill 202.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking for unanimous consent of the House to move to Bill 202.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North is seeking unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(3) to allow for the consideration of Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before I call on the Clerk, this is most unique. This, perhaps, has never happened before in the history of Alberta in 99 years, so it's a wonderful example of parliamentary co-operation, the highest form of democracy. I congratulate you all.

Now I'm going to ask the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to assume the chair in committee after the Clerk calls it.

head: **4:00 Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Haley in the chair]

**The Acting Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order, please.

**Bill 202  
Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act**

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Madam Chairman, I rise to introduce amendments to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, PCHAD. There are copies of the amended bill being circulated. Would you like me to wait until the members receive them?

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. member, could we wait for it to be circulated, please?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Yes.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. members, I believe that everybody has the amendment now. We will refer to it as amendment A1. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. Madam Chairman, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was created to protect Canadians from the potential misuse of power by the government. It was created to ensure that everybody, regardless of race, sex, or age, is treated with dignity and respect and to ensure that every Canadian is treated equally under the law. However, Charter rights are not absolute. The Charter and the courts both recognize that the government has the right to make laws for the good of most people, even if the law violates a Charter right or freedom. If a court decides that a law does this, the court will consider whether the violation can be justified under section 1. It says that Charter rights and freedoms are "subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be . . . justified in a free and democratic society." This is the test that is used by the courts.

Madam Chairman, the original wording of Bill 202, PCHAD, had two parts: a forced intervention, assessment, and detox and a 90-day mandatory treatment program. To avoid significant problems due to the Charter, I removed the 90-day treatment order from the bill at this time. This was because of a lack of specific, scientific evidence showing that mandatory treatment is more effective than voluntary treatment. Due to this lack of scientific evidence, in the opinion of several experts Bill 202, PCHAD, as it was originally written was likely to fail this Charter test.

I have looked for many hours to find scientific studies that prove that mandatory treatment is effective. Although it is difficult to find any saying this, it is also difficult to find any saying that it is ineffective. Furthermore, I have received many phone calls and e-mails from former youth addicts telling me that this measure will work. Addiction counsellors at the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre in Calgary and Bosco Homes east of Edmonton also state that mandatory treatment is effective. These people deal with addiction every day and are in a good position to make this assessment. In time the science will become more consistent with the anecdotal evidence. The scientists need to start asking the right questions.

After much research, however, I did find studies that show that mandatory treatment can be as effective as voluntary treatment. Furthermore, according to AADAC, an argument for compulsory treatment is that it provides better outcomes than no treatment, and it offers a viable method for retaining clients in treatment long enough for them to recognize that they have a problem and then to seek help. Additionally, AADAC admits that alcohol and drug treatment is more cost-effective to give someone than to incarcerate them. By shifting resources from the criminal justice system, additional funds could be made available to increase treatment capacity.

A critical aspect of PCHAD, Bill 202, is that it proposes to intervene and to treat children who are addicted to drugs before they become involved with the justice system. This would save the justice system and society even more costs associated with the problems that surround addiction and crime in the long run.

However, at the moment the difficulty and complexity in proving the effectiveness of a 90-day mandatory treatment order to the Supreme Court of Canada are the reasons for the amendments to this bill. The amendments, however, leave in place the first part of this

bill, which allows the addicted youth to be removed from the drug environment and be put into detox and assessment for five days. Five days has been deemed by the courts as a reasonable amount of time to hold someone against their will. Once the five days expire, we will ask the youth to consider voluntary addiction treatment, which could then potentially be enforced by contract if the youth agrees to a treatment program.

Madam Chairman, this is a forced intervention, with the option for the child to help themselves at the end. This intervention would be very helpful to parents, especially when they have the support of loved ones in trying to convince their child that they have a problem for which they need help. I believe that parents who need to help and protect their child will accept this tool for intervention even if it doesn't include further mandatory treatment.

Madam Chairman, this is far less than I had hoped for with this bill. However, mandatory treatment is a very complicated issue, and to withstand a Charter challenge, we will need more research and more consultation. The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act took two years to develop using experts from many fields, and it, too, had to be amended to avoid being deemed unconstitutional. More work is needed, and I intend to make sure that this work is done.

Madam Chairman, I have just explained to the members of this Assembly the main reason I had to amend Bill 202. Going back to the Charter, the Supreme Court of Canada stated that a limit on Charter rights is acceptable if the limit deals with a pressing and substantial social problem and the government's response to the problem is reasonable and justified. It's amazing that the Charter, which is supposed to protect everyone, can stop parents from keeping their children safe and protected from drug addiction.

According to AADAC's Alberta youth experience survey, uppers without a prescription and club drugs are some of the most frequently used drugs among youth. According to addicts of drugs such as crystal meth, one or two experimentations can quickly lead to a very dangerous addiction. My point, Madam Chairman, is that it would be very difficult to deny that we have a pressing and substantial social problem, and I believe that a five-day detox is a very reasonable response to this problem.

I also believe that having a forced treatment for 90 days is reasonable as well, but as mentioned, it would be difficult to have this withstand a Charter challenge without further research and review. Therefore, these amendments are important to ensure that this bill is strong. Although I am very disappointed with the changes that I've had to make to the bill, the intention remains the same, and that is to give parents a tool to intervene in a behaviour that is seriously harming their children.

People will be right when they say that five days is not enough time. In fact, five days is no time when it comes to dealing with the complex issue of addiction. In five days, however, the hope is that we could get the child away from the drug long enough to realize what a profoundly negative effect it is having on them, and this will hopefully help them to decide to go into voluntary treatment.

#### 4:10

As my colleague from Peace River stated during the debate on Bill 201, "sometimes when you go for all or nothing, you get nothing." Trying to pass this bill with a 90-day provision is an example of going for all, and I am not willing to settle for nothing. If we vote to accept these amendments, we will be voting to do something now, with the ability to build on it later.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure everyone that the purpose of these amendments is to give parents hope. The hope is that this bill will help parents to help their children recognize that they have

a problem, and that will go a long way in the first part of treatment.

Madam Chairman, the United Nations convention on the rights of the child is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. In fact, except for two countries it has been ratified by every other country in the world, including Canada. This declaration of rights of the child spells out the basic human rights for children everywhere. The universal rights state that children have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated, the right to have the best health possible and medical care, and the right to be given guidance by their parents and family. Most importantly, article 33 states that children have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs.

Many critics of this bill, including civil libertarians, argue that it will violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To these people I say that it does not violate the rights of the child. It upholds these rights. Parents have a duty to protect their children, and Bill 202 will give them an important tool to help them do so should a child become addicted to drugs.

I would like to thank all of the members of this Legislature for seeing the importance of this legislation and for helping me to get it through this House. I would also like to thank all the parents and the youth and others who have supported and encouraged me in fighting this cause. Finally, I would like to thank David Gillies for his help, his guidance, and his support. I would also like to thank Peter Pilarski, our researcher, who has dedicated much time and great effort to this bill. The support for this bill has been amazing and is a testament to people's belief that it's the right thing to do.

I urge all members of the House to support the amendments proposed for Bill 202. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The next speaker is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for a very tenacious approach. If I may say so to the member, I think that taking a bill that somebody believes in very strongly and pursuing it and doing everything you can to bring it forward bodes well. That's what an MLA should be doing, and I congratulate you for doing that. I think it's very important that we do that. As I say, tenacious to say the least, we can say about the member. But she believes passionately in this, and she's prepared to go the wall for it, and I again congratulate her for it.

I just want to add to what the member is saying, and I want to just very briefly talk about a case that came to my constituency office last week. I think the Member for Red Deer-North would be interested because it's some of the same sorts of situations that I know she's had to deal with, and it shows some of the problems, I believe.

Obviously I'm not going to use names here, but it is a 14-year-old child. April 1 the child ran away from home. April 3 the mother and aunt contacted Children's Services, who already had an open case with this particular child, and they refused to intervene because the child had not been gone for a normal length of time, because she had run away before. For the same reason the police refused to intervene. So you can imagine the frustration here.

They believe that she's probably on crystal meth. They're not sure, but the way they read about the symptoms and that – and here they are. Because she's a problem, she's running away all the time, they want to get there quickly. They contact Children's Services; there's nothing they can do. Then they contact the police, and they say – and so they're caught. I think that's the type of people that

you're talking about. What do we do? Finally, on their own the mother and an aunt found the child, on their own initiative.

They went down to West Edmonton Mall, and they found the child. As I said, they're worried that she may have been using crystal meth. She had the symptoms. They're also worried that she may be involved in prostitution because often the two go together. Children's Services still refused to intervene even after this message was relayed. They said that she had to – this is the term that the person said on the phone – hit rock bottom before they intervened. Well, being down at West Edmonton Mall and running away from home and the potential, at least, they think, that she's on drugs seems to me to be pretty rock bottom.

So they're very frustrated, but they kept bugging the police, and the police finally intervened on behalf of the parents and kept her in a hold cell at West Edmonton Mall. The police officers then found that no one agency could intervene on their behalf, not the crisis unit, anybody.

What's scary about this is that this particular child was a friend of Nina Courtepatte, who we know was just murdered. She was in that group. So you can imagine the stress that they're going through after they read this. I think that this probably says as much as anything about the need for something to happen and the reason that the member is bringing forward this particular bill, because this is happening, and there's a great deal of frustration out there.

Madam Chairperson, in going through the bill itself, the member was disappointed because she didn't get all or nothing. But I guess that – and I think she alluded to this – it's much better to get a bill that can pass and do some good rather than one that's going to end up unconstitutional. Nobody's well served by that, and I think that's what the member has realized.

The changes, I think, are positive ones because the five days would have helped these particular people that I'm talking about. It would have helped them. They would have been able to move much quicker. They eventually did get her out, but they would have had a means to do it, so it would have solved their problem. Hopefully, in five days – who knows? – you give some opportunity. Again, you would like the 90 days, but if it's unconstitutional, then forget it.

The other thing that I think is extremely important, because there was a potential for abuse, is the idea that it has to be a guardian. I think that's crucial in terms of amendment, and I think that's very positive because you don't want everybody holus-bolus, from teachers to social workers, you know, involved in this. It should be a parental or guardian responsibility.

I would just conclude, though, and say to the member, because she's championed this cause and done it very well, and to the government: we can have it mandatory or voluntary, but there just are not enough treatment centres in the province. I think there's a growing epidemic – we know that – in rural Alberta. We're told that in Edmonton it's more coke than crystal meth. Who knows? It doesn't matter. Drugs are drugs are drugs. So the point that I would make: if she would take that same energy, talk to her colleagues even if it's in the budget, and get some more treatment centres. Even the ones that want to go in voluntarily now, there just are not enough there. I think the member is well aware of that. So I'm saying to the member across the way that if she would now take that same tenaciousness, that same energy, and really start to promote that end of it. That's the most crucial part of it.

Having formerly, in a different world, been a high school counsellor, if a person doesn't see a problem and want to change, it's very hard to change them. If they do see a problem, then you can work with them. I'm told that even for the students and kids that want to change and get off this, it's a very difficult drug, one that we're not used to. It's very difficult to change. So we have to have

more help there, and I'm convinced that the hon. member will use that energy to promote that, that we get more treatment centres.

So, Madam Chairperson, I just wanted to conclude by telling the member and the members of the Legislature about some of the problems. I know that she's talked about parents and one that just came to my attention last week, and I think that this bill would go some ways in at least temporarily helping those parents. That's just temporary, but the more long range is: how do we get more treatment centres?

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

4:20

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you.

We'll move to Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. In one of his wartime speeches after the Battle of El Alamein I believe Winston Churchill said: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is . . . the end of the beginning." I believe we are one better than Churchill and the Allies here. We are at the beginning of the end. Now that the end in the time frame for the passage of this bill is in sight, we need to focus again on the other meaning of end: the purpose or goal of this exercise.

Madam Chairman, this bill is about a chemical, but it is not about just another chemical. In an age when we've come to accept the presence of trace elements of toxic chemicals in the clothes that we wear and the air that we breathe, we need to remember that though all toxins may seem equal, some are deadly, far more deadly than others, and crystal meth is one of these. There are some substances, cyanide for instance, that not even the most reckless experimenter would be likely to try once, because one try is all they'll get. Crystal meth is not quite there, but it's close. Addiction can occur from a single dose, from which inevitable damage follows.

Madam Chairman, this is a bill about abuse, but it is not only substance abuse. It's an abuse of the promise of youth and the hope of adulthood. It's an abuse of God-given potential to grow and manifest the divine image in relationships, re-creation, and service. It's an abuse of relationships among human beings – adolescents and their guardians, siblings and friends, significant others – who must stand by powerless to prevent the destruction they see happening. This bill opens a window, a small space through which they can try to intervene to pull a loved one out of a downward spiral.

Madam Chairman, this bill is about people, not just about some other people. In some way it affects us all. The timeless words, "you shall love your neighbour as yourself," are not just a noble ideal. They are a recognition of the fact that we are all connected and that, ultimately, we cannot do or be otherwise. How we love or treat another ultimately comes back to how we treat ourselves in the society we share.

I urge my fellow members in this Assembly not to reduce this to the level of a problem, a social problem, someone else's problem. I urge us to stand together, to commit in the resolve that crystal meth shall not pass the threshold of acceptance in our society, and that this bill shall pass in our combined and co-operative effort to find an alternative.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Calgary-Shaw, please.

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you. I just wanted to rise briefly today and also add my comments to today's debate in committee. I'd just like to compliment the House in this centennial year. I think this is a moment in time when we all put aside our political differences and

do something for the right reason, and I commend all members of the House for the co-operation today here in the House.

I was thinking of my own four boys when they were little. I used to spend a lot of time and energy locking up poison. I know that the rest of parents can all remember the days when all things had to go on a high shelf or behind a locked cupboard. I was just vigilant about that. I never placed a cleaning element low. I never left anything in harm's way that I felt my boys could get access to and do themselves harm with. I knew what poison meant as a young mother with young children.

Now, my boys grew up, and they became teenagers. I could no longer lock the cupboards, and I could no longer put things on the shelves high enough. I had to send them out into that greater community. What I was hoping was that I had been able to teach them enough so that they would recognize the dangers of poison. Yet we know that there are those poisons out there. The fact that children today in their teenage years would feel inclined to take the things into their bodies that their parents have locked from them their entire lives is just astounding to me on some level, but we know it's true, and we know it's happening.

I'm thinking of a good friend of mine whose son got addicted, and she told me that she prayed nightly that the police would arrest her child. Now, I never prayed nightly that the police would arrest my children. I have to say that that was not a dream of mine, but that's what she had been reduced to. She prayed nightly that something would happen so that the police would arrest her child because she feared for his life, and she had no other tools at that point to work with. I see this bill, in the first, as giving parents tools, but I also recognize that there are some realities around this bill, that we can't necessarily take it to its full extent today, that we might encounter challenges that will mean that we'll lose the first half of the opportunity.

I recognize that sometimes as legislators we have to balance the intent with the realities of our current situation, so I'm going to support this amendment, although I will say also that my hope is that the member will pursue this.

I have a brother-in-law that actually runs one of these treatment facilities down in Utah, and I spent a good hour talking to him about the kinds of kids that come into his facility and the kind of help they can give those children. He has almost a 90 per cent success rate right now in his facility.

So I say to you that I think there are good ways to do this. I think that we can, first of all, take a look at doing the right thing in the first instance, bring these children in, get them tested, maybe get them in that five-day period to acknowledge and actually help us to get them into those voluntary treatment programs.

I commend the member, and I will be supporting this amendment because I also agree that we can't afford to lose this first step. So I thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. I must applaud the hon. member who sponsored this bill because it's an issue that needed to be addressed. This bill will give parents the capability to force their drug-addicted children into secure treatment facilities. This, in turn, will help to battle drug and alcohol problems in youth throughout Alberta.

This bill is the first of its kind in Canada. Madam Chair, under this act a person from the community can apply to AADAC to have the child admitted. This member of the community who is referring the child abusing drugs must have a valid belief of the child's drug

or alcohol problems. After the application is made, then AADAC must decide whether the child needs treatment. They can request that the guardian appear before them.

A child should be allowed to enter treatment voluntarily if the commission rules that that is what is needed. It can be at a facility or on an outpatient basis. There must be an agreement between the guardian and the commission about the treatment. This treatment would be no longer than six months. If the child does not go along voluntarily with the assessment, the guardian of the child may apply to the court.

When a child is apprehended, he or she will then be taken to a safe house, and a director within child welfare must be notified. The director will either give the child back to the guardian or confine the child in the protective safe house. If the child in the safe house has not appeared before AADAC on its initial assessment, he or she will be assessed involuntarily at the safe house.

Within five days of the apprehension the child's guardian must appear before the court to show cause for confinement. The child must be fully informed of the case against him or her. Under this act a child can be confined for 90 days. The child or their guardian can apply to end the period of confinement, requiring the child to live at home and work through the addiction as an outpatient. A child may be excused from a hearing if prejudicial information is being presented and the child should not be there. Protection of the child's confidential information – for example, the names of family members, et cetera – will not be disclosed.

#### 4:30

The minister is in control of developing the programs to treat children on drugs or alcohol. The minister may decide what are protective safe houses and make regulations pertaining to the costs of treatment programs, the cost of guardians, the assessments done on children, the panels within AADAC that will make the decisions, and programs for treatment. This legislation will give many, many affected families a hope, our children much-needed drug treatment, and, consequently, make the fabric of our society stronger.

I have received many phone calls from my constituents about the recent problem of drug abuse among children. In some cases the parents are helpless because they don't have the right to step in and take care of their own children. I know some people argue that this is taking away rights from Alberta's teens and arbitrarily forcing them into treatment. What defences are in place to make sure that children who don't require treatment will not be forced into treatment? This bill is in reaction to the similar problems of drug abuse among children.

Madam Chair, the way that this bill will work in apprehending is the same as the protection of children in prostitution legislation. The parents will have to bring their case to the courts, and there will have to be a hearing with child welfare to determine the application. The threshold for the decision on whether the child will be detained will be created by AADAC. The child will then be picked up under a court injunction and detained for five days for an assessment to be made on whether the child should remain in secure treatment or returned to the parents.

The children will not enter the child welfare system other than the assessment part of it. There is no direction within the bill on what treatment will be provided. We support this bill but with some concerns for the question on granting this control to the court. What role does the children's advocate play in this bill? This is the question. What facilities are going to be used for safe houses? Who is going to pay for the police needed to perform these new arrests? How many new directors of child welfare will be required for the enforcement of this bill?

There are concerns about the treatment facilities available since there are very few treatment facilities throughout Alberta.

I am sure that this bill will give parents the tools to force their kids into treatment so that they can be helped. I agree that parents should have the right to step in and take care of their own children. The government must look into creating facilities for children so that there are enough spaces for the children to get the treatment they need. The government and the courts will have to exercise caution in the use of this new law to ensure that the rights of the children are not abused.

In closing, I want to say to all parents and teens who are affected by this: we will not give up on your battle against drug and alcohol problems in Alberta. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. I commend the member for introducing this meaningful private member's bill and for her effort to navigate it through the legislative process.

The amendments may seem to soften the original bill, but like the philosopher Plato said: never discourage anyone who continually makes progress, no matter how slow. It's also said that Rome wasn't built in a day. Likewise, the Great Wall of China wasn't built all at once. I have been brought up in the Oriental culture, where strong family values of honest, clean, and healthy living and behaviour are the foundation of society. In fact, in that culture parents are the ultimate authority in keeping those family values. Due to some socialistic ideology, governments have interfered somehow in family life, so I see this bill as an opportunity for parents to claim back some rights to protect their children from modern societal harm.

I support this bill and amendments, and I urge all of you to support it as well. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, hon. Chairman. Regarding this Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, issues for us in St. Albert are simply that we don't have any intervention service, and we don't have any treatment service under the umbrella of the FCSS. Many parents have talked to me regarding our AADAC service in St. Albert, and we're pleading with the powers that be to evaluate the service because we don't think it's doing the job.

There are several points in here that I'll quickly touch on. It's the civil liberties aspect. What I've come to terms with is that for the well-being of the family and other community members, I think it's important that we support the aspects of the bill that talk about incarceration. Treatment and intervention is a focus that I think is very important. I believe in the wraparound service aspect of this particular underlying philosophy of treatment, whereby we focus not only on the medical but the spiritual, physical, social, and mental health aspects of the person. A must to address in this whole question are the emotional and behaviour patterns. They are the things we must look at, and the key here is therapeutic cognitive behaviour interventions.

Another aspect that I'd like to address is the question of lodging. I think it's important that down the road we look at halfway houses or a facility in a rural setting for the treatment of these kinds of people. It's key that we have trained staff with follow-up resources after the particular persons leave treatment.

Other aspects that I think have to be encouraged are the supports

for the pharmaceutical people in St. Albert, for example, that are supporting the behind-the-counter strategy for people not being able to get at the ingredients. I would hope that down the line we do a little more encouragement in terms of the research and start now into this very serious problem and continue it.

I also haven't had a chance to look at the Minister of Education's budget thoroughly, but I hope that the DARE program in the elementary school is reinforced, that it's looked at in terms of the problem of crystal meth, and that we start in the exercise of prevention.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll sit down. I want to just compliment the members on both sides of the House, women power, and also suggest that I support the amendments as they are.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you. Calgary-Egmont.

**Mr. Herard:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very proud of the work of the MLA for Red Deer-North and also very proud to stand in this Chamber today and congratulate the members opposite for not having withheld the ability of this bill to come forward today. So I commend all of you.

I believe that all members of this House agree that the protection of children is one of the paramount duties that we have as legislators. I also believe that the members on both sides of this Chamber agree that the protection of children is the intent of the Member for Red Deer-North in bringing forward the bill and the amendments that I'm speaking to.

4:40

I fully support the premise on which this bill is based, the intent, and the desired outcome. The amendments which have been brought forward today preserve the intent of the member: to protect children. At the same time, these amendments ensure that the rights and freedoms of minors who are apprehended under PCHAD are fully protected.

Everybody knows how difficult it is today to parent because parents don't know where their rights begin and where they end anymore. They don't know what can happen to them if they simply try to bring some discipline into the lives of their children. So it's a very complicated world today to bring children up in.

I really didn't realize until some years ago that it was against the law to take your child for treatment with respect to this kind of a situation, but I'm aware of a family in Vancouver who had a 15-year-old daughter who had been away from home for something like seven or eight months, and this was the third or fourth time that she had not come back home. The parents were aware that this teenager had a rap sheet the length of your arm in terms of criminal charges and in terms of prostitution and everything else. They were aware that she had several times tried to take her own life. The last time they had seen their daughter was some three and a half months before they got a call one day that she had been seen at a particular location. They rushed over there, picked her up, and they came to Alberta, the entire family: mother, father, siblings, and this 15-year-old child. They didn't stop until they got to Alberta, and in fact they moved the entire family to Calgary because there's an adolescent addiction centre there with a fantastic record.

I'm pleased to say that today this young lady is an honours student, that has either graduated or is about to graduate with honours. But the interesting part was that had they been stopped on their way from Vancouver to Calgary, they could have been charged for kidnapping their own daughter.

So what this is doing is it's giving parents tools. As limited as



perhaps some people feel the tools are with respect to this, it's giving parents tools. You know, during the five days, once the assessment is done – and it says in here that they'll be assessed by AADAC and that then they can be in detox for a maximum of five days. The bottom line is that if they are determined to be type 3 or type 4 addicts, at least there's an opportunity to find a treatment centre that will take them on and work with them with this horrible illness.

We have to remember that addictions are illnesses, and addiction to drugs is probably one of the worst addictions or one of the most difficult to treat. I'm aware that in the treatment centre that I'm so proud to have in my constituency, the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, it takes on average 11 to 14 months of very intensive treatment, where the children go and live in the homes of parents who have been through it with their own kids, where peer counsellors exist and work with the addicted because you can't snow the snowman. You know, they've been there, done that. They know all the lies. They know all of the shame. They know all of the things that happen to these kids.

So this is giving parents some hope that at least during that period of time that their children are under a court order, they can find a place that can in fact deal with the addiction, not just in the child who's addicted but also in the destruction that it creates in the entire family and siblings. I have been to graduations at the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre where three – three – kids from the same family graduated at the same time, but a fourth child was out there using.

So some people have some very, very difficult things to go through with the ravages of drugs. I'm just so proud to support the hon. member and the amendments that she's brought in while we can take some time to maybe deal with this problem correctly. I know that I agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I think that we do need to look at dealing with this problem and having more facilities and beds available and programs that really work.

So I would urge everyone to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, please.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm excited to be able to stand up and debate this amendment as well. I give my thanks to the persistence of the hon. Member for Red Deer-North in getting this to here. I think that, perhaps, the government is more to be thanked than the opposition in getting this here. I am truly thankful for being able to be part of this exceptional occasion, I guess, today being a first in history according to our Speaker.

I'm sad that we have to bring forth an amendment that's watered-down. The point that, I guess, I'd like to talk on this amendment is that, perhaps, we need to be innovative again, as we were to get this bill here, and to look at the second step on what we can do. If, in fact, this is the first step and we can pass this amendment, which I will agree and I'm excited about, we need to be looking at the second step. I would urge this government and challenge them to write a stronger bill and to bring it to this Assembly, that we could pass a second one, that we could – this is worth the fight – fight a constitutional challenge on the original bill. But let's pass this one first, and then let's look at taking the next big step, sticking our neck out and fighting for the youth of our province, not saying: this is a step and good enough. We want to take the next one.

I believe this is a situation of priorities, and as the hon. member just mentioned, we need to protect those who can't protect themselves. This is just such a predatory environment once they get into that lifestyle that we have to be able to reach out and to protect them.

The challenge that I'd also like to put forward is the priorities. Just as this has come forward, I think there are many other things that we could do for our youth in protecting them if, in fact, we agree to continue working together to do that.

But I am very concerned about the lack of facilities. I can't help but ask myself – today we've gone over it several times – how many facilities could a \$43 million transfer from horse racing to treatment centres accomplish? And I think that we have the funds that we can do it. I would challenge the government to put that in their priorities and where we spend the money.

But I'm pleased to be able to speak to this amendment and am looking forward to passing it here in the House. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Shariff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Before beginning comments, let me just congratulate you for the wonderful job that you're doing as chairman of the committee right now.

Madam Chairman, I'd like to speak on the amendment to this bill and make some comments about the bill itself, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, 2005. I want to first recognize and acknowledge the excellent work done by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. I think this bill is due, a long time coming, and I'm glad that she has forced it upon us and taken the approach that she has to make it a unique process to have it passed in this session. I also want to thank and acknowledge all members of this Assembly from all sides of the House for their co-operation in moving this bill so fast through committee today.

4:50

I will support the bill. I support its purposes and objectives. But I want to raise a few concerns, and I think these are important issues that we need to really try and understand. First, why are our children finding themselves in this situation? We need to ask that question, and we need to find other amendments within our legislation to try and address solutions for this problem. First and foremost, what are we doing to those people, those perpetrators, those abusers who are bringing these drugs to our children? Why is our justice system not tough on them? I think these people should be – there should be no leniency whatsoever. If you are caught getting drugs to our children, selling it to them, put them behind bars. If it is for 30 years, so be it. Let's be tough.

My second question is: what has happened to our society today? Why are our children – and the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont just talked about a family with four children in the same situation. What's happening to our society? What's happening to the society that would oversee its neighbours? We were a small village at one time. We've become a big cosmopolitan centre. But I think we need to make sure that our schools, our other resources that our children go to have the monitoring abilities.

A third point I want to make is that as a former child welfare worker I have heard this again and again, that we are not funding the current resources for child welfare needs. I hope we have the courage to find the resources within our budget so that these issues are dealt with first and foremost.

The act also is proposing that the parents will apply before the court to obtain an apprehension and confinement order. So I raise this issue: do we have the capacity in our judicial system to have these parents go before a judge? Do we have the capacity to help the parents so they can prepare appropriate court paperwork and apply before a judge? Do we have enough court workers or child welfare workers who have experience to help these parents put the application in a correct format? So I think there is a lot of thinking that

needs to go through with the various departments to make sure that adequate resources are provided to our court system, our judicial system, and our families.

But, most importantly, I don't think we have enough services in this province to address the needs of such children. I hope that that becomes priority 1. As soon as we pass this bill today, we make sure that services and resources in this province are made available so that our children, the children of this province who find themselves in this situation, and parents who want to take responsibility and apply to the courts are able to go before the judge, get an apprehension order, get a confinement order, and have the child in resources on the very same day.

Finally, Madam Chairman and hon. members, I just want to make this statement. We as a society will be judged by how we respond to the challenges faced by our children. I hope we do not fail them.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The clauses of Bill 202 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Now I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 202.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Ms Haley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 202. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Would all hon. members who agree in the report provided by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere please say aye?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask permission from the House to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have in the members' gallery people who are very important in respect of this bill.

We have Audrey Bjornstad, who is the chairperson of PEP, Parents Empowering Parents; Marilyn Benay, who is the co-founder of PEP; and Gary Bjornstad, also a member of PEP. They worked very hard and dedicated many hours to get to this point. We also have Peter Pilarski, the researcher who put in many hours, and Susan Gosselin, my loyal and faithful assistant. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warmest welcome from this House.

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, thanks again for recognizing me. To all sides of the House I thank you for your support today. I seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to proceed to third reading of Bill 202.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

**Bill 202**

**Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act**

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a true honour for me to stand here today for the third reading of Bill 202. Allowing for this process to go through the way it has speaks volumes about the compassion and social responsibility of all members in this House.

On November 16, 2000, members of this Assembly came together and took a bill through all the stages necessary, and we passed that bill in one day. That bill was the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. That day I witnessed all parties coming together in support of a very important cause. That day showed me what could be done when we agree to work together.

Today is another example of such a special day. On behalf of all the parents who have been waiting desperately for this day I say: thank you. The Holocaust was one of the greatest evils ever forced on mankind. Perhaps with the help of Bill 202 we can heal another kind of evil.

I thank the members for Calgary-Shaw and Banff-Cochrane for helping me to get started. Without their initial help this bill would not be here today. I thank the members of my caucus for supporting me and the various members who provided useful advice. I also thank the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, and the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for doing their part in helping me to push this issue forward, and I thank the hon. members from the two other parties for helping me to get unanimous support to introduce the amendments and for allowing me to move third reading. To see everyone come together as they have is truly remarkable. I'm certain that parents and ex-addicts in the future will be ever grateful for this amazing work.

I must also thank the hundreds of parents who have phoned me, e-mailed me, and approached me about this bill, and I'm sure other members have had the same. Their words of encouragement have gotten me through the difficulties I have faced, and their stories have caused me to fight harder for their cause. This bill is for these parents, so they can help their children.

Finally, I would like to say a special thanks to David Gillies. David, you have been a wise and caring friend throughout this process, and your advice and assistance are greatly appreciated.

Today we have come together to give parents a tool for helping their drug-addicted children to overcome their dangerous habits. We

have given parents a way to take their children into detoxification and to help them to get their lives back. We have upheld the right of children in Alberta to be protected from dangerous drugs. Mr. Speaker, the members of this Assembly have come together today to do something out of the ordinary. Alberta's parents thank you all for this effort.

The only thing left to do today is to vote in favour of passing Bill 202 in third reading, and I encourage all members to do so. Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an exciting day for us. The challenge of crystal meth is giving us an opportunity to think, act, and speak as a single body. I believe it is important to recognize that on matters of common concern we can come together and vote as a body, not in lockstep with party discipline or in keeping with preheld positions but as a conscious body of members acting in the common good.

In matters of this importance it matters not who introduced a motion or a bill, who spoke first and last, the constituency they come from, or the party to which they belong. What matters is that we are not only representatives or members of the Assembly but fellow human beings addressing an issue that touches our common humanity. If the disease of crystal meth addiction can propel us into a commitment to physical, emotional, and spiritual health, then, Mr. Speaker, we may look back on our deliberations and say: it was good work we did together here.

Thank you.

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

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to join the debate on Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, in third reading. I'm going to be very, very brief this afternoon, but I guess I just want to say that I'm very heartened by this day, and I'm very heartened by this bill as I agree with my colleague from Red Deer-North and other members that we do need legislation that gives parents the tool to help their children break the dangerous cycle of drug and substance abuse before it's too late.

Mr. Speaker, in my community in Drayton Valley and the surrounding area, unfortunately, this has become a severe, severe problem, an epidemic. I can't tell you how many times I've had parents come to me asking for some form of a tool or some form of a way that we can help, that we can intervene.

I really appreciated it when the Member for Red Deer-North talked about the word "intervention" because that's what this is. When you have a friend that is in a crisis or that is in need, one of the best things you can do for them is to do an intervention. This is certainly what we will be able to do now if we can pass third reading of this bill today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm just very, very supportive and very thankful for what I've seen happen here this afternoon. I think it's a wonderful statement of co-operation and opportunity and democracy. I would just like to lend my support to the hon. Member for Red Deer-North and echo her in all of her thank yous around the House and urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am mindful of the time and what we're trying to accomplish here this afternoon, so I'll try to keep my comments brief. I've not had a chance to speak on Bill 202 yet, and I really do have a few things that I had wanted to say.

First of all, I'd like to add my voice to those many today who have congratulated in particular the two House leaders, I believe, who worked late into the night last night – I know because I witnessed it myself – to sort of steer this process that we witnessed today, make sure that it happened, and the third-party House leader and the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, who also were consulted. All indicated they would provide the unanimous support and make sure their whips provided the unanimous support to allow what you, Mr. Speaker, referred to as an historic occasion in this Assembly. I'm very proud and honoured to have the opportunity to be a part of that.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this bill in third reading because, quite frankly, I really couldn't support the amendment that we were dealing with in Committee of the Whole, yet I understood, as did the Member for Red Deer-North, that that was most likely the way that things had to be dealt with today. Once again, something is better than nothing, and I certainly appreciate that. My comments, then, really are more suited for third reading.

I am a parent of two teenaged children. I have a 17-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter, and touch wood, we've never experienced anything like this. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll be frank with you. I live in fear every day that my kids, in a moment of foolishness or a moment of submitting to peer pressure, might test just one time crystal meth. Just one time.

We've all seen pictures. We've heard the stories. Several of my colleagues visited Bosco Homes last week, and we saw first-hand some of the ravages that this drug, amongst many, can do. In light of that, I just think there is a duty upon us to do absolutely everything we can to help those parents who find themselves facing this challenge, a duty upon us to do everything we can to give them every available tool.

In preparation for debating this bill once I knew it was coming forward, I took time to arrange for a visit with Doug Green, who is a school resource officer at Harry Ainlay high school in my constituency. He's been in the news a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because he has a black lab that he visits various schools around the Edmonton area with, and there were some of the same concerns expressed about him visiting the schools with his dog that have been expressed about Bill 202 in terms of privacy and so forth. But it was a very enlightening morning that I spent with Mr. Green.

He showed me some crystal meth. Things have changed a lot since I was in grade 5 or 6, and a police officer came into the school with a bag of dope. Mr. Green pulled out a very tiny, about a half inch by half inch, plastic bag, and there were two little crumbs in that bag. Those crumbs were crystal meth. They were so small you could hardly see them. He told me that that was a day's supply.

One of my colleagues earlier asked: why have we let things get this way? Well, one of the reasons is that this drug is so dangerous because it's so small. It's cheap. That supply that he showed me is less than \$10 for a day. It can be hidden anywhere. It provides a high that lasts up to 10 hours as opposed to a joint, which may give you 15 or 20 minutes or half an hour of pleasure, as it were. Those are some of the reasons why this drug is so devastating. Not only is it so terribly addictive, but it's cheap, it's easy to conceal, and it provides this long high.

5:10

We've met with some of the members in the gallery, and we were told that one of the problems is that the kids perform better for the

first little while when they're on this drug, so it makes it so hard to detect. By the time they get to the point that we're talking about today, when the provisions of this legislation might actually kick in, quite frankly, it's almost too late. This is why I say that at that point you have to give the parents absolutely whatever tool might be available.

I would recommend to anybody who hasn't seen one of Mr. Green's presentations to take one in. He does them weekly throughout the city and the surrounding area. He has told me that they're open to the public, and he would be happy to have members of this Assembly join him for one of those. I would be happy to facilitate that if anybody is interested. I'm going myself next Friday to a presentation that he's doing in north Edmonton.

This program that he is doing with his dog is costing a grand total of \$5,000 per year, a pittance – a pittance – compared to the numbers that we talk about daily in this Assembly. He told me that one man, whether it be him or somebody else, could tour all of northern Alberta. So presumably two officers for the entire province could tour every school and educate students in every school in a year on a rotating basis. I don't know what that would cost, maybe \$60,000 or \$70,000 in wages and a few thousand dollars for the dog and some money for travelling and whatnot.

We're talking probably, in my mind, less than a quarter of a million dollars to have a full-time person doing what he's doing part time aside from his other duties as a school resource officer at Harry Ainley high school. It just seems like such a small investment because as much as we're concerned about the kids that are hooked on meth and are at the stage where they're going to benefit from this legislation, several have mentioned that not only do we have to talk about treatment, but we really, truly have to look at why they're getting to this place in the first place. Anything we can do to make sure that that doesn't happen is so valuable.

Mr. Speaker, I am a member of a rather select club. There may be others in this Assembly that I'm not aware of. I've lost a daughter. Thank God it wasn't to crystal meth, but I've lost a child. When you've lost a child, if anybody in this room has, they will know that everything is completely out of order when that happens. It's not the way God intended it to be. It's not something that you ever completely recover from.

One of the things that I did – this was 11 years ago – to deal with it was that I became involved with a group called Compassionate Friends, which is a bereavement society for parents who have lost children. For the first couple of years I was there because I had to be, and after that, I was there because I could help other parents who had lost a child. One of the most interesting things that I learned out of that was that there was at times almost a division in the room, almost a wall between two groups of parents. The one group of parents would have been parents like myself who had lost a child through an accident. All of a sudden, you know, your life changes in a flash. On the other side of that wall were the parents who lost their children through a disease or an addiction, and they had watched their child die in front of them.

It was always interesting because in our case we never had an opportunity to say goodbye to Nicole. We never had an opportunity to make one last trip to Disneyland or whatever. But in the case of the parents who watched their child die in front of them, they had to watch the suffering. They had to suffer themselves. They had to experience this daily over, sometimes, a prolonged period of time. I can't imagine what that would be like. I know in my heart the unbelievable despair that comes with losing a child, but thank God I never had to watch my child suffer. I never had to watch my child die in front of me.

It's for that reason that this bill, as watered down as it may be, gets my complete support. If I'm that parent, and I'm watching my child die in front of me, at that point, quite frankly, I don't care about personal freedom or liberty. I don't care about laws. I would do as the Member for Calgary-Egmont suggested and kidnap my own child. At that point I would do anything, and what we're doing here is making sure that these parents don't have to be criminals when they'd do anything to save their child.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that pretty much covers what I meant to say. I could go on a long time. I think perhaps members sense that, but I wouldn't want to do anything that might interfere with making sure that we get the business done that has to be done before 5:30.

Thank you.

**Ms DeLong:** I just wanted to express a quick thank you from all the parents in Calgary-Bow to the member for bringing this forward. It not only starts to solve the problem for those parents who really need it, but it also gives a backup to the parents who are raising children, to know that they do have more tools to be able to help bring up their children. I just wanted to say thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for the interest of members of the House – there's been a couple of mentions of Bosco Homes here – the Bosco program is called the adolescent drug and alcohol prevention and treatment centre, the ADAPT centre. It's for children and adolescents age 12 to 18 who are facing difficulties with a variety of drugs, including crystal meth. The program is available at a rural lakeside setting in Strathcona county, which is 20 kilometres from Edmonton. There is an in-patient program, which can last from six to nine months, and there is an out-patient day program offered in conjunction with the Bosco Homes schools.

The ADAPT program is based on the latest research in the field of addictions treatment, and the program is in place right now and can easily be used as a secure facility. So if any members run across cases where your constituents are looking for some sort of option, I encourage them to consider Bosco Homes. You can get in touch with them through their telephone number, which is 440-0708.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I'd be remiss as the Minister of Children's Services if I didn't add a few words on this particular piece of legislation and the hard work that has gone in by the Member for Red Deer-North. We held a meth conference about a year ago, and she was there every day from start to finish, listening to what had to be said and what people had to say at our particular meth conference.

I think it's a wonderful day in this province to see something like this go through, Mr. Speaker, and I have to stand up here and say, "You go, girl, and good for you."

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Strang:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I guess I want to add to the thank you to our hon. Member for Red Deer-North and also state that in West Yellowhead it's quite a problem too. That's why I've got another bill coming up after. We did have a crystal meth workshop in Edson in September, and we had the Solicitor General there as well as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who is the chair of AADAC. We had over 150 people there, and we turned lots

away. So this problem isn't centralized within one area.

So I'm just proud of the member for doing what she's doing because that puts another tool in the tool chest so that we can look after our future.

At this time, I'd call the question.

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

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd be remiss not to add my views in terms of Bill 202. To the Member for Red Deer-North I just wanted to indicate that I'm very pleased to see this bill go through.

From an aboriginal perspective I certainly have seen many of the aboriginal youth and parents who have had to deal with the issue of crystal meth, and as we have more aboriginal people move into the urban centres, it certainly highlights the need for some tools for the parents to be able to deal with it. I'd like to commend her for all the work that she's done and the care that she exhibits in dealing with children, most particularly in dealing with the issues that affect the children and families of today.

I would like to say congratulations to her.

5:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to conclude the debate.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before I conclude the debate, I would like to thank every member in this House for

proving through their actions that children are the number one priority in this province of Alberta.

I'd call the question.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a third time] [applause]

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very, very historic day, indeed. I just want to briefly add my comments in relation to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, and to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for the courage to see this through and all members on all sides of the House for supporting it so unanimously. I've been in this House for 12 or 13 years, Mr. Speaker, and I've yet to see such tremendous co-operation. Wouldst it were so on so many other important pieces of legislation we do in this House, we could change the image of democracy as we know it in this entire country.

On that note and on the historic note of a historic budget as we begin the second century of our province financially and given the hour, I would move that we now call it 5:30 and adjourn until Monday, April 18, at 1:30 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Before calling the question, let me just tell you how proud I am of all of you for being true parliamentarians.

[Motion carried; at 5:22 p.m. the Assembly adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

