

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 15, 2006** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 06/03/15

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms bearing Alberta's original Mace, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly and Mr. Ray Speaker, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

[Mr. Ray Speaker took his place behind the Bar]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. On this special occasion we give thanks as legislators for the rich diversity of our 100 years of history. We ask for guidance in our deliberations and debate of the future that we may determine courses of action which will be to the enduring benefit of our province of Alberta. We welcome the many challenges before us and dedicate ourselves to both the present and the future as we join in the continuing service to Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor**

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, as we await the arrival of Their Honours, let me welcome all who are here today. The galleries today host many former members, spouses, relatives of deceased members, and guests of former members. Those of us who currently serve are honoured by your presence, and we welcome you. One hundred and twenty-eight former members and 16 spouses of former members will join with current members as we celebrate the 100 years of democracy in Alberta today.

We currently serve in the 26th Legislature. In the general election of August 5, 1952, three former members with us today were elected to serve in Alberta's 12th Legislature. As Alberta's senior parliamentarians let me introduce them and ask them to stand. Arthur Dixon was elected as a Social Credit member as one of six Calgary MLAs in 1952. Nick Dushenski was elected as a member of the CCF in the Willingdon constituency in 1952. Raymond Reiersen was elected as a Social Credit member in the constituency of St. Paul in 1952. [applause]

By coincidence, 1952 was 54 years ago. That was the average age of current members elected to this Legislature in the election of 2004.

I'm also pleased today to acknowledge the presence of a message that we have received from Buckingham Palace, a message delivered to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

I was pleased to receive your kind message of loyal greetings sent on behalf of the Members of the Legislative Assembly on the occasion of the Centenary of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta which is being marked during a Special Ceremony in the Chamber today.

I remember with pleasure my visit to Alberta last year and send my warm good wishes to you all for an enjoyable event during this most special anniversary year.

Signed Elizabeth R.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Kwong.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Mrs. Kwong, and their party entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

His Honour: Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

The Speaker: Your Honours and hon. members, 100 years ago today at the hour of 3 p.m. the 25 members of the First Legislative Assembly of Alberta came to order in a makeshift Chamber in the Thistle Roller and Ice Rink, located only a short distance from this site. They heard the province's first Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. George Hedley Vicars Bulyea, outline the first steps to be taken in the evolution of the fledgling province.

Today we sit in the Chamber of a magnificent Legislature Building, where we celebrate the centennial of our Legislative Assembly and, in doing so, give recognition and our profound thanks to the contributions of the 769 men and women who built and developed this institution beginning in 1905. Their vision, dedication, and sound judgment in serving the interests of Alberta have led us to where we stand today, a province with a high standard of living, productive and healthy citizens, and unparalleled potential for the future.

In celebrating 100 years of democracy in Alberta, we are thankful for the wisdom shown by our forebears in choosing the Westminster model of democratic governance that, despite its occasional foibles and frustrations, has demonstrated its staying power and effectiveness over 700 years of history.

It's now my great honour to call on Alberta's 16th Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Norman Kwong, to address the Assembly on this most auspicious of all occasions.

Your Honour.

1:40

His Honour: Thank you. It's not very often that I'm the best dressed guy in the room.

Good afternoon, Premier Klein, Mr. Speaker, hon. ministers, hon. members, distinguished guests. I am honoured to join you all today in paying tribute to the 100th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. This is a proud day for we who are gathered in this Chamber. Indeed, it is a proud day for all Albertans.

Since 1906 the Legislative Assembly and those who served through it have been one of our most powerful and enduring symbols of democracy. While it is true that democratic ideals thrived in this land long before Alberta was a province, it is the Legislative Assembly and its special partnership of Crown and Assembly members that gives us the means to govern in a truly democratic fashion. Since 1906 nearly 800 Albertans have responded to the call of public office. They have given their hearts and minds to serve as Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Throughout our history hon. members have represented a variety of viewpoints and political affiliations. They have debated issues both great and small. Regardless of which side of the House they sat

on or sit in, each has shown the highest degree of personal sacrifice, dedication, and commitment. Each person who has served in this Assembly has an intense desire to leave their communities and this province a better place than they found it.

As Her Majesty the Queen's representative in Alberta I congratulate all of you on 100 years of service to the citizens of Alberta.

Thank you very much. [applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Your Honour.

It's now the pleasure of this Assembly to invite former member Mr. Ray Speaker to give remarks on behalf of all former members.

Legislative Assembly of Alberta 100th Anniversary Addresses to the Assembly

Mr. R. Speaker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Your Honour, Mr. Premier, Leader of the Official Opposition, ministers, members, former members, and spouses of former members, I want to say that it is a great opportunity to be able to say thank you for letting us as former members be part of this ceremony today. Mr. Speaker, you have done a superb job. Thank you. My colleagues in the gallery are having a great time today. We want to thank you for that, and they want to thank you for this great time. [applause]

Your Honour, I should say, first of all, that it's the first time I've appeared before the Bar. I'm off subject – and Mr. Speaker has only allowed me a limited amount of time – but I was threatened the first time I arrived at the Legislature that if I didn't behave and if I didn't quit swearing, I might end up here. But I will behave.

Spending nearly 30 years in this place has allowed me a very special friendship with MLAs dating back to 1935, some 70 years. I want to say something about those people. Every one of them was very strong in purpose. They came here because they wanted to represent their constituents, they wanted to do it in a democratic process, and they wanted to make sure that the individual needs of Albertans were well met. I can only say again that our gallery here has a group of people that have made an excellent contribution to this Assembly and the government and the democratic process of our province.

A few remarks on the lighter side. My first visit to this Legislature was 42 years ago on February 13 for the opening of the 1964 session of the Legislature. I walked from the hotel with a member that was elected in 1935. He said: I will show you what to do and when to do it. So I followed and went along with him. We entered the rotunda, and as I saw this new building and looked up, I said to myself: man, there's nothing like this in Little Bow. After that, we proceeded up the marble steps and turned to the left. Now, that's the only time that I've done that. The two of us proceeded to a room just outside this door over here, and we walked into the room. It was larger than it is today. It was a bare room, and all that was on the wall was a series of coat hooks. My colleague said to me, "That's your hook right over there; hang up your hat and coat," which I did. Then as I turned, he said: "Over on the right here, through that open door, is the urinal. If you have to use it, go ahead." That was my introduction to this Legislature.

The session of 1964 was also special in that it was the first session to have a sound system. Prior to 1964 the Premier and the government had difficulty hearing the opposition, and that was for two reasons. It's not quite the same today, I understand. Democracy in Alberta had the habit of electing small oppositions. That was the first reason. The second reason was that at that time the members of the government brought a local paper back into the Assembly, and they read the paper during question period, so you couldn't hear anything. I had a Scandinavian friend that was part of the Legislature at that time. That was prior to my time. I said: what was the

name of that paper? He said: well, gee whiz, I think it was the Edmonton Urinal. Anyway, at that point in our history the opposition was finally heard. Also, we had *Hansard* introduced in the same session, and you could read what the opposition had to say to the government at that point in time.

Well, the 1964 session ended with a volley of paper from the press gallery, and that signalled two things. Certainly, first of all, the session was over, and secondly, as members – and you don't go through this practice – we all came out this door. We lined up at the Clerk's office over here, and there was the Clerk's counter. As your turn came to approach the counter, you were given two things: first of all, your annual paycheque, and it was one cheque, no deductions. Secondly, you were given your annual supplies. Mr. Speaker, as a note I want to say that it wasn't a briefcase with a million dollars in it. It was a cardboard box, and in that cardboard box were the following: one pack of legislative paper, one pack of envelopes, four steel loose-leaf rings, one eraser, and one box of paper clips. Now, I tried to understand that, but I understood it better and respected it, this kind of frugality, when I was reminded by some of the members at that time that in 1935 the public servants couldn't be paid by the government. So it was part of that era.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, and certainly members here, things have changed, but I think the constant that we have in this Legislative Assembly is the democratic process that keeps us free and able to speak our minds and give our opinions. If we could look back and witness 100 years of our democratic system, that has been in partnership with the private sector of our province, the way to observe it, the most obvious way, is in our success as Alberta. Today I just happened to read the third-quarter report of the Finance minister: \$24 billion in the budget, \$7 billion as a surplus, no deficit, no debt. We have the heritage savings trust fund that is active and viable, specifically in research. We have an infrastructure in this province of roads, schools, public buildings, hospitals, and telecommunications. We have a program of health care and social services. Along with that, in our private sector we have a broadened diversity, which is most important. We can all agree that it's most exciting that in 100 years we have moved from a frontier province of homesteaders to a diversity and combination of public and private opportunities in this province that are second to none.

1:50

From my recent travels to Ottawa and other places in Canada I can report to all of you that Alberta is the envy of all Canada. Congratulations. Mr. Premier, you know what I think? It's time we throw a party.

In our 100 years former governments have set the stage, though, for this progress. With the former members that are here, I think that historically, as to what has happened, we should recognize that. For example, the government of Premier Brownlee in 1930 secured for Alberta provincial rights to our public lands and natural resources, and that was a promise made by the Laurier government in 1905. Premiers Aberhart and Manning in the 1940s legislated a checkerboard system of resource development and a resource reserve program to manage Alberta's provincial oil and gas resources.

Premier Strom in the 1970s supported resource development and balanced the first billion dollar surplus budget for the province of Alberta. Premier Lougheed in the 1970s and the 1980s, in battling constitutional and national energy program challenges, ensured the protection of Alberta's natural resource ownership, specifically oil and gas, by insisting on the notwithstanding clause being in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. Premier Getty took courageous steps to diversify our Alberta economy to protect our public revenue in times of unexpected shifts. Premier Klein, you heard the call of

Albertans in the 1990s to eliminate the deficit and the debt. Your government listened at that time, and you are to be congratulated.

That brings me back to today. This government and this opposition face a fantastic opportunity at the beginning of the next hundred years. Democracy holds the answer to what unfolds in this province of Alberta. With this privilege, on behalf of my colleagues here assembled I wish you the best on the 100th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Thank you. [standing ovation]

The Speaker: Mr. Speaker served in the Assembly for 28 years and six months. Thank you very much, sir.

It's now my honour and my pleasure to introduce to all here the dean of current Canadian first ministers, the hon. the Premier of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Honours, current and former Members of the Legislative Assembly, distinguished guests, families, and friends. Mr. Speaker, the other Mr. Speaker, Ray Speaker, noted that when he was first elected to the Legislative Assembly, one of the first things he was shown was his way to the washroom. I can tell you that across the hall from me existed Ray Speaker when I was in room 137 as Minister of Environment, and one of the first things he did was show me the bathroom.

On behalf of my fellow MLAs I am pleased to welcome our special guests here today. This is a very, very special day, the 100th year of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. It's been a challenging and rewarding 100 years, and I am privileged to be part of that history and to call myself an Albertan because certainly we have changed a lot since that first day in 1906, when the very first Legislative Assembly began its work in I believe McKay school.

Today Alberta is a prosperous and vibrant province with some of the most innovative and compassionate people in Canada, and it has an exceptionally bright future ahead. The hard work, passion, and energy that the members of this Assembly have dedicated to serving the people of Alberta have played an important role in making sure that future is bright. One hundred years of discussion, deliberation, and progress have taken place under this dome and have led to many remarkable achievements. Every MLA that has served in this Legislature has a right to feel proud. No matter what side of the House he or she sat on, all MLAs have shared in Alberta's democratic traditions and in the work of building this province.

One thing in particular should make us all proud, and that is the teamwork and the dedication of our families and our staff and our colleagues, who, although not elected officials, have made large sacrifices and have supported us and worked hard to make this province great. The work and success of each MLA is a team effort with a network of individuals standing behind them, supporting them, and helping them to succeed.

Of course, all of these people include researchers and ministry staff, program experts, and many other dedicated professionals who share their knowledge and passion for the province to help us do our jobs to the best of our ability; administrative staff and pages to help keep us all organized; Legislature caretakers, who keep this beautiful building going and ticking; Legislature security, who keep us all safe; our spouses and our children and friends, who offer support and understanding even when our duties require many hours away from home. Each person over the past 100 years has played an extremely important role in making Alberta's future bright, and together we can make our province's next 100 years an even greater success.

Some of the special people I've mentioned are seated in our galleries and on the floor today, and I would ask them all now to stand and receive the warm and very special acknowledgement of

the Legislative Assembly for their commitment to Alberta. Please all stand. [applause]

The Speaker: The Premier was elected to this Assembly in 1989 as the Member for Calgary-Elbow. Thank you, sir.

Many people, including me, believe that democracy functions best with an effective opposition. It's now my pleasure to introduce the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

2:00

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With two Mr. Speakers in the Assembly we may be in twice as much trouble as normal.

It's a great pleasure to rise here. To all of you who are gathered here, all the special guests, I'm sure we listened carefully to Mr. Speaker's comments about the importance of democracy and to the Premier's comments about how behind every elected representative there's a whole team of people. How true that is. I'm pleased and honoured to join with them in this Assembly and with people across the province in celebrating our first century of legislative democracy in Alberta.

One of the great strengths of democracy is that it adapts. It adapts to changing social values, to new technologies, to changes in demographics. Democracy's flexibility and its responsiveness to the needs of the people it serves is what allows democratic ideals and the economic, cultural, and social benefits derived from those ideals to endure. The flexibility of democracy was demonstrated early in the history of this Legislature when the government of Premier A.L. Sifton in April 1916 recognized the right of women to vote. Far too many years later, in the 1960s, peoples of Alberta's First Nations secured the same right. Changes such as these have benefited us all, bringing fresh perspectives to the Legislature, empowering Albertans, and raising the legitimacy and effectiveness of our democracy.

Now we believe it is time to start thinking about further changes. Alberta's Legislature has served its citizens reliably for 100 years, offering stable, responsible, and at times even visionary government. As we enter our second century of democratic governance, I think Albertans should take this opportunity to consider ways in which to continue to renew our democracy, to make our Legislature more representative and accountable and our elections more fair. Ideas like fixed election dates, electoral reform, better rules on political financing, and other changes could inject new life into our democracy, encouraging more citizens to vote and increasing citizen engagement in the democratic process.

While people of different political viewpoints often disagree on questions of policy and ideology, disagree here every day that we sit, I think we can all agree that as legislators we have a responsibility to make sure that the people we serve remain committed to and engaged in the political process.

The ultimate aim of democracy is to ensure that government serves the public good, that citizens' interests are protected, and that peace, prosperity, and freedom are nurtured. While far from perfect – it is, after all, a human institution – our Legislature has done an excellent job of serving its people, and I look forward to witnessing the changes the people of Alberta will forge in the years to come.

Thank you very much. [applause]

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition was elected in 2001 to this Assembly in the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. Thank you, sir.

It is now my pleasure to call on the hon. leader of the third party in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Sir.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking you for your efforts and the efforts of your staff in

organizing today's celebration. I think it's much appreciated by members both current and past, and I'd like to express my welcome to all of our former colleagues, friends, and their families today. Welcome.

Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate 100 years of representative democracy in Alberta. The importance of this fact cannot be overestimated. It has protected the rights of individuals and provided for their collective needs. It is the wellspring of social progress and even of economic progress. But democracy is not a static thing; it is a living thing. It needs to be nurtured and supported.

Democracy in Canada was not something that was handed to us by the British or by the Crown. The history of democracy in Canada and Alberta is a history of the struggle by those who were ignored and disenfranchised to extend their rights and to strive for greater measures of equality. It had to be wrested step by step from the elite of this country. When this Legislature first met, the elected representatives were all men. Because of the work of the Famous Five and thousands of women and men who believed in the equality of women, the franchise was extended to women in 1916, and by 1917 the first female MLAs in Alberta joined this Assembly.

Now we enjoy broad democratic rights and freedoms. That is certainly worth celebrating. It is an enormous accomplishment and has improved and enriched people's lives in countless ways. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who have worked over the last 100 years to build our democracy in Alberta and in Canada. To the workers and the farmers, the small business owners, and community-minded people from all backgrounds who worked so hard for a voice at the table and for the right to be treated with the same dignity as their fellow citizens a hearty thank you.

The very name of the New Democratic Party's political philosophy is social democracy, and it proclaims our goal of extending formal democracy into the social and economic fields. We see real democracy as far more than just elections and Legislatures. The extension of human rights to all, the right to free and unfettered collective bargaining, the right to quality education and medical care regardless of ability to pay, the reduction in poverty, and the elimination of homelessness are all parts of our vision of democracy. The extension of democracy is vital to the people's interests. Things like the Alberta Bill of Rights, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Human Rights Commission, and freedom of information legislation are all important parts of our democracy.

As we enter the second century of democracy in Alberta, parliamentary reform, electoral reform, limits on executive power, transparency and accountability in government are keys to extending social and economic progress in our province. They are vital to defending the gains of the past 100 years and extending them into the future.

Let us dedicate ourselves to renewing our vision of democracy in Alberta. Let's do our part to ensure that we hand to our descendants 100 years from now as much progress in building real democracy as we have received from our forebears.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [applause]

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get unanimous consent of the House to allow the leader of the Alliance Party to speak today.

The Speaker: The request is that the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner be given an opportunity to participate today. We will need unanimous consent. Any dissenters?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Honour, Mr. Premier, and all the special guests that are here today, it truly is an honour to be here. As mentioned, 100 years ago today 25 MLAs from across Alberta came to the Edmonton Thistle Roller and Ice Rink to meet for the first time. Their challenge was much like ours: to provide good government and to serve the people.

Perhaps the most important principle that we need to ensure good government as we enter the second century of democracy is that of accountability. I know of no better way than to have a democratic process for recall.

Albertans have a long history of independence and self-sufficiency. As stewards of the land we need to foster that independence and continue to foster an appreciation of our democratic rights. It is a sad situation for a government to be considered out of touch and not putting the interests of the people first and foremost. People must be engaged and part of the process when they believe that they will make a difference. We should never underestimate the capacity of Albertans to make a difference and to rise to the challenges. So let us challenge ourselves to protect our freedoms by protecting the rights of our fellow citizens. The best government is the one that governs the least, one that helps the people to help themselves.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is exciting and challenging. It's truly an honour to be here half a century after my grandfather and to see his passion and the passion of the MLAs here in this House to provide that democracy. May we be strong and free and continue to enjoy peace and prosperity for another century. [applause]

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Your Honour, Mr. Premier, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, the hon. leader of the third party, all members, I would like to thank all of you for your contributions today in marking the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The citizens of Alberta place a profound trust in the members elected to this institution, and it's certainly my hope that we and our successors will continue the legacy of excellence demonstrated by our predecessors.

To conclude our ceremony today, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau, who is in the Speaker's gallery, to lead us in the singing of our national anthem and *God Save The Queen*.

Hon. Members and Guests:

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

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen!
Send Her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and Mr. Ray Speaker left the Chamber]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will now follow through the normal Routine. It's back to work.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly my father, Mr. Mel Dunford, who is here from Calgary to celebrate with us the hundred years of democracy in Alberta. So I'd ask you to share the warm and traditional welcome with him.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Parliamentary Reform

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's of course an honour to rise in this Assembly on the 100th anniversary of its first sitting, under, I might add, a Liberal government, in 1906. It would be far too easy, however, to revel in the celebrations and overlook the fact that Alberta's democracy is in need of serious repair. Where once Alberta led in democratic innovation, this government is now viewed as a democratic dinosaur. My question is to the Premier. Given that in the last election voter turnout was just 45 per cent and this government received only a minority of those votes, will the Premier finally give his support to the Alberta Liberal proposal for a citizens' assembly on electoral reform?

Mr. Klein: Well, notwithstanding how many people or what percentage of people turned out, we managed to elect 63 members. That is the democratic process, Mr. Speaker. That is the democratic process. If the hon. member can count, there are 63 of us. There are only – how many? – 16 of them, give or take, four, and one. Everything is on the table. Send me a proposal.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that over 50 per cent of voters in the last election supported opposition parties, why doesn't this government have all-party policy committees, which are common practice elsewhere?

Mr. Klein: I have explained time and time again. First of all, this is a Legislature. It is not the House of Commons. Other ND Legislatures and other Liberal Legislatures don't have any form of committee system whatsoever. In other words, they do things from the top down, including Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, these are standing policy committees. They are not standing committees of the Parliament or the Legislature. They are standing policy committees of government. I would like to make that clear: of government. Standing policy committees of government.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the Premier has said that he could, quote, care less about fixed

election dates because he, quote, won't be running, won't be around anyways, will the Premier level the playing field for everyone who will be running and commit to fixed election dates in Alberta?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with telling only part of the story . . .

An Hon. Member: That's tactful.

Mr. Klein: Oh, it is tactful. That's what he does.

The other part of the story, Mr. Speaker, is that for every upside there is a downside. What he forgot to say is that I also said, "For every action there is an equal and opposite and often negative reaction." So send me a proposal. We'll consider it, but we'll consider both the pros and the cons.

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

Public Opinion Survey on Health Care

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today this government released the results of a survey which concludes that changes are needed to our health care system, a point that I believe all of us would agree on. What this survey does not do is justify the government's plan for its so-called third way. Instead, it shows that Albertans want changes within the public system. My questions are to the Premier. Given that this survey shows that half of these respondents didn't know what the third way was and those who did had five different ideas of its definition, will the Premier commit now to releasing more details of the government's plans?

2:20

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the Minister of Health and Wellness speak to the specifics of the survey results. But what I find very interesting – and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition alluded to it – is that changes are needed. Substantial changes are needed to achieve sustainability; in other words, to bring the cost of health care down in line with the rate of inflation and to improve access. Another thing the survey pointed out was that Albertans want to make their own choices and manage their own health care, and that speaks to many of the initiatives that have already been undertaken. I've said from the very beginning that debate is healthy, and Albertans are making sure their voices are heard. The survey is just one more way.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the top two suggested changes were to improve wait times and to increase staff levels, why is this government pursuing reforms that will see increased doctor shortages and even longer wait times in the public system?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, all we have put forward are proposals contained in the health policy framework, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the colleagues in the House would know, when we talked about our supplementary estimates, we talked about additional dollars to improve the access times, to build on the great success of the hip and joint project, which has made a considerable difference throughout, putting the patient first, building a strong public system. The heavy emphasis of eight of the 10

policies is on building a strong public system, sustaining it, and advancing innovatively.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Premier: given that within those surveyed, of those who wanted a change to the health care system, only 3 per cent – 3 per cent – wanted a two-tiered system and 7 per cent wanted partial privatization, will the Premier now rule out private payment for preferential access? Will he rule it out?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I would rule in anything that achieves the two things that we want to achieve, and I'm sure the opposition wants to achieve them. Those are improvement in access and bringing the costs of health care, which now exceed \$10 billion annually and will eat up our total budget by the year 2025 – already in New Democrat Manitoba, where they have no cares whatsoever about spending money, it eats up 43 per cent of their budget. It's no wonder that their roads are falling to pieces and their education system is lacking and there's no money for the protection of people and property and privacy. That's the ND way.

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

Government Accountability

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Democracies can be distinguished by whether the people and their representatives can examine what the government does and whether the government is accountable. Yet in this province secrecy and spin, not openness and transparency, seem to be the norm. To the Premier: why is the government proposing a new FOIP policy which will increase government secrecy when there is such compelling evidence that democratic openness and transparency are much needed?

Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Rules

The Speaker: Hon. member, as the chair recalls, yesterday there was second reading on a bill dealing with this matter. This matter is currently before the House. All members have opinions on this and may participate; this is not a position of one person. The bill is before the House, hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: I see, Mr. Speaker. Okay. I'll move on.

Government Accountability (continued)

Mr. Elsalhy: To the Premier again: when will the public-sector whistle-blowers in Alberta receive legislated protection instead of a witch hunt every time they open their mouths to expose corruption?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I take strong exception to that assertion that a witch hunt is conducted against those who wish to report legitimately on the misdoings and the misconduct of others. I can tell you that if anyone wants to report anything, they are not punished in any way, shape, or form.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. One more time to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: given the vital role in ensuring accountability played by the federal Auditor General, when will this government empower Alberta's Auditor General with the necessary resources, the necessary autonomy, and the investigative powers for him to do a better job?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member – and I understand that he is new and maybe doesn't understand the rules – that the Auditor General reports to the Legislature. He is not under the control or the direction of the government whatsoever. He is under the control and the direction of the Legislature, including the opposition.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Automobile Insurance

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans who want to see what our health care system will look like in a few years under the Conservative third way need look no further than the profits being made today by the private auto insurance industry. The insurance industry made an obscene profit of \$6.5 billion on the backs of the country's drivers in 2005, which was almost 50 per cent higher than the record \$4.2 billion profit they made the year before. My questions are for the Premier. Will the government take action to protect Alberta drivers from being gouged and order an immediate rollback in auto insurance rates?

Mr. Klein: I'm going to have the Minister of Finance expand on my answer, but I want to provide a preamble, and that is to remind the New Democrat opposition that the Alberta Automobile Insurance Rate Board sets rates annually to ensure fairness to consumers.

I'll have the hon. Finance minister respond further.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the report that I think the hon. member is referring to does not confine itself to automobile insurance. It is all property insurance. So you really have to take that information and look at the area of auto alone. What I would inform the House is that it is our estimate and I think the insurance industry's estimate that Alberta drivers have saved \$300 million in premiums under our reforms.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, there's a Santa Claus too.

This is to the Premier. If the Saskatchewan automobile insurance corporation can offer an 8 per cent reduction in rates to its drivers because it's making a good profit, why can't the private insurance industry do it, and why doesn't this government direct them to do it?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance expand on that, but I would remind the leader of the New Democratic Party that the insurance agency in Saskatchewan, the socialist agency, can compete here if they want to.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think that rather than charging the money and giving it back, the system that we've put in place will work much better. We have had two rollbacks in insurance rates here. We have an opportunity again this summer for the Automobile Insurance Rate Board to examine the premiums and profits, and at that time if it is determined that there should be a further lowering of premiums, it will happen then.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that the government promised Alberta drivers that the rates that they pay would be the same or even lower than those enjoyed by people who live in provinces with public automobile insurance, isn't it true and will the Premier not admit that he has just broken another promise to Albertans?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, no, I won't admit anything. The only thing I will admit is that we achieved what we wanted to do. The hon.

leader of the ND, the socialist opposition, would have us think that we were trying to punish all drivers. What we were trying to do was eliminate penalties for younger good drivers and eliminate financial penalties for older good drivers. If the ND opposition, the socialist opposition, thinks that was wrong, stand up and say so.

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

2:30 Government Spending

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been hearing a lot from this government recently about sustainability and the cost of health care. While health spending is increasing, the rate of overall government spending, excluding health, is also rising at an unsustainable rate. We should learn our lessons from the past and avoid boom/bust spending. Wise fiscal prudence would have us cap spending and increase savings now to avoid drastic cuts later. My questions are for the Premier. Will this government limit the budget to current levels with an index for inflation and population growth to avoid drastic cuts later?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, details of our spending plans will be contained in the budget when it's tabled in a short period of time.

I'll have the hon. Finance minister respond to the extent that she can respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I always find it interesting when they get up and say: "You should reduce spending. You're spending too much." When I ask the question of the hon. members who say this, "Do you want me to reduce spending in Health?" it's "Well, actually, we've been asking for more spending in that area." "Do you want to reduce spending in Education?" "Well, actually, we're not funding our schools enough." "Do we want to reduce funding in Advanced Education?" "Well, actually, we don't have enough spaces for all of our students, so we can't do that either." "Should we reduce spending in Children's Services?" "Well, no. We want more money for Children's Services so that we can provide more lunches, more services every day." It is irresponsible to stand in this House and complain about government spending with absolutely no solution at hand.

Mr. Hinman: Well, more ministers and more bureaucrats wasn't where we were asking for spending.

My question again is to the Premier. Will this government protect Alberta's long-term interests by depositing 30 per cent of resource revenues into the heritage savings trust fund, as was originally intended?

Mr. Klein: I don't know if it was originally intended. I can't find the policy written anywhere that that, indeed, should happen. I would remind the hon. member that when I came into government in 1989, as you so rightfully pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the size of the public service was in excess of 30,000. It is now 22,960.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It won't take long and we'll be back to where we were.

My last question to the Premier: will this government alleviate the pressure on property tax by distributing 2 per cent of the provincial revenues on a per capita basis unconditionally to municipal governments?

Mr. Klein: I'll have the hon. Finance minister expand on that question through her answer. I can tell the hon. member, through you, Mr. Speaker, that we give 5 cents per litre of gasoline to major municipalities. We have taken over total financing for all secondary roads, total financing for all major highways through municipalities. In addition to that, we have distributed amongst the municipalities \$3 billion in unsolicited funds. Three billion dollars. That is a lot of money.

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

Marlborough Elementary School

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning 400 students went to Marlborough school expecting that they would have a normal day filled with classroom activities. Instead, they were confronted with locked doors because the roof on their school is structurally unsound. These students have been dispersed to other schools, such as Bob Edwards and Greenview in northwest Calgary, which is at least 45 minutes on the bus for K to grade 4 students. My question is to the hon. Minister of Education. What is his department doing to work with the Calgary board of education to ensure that not a single instructional hour is lost for the students at Marlborough elementary school?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think we should thank the Calgary public board for acting very quickly and doing the precautionary measure of ensuring that the structural nature of the roof is thoroughly investigated and assessed. The second thing is that the Calgary board has already made arrangements for these students to be transferred for the next several days, I would assume, to neighbouring schools to make sure that no instructional time is being lost. My department has been working with them in that respect, and I feel pretty comfortable that the temporary plan, at least, will not result in any lost educational time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister inform my constituents as to how long his department has been aware of concerns with the structural integrity of the roof at the Marlborough elementary school?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, my Department of Education doesn't yet have full technical responsibility for infrastructure. That is the plan, and that is going to be transferred over very soon. We have consulted with the ministry of infrastructure, and I can tell you that an assessment was performed by the ministry of infrastructure in co-operation with the Calgary board of education. Our government, in fact, provided some \$25,000 some time ago for that to be done. I don't have an exact date. I will get that for the hon. member.

I think it's important to stress here that there have been no casualties. There hasn't been any harm done. This is a precautionary measure taken by locally elected trustees, and I think they've acted in very good faith.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: could the minister inform my constituents as to what steps he is taking to ensure that repairs to the school will be expedited to permit students to return to school in their community as soon as possible?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, a lot is being done. In fact, I just got an envelope here of the news release from the Calgary board. I think it's important, first of all, to address the fact that the Calgary board of education will hold a meeting for parents on Thursday, March 16 – that's tomorrow – at the Bob Edwards school, and they will provide some more detailed information to parents and guardians regarding the situation at Marlborough school.

The other thing is to stress, of course, that the Calgary board of education and our government take the health and safety of our children very, very seriously. I'm very pleased that we're going to be ensuring that health and safety for students is not compromised. We are going to be working with them as soon as that engineering report is completed, and we will ensure that whatever funds are necessary there will be provided. We provide about \$9 million to the Calgary board of education for major infrastructure renewal as part of the \$730 million overall that we provide annually.

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

School Infrastructure

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. Member for Calgary-East pointed out, Marlborough elementary school in Calgary had to be evacuated this morning because of structural concerns. The school has problems with the roof. After engineers examined it, school board officials decided it was unsafe for the students. The majority of schools in Calgary are of a similar age, 1968 or older. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity does have the floor.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are all to the Minister of Education. Given that the Calgary board of education has an infrastructure debt of over \$400 million, how many more structural concerns will be allowed to reach the critical point before this government takes action? [interjections]

2:40

The Speaker: There's a synergy that exists between the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity and the Minister of Education. Now it's the Minister of Education's turn.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my turn, but I'm not going to start yelling and shouting, not on the democratic day that we're celebrating.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there are a number of new schools that have opened or have been approved for the Calgary board of education just in the last couple of years. Let me just read 15 of them quickly. [interjections] No? All right.

Well, then, let me simply say this. Mr. Speaker, the Calgary board of education in its news release today clearly said that it is "temporarily relocating students from Marlborough School in Northeast Calgary as a precautionary measure while it conducts a comprehensive assessment of potential structural problems at the building." They are doing a precautionary thing. We should be thanking them. We shouldn't be yelling at them. We shouldn't be accusing them of anything untoward. They've not done anything wrong here. They've acknowledged that there might be a problem, and they're erring on the side of caution and doing this preliminary assessment. So that's a good move.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the backdrop of a \$7.4 billion surplus how can the Education ministry justify its inaction on maintenance and new school construction?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think we've done a pretty good job so far. That doesn't mean that a better job can't be done in the future. I'm going to be addressing this with school board chairs when I meet with them on Friday, March 24, which I've alluded to here earlier. I've already provided them with a temporary agenda, and infrastructure is one of those issues that we're going to look at. Suffice it to say that in the range of about \$800 million is being spent in this area, and Calgary is getting a reasonable share of that. I'm not immune to Calgary's growth pressures. I know that they need more schools in that area. As soon as monies become available, I can guarantee you that they're going to get some.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When is this government going to take kids off the buses, out of decaying school structures, and provide a healthy school environment?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that there's no inference that buses are an unsafe environment. We have very capable bus drivers out there who are absolutely pledged to ensuring a safe and caring environment on the school buses. Now, there is an issue of bus ride times. That's a separate matter. But the health and safety of our students is protected on buses and in the classroom. We're pretty proud of that record so far, and we're going to ensure that that proud record continues as a legacy into the future.

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

Keephills Electricity Generation Plant

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's announcement by TransAlta and EPCOR to construct a new 450 megawatt, \$750 million coal-fired generating unit at TransAlta's Keehills site is great news for the economic development of my constituency of Stony Plain and great news for all Albertans. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Can the minister assure my constituents and all Albertans that this new project will utilize the newest proven technology to ensure that the coal required for this project will be used in the most efficient manner and that the environmental impact of the generating process will be further reduced to protect our environment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can assure Albertans that they're going to have continued progress on the cleanest coal, the best technologies that are available to be used. This is still early in the process. They've just signed a development agreement. There's much work to be done. It'll have to have all of the clearances by the Energy and Utilities Board, by Alberta Environment to ensure that those environmental standards are met.

In fact, Genesee 3 was one of the latest coal-fired plants brought on, and that set the benchmark. It's going to have to meet that or even a superior benchmark. Just for some illustration of the standards that that's meeting, most of the sulphur dioxide is eliminated in those processes. There's about a 50 per cent reduction in NO_x; particulates, virtually nil. Carbon dioxide emission is even down 15 per cent in those coal-fired plants.

New legislation is coming for mercury. Alberta Environment has brought in a 50 per cent reduction in mercury emissions. That's going to be in place by 2010.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: does the minister's department project that the electricity will be needed by Albertans in 2011, when this project is scheduled to be commissioned?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate that we have one of the fastest growing, best places in the world to invest, to live, and to work, and we continue to see the growth and the need for generation of electricity. We are going to need this plant and others to come forward, so clearly there is a great demand. The marketplace has acknowledged the tremendous benefits of our electricity deregulation. They have brought on generation faster than in any other jurisdiction in North America. About 4,000 megawatts have been brought on in the last few years, and this will add to the continuing growth of the long-term availability and supply of generation.

Mr. Lindsay: To the same minister: will the province's electrical transmission network be strengthened in time to ensure that this much-needed new generation will be deliverable to Albertans and possibly others?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, transmission continues to be one of the more urgent needs. The Energy and Utilities Board along with the Alberta Electric System Operator have been doing a long 10-year, 20-year plan on the transmission needs. They've approved a line between Calgary and Edmonton that's to be constructed. It's urgent that that be put in place. The anticipated completion of that is 2009-2010, in that time period. That will be in advance of this new generation that comes from that area. The transmission lines will be available to carry that load.

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

Calgary Health Trust

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary Health Trust, a fundraising arm of the Calgary health region, has resorted to soliciting donations for medical equipment like heart monitors and stretchers. Requests for charitable donations have been posted throughout Calgary hospitals in an effort to make up for funding shortfalls. My questions are all to the Minister of Health and Wellness. As the richest province in the country why are we collecting donations for basic medical equipment?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, today in Public Accounts this question was raised relative to the collection of funds by Calgary Health Trust. I had the opportunity to speak with the chair of the Calgary Health Trust, Mrs. Pat Nelson, who used to be a sitting member. She talked to me about the times that people in memory of their loved ones wished to make donations, and predominantly many of the bequests that come to the Calgary Health Trust take advantage of just that opportunity.

For many decades in Alberta people have chosen either to fund raise on behalf of local priorities or because local people want to prompt other kinds of amenities in hospitals or, in fact, have been in appreciation of the kinds of care they've received in public health

care facilities. Particularly when people are in the terminal stages, they often feel a great attachment to those facilities. This trust fund takes an opportunity to take advantage of consolidating those resources in order to supply hospitals and health care facilities with the right types of facilities.

Ms Blakeman: Openly soliciting, advertising for donations.

Again to the same minister: where does this government draw the line on what new medical equipment is deemed essential and what is a luxury and open for donations?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that in some of the private, nonprofit, and other institutions one might well categorize some of the replacement equipment provided by auxiliaries or other fundraisers as essential. Again, it is their choice. Our government with the federal government has through the last several years, in the recent past, done a great deal to co-operate on diagnostic equipment. The many millions of dollars that are spent on new MRIs and CT scans come from the resources of the province. To the largest extent we try to provide the essential ingredients. I would suggest that although some of these pieces of equipment from time to time in certain institutions might also be categorized as essential, it has not been so much solicited as it has been the preferred offering of generous donors who want to improve our health care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: well, is it the minister's position, then, that these health regions should have to rely on these so-called generous donations in order to provide basic medical services to Albertans?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, basic medical services for Albertans is certainly the mandate and mission of the government of Alberta. I might also add that if people wish to provide more amenities – many people fund raise for ambulances, for example, in rural communities – it becomes a large part of a community endeavour that they're not only proud to do, but they enjoy doing. Many of these kinds of amenities have built communities by pioneers who have taken great pride in adding to their community with local dollars over and above what has been provided by government. Rather than worry about this, I think we should congratulate the members of the Calgary trust fund for a job well done.

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

2:50

Forest Industry

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Recently the government of Ontario announced a multimillion dollar aid package for its forest industry. Is Alberta considering similar relief for this province's forest sector?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as you and this Assembly and all Albertans know, we are not in the business of being in business. We recognize first and foremost that the forest industry is facing many economic challenges that have been brought on by a number of things, including a strong Canadian dollar and a weak U.S. dollar, rising costs, and certainly global competitiveness works its way into

there too. These economic pressures are not just being faced by Alberta industry; this is across Canada as well. Ontario recently updated their stumpage system, which we did January 1, 2006, in Alberta. So all provinces across this country are grappling with this issue. Our industry, to their credit, has not asked for a bailout. What they have asked is that the Alberta Forest Products Association and the government, my ministry, look at competitiveness, costs, and at future markets and come up with an Alberta-made solution.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Is your department working on a strategy to develop other market opportunities for Alberta's forest industry?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that is yes. We are actually committing to seeing the forest industry grow and prosper. To support our industry, we have to take a look at participating in cross-ministry initiatives with Economic Development and other ministries to look at exploring emerging markets that may be out there for our fibre, fibre that we can adapt to the marketplace for our own forest products, and looking at new and innovative ways in terms of synthetic fibres that come from agricultural products as well. We would be working through our partnerships but, more importantly, looking at science, research, and technology to help us build those new markets for our products.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the same minister. How is this approach going to help Albertans in rural communities that look to forest industries for their livelihood?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very important question, and I want to thank the hon. member for it because it actually speaks to the heart of the issue. This is not just about industry; this is about Alberta and it's about Albertans. The long-term sustainability of our rural communities is impacted by the long-term health and sustainability of our forests and the forest industry in Alberta. In addition to those initiatives that I talked about, we're working with our MLAs; we are working with our industry and our communities to help industry remain competitive in a global market. More importantly, these efforts I believe will address the viability of our existing communities to help them remain competitive and supportive of Alberta communities.

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

Coal-fired Electricity Generation Plants

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I attended a news conference with citizens fighting a massive new set of transmission lines designed to facilitate exports of coal-fired electricity to the California market. This follows on the heels of yesterday's EPCOR and TransAlta announcement that they plan to build a new 450-megawatt generating unit near Lake Wabamun using the same old dirty-coal technology that the Premier told Albertans in his televised address was no longer being used. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. Will the minister stand in his place and assure Albertans that under no circumstances will his government allow the proposed Keephills 3 generating plant

to be built using the same old dirty-coal burning technology that is being used in the Genesee 3 generating units?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, thank you very much for the question. To the hon. member I also want to say that I think it's really wise for all of us in this 21st century that rather than dealing with labels, such as calling things dirty coal, maybe we should save labels for planets and not for people and the kinds of initiatives that are taken forward. That actually came from David Suzuki. He said that rather than trying to pigeonhole and disenfranchise and really exclude in terms of new technologies, new regulation that's going to reduce mercury as we go forward, Alberta will continue to lead this country with environmental practices.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask why the minister is stubbornly refusing to require zero-emission coal gasification technologies to be used for these future coal-generating units, including the proposed Keephills 3 plant.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the ultimate goal of all Albertans – and I know that all Albertans and members of this House and, certainly, the Member for West Yellowhead would agree – is: first and foremost, how do we use technology? How do we reduce emissions? What is the government doing? I'll tell you what the government is doing. We are reducing, in terms of our emissions, by 50 per cent by the year 2010. Can we do better? Our attitude is – Albertans have an attitude – we can always do better, and we will continue to do better through technologies.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, why is the minister putting the profits of power companies who want to use and have been using outdated coal-burning technology to export Alberta power to the United States ahead of public health and this province's environment?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, public health in this province is number one. The environment is very important to us all. Again, rather than using labels, let us embrace our positive energy and positive things in what we're doing to harness that energy in positive initiatives. As a former not NDP but Liberal cabinet minister from Ottawa said: it's clear that Alberta is leading the way in environmental initiatives.

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

Alberta/Montana Electricity Transmission Line

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Electricity deregulation has been a very bad deal for Alberta consumers from the very start: higher costs, lower service . . .

An Hon. Member: It's the same as yesterday.

Mr. MacDonald: It is the same as yesterday, but the power bills have not gone down, hon. member.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the floor, and I hear interjections from all corners of the House. So, hon. member, let's start over.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Electricity deregulation has been a bad deal for Alberta consumers from the very start: higher costs, lower customer service, and now we have problems with the

development of the transmission system. Citizens from across this province and even in the state of Montana gathered in the south end of Edmonton before noon today to express their concerns about increased electricity exports from this province. They spoke specifically about the Alberta/Montana tie-line. My first question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Energy. Will the Alberta government intervene before the National Energy Board on behalf of this alliance of landowners, farmers, and ranchers that are opposed to the proposed construction of the Alberta/Montana tie-line?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to point out a couple of things. First off, this line that's proposed is actually being built and developed to promote wind energy, for one. We're trying to still promote the renewables, trying to promote clean alternatives. I guess that we could cut off an ability to transport it anywhere, but transmission is a fundamental piece of our integration and reliable delivery of electricity. Better ties will only allow more generation capacity to also be imported into Alberta. It's not just a one-way flow outside, going export. It allows us reliability of bringing more in. We are one of the few jurisdictions in North America that are very limited by the amount of inter-ties between the provinces and the United States.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: can this government guarantee electricity consumers in Alberta that their bills will not increase even more if we export large volumes of electricity to the United States through this proposed Alberta/Montana tie-line?

The Speaker: On previous occasions the chair has said that nobody can give guarantees.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Okay. I cannot guarantee that.

Mr. MacDonald: I knew the answer to the question, Mr. Speaker.

Now this question to the same minister: given that we now have a link to the North American market for natural gas and everyone knows what that has done for the gas bills here in Alberta – they have gone up; we pay the same price in Edmonton as we do in Chicago – will the same effect happen for electricity prices when we have this direct link to the American market? Will our bills go even higher?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, that's pure speculation again. We have benefited substantially by having greater capacity to export natural gas. This year alone something like 14 and a half billion dollars in royalties and revenues have been brought in that we wouldn't have been able to have. We were stranding our gas in the past right here in Alberta. There's a very major difference, though, between natural gas and electricity. Natural gas is really quite a scarce commodity. It is becoming very difficult to find, so supply and demand have made for a higher North American price on natural gas, clearly. We have substantial, many ways, numerous opportunities to perpetually generate electricity in many formats, not having ever the concern of being short of supply.

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

Assistance for Grains and Oilseeds Sector

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly enough, 100 years ago our grains and oilseeds producers were earning almost the same dollar for a bushel of wheat as they are today. Yet today, in the past 30 years they've seen a 1,200 per cent increase in the cost of fuel, an over 1,500 per cent increase in the cost of fertilizer. Most of our producers in the grains and oilseeds sector are cash strapped going into the spring season. They hope they can afford crop insurance. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. One of the primary questions that the producers have been asking of late, those that couldn't afford to get into CAIS before, is: will they be eligible to receive some of the federal payment under the grains and oilseeds program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member made some very interesting and accurate comments about the crisis facing our grains and oilseeds sectors this year. While our production breakeven has obviously gone up a tremendous amount, it is indeed true that the input costs have gone up a tremendous amount as well. The federal government, as many in this House will know, did announce a program payment last fall that the new federal government has accelerated this spring. How they've accelerated that payment is by utilization of the CAIS program and the '04 information that producers had applied with in the CAIS program.

What's important to note for Alberta, Mr. Speaker, is that all producers have the ability to retroactively participate in the CAIS program all the way back to 2003 if they get their information in prior to the end of March this year. What's also important, as it relates to the payments from the federal government, is that if they had their '04 information in, then automatically those federal payments will flow to those producers. My concern is that close to 9,000 producers who participated in '03 have not put their information in for '04 as yet, and the deadline at the end of March is fast approaching.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second question that seems to come up a lot, Mr. Minister: if producers who might receive payment under the spring price endorsement or the revenue insurance coverage component of crop insurance receive that payment, is it going to impact their production index? Will it have a long-term effect on their yield coverage for their premium?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The great thing about these two options is that they do not have an impact on the yield coverage in the premiums nor do they reduce payments under the CAIS program, which we were just talking about. There are two beneficial features of these programs, and they are that they are independent from the producers' marketing strategies – therefore, they'll have no impact on the producers' future premiums – and secondly, the programs actually encourage producers to manage their farm and not the program.

I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that we did raise the revenue insurance coverage floor prices by 7 per cent this year to help offset

some of the impact of this higher cost of production. For example, some of these floor prices for 2006 and some of our major commodities are: red spring wheat, \$4.22 a bushel; barley, \$2.57 a bushel; canola, \$7.17 per bushel. Those are the target prices that were set under the RIC program. Again, we would like the producers to actively get involved in participating in these programs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. For those that are contemplating enrolling this year but might not be able to afford it, are there any options available in terms of affordability, Mr. Minister?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm encouraging all of the producers to participate in some of the meetings that are being held across the province right now. The Ag Financial Services Corporation is exploring those options with all producers in about 32 meetings that are happening across the province. It's important that these workshops are attended by producers who are interested in participating in CAIS or by those producers who may not understand the programs that are out there or the package of benefits that we have for producers. So I would encourage them to get in touch with their local AFSC office to explore those options.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 78 questions and answers in the 50-minute time frame today.

In 30 seconds I'll call upon the first of several hon. members to participate in Members' Statements.

Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you to you for your indulgence and, certainly, to the House. Mr. Speaker, what I consider one of the perks of this job is that I can introduce to you and through you to this House my granddaughter Kerstin Williams. In the end this is what it's really all about: our grandchildren. She's a grade 11 student at Bev Facey high school in Sherwood Park. She's an accomplished dancer. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Just so you know, your grandmother does behave here.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Britny Martens
Danielle Hilsabeck

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have known for quite some time that my constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka is blessed with a strong, talented, and active youth population. The 2006 Great Kids awards that were presented on March 5 proved this yet again. Out

of the 236 province-wide nominations 16 kids were honoured, including two young ladies from my riding: Britny Martens and Danielle Hilsabeck.

Britny was recognized in part because of her efforts in organizing a seven-kilometre walk in her hometown of Alix to raise funds and awareness for the Kidney Foundation of Canada. What's more is that the event, which was named the Give the Gift of Life Walk for Awareness, was done in response to her father's kidney disease. For an 11-year-old to show this kind of perseverance, compassion, and courage is a true inspiration. Through Britny's leadership the event was extremely successful, having raised \$7,000 and an invaluable increase in public knowledge.

The list of Danielle Hilsabeck's accomplishments is long and impressive, especially considering her age of only 14 years. Through her duties as the Clive junior high school students' union president she portrays natural leadership qualities, kindness, and respect to all students. On top of Danielle's other responsibilities she also took on the lead role in the production of the school yearbook last year, acting as a replacement for a teacher who fell ill. Her management skills allowed her to guide 15 student volunteers to a successful result. She is now the official editor of the entire yearbook.

I am proud to recognize the efforts and determination of these young ladies here today, and it is an honour to represent them in this Assembly. With great kids like Britny and Danielle calling the riding of Lacombe-Ponoka their home, I know that our constituency and our province have a bright future. Mr. Speaker, once again I congratulate them both on their outstanding accomplishments.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

3:10 **New Brigden School Fundraising**

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler. In life and in sports it's often said that it's not how tall or how strong you are that counts; it's your dedication and the size of your heart. So is the case with Alberta's small rural schools.

New Brigden school is one fine example. It's the most northerly school in the Prairie Rose school division, located in a small farming community in the Drumheller-Stettler constituency. This small school of just 49 students in grades 1 to 9 was involved in three projects which are making a big difference in many ways.

Mrs. Machell and the grades 1, 2, and 3 class learned their lessons about conservation and over three years collected pennies for the planet. The students then presented \$180 to Ducks Unlimited in October 2005 towards preserving wetlands.

The students together with their parents and community members tackled recycling. They filled recycling bins with beverage containers and helped the students' union win \$500 from Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation's school recycling program as the top collector in the small school category. These funds along with the money from the containers themselves will be used for students' union activities.

The school has also undertaken a project to fund the building of a well in India. By raising \$750, the students will provide a safe source of drinking water to a village of over 200 people. Through the sale of calendars created by the grades 1, 2, and 3 class, a silver collection at the Christmas concert, and a number of donations from within the community, they have raised \$608.64 as of March 9, leaving them just shy of their goal.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts of the students of this rural school should be an inspiration to all of us and demonstrate the importance of

small rural schools as important members of the community and helping to develop strong character and good citizenship as part of a well-rounded education. These are just a couple of the reasons why Alberta students are amongst the best in the world and benefit from an outstanding and caring education system in our province.

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

Democratic Reform

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To remember democracy is especially important as many of our sons and daughters are in harm's way in Afghanistan as we meet here today. They are tasked to battle a terrorism that is directly aimed at our way of life and our democracy.

I speak often of democracy to children. I visit all the school classes in Edmonton-Manning that have visited these halls. We talk of this room as our great hall of democracy. We talk of its importance to our way of life. I tell them of some of the 46 countries I've been in and how so many of the places are where people are fighting and dying to have the right to vote. Much of the world would love to have our democracy. I tell them that it is so important what we have, but when I leave the kids, I sometimes wonder: what is happening here in Alberta?

Last night we debated yet another emergency supply bill, over \$6 billion outlined in a small booklet with no details, some line items in the billions, emergency supply gone awry. This should not be normal for a democracy. The huge amounts do not constitute emergencies. What is happening? Our American neighbours started their revolution with the cry: no taxation without representation. What is happening?

We also debated last night a bill which put more into regulation, to be decided in secret behind closed doors. Secret decision-making is out of control, and there are no opposition members on standing policy committees, more secrets. What is happening?

There is hope, Mr. Speaker. There is hope for democracy. We heard questions today about citizens' assemblies and about electoral reform. We must enter this 21st century. We must renew our democracy. It is rapidly approaching a time for change. Let us embrace it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

U of C Human Performance Laboratory

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People who live at the foot of a mountain seldom realize how high the mountain is, so today I rise to speak about something outstanding that is close to us. I'm talking about the human performance lab at the University of Calgary, that I had the opportunity to visit. The lab's international reputation is well established with its partnership with many athletic companies. Name any international, well-known sport company; my bet is that they are working with the U of C's human performance lab. Name any high-tech shoes worn by top world athletes and players; my bet is that they can be traced to the research and design from this lab. I'm talking about high-tech shoes for athletes in soccer, basketball, track and field sports, even golf clubs as well.

The work on sports equipment is only a small part. The greater research discoveries and achievements are in human physical and mental performance and endurance. In the recent Winter Olympics the outstanding achievements of Canadian athletes can be traced to the work of dedicated people at the U of C's human performance lab. They are now working harder and smarter for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

Building the ultimate athletic and sports equipment is only about 20 per cent of the researchers' work. The other 80 per cent of the work is on health and wellness and improvement of the quality of life for Albertans, Canadians, and humanity. The researchers also examine aging and mobility of people, how to prevent injuries and diseases such as osteoporosis, arthritis, and cardiovascular problems.

I would like to ask all members of this House to join me in commending the great work of the researchers at the U of C's human performance lab and commending the University of Calgary for their vision in establishing such a world-leading study centre. Alberta's educational institutions are outstanding, Alberta researchers are world class, and Alberta students are eager to learn and discover. So investment in education is the best investment.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

One Hundred Years of Democracy

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also my great honour to rise today in recognition of Alberta's milestone, the 100th anniversary of democracy in our province. Last year was a banner year for all Albertans. We celebrated the centennial of our province in grand fashion. We took time to recognize how far we have come together and recognize how much further we have the potential to go. Today we celebrate something even more important. The prosperity, good governance, and democratic freedoms that Albertans enjoy today saw their genesis not in this Chamber but rather in the Thistle rink and then the McKay Avenue school with the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature. From these humble beginnings 100 years ago our predecessors have developed a grand and noble tradition. They sat, as we sit now, with the goal of making Alberta a better place for all who are fortunate to call it home.

A full century has passed since that beginning, and while the location of the Legislature may have changed, the principles that guide it have not. The concepts of freedom, democracy, and justice introduced to our province so long ago have only grown stronger with the passage of time. Albertans are fortunate to enjoy a level of democracy that many in the world do not. As we pass this anniversary, let us look back with pride at what was and forward with hope to what will be.

Tomorrow this anniversary will be behind us, but what it represents will remain everlasting. We as representatives of the democratic process will continue to play our part. Eventually we will move on, but democracy will remain and grow stronger. The principles established a century ago have survived war, disease, depression, and hardship. They have survived and emerged healthier and more vibrant than ever. They will continue to flourish well into their second century and beyond.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it has been my honour today as a member of this Assembly to recognize this anniversary, and it continues to be my privilege as a citizen of this province to participate every day in the freedoms that it commemorates.

Thank you.

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

Assistance for Alberta's Farm Families

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Alberta's farm families. Farmers and their families were some of the first settlers in our province, but times have changed on the family farm.

An Hon. Member: You don't even know one.

Mr. MacDonald: I'm sorry. I grew up on one.

Now fertilizer and fuel costs are some of the biggest regular expenses for farmers, not to mention the costs of equipment and even university tuition for their children. Commodity prices continue to fall despite increases in all the expenses for supplies purchased off the farm. Everyone else, it seems, gets their share before the farmer. This is not the result of a one-time disaster or just a bad year. These trends are an economic reality for many farmers.

3:20

This government, in co-operation with the federal government, responded to this farm crisis with the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, or the CAIS program, as it is called. The goal of this program was to integrate stabilization and disaster protection into one program. It has however fallen far short of its goal. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business described the ills of the CAIS program in its recently released report *The Case Against CAIS*.

The pages of this report tell a tale familiar to all those that call farming a way of life. A full 58 per cent of CAIS participants are dissatisfied with the program. They feel that it is far too complex, and they know that it is riddled with time-consuming and expensive paperwork. Farmers continue to jump this endless series of hurdles in their need for some income support only to find that the program that is there for them provides too little money and often is too late. The result is that the CAIS program has added accountant fees to the long list of farm input costs. Almost 10 per cent of farmers are paying over \$5,000 just to participate in the program. It is clear that the CAIS program is not providing a long-term solution to the farm income crisis. Farmers need to be treated fairly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we move on to the next item of business on the Routine, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasant task that I have this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all our colleagues here in the Legislature a lady that's here on her first-time visit. She would be one of the stalwarts behind legislators in the province of Alberta. She is associated with my colleague from West Yellowhead, and I would ask Tammy to please rise and receive the warm welcome of my colleagues in the Legislature.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm submitting a petition on behalf of many concerned Albertans from the communities of Hill Spring, Magrath, and Glenwood petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to

eliminate all [school] fees for instructional supplies and materials . . . textbooks, musical instruments, physical education programs, locker rentals, lunch hour supervision and required field trips, and to ensure that schools are not deprived of the resources necessary to offer these programs and services without additional charges to parents or guardians.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of 20 Albertans. This petition reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to call a public inquiry into Enron's role in the development of electricity deregulation in Alberta and their market conduct in the Power Pool of Alberta.

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first tabling is from two of my constituents from Edmonton-McClung, Lorene Gervais and Bryn Berezanski, addressed to the hon. Premier and CCed to me as their MLA, requesting that the hon. Premier instruct the Treasury Board to immediately increase funding to programs helping persons with developmental disabilities.

My second tabling today, Mr. Speaker, is a letter written by a really bright young woman from Edmonton-McClung, Miss Christel Hyska, addressed to the Premier, again, where she goes into great detail informing the Premier why the proposed third way is wrong and complains about the lack of consultation with the citizens of this province.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a total of seven sets of tablings expressing concerns about the provincial government's plan for the future of daycare. For the sake of speed, Mr. Speaker, I will only share the names of those who sent the concerns. To begin with: Maureen Broda, Dan Rupert, Jeanie Blanchette, Dave Miller, and Louise Vos.

The second set was sent by Sarah Webber, Marwa Bondak, Pam Thind, Mary Ann Rabie, Rushmi.

The third set was sent by Binda Pokhareil,* Sandeep Thind, Marianne Skibova, Sharon Kumar, Maryann Javed,* and Sadia Javed.

The next set was sent by Irene Nand, Theresa Baron, Jessie Ramsomair, Bev MacDonald, Sunojnie Gunraj,* Jasvinder Thind.

The next set was by Emma P. Baragona, Surinder Kaur Dhillon, Kathy Justason, Sheryl Semmler, Carolyn Epp, Genna Cabinas.

My second-last set was sent from Don Horne, Lisa McLean, Martin Lafaille, Pritpal Kooner, Burton Baskerville.

The last set was sent by S. Kala, Kanwaljit Thind, Sukhinder Thind, Jashir Bhamber, Avril Magara, and Jolene Chamberlain.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seven more letters regarding the provincial government's involvement in the national daycare program: Tracy and Dave Ludwick, Michele Parker, Tammy Adams, Kimina Sloan,* Vanessa Rotuk,* Joanna Carnium,* and Denise Cote.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table on behalf of the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar a public notice to

*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.

a town hall meeting on public health care, a public consultation which is to occur Wednesday, March 22, at The King's University College, 7125 – 50th Street. The time of this public consultation is between 7 and 9 p.m. Look forward to seeing everyone there.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table six letters and the appropriate copies regarding the provincial government's plan for the future of daycare. These letters are from Jean-Marie Ndahiro, Suzanne Poirier, Rene Robitu, Tamara S. Miners, Joyce Lawrence, and Fatima Bellahmer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table six letters and appropriate copies regarding the provincial government's plan for the future of daycare. The letters I'm tabling today are from Carmen Magana, Mavis Cardinal, Myria Lewis, Pamela Gogowich, J. Perrin, and Matthew Milloy.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my great pleasure today to table with the Assembly a message from Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, March 15, 2006.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 22

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2006

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance it's my pleasure to move for third reading Bill 22, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2006.

There's been some discussion in second reading and at committee of the provisions of the bill. I would just briefly say what I've said every time I've heard the same arguments from the opposition relative to the timing and relative to the process, that interim supply is a time-honoured tradition not just in this House but across the Commonwealth. It's an appropriate methodology to ensure that the business of government continues while the intimate details of budgetary process and normal supply are provided for. This House has the opportunity to debate every bit of spending in detail, not only the budget estimates when they're brought forward and through Committee of Supply but also, of course, supplementary supply.

I was just astounded by the member's statement today from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning when he was talking about emergency. This is not a bill about emergency supply at all. This is part of the normal process of governance. It's part of making sure that governance continues while the opposition and the House, every member of the House, has an opportunity to fully and completely debate the full set of estimates when they're brought forward. It allows government to do budget and estimates on an appropriate basis so that they're not rushed in and fully debated before the end of March in every year but that they have the fullness of debate. Obviously, the interim supply bill only provides for a modest amount of the year coverage to give the time for that full debate.

I would commend it to the House and move Bill 22 for third reading.

3:30

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to comment on the Education expenditures. I'm just looking for it here. I believe we're addressing the question of \$637,400,000. As my good colleague from the constituency of Edmonton-Manning suggested, democracy is not being given the benefit of the process by having to deal with this in a lump sum.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

But be that aside, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm able to dream a little bit here and talk a bit about the things that should be in the budget, and maybe I'll score some points. The Education minister is not here, but I know that his good colleague is there. [interjections] Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I will just comment further on this. Excuse me for that. Anyway, let me say something positive to follow that remark that I carelessly made.

First of all, I think the government deserves some accolades for the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act. I think I support that. I hope that in the purpose – I've added a number (iv) point under Purpose – they would take a look at the act to support and encourage research into the nutrition aspect of people, the spirits they take in, and look at that in terms of healthy bodies and lifestyles. So I hope they would maybe add another purpose to the act, but I think that generally I'm very much supportive of it.

Let me, then, just turn to a claim the government continually makes. It continually says that we have the best education system in the world, and there's a lot of money here. I would just challenge that, and I would go along by saying that we have the best, excellent teaching force in the world in Alberta.

I was at a wonderful ceremony the other night with 16 teachers in St. Albert receiving excellent teaching awards. The interesting thing about these teaching people and meeting the elementary principals at the end of the evening was asking them: what thing would you change in terms of the elementary school? It was interesting that they suggested that the whole question of diagnostic testing should be looked at. It was interesting to hear what they said about that. So I think we're on the right track over here by asking the government to take a look again at the K to 3 area, laying the foundation for kids, and have a look at the whole question of diagnostic testing.

As the Minister of Education was saying the other day, he's meeting, I believe, with special education parents even today. I think that it's today he's meeting them. One of the things that comes out in their literature, their brief to the Minister of Education, is the fact that one in five children – one in five children – has reading problems in starting school. One of the pieces of research that's very clear now is that if we don't do remediation in the elementary school, we are losing these kids. I haven't got a crystal ball, but I hope some of that \$637 million that we're talking about there has some dollars for that particular thrust. I think it's very, very much needed.

On the whole question of special needs for children, the government has the postulates laid out about what special education parents can receive from the government. One of the things that seems to be lacking, according to these parents that I talked to, is the resource base for children with special needs. That's an area I think the government needs to look at as well.

A third area along with this is the whole question of career education. I don't read the *Edmonton Journal* very often. In fact, I

went swimming this morning; that's why my face is so red and my eyes are kind of blurry.

An Hon. Member: I thought they were Liberal.

Mr. Flaherty: No. I do read the *Edmonton Journal* once in a while, and I noticed that in the *Edmonton Journal* they talked about the good apprenticeship program. I'd like to commend the minister on that. But if you think you're doing well now, Mr. Minister, I would suggest that if you could get good support from career counselling in our secondary schools and develop a career education diploma and give it some prestige – with all those good communication officers you have, I'm sure they could spin you up something nice – we would attract students that need to be encouraged to go in that area. I think that's one thing I really would urge the government to look at.

Now, one of the other areas that I have to say I was kind of impressed with the government on is this half hour of physical activity. Unfortunately, I ran into a phys ed specialist from an elementary school at this function the other night in St. Albert, and he said: this is not a bad idea, but the problem with it is we have no way of measuring to see if kids' endurance or cardiovascular is improving. You know, I think that's a very significant point.

An Hon. Member: Put them on a scale.

Mr. Flaherty: We could do that, but I think we have to look at this whole thing.

In terms of the educational process I'd just like again to talk about the Crystal Meth Task Force. I think this is a good move, but I really would like to know how the government is going to report to this Legislature on what this task force is doing. Is it making a difference? What are its deliberations all about? I think it would be very, very important to get that information.

Continuing on my dream for kids and talking about this particular interim budget, about how we're looking to help kids in our schools, I think we should have a look – hopefully there's some money in there; maybe we're going to be surprised on the 22nd and hear that there's money in there for a hot lunch program. We are blessed in St. Albert in that the chairman of the Protestant school board in St. Albert is a specialist in nutrition at the University of Alberta, one of our fine institutions. She's saying that children need good nutrition to do well in school. I think it would be very wonderful if this government could come out with some real insightful and really good thinking and look at this as an area that they would consider in the budget on the 22nd.

Now, the sad thing to talk about here in terms of infrastructure – and we had a look at this this afternoon in terms of the school that had the problem in Calgary; thank goodness no one was hurt, and that's wonderful. We have to look at this whole business of portables. I believe the Calgary Catholic school board received 12 new portables, that, by the way, don't work in the system that they have. These new portables don't fit into the Calgary Catholic school board system, so I'm hoping that we can give them the kind of support that they need. They need 180 of these over the next three years. I hope this budget that we're waiting for will address that issue if it's not in this interim statement here.

Of course, the question of transportation is a big issue as my colleague from Calgary talked about this afternoon. I had a meeting with one of the officials from the ASBA the other day, and he was telling me that we have to look at the funding framework in education in the rural and the urban areas because it's not doing the job.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll sit down and thank you, and I'll turn it over to you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief with my remarks at this time on Bill 22. I would have to caution Alberta taxpayers in regard to this government's attitude towards interim supply. Certainly, the hon. Minister of Advanced Education is correct that it is a tried and true parliamentary tradition, but we have to be very, very careful. Taxpayers are quite aware of this government's spending habits in the past and how those spending habits got us into deep, deep economic trouble. The consequences of those excessive spending habits were cuts to public health care, cuts to public education, cuts to the public service, an infrastructure debt that we're just now beginning to realize how extensive it is.

3:40

So we have to be careful here whenever you consider that the provincial budget literally, Mr. Speaker, under this Progressive Conservative government in the last 10 years has almost doubled. Yet we still have problems like what the hon. Member for St. Albert was talking about. This large amount in this bill, Bill 22, indicates that this government has some planning and priority problems.

Now, I don't know – and I've said this before – whether all the hon. members are so focused on the upcoming leadership review and leadership campaign that they're not focusing on these respective departments, but I sure would urge the hon. members across the way to focus on their departments and, certainly, focus on some of the problems that are currently being brought to the attention of this hon. member.

Specifically, adults with developmental disabilities and their families are very, very concerned this winter about the money that is going to be provided through Seniors and Community Supports for Albertans with developmental disabilities. Now, much has been said about this issue already, and certainly there's a significant amount of money in this bill. Hopefully, that issue will be addressed, and this government won't ignore the advocates, who are standing up and speaking out on behalf of Albertans with developmental disabilities and their families.

It's very important. It is our duty, our obligation, to provide for these citizens. Through no fault of their own they can't participate in our rosy economic activity, but they have every right to live their lives with dignity and with respect, and we must never, never forget that. We shouldn't have to force their families into action every budget year by contacting their respective Member of the Legislative Assembly. They shouldn't have to do that to know that their loved ones with developmental disabilities will be cared for. Now, that's just one issue, Mr. Speaker, but certainly I hope that will be addressed.

Now, the hon. Member for St. Albert was talking about education a little earlier. When we look at this budget and we see the amount of over \$600 million that's going to be allocated for public education, we have to still be concerned about the leadership that's been shown by this government towards the Learning Commission. Certainly, in the neighbourhood that I represent, we've seen the school closure process, that some unfortunate neighbourhoods in Calgary are now experiencing: good public schools being closed, some of them being sold after parents, taxpayers, were told that there was no money to keep these schools open. Now we have millions of dollars in extra money to turn them over to another group. Is that fair? Is this how this government is operating these days?

Parents, Mr. Speaker, have suggested that this government has lost touch; they've lost direction. Parents are very concerned that whenever one school closes and the other schools in the neighbourhood become overcrowded, the fact that the gymnasium can't be used by all students at one time because of the crowding, that's not what I would certainly describe as an Alberta advantage. We have schools that have been designated as receiving schools as a result of these closures, with overcrowding to such an extent that the library is now being used as a classroom. Children routinely eat their lunch in the corridors. They sit on the floor and eat their lunch. Again, I don't think this is good public policy. This was initiated by this government: by the Minister of Infrastructure, by the Minister of Education. Parents, the people who pay the taxes, are not happy. They don't think that their resources are being used wisely. When they're told to send their child to a school and they abide by that, they find out when they get there that the school is in poor repair, that it is overcrowded, and that class sizes have not been reduced like they had been promised. So there's certainly a lot of work to do.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is correct when he talks about the historical use of the interim supply bill, but we have to be very, very careful. I know we're spending a lot of money in this province. I'm going to continue to ask this government if it's being spent wisely and in the right places.

We were at Public Accounts this morning, and one of the officials from the department of health, Mr. Speaker, said that we've got bucketfuls of money. I'm going to have to review *Hansard* from that meeting to get the exact quote. I was surprised that the financial situation was referred to as bucketfuls of money. We have to be very, very careful.

An Hon. Member: Who was it?

Mr. MacDonald: Hon. minister, the ministry of health was in Public Accounts today.

I listened with great interest to that description. I hope that is not the attitude in all ministries: that we have bucketfuls of money. If we do have bucketfuls of money, let's save it in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund and spend wisely. Spend smartly, spend wisely. Let's not spend our finances unnecessarily.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and cede the floor to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, who seems very interested in speaking on this matter.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions or comments. The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I'm intrigued by the hon. member making the statement that a minister of this government made comments about buckets of money. I would just like to get some clarification: was it the minister that made this comment and of which department?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: as I said earlier, I'm going to check the record in *Hansard*, but it was the department of health that was appearing before Public Accounts this morning, and it was one of the department officials.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 22, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2006. I've been looking through the bill to see for what period, for what particular number of days or weeks or months into the next fiscal year this 6 and a half billion dollars or so is being asked for approval by this House. I don't find those numbers here. Is it to tide us over the next two months, three months, four months? I think it would be useful to have the information here. It's not there. I'm just trying to look for it. I presume that it's for two months. It would be important to have that kind of information included in the text of the bill so that we don't spend more time asking questions with respect to this kind of issue. It's a lot of money. I think the government has to go on while we debate the budget, so I understand that there's a reason for asking for approval of interim supply funds.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, we are now only about seven, eight days away from when the budget comes down, when we'll have more information, but to speak to this request with some focus, I think it would be good to have a little more information from each ministry with respect to what the money is being asked for and how that money is going to be spent, on what program, and what have you. Without that information here it becomes a sort of pro forma kind of discussion: you either vote for it or you don't. You don't want the government to stop. You want people who work for the government to be paid, programs to be funded. But as a member of the Assembly I find it very difficult to intelligently ask questions on the amounts being asked for or on the bill as such unless I have more information on this. So I regret that that information isn't there.

The practice that the Minister of Advanced Education as House leader for the government side suggested, that all governments do this, doesn't justify not having the information here that's essential for the deliberations of this House before the House votes on it. Otherwise, as I said, it becomes simply an exercise in tradition, and the appeal is made to past practice rather than to the reasons and the information needed for us to make up our minds on which way to vote on this. So I find that a little bit frustrating.

I would move on now to talk a bit about two or three departments that are asking for money. Advanced Education is the one I'll start with, where \$344,700,000 is being asked for in terms of interim supply for this department.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I was listening to CBC Radio, to a program called *The Current*, which runs, I guess, between 8:30 and 10 o'clock in the morning. One of the persons being interviewed by Anna Maria Tremonti, who is the host of this program, was none other than the president of the University of Alberta, Dr. Indira Samarasekera.

In the dialogue between the host and the president one point that President Samarasekera made very much was the challenge that we have before us in this province. Certainly, we have the opportunity in this province more than other places. She also talked about the country in general. One of the most important natural resources, she said, is that stuff between our two ears, our brains, our development, our human capacities and skills and abilities. She emphasized the importance of postsecondary education and in particular, of course, spoke about universities and the University of Alberta, which she is now the president of.

The point that she made was this. She said that class size, to improve the quality of education, is the key challenge that we face, that the quality of education is contingent on the size of classes that our students have to be in. She gave a sort of average figure. She said that about 15, 20 years ago at this university the average class

size used to be around 16. There's a great deal of variation between the smallest graduate classes and the undergraduate classes, but on the whole the average was around 16, 17. Today, she said, the average is 24 or 25. Huge increase. Absolutely huge increase. She said that we tap into this enormously important resource called human capital through providing the best quality of postsecondary education that we can to Albertans who return to university.

Another point she made there was that only about 50 per cent of the students at the university now are between the ages of, say, 18 and 35. The remainder are people who return to university or come to university in their mid-careers to learn new things and to upgrade and to update what they already learned perhaps 10, 15, 20 years ago. She said that the class size is the critical factor here. We must try and roll back the class size, the University of Alberta being one case in point, but I'm sure that the situation is the same at the University of Calgary and other institutions. The class size must be reduced, she said, to between 14 and 16. That's our challenge.

Now, questions that come to mind here are: is the minister planning to respond to this kind of advice from one of the most respected leaders in the area of postsecondary education in this province? If so, in the request that he is making, is he providing for such reductions? If so, how? I'm just putting this question for the minister's consideration, and I hope that he will certainly address that because the development of human resources is the key to increasing productivity, to improving our quality of life, to increasing our competitiveness, and to ensuring prosperity into the future. That's the message from people like Dr. Indira Samarasekera, the president of the University of Alberta. I think it's important that we address those questions here, as to how we invest our resources to address those very fundamental challenges that our postsecondary institutions such as the University of Alberta and other institutions in this province face.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, to another minister's request here. Children's Services: \$224,500,000 is being requested for the period, which, as I say, I'm assuming is the next two months, April and May, but that information is not contained at least in this document, Bill 22, for me to be surely able to say that these monies are there to tide us over into the new fiscal year during the first 60 or 61 or 62 days. But this is a fair bit of money here.

The minister made some very, I think, important commitments to the families of Alberta not long ago – a couple of months ago perhaps, maybe a bit longer – with respect to bringing forward a five-point plan for the provision of child care services and early childhood learning services and opportunities for preschool-age children, in particular those whose parents work, are in the labour force and have employment and are not home for at least part of the day or most of the day. Seventy to 75 per cent of parents of children under six years of age, Mr. Speaker, are in that situation in this province. What the minister had to offer by way of a five-point plan that she made public and released some months ago – there was a great promise in that plan for those families and for the children in those families who need and use child care and daycare services.

4:00

I want the minister to perhaps address the question of where she stands now in the context of a new government in Ottawa, which has very different plans than the five-point plan that the minister had not only endorsed but, in fact, with some great deal of pride and joy offered to the families of Alberta three or four months ago. Is that plan going to be pursued regardless of what the federal government does or doesn't do for our children, for our families on that score?

I think it's important that we invest in these very young children and families who are in that situation in order for us to tap into the

human resources that are available in this province. But in order for us to help them grow to the maximum possible extent and capacity, investment must be made not only at the postsecondary sector, but we should start making those investments in the very critical first few years of every child's life.

That's why child care these days is more than just babysitting. It is, in fact, to instill in our very young children the capacities and skills that serve as the starting points for their formal education. Stimulating environments in which to spend their early years lead to their ability to succeed and do very well indeed as they start formal schooling from kindergarten onwards.

At this point I think I could probably also refer to whether or not the monies being asked for under Education by the Minister of Education also include a commitment to bringing in full-day kindergarten, that's been recommended by the Learning Commission, a recommendation that has been accepted by this government.

No answers to these questions here because there are no details. There's no information here on how this government is planning to spend the money that it's asking for on fundamentally important programs, programs that will certainly make sure that as we move into the future years, the investments begin to pay back.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the House has before it Bill 2, Drug-endangered Children Act. If passed, its implementation will require a huge injection of new resources for social workers, for caseworkers, for police officers, for others.

So these are questions that are germane to this discussion but can't really be addressed very well unless we have more information. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 22, interim supply, in third reading. Since it is third reading, we're supposed to speak to the effect of the bill. We've had, I think, some opportunity – some might argue ample; some might say not enough; I'm not going to get into that argument right now – to question specific ministers about specific departments, specific line items in the interim supply estimates in Committee of Supply. We've gotten some answers back to some of our questions. Some of those answers we like; some of those answers we weren't so impressed with. But we're beyond that point now, and we're talking about interim supply in third reading. So what's the effect of this bill? Well, the effect of this bill is to keep the government of Alberta going for the next two months or so, if that's what it takes to get the actual budget fully debated and passed. I'm sure it won't take two months to do that.

The hon. Government House Leader and Minister of Advanced Education referred to interim supply as being, I believe the words were, a time-honoured tradition or a tried and true tradition, something like that. Of course, on the face of it he's right. Just because something has been done a certain way for a long enough period of time to refer to it, though, as a time-honoured or tried and true tradition doesn't mean that we can't improve upon the process. The minister is looking at me now going: oh, here we go again; another opposition member is going to talk about the process of interim supply and why we need to rush through \$6 billion plus in government spending to keep the lights on and the wolves from the door.

Yeah, I've got to mention it once again – I really do – and, in fact, refer the minister and hon. Government House Leader back to an exchange, perhaps, that I had with the hon. Minister of Finance last Wednesday evening, as a matter of fact. It's in *Hansard*, and I'm

certainly not going to quote from it, but I asked a general question about the process: especially since planning for next year's budget will begin scant weeks after this year's budget is debated, why is it that there's such a thorough process that we go through, that we can't simply start the process earlier so that the budget is ready to be delivered in time to be debated and passed before we run out of the fiscal year?

Mr. Speaker, here we are today celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature. It's not like we change the dates of the fiscal year year in and year out. That's pretty predictable. That's a heck of a lot more predictable than the weather in this province has been for the last 100 years, for instance. She undertook, Mr. Speaker, to actually try and see if some changes could be made in the great, creaky, old government ship of state to effect a more efficient moving forward of the shuffling of the paper so that we could actually get to that point next year. She said:

As I say, I don't take issue with the member's question. It would be the ideal. Can we work towards that? I'll make a commitment to the House that we try. We've got a lot of work to do, a lot of policy to make sure that we have right.

Then she went on to say that she takes "a great deal of pride" in the way that the budget process does come together.

She finished off by saying, "I thank you for your comments. I understand entirely where you're coming from," and she said – and I'm sure that the Minister of Advanced Education will agree with this point – "You know, Mr. Chairman, it would be refreshing to have a debate that didn't centre around: I don't have any detail for these numbers." Mr. Speaker, would it ever be. Would it ever be refreshing to have a budget debate about the budget so that we didn't need to have a debate about interim supply, which is kind of like an episode of *Seinfeld*, in a way, a show about nothing – well, a show about nothing in terms of the information that's supplied to justify figures. On the other hand, it's a show about over \$6 billion.

So we're supposed to talk about the effect of this bill if it passes third reading today. I think that in the course of talking about that, I will refer back to a remark made by my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar a little while ago. Of course, I haven't had the opportunity to review *Hansard* from this morning's Public Accounts either, so I don't know that this is absolutely, 100 per cent, word for word accurate. He referred to the official from the ministry of health who referred to the notion that we have buckets of money.

Mr. MacDonald: Bucketsful.

Mr. Taylor: Bucketsful, or bucketfuls, of money. I never know where to put the "s" in that. Bucketfuls of money.

I mean, that not only speaks to the effect of this bill and the effect of the budgeting process that goes on over the course of an entire fiscal year, an entire calendar year, goes on on a daily basis, but that's really the challenge that we face here in the province of Alberta over the next fiscal year, over the course of the budget debate that we will have starting in a few days, over the course of the fiscal year beyond that.

Perhaps at that point we'll have gone through a leadership replacement process on the other side, an election, and a change of government so that we can set about doing this right.

4:10

Mr. MacDonald: That's a time-honoured parliamentary tradition as well.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. That's a time-honoured parliamentary tradition, exactly: changing governments when they lose their way.

You know, here we have on the one hand the bucketfuls of money, whether we're referring to the particular buckets that the official from the health department was referencing in Public Accounts today or whether we are referring to the general state of things these days in the province of Alberta. Bucketfuls of money: we have bucketfuls of money. We have bucketfuls coming through the door. We have bucketfuls going out that door as we spend it, and this government, Mr. Speaker, is spending it so rapidly that we could actually find ourselves in this province back in a deficit position in 2008 if we stay the course.

You know, projecting what will happen if we stay the course is always a dangerous game because, of course, courses seldom stay the way they are, and thank goodness for that. If they did, for instance, by now every man, woman, and child in the United States of America would be an Elvis impersonator. You know, that prediction was made a couple of years after Elvis died. There was a rash of people rushing to become Elvis impersonators. I know we have an occasional one in this House.

Mr. MacDonald: And a fairly good one too.

Mr. Taylor: A very good one; better than most, in fact.

If we stay the course, health care will consume 100 per cent of our budget by 2025, quoth the Premier. Well, you know, we're not going to stay that course, regardless of whether he gets his way in the debate over whether health care should be commercialized in this province or not.

If we stay the course, we're going to be back in a deficit position by 2008. There are many aspects of policy with which government members and members on this side of the House disagree, but I don't really think that members of the government opposite are quite that profligate in their spending and quite that crazed with going through the bucketfuls of cash that they'll actually allow that to happen. But if we stay the course, that could happen. So we've got the bucketfuls of money. The challenge here is not to spend it; the challenge is to spend it well, to spend it wisely, to spend it effectively.

I'm not going to go over all the ground that has been covered this afternoon because it's on the public record already, and it's there for anybody to look up, but there have been some excellent points raised already by my colleagues who have spoken to Bill 22 in third reading so far. There are areas and there are people in this province that we should be spending on that we're not. There are schools in this province where the roofs are threatening to fall in. I just don't understand how you can get to that point in the richest province in the land unless, of course, you're spending stupidly. We certainly know that the spending is going on.

So that's one example. There are many, many others. I mean, you can look all around this province and see examples of money, bucketfuls of money, being thrown at things without any logical think-through of the process, of the need, of the consequences, of the effect of doing that, without any logical thought being given to an investment strategy first, followed by the spending that needs to be done. There's a kind of – oh, it's almost a panicked approach, the realization when you wake up one day that you've neglected all sorts of things and you can't possibly fix it all, but let's try and fix as much of it as fast as we possibly can. Well, you end up overpaying the contractor whom you hired to renovate your house and fix the leak in your roof when you take that sort of attitude. Although I think we could work the process better and more efficiently and more effectively, I don't have a fundamental problem with what's being asked of the members of the Legislature here today, which is

to give final, third reading approval to \$6 billion and change in interim supply.

The number is a lot higher than I'd like to see because of the process, but I'm okay with interim supply in principle. I've got less of a problem with that than I do with supplementary supply, where partway through the budget year this government comes back to the House and asks us to retroactively approve the spending of billions of dollars more that wasn't in the original budget, because that just says that they spend without any discipline, without any plan, without any vision. Whoever yells the loudest gets the last piece of candy in the jar. I have a huge problem with that. I have a huge problem with the overall approach to spending by this government. I don't see a plan. I don't see a vision. I don't see a logical process there.

So, yeah, we need to approve Bill 22 to keep the lights on and the wolves from the door and to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that your cheque doesn't bounce and mine doesn't and, far more importantly than that, the 22,959 public servants – was that the number that the Premier gave today? Oh, no: 22,960, minus the one who perhaps talked about bucketfuls of money at Public Accounts today; I don't know – that everybody gets their paycheque or severance or whatever.

So we need to pass Bill 22, and I'm going to vote for it; of course I am. But I hope I've raised some questions here that get some serious debate, some serious consideration not only during the budget debate that starts in a few days' time but by the tall foreheads who start to work on preparing next year's budget in a few weeks time, because the process needs changing. The overall process needs changing.

This government, Mr. Speaker, spends an incredible amount of time taking relatively simple, straightforward concepts and adding layers of complexity to those concepts until they've spent entire days chasing their tails so that at the end of the day they're too tired to make a decision or too caught up in the complexity of what should have been common sense. We need some common sense back in this province. This government isn't delivering.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, does anyone else wish to speak?

Does the hon. Government House Leader wish to close on behalf of the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps it would be appropriate just to say a few words given the amount of discussion

this afternoon on Advanced Education. I appreciate the words that were given by various members opposite about the value of education to Alberta and about the need for us to invest in education and to treat education as a very important way of ensuring that our human potential is maximized in this province so that we can achieve the future that this province has. That is an extremely important investment.

The issue of interim supply gives us the time to move forward to talk about full supply. I hope that those same interests will be expressed as we go into Committee of Supply in each of the departments and talk in detail about the uses that we have from our nonrenewable resource revenue and from our citizens and the ways in which we apply it most effectively to maximize the human potential and maximize the opportunity for the province and that we take that time and we do that appropriately, recognizing that in most jurisdictions the question of interim supply is not about providing that full amount of information and debate that we've heard talked about before, but it's about getting the resources so that we can continue to do the job that needs to be done for Albertans while we have that full debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been a very momentous day as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of our Legislature and of leadership in this province. We've had many guests in the Legislature, former members who've come back to help celebrate with us, and the Speaker has made a conscious effort, indeed a stellar effort, to make sure that we mark the anniversary appropriately.

Members will be retiring to a dinner with former members to help celebrate this event, and so we've agreed, I think, earlier that it would be appropriate to adjourn the House early today so that we could enjoy the company and the camaraderie of members and former members and share stories about the various ages that we've represented in this House.

Therefore, I would move under Standing Order 4(3) that the House do now adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 4:21 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]