

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, May 4, 2006

1:30 p.m.

Date: 06/05/04

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We give thanks as legislators for the rich diversity of our 100 years of history and culture. We welcome the many opportunities during this centennial year of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and dedicate ourselves to both the present and the future as we join in the service of Alberta and Canada. Amen.

Please be seated.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Governor General]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, the Royal Canadian Artillery Band will now play *Concerto in D* by Georg Philipp Telemann. The timeless splendour and beauty of this baroque music is a fitting prelude to the entrance of Her Excellency the Governor General into the Alberta Legislature. The band is under the direction of Captain Brian Greenwood, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

[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, Her Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor General awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada, Michaëlle Jean, CC, CMM, COM, CD, and His Excellency Jean-Daniel Lafond, CC, their party, and the Premier entered the Chamber. Her Excellency took her place upon the throne]

The Speaker: I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of the royal anthem, *God Save The Queen*. Please participate.

Hon. Members and Guests:

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!

1:40

The Speaker: Please be seated.

On behalf of all members and all Albertans I would like to

welcome Your Excellencies to this province and to this legislative Chamber. Your Excellency is the first Governor General of Canada to address this Assembly in this room. You do us a rare and signal honour. [applause]

Your Excellencies, hon. members, and ladies and gentlemen, in 1964 these words were said by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada:

The ways of democracy depend upon the conscious support of all citizens. The function of constitutional monarchy is to personify the democratic state, to sanction legitimate authority, to assure the legality of means and guarantee the execution of the public will.

Your Excellency's presence here today reminds us of this and of the pre-eminent role the Crown plays in the life of this country. Her Majesty's words speak to the bedrock foundation that supports our people and the public institutions that serve our provinces, territories, and the nation.

It is fitting and appropriate that Your Excellency sits on this day in the Chamber beneath the flags of the provinces and territories. They are a unique expression of the loyalty and allegiance that members of this Assembly feel to Canada, just as you represent the human dimension of all that this nation is. Welcome, sincerely, to both of you.

It is now my honour to invite the hon. the Premier of Alberta to extend his greetings.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Excellencies, Members of the Legislative Assembly, I do want to extend a very warm and sincere Alberta welcome to Their Excellencies on behalf of all members of the Legislature. As the Speaker pointed out, this is the very first time that we've had the honour and the privilege of hearing from a Governor General in this Chamber, and we're looking forward with great anticipation to your remarks today. Welcome, once again.

Thank you. [applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

I would now invite Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, to address the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Address to the Legislative Assembly by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean

Her Excellency: Premier, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, distinguished guests, chers amis. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I feel truly privileged to be here today. It is a great pleasure for my husband, Jean-Daniel Lafond, and me and also for our daughter, Marie-Éden, to begin here in Edmonton our first official visit to Alberta. We may be a bit early for the wild roses, but I would say that the warmth of your hospitality is like the embrace of your Alberta chinooks.

You know, last night Jean-Daniel and I enjoyed an outstanding jazz concert at Canada's oldest jazz club, the internationally renowned Yardbird Suite. This morning Jean-Daniel shared some meaningful time with francophone community leaders and students at the Campus Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta.

Also this morning I was deeply moved and terribly pleased to have spent some time with some of Canada's wounded soldiers and their families at CFB Edmonton to learn more about the Military Family Resource Centre and the challenges facing military families on a daily basis. Of course, my thoughts are with the family and friends of Corporal Randy Payne, who gathered yesterday in Wainwright, Alberta, for a memorial service, as well as the family of Bombardier Myles Mansell, whose funeral was held yesterday in

Victoria. On Sunday my thoughts will be with Lieutenant Bill Turner and his family and friends as they celebrate his life at a memorial service in Edmonton. [applause]

I can say that, clearly, it is not only Alberta's breathtaking scenery and great economic prosperity that is attracting new citizens here. This province has long been seen as a mecca of opportunity. For over a century hard-working and independently minded people have been coming here to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Je sais, par exemple, que dès les années 1700 les voyageurs canadiens-français y sont venus pour la traite des fourrures après un long et périlleux voyage. Je sais qu'en épousant des femmes crie et en établissant des communautés métisses, ils ont commencé une longue tradition de diversité linguistique et culturelle, qui persiste jusqu'à nos jours. Et puis la ruée vers l'or et la construction du chemin de fer ont donné lieu à la vague d'immigration suivante. Puis après la découverte du pétrole en 1947 votre population a doublé.

[Translation] French-Canadian voyageurs made the long and arduous trek to your lands in search of fur during the 1700s. By marrying Cree women and establishing Métis communities, they began a long tradition of linguistic and cultural diversity that persists today. The gold rush and construction of the railway represented the next wave of migration. And then, following the 1947 discovery of oil, your population doubled. [As submitted]

Poursuivant leurs rêves, chaque nouvelle génération de pionniers entrepreneurs a enrichi l'Alberta. Il vous a fallu – c'est impressionnant – à peine 100 ans pour atteindre un niveau de prospérité qui fait l'envie aujourd'hui du pays.

In pursuing their dreams, each new generation of ambitious pioneers has enriched Alberta itself, and in just 100 years you have together achieved a level of prosperity that is the envy of the country.

Who would have predicted a century ago the thriving communities of this province? Did observers in 1905 envision a rich economy based on agriculture, energy, tourism, and of course world-famous Alberta beef? I had some for lunch today. It was just delicious.

They say that journalists write the first version of history, and it's interesting to review what they had to say a century ago on the occasion of your entry into Canada. I was very interested to learn that the *Globe*, for one, was suitably impressed by Alberta. Reporting on the events and ceremonies of September 1905, its representative observed, "An easterner cannot come west without learning that here they never do things by halves." Similarly, Montreal's French language daily, *La Presse*, reported, "With its immense natural resources, its intelligent and active population, one can predict that the new province is called to play a significant role in Canada's future."

The pioneer spirit of independence and resourcefulness in this province is legendary, yet your deserved reputation for fierce individualism and economic self-reliance belie another lesser known aspect of Alberta's character: your people are among the most generous of Canadians. Eighty-five per cent of you make financial contributions to charitable and nonprofit organizations. Combined with those who volunteer their time, 94 per cent of your citizens believe in giving back.

So Alberta's tremendous prosperity affords you the opportunity to make the most of this attitude of sharing. Surely a prime benefit to be derived from such communal wealth is the ability it gives us to ensure that no one is left behind and that each among us has a voice.

1:50

The health and prosperity of every society is compromised by the

people within it who suffer from poverty, who are disadvantaged by birth, who fight against discrimination of all kinds.

Vous savez, je me suis engagée à me servir de mon poste de Gouverneur Générale pour attirer l'attention justement sur la nécessité de briser les solitudes. C'est-à-dire, il faut entendre par solitude les multiples différences qui continuent de nous séparer: celles qu'imposent la géographie et l'âge, le sexe et l'origine culturelle, la langue et la religion, la pauvreté et l'ignorance.

Mais je crois qu'en oeuvrant ensemble, nous pourrions éliminer les barrières qui empêchent, par exemple, les autochtones d'atteindre leur potentiel et d'apporter leur contribution à la société. En reconnaissant aussi la force qui naît de la diversité linguistique et culturelle, nous pourrions enrichir notre société tout entière. Et en collaborant, nous pourrions trouver des solutions valables à l'aliénation sociale qui conduit certains jeunes à l'isolement et au désespoir.

I have pledged to use my office to focus attention on breaking down solitudes, the myriad of differences that continue to separate us, those imposed by geography and age, by gender and ethnicity, by language and religion, by poverty and ignorance.

I think that by working together, we can eliminate the barriers that prevent, for example, aboriginal people from reaching their potential and contributing to society. I also think that by recognizing the strength that comes from linguistic and cultural diversity, we can enrich our entire society. And by collaborating, we can find meaningful solutions to the social alienation that drives some young people to isolation and despair.

The marginalization of any human being is a loss to us all, and nothing in our affluent society is more disgraceful than our failure to nurture and support those who are most vulnerable. I also believe that children and youth represent not only our future, but they are our present. We have a profound duty to them not only to pass on a better world but also to ensure that they have the capacity to embrace it and each other with respect and responsibility.

This, too, is part of our collective dream and an achievement that has eluded many societies. Close to realizing it in so many ways, we cannot afford to take it for granted or to assume that it is someone else's task. I think every one of us, with every action we take and every attitude we express, has really an opportunity to foster respect, to promote dialogue, to nurture co-operation to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to fully participate in building our society.

It is especially fitting to reflect on the importance of these values here in this Chamber that was home to the first female legislators in the British Empire. Between them Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams exemplified such values. They really championed initiatives and supported legislation to help widows, to help immigrants, to help people with disabilities, to help soldiers and their families.

Here in this House, at a time of unprecedented prosperity in your province, I think you have a golden opportunity to continue this tradition. Your capacity to make a difference in the lives of others through your actions and through your decisions is limitless.

So I want to say that I look forward to hearing of your plans and to continuing the conversation we start this week. It will be but the first chapter in our ongoing dialogue. I know that you and the people of Alberta you represent have important matters to discuss, and I think you have very inspiring stories to share and, I must say, valuable lessons to teach me.

So I am here. We are here to listen.

Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. [applause]

The Speaker: Les mots de Votre Excellence ont retenu l'esprit et la

promesse de la province de l'Alberta. [Translation] Your Excellency's words have captured the spirit and the promise of the province of Alberta. [As submitted]

Your Excellencies, this House would ask that you carry with you as our Queen's representative our good and heartfelt wishes for success in all that you endeavour to do across this great nation.

To conclude our ceremony today, I would invite Mr. Paul Lorieau, who is in the Speaker's gallery, to lead us in the singing of our national anthem, and I would invite all here to participate in the language of their choice.

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.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Excellencies, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[The Mace was uncovered]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

2:00

Introduction of Guests

head:

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am just delighted today that we have been joined by some guests in the public gallery. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Jo Whitford, who is here with 27 members of the Minerva senior studies program from Grant MacEwan in my constituency of Edmonton-Centre. This is a very active group. They host a wonderful seniors' tea during Seniors' Week in the beginning of June. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first person that I would like to introduce is my wife, Karin Olson. She's here for the ceremony today, and I'm just introducing her on the spur of the moment. She doesn't know I'm doing this. I'd ask her to please rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of this House.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is Ron and Lynda Jonson. Ron and Lynda are tireless advocates for senior issues and for improving conditions in Alberta long-term care facilities. Lynda is a former registered nurse, and Ron is a former engineer. Living in Hinton, together they helped form the group Seniors I Care. They're here today to share their concerns regarding the government's recent announcement on long-term care policy. I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It truly is an honour today to stand and introduce to you and through you an outstanding group of students from Glenwood. They are 14 grade 9 students. I'd just like to point out at this time that this school is a blended school. There are members of the Blood band that join them, and together they learn, they play, and they have a friendship. It's great to see that community and how together they're stronger. I'd ask them and their principal, Kelly Thomas, and his wife, Kathy, and Mrs. Deb Johnson and her husband, Kevin, if they'd all please stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of distinguished guests from the Senate of Canada who are here this afternoon, no doubt to listen to the speech and comments made by Her Excellency the Governor General. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly. The first one is no stranger to this Assembly. The former leader of the Liberal opposition, Senator Grant Mitchell, is in attendance today. Also, from the city of Edmonton, a Senator that's done a fine job for a number of years, representing our province in Ottawa, Senator Tommy Banks. Finally, also representing Alberta and doing a fine job, Senator Claudette Tardif.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very quickly I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 47 parents and students from home school learning in Okotoks. I would ask them to please rise and quickly receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two aboriginal leaders who are seated in the members' gallery: Alden Armstrong, who is the president of the MSGC, and Audrey Poitras, who is the president of the Métis Nation of Alberta. I'd ask that they stand and receive a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have this opportunity to introduce to the members of the Assembly a person that is no stranger to this Assembly, the first lady Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta, the Hon. Helen Hunley. Of course, she resides in the town of Rocky Mountain House. I would ask the members to give her the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 30 parent helpers, teachers, and students all from my hometown, Coronation, the greatest place on earth to be. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Dan Kinakin, and parent helpers Mark Zimmer, Joyce Webster, Jackie Rodvang, Lori Eno, Greg Schroeder, Angie Whiteford, Barb Smith, Rowena Swahn, and George Nichols. I'd ask them to rise – they're in the public gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure on this special occasion to introduce to you and through you two guests today: my sister, Ms Andrea Rogers, and a special friend, Mr. Maurice Locker. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a volunteer par excellence, a community leader in north Edmonton. Marg Day, could you please rise and be welcomed by the members of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly David Kostyk. David Kostyk is a member from Glengarry, now a person within Edmonton-Decore constituency, and resides within my riding. He is a tireless volunteer, recognized for his efforts for community involvement as well as cultural diversity. I'd like David to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of very outstanding and distinguished Albertans, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. They have been meeting yesterday, today, and tomorrow. They travel around the province gathering information and making recommendations to the minister of seniors. They are Mr. Jim Acton, from Edmonton; Diane Caleffi, from Calgary; Jean Dreger, from Calgary; Clyde Elford, from Calgary; Dr. Bill Forbes, of Edmonton; Leonard Olson, I think from High Prairie; Dawn Parent, of Lacombe; Maureen Hemingway Schloss, from Edmonton; Janet Tomalty, from Barrhead; Dr. David Belcher, from Drayton Valley; and Dr. Brad Hagen, from Lethbridge. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Alberta Office in Washington

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our million dollar man in Washington is living up to his price tag. Reports of lavish hosting expenses, numerous return trips to Alberta, and an extravagant \$8,000 a month apartment have many Albertans shaking their heads over the hypocrisy of this action from a former minister of this government who once celebrated layoffs and government cuts. My questions are to the Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations. Given that most of the hosting expenses racked up by Murray Smith were for wining and dining visiting Tory MLAs from Alberta, can this minister explain what purpose is being served by wooing members of this government?

2:10

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the United States is Alberta's largest trading partner. There are \$65 billion worth of exports that go from Alberta into the United States. It's quite clear that it is important for us to have a good trading relationship with people in Washington. The number of occasions that Mr. Smith has not only hosted members of government from here in Washington – he has also hosted a number of people in Washington and has often facilitated a meeting of the two. The result is that we have built relationships with decision-makers, policy-makers in Washington, DC. Since our office has opened, the government of Alberta, the province of Alberta has had an unprecedented amount of media coverage in Washington. That media coverage is well known. The border has been opened to Alberta beef. There have been more ministers' meetings in Washington than have ever been held before. So the cost is well justified considering that we have a \$65 billion trade relationship.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope I get a straighter answer to this question. Can the minister confirm that Murray Smith is not receiving any personal compensation for speaking engagements he attends in Alberta on the taxpayers' dime?

Mr. Mar: I'm not aware of that at all, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member has some advice on this matter, then he should table it in the House, and we'll proceed on that basis, but to simply go on the basis of innuendo is not appropriate and not becoming of this member.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell this Assembly what checks and balances are put on Murray Smith's expenses while he is in Washington? For example, does his credit card have a spending limit?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, all of the expenses that are incurred as a result of the conduct of his work over there are in accordance with the normal government policy associated with individuals who would serve in the capacity that he serves in, and I can assure you and assure Albertans and members of this House that the Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations goes through the same auditing process by Alberta's Auditor General. As we speak, there are people from the Auditor General's department in our department, right now, and they will be there until the 18th of this month. If something arises as a result of the normal course of auditing and the Auditor General has recommendations to make thereafter, we will certainly entertain them and proceed on accepting his recommendations.

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

Biofuels Industry

Dr. Taft: Future economic opportunity in the form of biofuels is literally out there growing in fields, but this government is once again simply too tired to harvest the economic benefits of this emerging industry. Once again, this government is a follower in a quest for renewable energy. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Given that Agriculture Canada said that mandating an 8 per cent ethanol content in all fuels would alleviate this country's farm income crisis, will this minister

urge his government to mandate ethanol content in all fuels sold in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, thanks to the hon. member for the question because it gives me a chance to talk a little bit about what we're doing in biofuels in Alberta. We have initiated a strategy for biofuels that is probably leading the country in terms of developing a sustainable biofuels industry for our province that isn't going to be sustained based on government grants. It's not going to be sustained based on handouts; it's going to be based on good economics and sound financial sense.

I can say that on my recent trips into Europe with the WTO I was also able to talk to some of the European agricultural ministers about biofuels and where they're headed with their industry, how that reflects upon the biodiesel impact that we might have in Canada in our oilseeds industry, which is a critical component of the grains and oilseed sector. In addition to that, we were able to look at some new technologies on the ethanol production. I think that it would be premature of us to jump in to some old technologies when new technologies are coming to the forefront which are more efficient; they're more economical.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking at pilot projects where we might tie biofuels with biodigesters to ethanol production, which gives us not only an environmental enhancement but also fuel efficiency and feasibility.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like dithering to me.

To the same minister: will the minister of agriculture provide any incentives for farmers to develop biodiesel production facilities and convert farm machinery to take advantage of the wide range of benefits from this type of fuel?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again a good question because we are doing those things. We are actually sitting down, talking to the Minister of the Environment federally, who handles this file, as opposed to the minister of agriculture. We're working in consultation with the federal Department of the Environment and the federal department of agriculture. The federal minister and I have talked about his commitment politically to creating a mandatory blend across Canada, which makes a lot more sense than individual provinces having a patchwork across the country. That's what we're advocating because that makes sense.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More dithering.

Again to the same minister: will the minister provide biofuel incentives to make renewable energy from animal wastes a reality in places like Red Deer county?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the hon. member doesn't do research before he asks questions. Alberta is a leader in the dry manure biodigestion field. If he would care to drive a little bit outside the outskirts of Edmonton, he would find North America's first biodigester of dry manure matter at Highland Feeders, just north of Vegreville. We helped put that project on the map.

If the hon. member would also do further research and perhaps talk to that county, he would also understand that I've met with them several times. We are working with them and our federal counterparts to maybe see that project come to fruition, hopefully, in the near future.

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

Tools for Skilled Tradespeople

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safe, quality tools cost big bucks for tradesmen. For example, field mechanics need pricey laptops for diagnostics; their trucks when fully rigged can cost over a hundred grand. For many trades it's not a simple tool kit anymore. It is urgent in order to keep, attract, and train tradespeople in Alberta that this government provide more than the small amounts allowed in the federal government's budget. To the Minister of Finance: will the minister commit to having this government proclaim within two months the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Tools Deduction) Amendment Act of 2001, now five years in waiting, so that tradesmen and apprentices can plan their tool purchases for this tax year?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we discussed this a couple of days ago in the House. The federal government has since come down with their budget. One of the things that we attempt to do on a very regular basis, in fact all of the time, is ensure that we follow and change our tax policy when the federal government enters into these areas. Our legislation certainly focuses on apprenticeship, and that's important. What I will commit to the hon. member is that we will be reviewing the federal initiative. We will be entertaining, I would expect, changes to our tax legislation to ensure that people who are in those areas have the most advantage.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Finance: is the Finance ministry examining any other tax measures to keep tradesmen in Alberta, such as a travel tax break for work trips to Fort McMurray?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. member and all of the members opposite to sit in the Legislature – I think it's a week yesterday – on the 10th when we will have an opportunity for two hours to entertain questions on Alberta's tax policy. It will take about that long to talk about the tax advantages that tradesmen, individuals, businesses, corporations have in this province. I want to make sure that everyone is aware of all of the tax changes that we made in this budget, which have been received very positively by Albertans, by business and individuals.

2:20

I would also remind the hon. member that I've been very straightforward in my discussions on tax policy. We initiated an internal tax review last year. We implemented a number of tax changes. Now, first, we ensured that lower and middle-income persons receive the benefit. You would recall the employment tax benefit, and you would recall that in this budget that becomes indexed beginning this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the minister of human resources on quality, safe tools. What has the

minister done to ensure that his safety inspectors check that the tools and equipment brought in by temporary foreign contractors to our oil sands are up to Alberta safety standards?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, we're fortunate in Alberta to have such a strong economy, a booming economy because of a good government. You know, any person that works or comes to Alberta has to follow the employment standards, and they're the highest in North America.

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

Continuing Care Standards

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's more than a year since the Premier promised Albertans that this government would implement every one of the Auditor General's recommendations regarding long-term care in this province, yet today seniors' advocate Lynda Jonson told reporters that little has changed, and in fact the situation may have gotten worse. Yesterday's announcement about new standards are so vague, enforcement is so weak, and funding falls so far short of what the government's own MLA committee said was necessary that the government has completely failed to keep its promise to the people of Alberta and to the seniors of Alberta. My first question is to the minister of seniors. Given that the government's own MLA committee on long-term care said that \$250 million of additional funding would be required to raise standards to the level that was necessary under the Auditor General's report, why is the government only providing an additional \$42 million? Why could the government give the horse-racing industry \$63 million but seniors only \$42 million?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to address that question regarding funding for the budget for continuing care, which is administered through two departments, through the Ministry of Health and Wellness and through my department. The \$42 million that the member is referring to, of course, is for the accommodation side, which is within my department. The funding that was put in place with third-quarter funding as well as the current budget over the past three months combined has been approximately \$140 million between the two departments. That was referred to in the estimates by both the Minister of Health and Wellness and myself. It's significant. It's a hundred million dollars more than what the member has mentioned.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And \$150 million less than what's needed.

My second question is to the minister as well. The changes proposed in yesterday's announcement to inspections simply replace a toothless inspection committee with another toothless inspection committee. When will the government commit to having independent, professional, unannounced inspections of our long-term care facilities? Enough of these silly committees.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is clearly one of the recommendations from the MLA task force, and that is exactly

where we're moving toward: unannounced inspections. That will come through with the legislation and regulations that are required. The very first step and the most important was implementing the standards. That did occur yesterday. There's an immediacy to that. Yes, there will be unannounced inspections as we follow through with the monitoring, the enforcement, the concerns resolution process. That's all within the next step.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We also learned that relatives of individuals who are in the Hinton long-term care facility are on 24-hour rotation providing care to their loved ones. Given that situation, how can the minister tell people that they need to keep waiting and waiting? They've waited long enough. People are very, very badly cared for in many of our facilities. When will the minister do something about it?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, people are well cared for in our facilities, and I can tell you this: we very much want to continue to have families involved in the care of their loved ones in facilities. I'm not certain of the particular situation that you're discussing, but I do know my own family and friends' families and people that I've had an opportunity to dialogue with, you know, over a number of years, especially as an acute-care nurse for 20 years. Families become very involved in the care of their loved ones that are, well, in long-term care especially. Yes, families will rotate on a 24-hour basis when they're involved in care. I hope, actually, that families continue to be involved.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Significant new responsibilities have been downloaded onto continuing care facilities and the nine regional health authorities, who have been given an entire year to implement a patchwork of separate policies and processes. It appears that this new continuing care system offers very little consumer protection to Albertans and allows the government to avoid accountability. My questions are to the minister of health. Why did this government choose to define nursing services like bathing, personal hygiene, and toileting as personal care services rather than essential health care services? Is it because residents are going to have to pay for them?

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me clarify that there is no intent to have persons pay for those care services. What is intended is that there's a personal care plan for every single resident in any kind of continuing care or care plan where people are receiving publicly funded health care services, and that is more important. For example, you could implement cross-ministry or across Alberta Health and Wellness a standard of three or four baths per week, and if you do that, you're going to severely compromise somebody whose skin is paper thin and who is unable to absorb that. So perhaps the most effective way is to say that the personal care plan must, in agreement with either the person being cared for or their families or their other caregivers not currently paid for by the government of Alberta – are given the kind of care that is most appropriate for them.

Mr. Speaker, in the last two series of questions what I think was

missed in my response yesterday to this Assembly was the fact that in the last few months the Health Quality Council has been given the status and the authority to assess through its matrix of quality the quality of care delivery in any kind of facility that exists in Alberta that is publicly funded as a health care facility. We look forward to their participation.

Ms Pastoor: Given that dependent seniors are being reclassified into assisted living settings, in which they're responsible for more costs, what protections are in place to prevent price-gouging in these settings, private and public?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the very first comment should be that people who are assessed to move into another type of facility, such as assisted living facilities, are not assessed to be punitive but, rather, to provide services that are more appropriate to the kinds of support they need. Regional health authorities have belabored the fact with me that people who exist in long-term care facilities frequently just exist. They don't live in the kind of wonderful, interactive fashion that they could in an assisted living facility. Yes, with assisted living there are other kinds of costs that are described and prescribed. In fact, where somebody is unable to afford costs that are part of their menu, then there is an accommodation that can be made in consultation with the regional health authority.

Ms Pastoor: Will the minister guarantee that the cost to the facilities of meeting the new standards will not be off-loaded onto the residents?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to be able to guarantee that, but I'm trying to avoid the word "guarantee" and simply say that the funding that is in Health and Wellness's budget is intended to in fact facilitate the delivery of those care standards with no intent to provide any additional cost to residents. That is certainly not part of the plan.

Mr. Speaker, you know, just once it would be lovely to give a response that people actually listened to.

2:30

Métis Hunting Rights

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Justice released the excellent report of the MLA Committee on Métis Harvesting, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The report makes some important recommendations to change the regime under which Métis harvesting is conducted in Alberta. Press reports indicate, however, that one of the Métis associations is not receptive to negotiating some of the proposed changes. My question is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Will the minister assure wildlife managers, conservationists, aboriginals, and hunters and fishers in the province of Alberta that the recommendations of the Métis harvesting report will be reflected in government policy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly would agree with the hon. member that it was an excellent report that the MLA committee came out with, and I'd like to acknowledge his participation on that committee in producing the excellent report.

The position of the government is reflected in the report, and candidly we acknowledge that the Métis people have a right to harvest fish and wildlife for food. A number of issues were raised in that particular report. We have indicated that it's important that

we as government revisit the interim harvesting agreements that were entered into in 2004 and that we will be doing it in the context of the recommendations.

We intend to proceed on the basis of negotiation in good faith, and I see no reason at this point in time to deflect from that particular objective on the basis of some editorial or newspaper articles. I believe, on the basis of what I know, that the Métis people have a good reason to ensure that the rights that they have are appropriately and properly reflected in the agreement, and that is how we are going to proceed.

Dr. Brown: Can the minister outline to the House a time frame for implementing those recommendations into law?

Mr. Stevens: Well, the recommendations, Mr. Speaker, are going to be implemented, on the basis of what I have indicated, in a new agreement with the Métis people, so that is where the recommendations will be implemented in due course.

Dr. Brown: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: can the minister advise the House how his department and his enforcement staff will manage Métis harvesting of sensitive species like bighorn sheep and grizzly bears in the interval between now and when a new agreement is reached?

Mr. Coumts: Well, Mr. Speaker, our role in this interim agreement is to continue to manage and monitor and enforce hunting and trapping and fishing regulations in the province under the terms of the interim agreement. We've identified, through the systems we have in place and the registration system we have in place, those sensitive species that the hon. member talked about, that harvesting by Métis is relatively a small percentage of the total harvest of those species.

The renegotiation process that was outlined certainly tells us that if anything is further required in terms of monitoring and managing, we will have the systems in place to do that, and we will continue to do the work that fish and wildlife officers and the department have set up to do to manage this interim agreement or another agreement.

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

Regulatory Review

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday, April 12, when questioned about the government's red tape regulatory review, the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency stated in this House that his employees "would take some extra time from their jobs they're doing to work on this, and we will be going ahead and getting some regulatory review done." I cannot imagine that there is too much on this ministry's plate so that it cannot fully tackle this important initiative. "Some" is simply not good enough. To the hon. minister: can the minister tell us how much of a regulatory review his department will be able to complete in their extra time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the hon. member across that it's a very, very important initiative. I want you to know that we're moving along very well with it. We have an MLA task force chaired by the hon. Member for

Foothills-Rocky View and the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and the hon. Member for Calgary-West. They've been meeting diligently with some industry folks from different sectors of our economy. They've been meeting with businesspeople. They've been meeting with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They're compiling a lot of things, and they're moving forward with reviewing some of the regulations. I'm sure we'll find some streamlining, and you'll find that you'll be very happy with the results.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. minister tell us what important Restructuring and Government Efficiency initiatives will be put on hold, delayed, cancelled, shelved, or otherwise interrupted as staff take some extra time to conduct a regulatory review?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, there'll be nothing put on hold. We're going to move ahead with everything we can.

Mr. Elsalhy: My second supplemental to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that the minister was turned down for funding for a proper regulatory review, can he tell us what other proposed departmental projects were turned down for funding by the Treasury Board?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I think the Treasury Board did a very good job with what they had to work with. They had to make their priorities. We will work around our priorities, and we will get things done, what needs to be done for all Albertans.

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

Climate Change

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Professor Dave Sauchyn from the University of Regina made a startling announcement at an environment conference held here in Edmonton. According to Mr. Sauchyn in the next 45 years the semi-arid climate around Medicine Hat today will spread north, extending as far as my constituency of Red Deer-North. Mr. Sauchyn went on to say, "No matter what action is taken to prevent further change, Albertans will have to . . . adapt to a [new] climate." I'm not so sure that that's a bad thing. With a longer growing season I'd love to be able to grow beefsteak tomatoes and juicy apricots. My question is to the Minister of Environment. In light of this information what is the government doing to ensure that we can adapt to climate change?

The Speaker: Well, hold on a second here. If I understand this correctly, the hon. member wants to know if the Minister of Environment can foresee the future. This is what this question is all about. Give it your best shot, Mr. Minister, but we're dealing with government policy here.

Mr. Boutilier: I can see a future for all of these members in here. I'll share with you later what that is, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say this: I think yesterday's comments by the professor are a validation. As quoted by this independent professor from the University of Regina, there is no other province in Canada that is dealing with the issue of adaptation, adapting to the environ-

ment, like the province of Alberta has. That's part of our climate change plan. I think that even more so understanding how we adapt to change in a climate has always been and always will be our plan because truly our plan has separated us from every other province in Canada. I can honestly say to all members and all Albertans that we are taking action on this important topic in securing our future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. My only supplemental, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that the government can't act alone, what can Albertans do to ensure that they are protected from the effects of climate change?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, part of our climate change strategy deals with renewables. It deals with technology, which I presented in Buenos Aires at a COP 10 conference. Also, did you know that this province is the first province in Canada to ever have a Ministry of Environment? Did you know that this province was the first province in Canada to have a Climate Change Central? Did you know that this province was the first province in Canada in terms of having a climate change law, unlike any other province, including even the federal government? Albertans care deeply about the environment, and that's why this province just simply doesn't talk about things; we take action. The validation by the professor is exactly that.

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

2:40

Southeast Edmonton Ring Road

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency borders on the southeast portion of the ring road. A number of my constituents are concerned that there has been inadequate consultation, a lack of child safety initiatives, and no real sound barriers. My question is to the Associate Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, capital planning. Why has this government failed to provide adequate consultation for Edmonton-Ellerslie residents who are directly affected by this development?

Mr. McFarland: Mr. Speaker, I'd like a little clarification after on the question, but I do think you have to realize that we've got a great news story to tell. Part of it is that in the next three years we're going to be doing a huge number of projects, mainly southeast, Henday road, the southwest, the north ring road. We've got something like 51 school projects, we're going to add 10,000 student places, and the number of highways in the province will exceed 1,000 kilometres, 300 of them brand new.

Mr. Agnihotri: That was not my question anyway. My question was on consultation.

To the same minister: given that the road is less than 100 feet away from some houses in that area, why hasn't the government implemented a child safety strategy?

Mr. McFarland: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that there have been many, many community involvement projects, projects such as the Anthony Henday, that have a lot of years of planning, have had many, many different community groups involved in the planning. If you have a specific one in mind, I'd be pleased to follow it up with the member.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: given the close proximity of the ring road to Edmonton-Ellerslie residents, why isn't the government building real sound barriers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you. Sound barriers, to my understanding, are something that we have looked at, continue to look at. In the case of the particulars, again if you have a particular location, I'd be more than pleased to follow it up with the department on your behalf.

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

Alberta Office in Washington

(continued)

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It looks like Alberta's man in Washington is living a bit high on the hog at taxpayers' expense these days: \$8,000 a month to rent an apartment near Embassy Row, taxpayer-funded monthly flights back and forth to Calgary, and a \$30,000 bonus on top of an already generous \$233,000 pay package. To the minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations: why is it that when former Tory politicians get patronage appointments to represent this province in foreign lands, they always seem to end up living a lifestyle more akin to Donald Trump than regular working people?

Mr. Mar: If one were to ask the people at KPMG or at Mercer, who do the types of surveys of the cost of doing business in various cities throughout the world, what you'll find is that Washington is a very expensive place to live. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the cost of housing our senior embassy officials with the federal government ranges between \$8,800 and \$11,000 a month for accommodations. My understanding of this is that the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation reviewed all of the different options available for the housing of Mr. Smith. This was found to be the most cost-effective one.

With respect to other expenses, like taxis, which has been raised by the media and by hon. members in this House in the media, the reality is that parking is between \$6 and \$9 for half an hour. It's a common way of doing business. For the first several months that Mr. Smith was down in Washington, he didn't have a vehicle, so he was taking the metro and he was taking taxis.

Mr. Speaker, it may seem like an extravagance to this hon. member, but it is not. It is a normal cost of doing business. It is a normal way of conducting business in a place like Washington, DC.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, certainly it seems like extravagance in accordance with regular people, working people in this province.

I'd ask the minister if he couldn't ask our Washington representative to at least try to find some digs in a different category, a little less fancy than the \$8,000 a month that he's charging taxpayers to rent the current apartment that he has.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I think, like the Amazing Karnak, I answered the hon. member's question before I even heard it. I answered it in my first response. I indicated that my understanding and my briefing is that the department of infrastructure looked at all of the various options. This was the most cost-effective one that was available to us.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, on top of all these perks of office – a \$233,000 salary, an \$8,000 a month apartment, and regular flights back home – why does our high-living man in Washington also get paid a \$30,000 hardship bonus?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, there is no hardship associated with living in Washington, and there is no hardship pay associated with it either. What was reported, in fact, was a \$15,000 allowance that is consistent with federal government policies to note that the cost of living in various postings in the world costs more, so \$15,000 in accordance with the federal guidelines is what Mr. Smith was paid. Now, as the exchange rate for the Canadian dollar goes up, the amount of that allowance will go down. But there is nothing out of the ordinary for the allowance that has been given to Mr. Smith. It is in accordance with federal guidelines.

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

Water Use by Oil and Gas Industry

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Pembina Institute just released a report calling for a moratorium on water licences for the oil sands projects and reductions in how much water is used by the oil and gas industry. This morning I heard the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers on the radio talking about water use for the oil sands. My question is to the Minister of Environment. What is the government doing to make sure that industry doesn't use water to excess?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, our Water for Life strategy, of course, is optimizing the use of water. In fact, each and every one of us in here – and I ask you, sincerely, for a moment in terms of water usage. Even the smallest effort – and think about this – like in the morning, when you wake up, turning off your tap when you're brushing your teeth will make a difference in water usage. Do you do that, or do you allow the tap to continue to run? I want to say that at one point I used to let the tap run, but I no longer do it because I'm taking personal responsibility. I'm also looking for responsibility from industry and from all sectors and all industries, not just oil and gas but also agriculture. I want to just end by saying that the optimization of water usage and the conservation of water into the future will no longer be a luxury. It will be a fact and an Alberta law that we are executing through the Water for Life strategy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since the Pembina report also specifically calls for the government to put a price on fresh water to provide companies with an incentive to maximize efficiency and to seek opportunities to eliminate and reduce water use, my question again to the same minister: are there plans to start charging the oil and gas industry for the water they are using?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, everything has a price. Does water have a price? Unequivocally so. In fact, I would ask you this. If you were in a desert and you had a choice of a barrel of oil and a barrel of water, what is it you would take, and what has value? It's pretty obvious to me what we would be taking. [interjections] Sometimes when you ask rhetorical questions, the answers are very obvious, but I didn't really require a response.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, our oil field injection policy is a

policy that we have implemented. It requires industry to seek alternative sources such as saline water and CO₂, which are other important alternatives to in fact using fresh water. That is also part of our Water for Life strategy.

2:50

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental, again to the Minister of Environment: what is the minister's response to the comments of the Pembina Institute, who is calling for a moratorium on development, and the oil and gas industry, that insists that it's already reducing water use?

Mr. Boutilier: I expect industry to continue to reduce water use. In fact, I expect all Albertans – individuals, industry, and all sectors – to continue to be more efficient in their conservation of water, but I think that to simply say a moratorium does not mean that we are stopping thinking. We are moving forward, executing our Water for Life strategy. It is our goal to have a 30 per cent improvement in water usage by the year 2015. It's a noble goal. We're on track to achieve that objective based on actions that everyone is taking.

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

Sale of Surplus Edmonton Ring Road Land

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Progressive Conservative government's ring road land scandal is certainly a political skeleton that is no longer buried. Land purchased by the government on behalf of taxpayers continues to be sold off at well below real estate market prices. In 2001 MacEwan West Developments paid over \$40,000 per acre to a private landowner. They paid market value. This government, however, continues to sell surplus land for a great deal less than market value. In 2002 a 147-acre parcel was sold to the Royal Development Corporation by this government for one-quarter of what the taxpayers paid for the property in 1981. My first question is to the minister of infrastructure. Given that taxpayers forked over \$22,000 per acre for land by the ring road in 1981 and the market set the price for land in that area at \$40,000 per acre in 2001, why did the government sell this land a year later, in 2002, for only \$5,700 per acre?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, the saga continues day after day, but he obviously has not really got an interest in why these things happen, or else he would have given me the information yesterday, and I could have had the answer for this particular one today. But the pattern has to be that he does this in the House, so then I have to get the information. I've got the information from the sale he asked about yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I'll go back just a little bit. With the Sheckter offers to sell, the situation was different. Often in these cases the offer to sell is a different condition. In the particular one that the member asked about yesterday, the individual that was selling it wanted to sell the whole quarter section, the whole thing, so we bought the whole thing. In the Sheckter deals he didn't want to sell the whole parcel, so there is that difference.

The fact is that in 1985 we paid \$11,916 per acre. Today the member talks about 1981. Well, I can tell the member right off the bat that in 1981 the price of comparable land was higher than it was in 1985. However, in 1985 we bought this land. In 1992, after we had taken out what we needed, we were selling on the open market the rest of the property, 49-some acres. The appraised value was \$8,000. We listed it on the market at that price through multiple listings, and it didn't sell.

So in 1995 another independent, accredited, licensed appraiser did an appraisal, and he came up with \$5,500 an acre. This was in 1995. Once again it was listed as a multilisting. It was listed at \$570,000, Mr. Speaker, and the fact is that it wouldn't sell at that price. There was an offer from one of the real estate agents that in fact they would pay \$5,280 an acre, and we accepted the offer. That's the story from yesterday.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if the member is really that . . .

The Speaker: I appreciate this exchange, but before too long I'm going to have to make a ruling on this that we're going to have to be dealing with these things under Written Questions or Motions for Returns. I don't understand the urgency of debating something from 1981 to 1994, and I've given a lot of leeway on this.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, proceed with your next question.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that taxpayers lost \$2.3 million on this bad deal alone, who in this Progressive Conservative government authorized this sale to the Royal Development Corporation in 2002 and why?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the guidance. I want to go one step further. If, in fact, this member believes that the taxpayer lost that kind of money, I would ask him to please take it to the Auditor General and have the Auditor General investigate so that we can quit this nonsense in the House.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that land further west of the ring road was sold the previous year, 2001, again by a private owner, for \$40,000 per acre to a local land developer, who in the government appraised this land and let it go for only \$5,700 per acre? Who did that appraisal?

Mr. Lund: The answer is the same as the last one: take it to the Auditor General. I can go through and on Monday have the hon. member ask me the question again, and I'll have all of the answers, but he doesn't seem to accept that. So take it to the Auditor General. Will you do that? I doubt it.

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

Avian Flu

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are relieved to be coming to the end of a not too severe flu season. There are now concerns voiced about a possible avian flu epidemic coming to Alberta. My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Because avian flu could be brought to Alberta by waterfowl, will your department be involved in monitoring for this disease in wild birds?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Alberta certainly has worked very closely with our federal government on a national surveillance program. Migratory birds are under the auspices of the federal government, but each province is responsible for examining the need for their own surveillance program within

their own jurisdictions. So it's really important that in terms of wild birds, we continue to concentrate our efforts on the fall bird migration as this follows the breeding season, when North American and Asian birds use the same areas. My department continues to work on this surveillance program and takes a proactive approach to make sure that we continue to monitor our birds.

In terms of this summer, which is what the question was about, in terms of crows and magpies that may be found on the side of the road, it's really important that as we're checking for West Nile virus, if we find indications of avian bird flu in this, we will also report them to the department of health and to the appropriate authorities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much. My second question is to the minister of health. Though the possibility of an avian flu pandemic seems to be more and more unlikely, what measures are being taken to prepare Alberta?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to clarify that avian influenza by itself is not a condition or a disease or an influenza that normally attacks humans. However, the disease has become particularly strong lately. H5N1 has had a very significant effect on people who handle poultry. The World Health Organization reports that as of the end of April there have been 202 cases and over 113 deaths. So we are monitoring with not only our department but other departments. We are working with a lot of due diligence to make sure that we are prepared. The program that we've had since 2003 has been updated. Perhaps most significantly, at the world health congress that I attended last month, it was noted that about 35 per cent of health care providers were ready in the case of a pandemic. When they asked the same sampling of people – some 1,500 – how many had in fact prepared their families, only 9 per cent had. There's a message to all of us to look after ourselves and to make sure that we manage the flu and influenza well.

Ms DeLong: No further supplementals. Thank you.

head: 3:00 Vignettes from the Assembly's History

The Speaker: Hon members, today the Legislative Assembly made history with the invitation to the Governor General, the first time in our 101 years. That is our historical vignette of the day. We actually made it.

head: Members' Statements

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

Education Support Staff

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in celebration of Education Week, 2006. I have spent a career in education and worked in education across the province, and while I have worked as a teacher and an administrator, I have always believed that I have worked my whole life as an educator.

This leads me to the topic of my statement today: the unsung heroes of the education system. While people often see and appreciate the hard work and professionalism provided by our teachers, the education system is the product of a wide range of people working together in pursuit of educating our future citizens. Any one of my colleagues who has visited a school will see right away the efficient and friendly administrative support staff, custodians, cafeteria workers, teacher assistants, and many parent and community volunteers who are a vital part of the operation of every school.

Outside the school, bus drivers, traffic patrollers, and lunchtime supervision staff all play a vital role in getting children into the classroom safely. As classrooms in society become increasingly complex, the business of educating our children no longer involves one profession but also guidance and personal counsellors, school librarians, nutritionists, and contributions from other specialists. System governance is also vital, and we need to recognize the work of school trustees, who give of their time as democratically elected governors of the education system. All of these people are part of keeping a modern public education system running and meeting the needs of today's children.

In closing, I feel that it is necessary to say that education support staff are feeling the impacts of shortsighted cutbacks, and the school system will suffer from their loss. I remember a time when a school custodian stopped to tie the shoe of a kindergarten child. It was then that my heart truly realized the value of all educational support staff across this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, did you have a petition?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition sponsored by the Friends of Medicare. This particular group of petitions has 6,388 signatures. It calls on the government to abandon its plans to implement the third way health reforms, which they sort of did and for the Assembly to defeat any legislation that would allow the expansion of private hospitals or insurance or allow doctors to work both in the private and public system, and opposes any action by the government of Alberta to contravene the Canada Health Act.

Thank you.

head: Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday, May 8, I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 16 through 24.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday, May 8, I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 27 through 32.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from the Official Opposition House Leader to the Speaker objecting to the request to waive Standing Order 8(5)(c) for Bill 208 without bringing that request to the House for unanimous consent to do so. I have provided copies to the Government House Leader and the House leader of the third party.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last evening

myself and several colleagues from the Official Opposition had the opportunity to attend Edmonton Catholic schools' 17th annual Celebration of the Arts. The theme of last night's gala was Children Are God's Creation, and featured were 630 performers from 18 different schools. I'm pleased this afternoon to be able to table the appropriate number of copies of the program from that wonderful event.

Thank you.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. If I could ask the Government House Leader to share with us the projected government business for the week commencing May 8. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to provide that information. On Monday, May 8, in the afternoon, of course, is private members' business. We'll deal with written questions and motions for returns, as I indicated earlier, and under Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole will deal with bills 207 and 208. On Monday evening private member's Motion 510 and government bills and orders, second reading on bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, and Pr. 3, Committee of the Whole on bills 29, 35, and 20, and as per the Order Paper if we have great success in moving along.

On Tuesday afternoon Committee of Supply, day 21 of 24, Restructuring and Government Efficiency. At 8 o'clock under Government Bills and Orders Committee of Supply will be Economic Development. We'll do committee on bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, and Pr. 3 and bills 36, 37, 38, and 20, and then other bills as per our Order Paper.

On Wednesday, Mr. Speaker, in the afternoon will be Committee of Supply, day 23 of 24, and it will be Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. On Wednesday evening, May 10, Committee of Supply, day 24 of 24, and it will be the Department of Finance. For second reading that evening will be Bill 40. Committee of the Whole will be bills 31, 29, and 20.

On Thursday afternoon there will be the introduction of the main estimates appropriation bill. We'll have third reading on bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, and Pr. 3. We will deal with bills 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 21, 24, 27, and 30, and if we make great progress, any other business on the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: 3:10 **Main Estimates 2006-07**

Solicitor General and Public Security

The Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to present an overview of the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security estimates and the 2006-2009 business plan.

Before I start, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce staff from my

ministry who are here with us today: Eric McGhan, Deputy Solicitor General and Deputy Minister of Public Security; Brian Skeet, assistant deputy minister and director of law enforcement; Neil Warner, acting assistant deputy minister for correctional services; Jim Bauer, executive director, senior financial officer; Al Sauve, director of Legislature security; and my assistant, Peter Davis. They're all in the members' gallery to observe this afternoon's presentation.

Mr. Chairman, over the next 10 minutes I'll present to you highlights of the services and supports that the Solicitor General and Public Security provides to Albertans. Following my presentation I'd be happy to answer any questions that remain, but should we run out of time, I'd be pleased to provide responses in writing to relevant questions.

Mr. Chairman, in developing our business plan and financial plan, we were guided by our core values of honesty, integrity, respect, ethics, commitment, compassion, and courage. These values are the bedrock embodied in our vision to ensure that Albertans have safe and secure communities in which to live, work, and raise their families. Each and every day we strive to achieve this vision by providing Albertans with a variety of supports and services.

The four goals that lead the programs identified in the business plan are: one, provide leadership in policing and services that promote safe communities in Alberta; two, provide secure and cost-effective custody, community supervision, and rehabilitation of offenders; three, to ensure the safety of Albertans by providing comprehensive provincial security services and crisis management; and four, provide services and programs to support victims of crime.

Mr. Chairman, to help achieve these important goals, the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security budget for this year is \$450 million, an increase of \$37 million over last year's comparable forecast. Of the total budget \$230 million goes to policing services, organized and serious crime response, and crime prevention programs; \$155 million is spent on remand and correctional centres, offender supervision in the community, and rehabilitative opportunities for offenders; \$26 million goes to security services; and \$16 million is spent on victims' programs and services. This is a significant investment to improve the quality of life in our communities.

When you examine the services we provide to Albertans, it's clear that this ministry is closely tied to one of the government of Alberta's strategic business plan priorities, which is to make Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. A safe and secure community is where people want to live, work, and raise their families.

With the additional \$37 million in the budget this year we will increase policing resources. The provincial policing programs will increase by nearly \$12 million to over \$155 million. This increase includes \$6.2 million to hire up to 80 additional RCMP front-line officers. This follows the 130 RCMP officers added in Budget 2005 to help fight crime in rural communities, bringing the overall Alberta complement of RCMP officers to just under 1,400.

Mr. Chairman, \$4.6 million is added for traffic enforcement positions, or sheriffs, as part of the province's traffic safety plan and \$1.7 million for the Alberta relationship threat assessment and management initiative, also known as ARTAMI. This cross-ministry program will better co-ordinate police, legal, mental health, and other experts to assess threats, manage victim safety, and find ways to prevent family violence homicides in partnership with the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

Mr. Chairman, funding to combat organized crime will rise to \$18 million, a 26 per cent jump. It includes \$2 million to establish a 20-member surveillance team that will work with the integrated response to organized crime unit to provide strategic support to crack down on organized and serious crime.

Another \$1.7 million will go to the integrated child exploitation unit to help catch online predators that use the Internet to sexually exploit and victimize children. Resources for the ICE unit are particularly important at this time. The events of this past March, after arrests were made during an international child porn investigation, demonstrate the need for enhanced resources in this field of work. As you may recall, a major break in the case came in January when Edmonton police arrested a local website administrator.

Finally, the ministry will also continue to work with the province's Crystal Meth Task Force to rid our communities of the scourge of this highly addictive and deadly drug.

We all know that organized crime, drug production, and child pornography are not exclusive to urban communities. Our growing economy is attracting a large number of hard-working people to the province, but it's also a draw to those who want to take advantage of our prosperity. Criminals follow the money. As such, the tentacles of organized crime and gangs are spreading right across our province. We've heard the call from municipalities for additional resources and have answered. Policing assistance to municipalities will increase to \$48 million, or 4.8 per cent. Of that, \$1.6 million will go to municipal policing grants to keep pace with the province's rapidly rising population. However, as we provide additional resources to fight organized and serious crime throughout Alberta, we cannot ignore the fact that gang members are also operating and networking behind bars. The increase in the number of investigations by police is leading to more gang members in jail, and the gang members are continuing to run their operations from inside. Jail might remove them from the street, but it doesn't hamper their activities.

To address this growing problem, I'm proud to tell you that we are the first provincial jurisdiction in Canada to create a correctional services intelligence unit. The CSIU will formalize the process of gathering and sharing intelligence information on known and suspected gang members in our correctional facilities, who they associate with and their activities while in custody. This is vital information for police, Mr. Chairman, because when these gang members are back on the street and committing crimes, police will have a clearer picture of the new ties gang members have made during their time in custody. The \$850,000 investment in the CSIU will also allow us to close the intelligence gap between corrections and law enforcement and help the police track gang members when they return to the street.

As we increase policing resources to fight crime, Mr. Chairman, we realize that this will cause additional pressure on our remand and correctional facilities. Overcrowding has become a serious issue at the Edmonton Remand Centre as remand populations continue to rise. We don't control the intake of people sent to the remand centre. We have to deal as best we can with the people sent to us by the courts. We don't have the option of closing the door and putting up a no vacancy sign. At present there are plans to build a new remand centre in the future, and our department has identified a new remand centre in Edmonton as a capital priority.

In addition to budget and resource increases, there are other key initiatives that our department has undertaken. They include but are not limited to the sheriff and RCMP highway safety pilot project. This pilot project focuses on enhancing the safety of Albertans and partners sheriffs with RCMP officers to perform traffic controls on highway 21 in Strathcona county and highway 63 at Fort McMurray and Boyle. This project will be evaluated in the near future on our ability to enhance enforcement while allowing RCMP officers to focus on more serious criminal matters.

Mr. Chairman, public security and corrections, however, are just two facets of my department's responsibilities. We will continue to

ensure that victims of crime are treated with dignity and respect and that they promptly receive information, assistance, and financial benefits. The report of the Alberta victims of crime consultation set up a 10-year vision for the development of programs and services for victims of crime. Our ministry has completed 13 of the report's recommendations, and we continue to work towards implementing those that remain. This past March we launched a campaign to increase awareness among victims of crime so they will know what programs exist and how and where to access them. The campaign encourages victims to report crime to police and then call their local victim assistance program.

Mr. Chairman, to assist police and Crown prosecutors to investigate and prosecute family violence cases, our department coreleased a domestic violence handbook last November. The handbook, created in partnership with Alberta Justice, is another resource to combat family violence. Guidelines for developing a domestic violence protocol for police services were also distributed for use with the handbook.

3:20

To support greater victim involvement and offender accountability in the justice system, we encourage communities to develop initiatives that deter crime. Our department earmarked \$350,000 in grant money to 16 groups involved in local restorative justice programs. Restorative justice programs are used as an alternative or supplement to any sentence such as house arrest, probation, or a jail term. As part of our crime prevention strategy Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security participated in the first province-wide Fraud Awareness Month campaign this past March. Partnering with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police and the Alberta office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the campaign informed Albertans how to protect themselves from becoming victims of fraud. This campaign was so successful that we plan on expanding it as a cross-ministry initiative with other departments in the future.

Mr. Chairman, our department continues to work collaboratively with other ministries, aboriginal communities, and other stakeholders to address the complex root causes of aboriginal peoples involved with the justice system. The ministry's aboriginal justice initiatives unit works with our program areas, other ministries and agencies in the development of community-based strategies that promote safety and security in aboriginal communities. In 2006 we will contribute \$11 million towards aboriginal justice initiatives, including youth justice committees, programs and services for aboriginal victims, cultural programs in provincial corrections centres, and community corrections programs.

We are sensitive to the unique needs of our aboriginal citizens. As such, we support policing in aboriginal communities. Community tripartite policing agreements are already in place in four other First Nation communities in Alberta. These agreements send a clear message to the citizens of First Nations that the government will continue to crack down on violent crime and gang activity plaguing their communities. The RCMP, the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, and the communities of Hobbema agreed in principle to a community tripartite policing agreement that will boost the RCMP's presence to 32 officers in their community. Hobbema has become a recruiting ground for gangs. The additional officers will also act as mentors and role models for Hobbema youth to help them stay out of gangs.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the mission of Solicitor General and Public Security is to serve Albertans by ensuring safe and secure communities through effective policing, security in correctional services, and when crime is committed to assist those victims of crime. The overview I presented demonstrates that we have clearly met this expectation.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my presentation. I'd be happy to address any questions that members may have, and should we run out of time, as I mentioned earlier, I'd be pleased to provide responses in writing.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to commend the Solicitor General and the department for all of their work in preparing these business plans and estimates, and especially I would like to commend all the public servants who work in the department and who work so hard. I have to also honour the hard-working police in this province and the special constables, who every day risk their lives even to protect the public and provide safe communities, and also the guards in our correctional institutes, who every day also put themselves at risk and do a fantastic job, sometimes in the face of deteriorating conditions, especially in the remand centres, yet they still work very, very hard and do a great job.

In my summary of the figures in the estimates overall the estimate for 2006-07 is \$434 million, up from last year's forecast of \$399 million. Funding for provincial policing increases by \$11.8 million, or 8.2 per cent, to \$155.4 million in 2006-07. This will allow for the hiring of 80 additional RCMP officers and more peace officers for highway traffic enforcement. Funding to combat organized crime is increasing to \$18 million from last year's \$14.2 million, an increase of almost \$4 million, or 23 per cent. This extra funding will allow for a 20-member surveillance team working closely with the RCMP and municipal police services to provide strategic support to fight organized crime. As well, some extra funding will be dedicated to the IROC team, integrated response to organized crime team, and for the new Crystal Meth Task Force. Municipal policing is increased by 4.8 per cent to \$48 million, up from last year's \$45.5 million. That's not much of an increase. I guess it keeps pace with population growth and so on.

In terms of the business plans I just want to comment in my introduction here about goal 1 on pages 342 to 343 under Core Businesses, Goals, Strategies and Performance Measures. Goal one: "provide leadership in policing and services that promote safe communities." In going through the strategies, Mr. Chairman, it's very interesting that there are 18 listed strategies here, and I'm very impressed by the number of strategies that focus on crime prevention. I think that so many of my questions in question period and comments last year to the Solicitor General and also to the Minister of Justice were how there's such a total imbalance between the amount of money focused on building prisons and keeping people in prison as compared to the focus on crime prevention.

I'm very encouraged by the fact that at least nine items out of 18 on this page are focused on crime prevention. For example, 1.2, "a plan to target First Nations gang violence"; 1.7, "the development of effective community justice initiatives that address local crime concerns"; 1.8, addressing strategies concerning sexual exploitation of children; 1.9, "youth leadership development . . . in Aboriginal communities"; 1.10, working to "reduce Aboriginal youth suicide," which is extremely important; 1.11, the youth justice committee program, which the hon. minister referred to, which I think is extremely important, and that's a part of the whole emphasis on restorative justice. Maybe I'll come back to this later because I'm not sure how much money the hon. minister referred to in terms of support to youth justice committees. I didn't quite hear the numbers. I had a visit with a person in Fort McMurray who is chairing the youth justice committee there, and there's a great need for extra resources, especially financial resources, for youth justice committees throughout the province. Strategy 1.12, focusing on response

to family violence; 1.13, addressing bullying; 1.15, dealing with crystal meth. All of these are efforts to prevent crime, efforts in the community to bring about greater awareness, greater education, and to try to get local communities involved in trying to prevent crime in the first place.

I'm reminded of the new chief of police in Edmonton, Mike Boyd, when he says – and he uses a wonderful illustration – that the path of crime is like a stream, and when the police come in and when prisons are involved, that's too far downstream; we have to move upstream and make a greater effort to prevent crime from ever happening in the first place. All of these efforts that are listed here, half the page, are devoted to preventing crime. I commend the Solicitor General. I don't know if this is a difference in strategy and tone in the business plan, but I think it's moving in the right direction. I think that all Albertans would be enthusiastic and want to be involved in a lot of the programs that are listed here.

3:30

Before leaving this page, I want to look especially at 1.18 in the business plan, which is about the McDermid report. I started off my remarks yesterday in dealing with the Department of Justice with the McDermid report, and it applies equally to the work of the Solicitor General. This was a very important report focusing on traffic safety, Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads: Report and Recommendations for a Traffic Collision Fatality and Injury Reduction Strategy, 2004. There are many, many recommendations in here that apply to the Solicitor General.

Just to lift up some of the conclusions. After a lot of study and working with stakeholders and looking at all kinds of information, some of the conclusions are quite startling. Under enforcement various police departments, in reporting to Mr. McDermid and carrying out this study, mentioned how insufficient the resources are in being able to carry out proper traffic safety in this province and how sometimes when traffic safety is considered in terms of priority, it's moved to the bottom of the agenda for many police forces. Now, that's very troubling. Why? Police have for so long had that as an important part of their task and their job. When there is reallocation of money and organization and downsizings, it seems that traffic safety gets to the bottom. Even within various detachments there do not seem to be targeted budgets just focused on the importance of traffic enforcement.

I think that's quite troubling, and I wondered if the Solicitor General would comment about that. It seems to me that that's going in the wrong direction when you consider how many lives are lost on our highways every year. Far more lives are lost from traffic collisions than from homicides. So not to channel money and to be really focused on the struggle, the fight to establish safer highways in this province is a tremendously important point.

Recommendation 7 in the McDermid report is especially, I think, directed to the Solicitor General's department because it deals with the use of new technology in improving the monitoring of safety on our highways. Much has been made about photo radar. I think that Mr. McDermid really emphasized the importance of photo radar on our highways. All kinds of other technology devices, some of which I'm not sure I understand, he lists:

- Expanded use of breath alcohol ignition interlock devices
- Use of roadside cameras
- In-car video technology . . .
- Tachographs (on board devices used to record distance travelled, speed, rpms, stops, [and so on])
- Vehicle data recorders.

A lot of interesting technological suggestions. I'm not sure how many of those have been utilized for policing in Alberta.

At the end of this recommendation 7 he makes this startling

statement. Well, I know that it's not startling, but it's an important statement. "There must be no reduction in the number of police officers presently assigned to the highway patrols." Then he says, "That recommendation has not been endorsed by the provincial government."

Mr. Backs: That is startling, isn't it?

Dr. B. Miller: That's startling. Well, I don't know what the provincial government is waiting for.

Now there's a complicating factor here, and that is the issue of special constables and peace officers. Is the answer to the McDermid report, the response: "Okay; we're not going to increase the number of police officers doing highway traffic safety; we're going to have peace officers doing more of that work"? That's not the response that Mr. McDermid was looking for. I have great respect for peace officers, special constables, but as a matter of fact they don't have the same level of training as police officers. I think that when you look at highway 63, there were not that many RCMP officers doing highway traffic safety. Now we have special constables doing it. We have to still be convinced – I know the pilot project is continuing now – that this is a better way of doing highway traffic safety than having more police officers.

When I was in Fort McMurray, I learned that there actually are only two RCMP officers – one does highway 63 north of Fort McMurray; one does highway 63 south – but with the special constables the one RCMP officer was doing a lot of administration to oversee the special constables. You know, what is the net gain here?

We've raised all kinds of questions before about the danger on highway 63 and all of our highways when cars are stopped. Will special constables be able to handle that? Do they have the proper training? We've asked questions about why the Solicitor General is moving ahead, pouring money into even increasing special constables, peace officers, to do traffic safety in Alberta before the pilot project is completed. I haven't actually received a good response on that issue. My understanding is that this pilot project is ending in June, and then there should be evaluation of the whole thing and then recommendations about how to move in the future. Has the Solicitor General already decided, before the pilot project is over, what direction he is going to go in?

I think the McDermid report still remains to be responded to in some of the specifics and in terms of an overall plan. The McDermid report pointed out that there doesn't seem to be a centralized plan for traffic safety in this province. It's too piecemeal. A whole lot of departments are involved with it. There needs to be, of course, interdepartmental working out in terms of committees and so on. But I haven't heard it ever presented: exactly what is the centralized overarching plan for traffic safety in this province? Are we going to actually put money into this so that we can stop the carnage on our highways? It's an absolutely important issue.

Now, moving on to one of the issues that continues to concern me and Albertans because it's so often in the press. People are asking continually about the conditions of our correctional centres, specifically the remand centres. The remand centre in Calgary was built in 1993 to hold 361 prisoners. Now it holds more than 500. In Edmonton the remand centre was built in 1979 to hold 332 prisoners. Now it holds more than 700.

If we look at some of the court cases concerning offenders, heroin dealers in this province, we find that many of them have been in other remand centres in Red Deer, Grande Prairie, and the conditions of these remand centres are just terrible. I don't know what kind of adjectives need to be used. I've used the term Third World condi-

tions. Overcrowding: that's the biggest issue, I suppose, with double bunking and sometimes triple bunking when a mat is just thrown in the middle for a third guy to sleep in a cell. Cells are very small, poorly ventilated. Some of those who are accused or in a remand centre awaiting trial sometimes spend 23 hours in their cells.

3:40

There are issues around cleanliness, with filthy mattresses, not enough opportunities to actually wash themselves. There are complaints about food and, of course, lack of medical services. Even a fatality inquiry has surfaced that issue with Jody Umpherville, who didn't get the proper medical attention, and she died while being in custody. The recommendation was that there be more medical services, even that a medical officer responsible for the Edmonton Remand Centre would be available.

There are questions about religious rights being violated, vegetarians not being able to have vegetarian meals, and Buddhists not being able to have opportunities to engage in their particular religious activities.

Now, a lot of the evidence comes from court cases, so I'm not referring to newspaper articles or just things that you might pick up from ex-cons, who always are willing to talk about their experience in the remand centres, although I must admit that in one article when someone was asked about being in a remand centre, he said:

I don't want to do no remand time, man . . . That's torture, man. Like, I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy to do time there, okay? I can't handle it psychologically. I will kill myself in there, man . . . Try sitting in a cell 23 hours every day . . . I'd rather do 20 years in the pen than do five months in the remand centre.

Well, Mr. Chairman, there's a real problem with this. I don't know whether it's the intention of the Solicitor General – I don't think it is – that the conditions will be so bad that it would be a deterrence in terms of committing crime. It would be awful to even consider that that might be the case.

Something has to happen here. I mean, this issue will continue to be an issue before this government. [interjections] You know, it's a human rights issue. It's a human rights issue. When people commit crime, they never think about what the conditions are going to be like in a prison. They never think about what kind of time, whether they're going to serve two years or five years or 10 years.

All those studies from criminologists indicate that when people commit crimes, they don't calculate in their minds: well, if I commit this crime, am I going to end up in the remand centre? They don't think that way. Most crime is committed within a conflictual situation where there's a lot of emotion, a lot of passion, and they don't think. In fact, surveys indicate that no one thinks about prison life in advance. Even people who are repeat criminals, when they're asked about criminal sentences, don't seem to know, so it's wrong to even think that prisons are a method of deterring crime.

Now, we have to look at the whole issue of remand centres from the point of view of our responsibility in terms of upholding human rights.

I've only just begun, but I guess my time is up.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, I think we have all afternoon.

Mr. Chairman, I may have missed in my opening remarks that I was actually moving the estimates for the Solicitor General and Public Security. Okay? Just to make sure that that's on the record and whatever. We're going to get them voted on later.

Some very interesting comments were made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. He's been a critic on this ministry for the

last 17 months, and we do work together on a number of areas and may have some differences but obviously are both concerned about the policing and corrections and victims in the province.

I do want to respond to some of the concerns that he raised, and I'll close with the comments regarding the remand centre. He did mention – and we may talk about it a little later – restorative justice programs that we provide in the province that are very important, I believe, and are a very critical area regarding providing programs and providing alternatives to sentences whether it's young offenders being placed in correctional facilities versus providing them with other programs in the community. We do provide \$350,000 for restorative justice programs as well through initiative grants. These are very important and critical in the community. That was one of the questions the hon. member raised.

He did go through a number of the goals, and I just want to comment on some of those areas. He made mention of strategy 1.2, where we talk about “partnership with other levels of government,” which is critical, especially at this time with the federal budget coming out yesterday. Looking at our partnership with the federal government regarding various initiatives, obviously with new RCMP officers, federal positions though they may be, they will still be an added component of policing within the province of Alberta.

We are very sensitive to the unique needs of our aboriginal citizens, as I mentioned in our opening remarks, and as such we support policing in aboriginal communities through either community tripartite agreements or self-administered police services. The tripartite agreements are a great example of community policing where government, police, and the community work together to fulfill their vision of safety and security for First Nations residents. The department has signed community tripartite agreements for six First Nations communities to provide effective and culturally sensitive policing. It's been a real opportunity for me to learn and understand more of the culture, having been able to attend two of those signing ceremonies. It's been a great honour for me to have been there to work with the RCMP and with the First Nations communities.

So our department, again, supports five self-administered First Nations police services throughout Alberta as well as any other municipal service, again looking at what the needs are in those First Nations communities. What do they want to see? What type of service level do they want, and how would it better reflect their needs in their communities?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora mentioned strategy 1.7, “Work in partnership with police and other justice practitioners, Aboriginal communities.” Again, Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security is committed to organizations, police services, communities, First Nations, and Métis settlements in administering sustainable crime prevention programs and restorative justice processes. As I mentioned, we provide \$350,000 for restorative justice programs in Alberta, and we provide opportunities for victims and offenders to communicate their thoughts and their feelings. This approach helps victims to heal and makes offenders directly accountable to those that they have harmed or hurt. The ministry currently supports four First Nations crime prevention co-ordinator positions, and these positions are responsible for developing and administering a wide range of crime prevention programs in 15 member First Nations communities.

Strategy 1.8, together with law enforcement agencies and other government departments to further strategies to address sexual exploitation of children. Again, we are currently addressing this problem through several means. Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security co-chairs a cross-ministry working committee under the Alberta children and youth initiative. The working committee

has developed a strategic plan which outlines four key areas of action: education and awareness, prevention and protection, enforcement, and research and training. We will vigorously fight the exploitation of children through the use of increased funding provided in Budget 2006.

Budget 2006 provided \$1.7 million to the integrated child exploitation unit to help catch online predators that use the Internet to sexually exploit and victimize children. Overall, provincial policing funding in '06-07 will increase by nearly \$12 million, or 8.2 per cent, to over \$155 million. The government of Alberta will launch a media campaign this month to raise awareness of sexual exploitation of children and youth through the Internet.

3:50

Strategy 1.9: “Support youth leadership development programming in Aboriginal communities.” Aboriginal people continue to be significantly represented both as victims and offenders in the justice system, not just in Alberta but in every province throughout Canada. As part of our preventative approach to addressing root causes of crime, Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security is committed to supporting youth leadership development programming in aboriginal communities, including programs such as the Alberta future leader's program and aboriginal summer cultural camps.

Part of our support towards youth leadership includes a \$50,000 grant to the Hobbema cadet corps to help pay for the uniforms that they wear. I can tell you, having been there just a month or so ago, that their cadet corps has now increased to almost 400 children in the Hobbema community. It's a tremendous program provided by RCMP members who are volunteering their time to assist kids, to keep kids busy, and to keep them in this program, which is half scout program and half army cadet program. They've mixed the two together. It provides them with a lot of fun and a lot of activities that they can partake in after school, in the evenings, and on weekends. It keeps them busy and keeps them excited with opportunities to have fun with their friends, and it builds their self-confidence and self-esteem. They can say no to drugs, and they can say no to gang activity.

The hon. member brought up as well strategy 1.10, working with stakeholders to reduce aboriginal youth suicide. Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security participates in the cross-ministry aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy, an initiative that was established as part of the Alberta child and youth initiative. In '05-06 an AYSPPS working group identified and provided assistance to three pilot sites to address the root causes of suicide among aboriginal youth. Each pilot site will be involved in the strategy for a three-year period.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

The next point I'll move to, Madam Chair: “Through the provision of financial grants and with the support of department staff encourage the involvement of interested communities in the administration of justice programs such as the Youth Justice Committee Program.” Alberta has 121 youth justice committees throughout Alberta, established under the Young Offenders Act and now the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The youth justice committees deal mainly with first- and second-time offenders involved in a minor, nonviolent crime and offer an alternative to placing them in the formal court process, bringing these offenders face to face with their victims and other members of the community. Through this process young people are held directly accountable to their victims and the community. They come together and agree on the appropriate means of restitution. Youth justice committees are an outstand-

ing example of what can be accomplished when a community shows faith in its youth and works to ensure that they are well prepared to become the leaders of the future.

Strategy 1.12: "Work in partnership with other departments . . . to implement an integrated province-wide response to family violence," a very critical area. Reducing family violence continues to be a high priority for the Alberta government. We want to ensure that all of our initiatives are sustained over the long term. Our Family Violence Police Advisory Committee, in operation since 1990, takes an active role in policy and program development with a strong focus on police intervention and increasing public awareness. We have a large number of cross-ministry initiatives with Alberta Justice and Children's Services.

To deal with the prevention of family violence, including the training of police officers and victim advocates, the Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors was released last November by myself and the hon. Minister of Justice along with guidelines to develop a domestic violence protocol for all police services across the province. The 160-page Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors provides information on investigative procedures, prosecutions, victims and abusers, risk factors, and safety planning.

Madam Chairman, the next area is 1.13, working to raise awareness and develop appropriate strategies to address bullying. Again, another issue that we have been working on. We participate on that cross-ministry working committee to implement the recommendations that arose from the Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying. In 2005 an awareness campaign focused on children aged 3 to 11. In 2006 a campaign will be launched to target 12 to 20-year-olds. In 2007 attention will focus on raising awareness of adults and their role in preventing and discouraging bullying behaviour among children and modelling positive behaviour. Solicitor General and Public Security will provide a bullying prevention program at the Edmonton and Calgary youth detention centres and other youth correctional centres to work with offenders who have a history of bullying behaviour. The bullying prevention program is expected to be implemented by September 2006.

Madam Chairman, I would like to just add a few more remarks before I let the hon. member ask me some more questions. Strategy 1.15 talks about combating the production, distribution, and use of crystal meth and other illicit drugs in Alberta's communities. I will go into some detail, I'm sure, further on throughout the afternoon. Really, this is indeed a huge issue and a huge area that we have to move forward on. We have provided the Crystal Meth Task Force, which, Madam Chair, you are a member of. A tremendous – tremendous – opportunity for Albertans now to provide information to the task force while the task force consults with the community. Our presentation to the task force, I think, was an opportunity to provide a strategic plan in place to combat what I just mentioned: the production, distribution, use, and clandestine labs throughout Alberta, not just in our major centres but throughout Alberta.

I'm looking forward to the recommendations that will be coming forward to government from the task force. Obviously, we'll work hand in hand with the task force recommendations and the ministries that will all be involved in combating the issues related to illegal drugs. We are prepared in our ministry to continue the work that we're doing already in the education and prevention areas and the areas regarding intelligence and enforcement but, as well, in the areas that we have to regarding treatment and healing, including offenders that are in our correction centres. That is our responsibility, and we take it very seriously.

Madam Chair, the hon. member spoke at length on 1.18, the traffic safety plan, retired Assistant Commissioner Don McDermid's report,

Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads. It is a very comprehensive report, and I think it was very well done. Obviously, Assistant Commissioner McDermid had a tremendous amount of experience in policing in Alberta and throughout Canada. A well-respected police officer throughout Canada. Two of the recommendations really strictly deal with our area. The recommendations fall in line with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, but I'll talk briefly on the two that we are moving forward on at this point in time.

We are committed to work with government, police, and community stakeholders to improve traffic safety in Alberta. The traffic safety plan was developed in response to the McDermid report, which will provide a structure to approach traffic safety in our province to make roads safer, to reduce fatalities, to reduce serious injury collisions, and to reduce collisions in general.

4:00

We are killing 400 people on our roads every year. We have to educate, and we have to enforce that legislation to ensure that we can save lives and to ensure that people become aware that driving is a privilege, right across Canada and in Alberta as well. It is not a right. Therefore, I'm sure that we want to work with the recommendations that are coming from the report, but the recommendations didn't say police officers. They said that they needed officers that would be working in that traffic enforcement area.

What we have looked at are other projects and other opportunities throughout the United States and Canada and what, in fact, we've been doing in Alberta for some 25 to 30 years with special constables, that have been working in municipalities throughout Alberta. We've expanded that program to tie ourselves in with the sheriff's offices from every other province throughout Canada and the three territories. All have sheriffs. We restructured and renamed our provincial protection officers to sheriffs to align ourselves with other provinces. Obviously, when our sheriff's office phones the B.C. sheriff's office, now they know who they're talking to, whereas before they didn't have a clue who a provincial protection officer was. So the term itself was to provide a better communication plan and a better working partnership amongst all of the sheriffs throughout Canada.

We've expanded the model. We've expanded the model and the scope of their practice so that they can in fact do traffic investigation and traffic enforcement. The Peace Officer Act, Bill 16, which is going through the Assembly, will again provide them with the opportunity to do more, provide them with the opportunity to continue to look at other opportunities, whether it's traffic enforcement, whether it's bylaw enforcement for the community in which they are employed, or whether it's working hand in hand with the RCMP on a number of issues that maybe have to be worked on in their community, whether it's a community problem-solving issue or a member of the public's issue dealing with the provincial legislation or bylaws.

So we looked at the sheriff program, Madam Chair, and we wanted to develop something that would be able to provide additional officers out on our highways. We want to look at those highways that are most dangerous in Alberta. For the pilot project we've started on highway 21 and highway 63 as those have been noted as very dangerous highways through the number of accidents that have occurred or the number of collisions and fatalities that have occurred in those two areas. As we advance this new role for sheriffs, we have seconded an officer from the Calgary police service to do an evaluation of the last three and a half, four months of the pilot project as well as for the next month coming to look at how the relationship is working. So he's working with the RCMP, he's working with the sheriffs, he's working with our department

staff, and he's working with staff in Infrastructure and Transportation as well to look at the whole plan, evaluate it, and look at a model for the future. When we talk about where these officers may be placed, we want to ensure that we're looking at targeted highways.

I'll continue on that as we move forward through the afternoon.

The Acting Chair: The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and join the debate on the motion that the Solicitor General belatedly put before the House, to debate and approve the budget for his department. I want to thank him for his work and particularly want to compliment the staff of the department, hardworking staff, who did a huge amount of work to get things ready for us to look at.

Certainly, people who work in provincial policing, whether they're municipal police forces and officers or whether they are RCMP officers or peace officers, correctional services personnel, people who look after the detainees and people incarcerated in our remand centre facilities, all of these people deserve our thanks and commendation. This is risky work. It's not easy work to do. It's dealing with people who have problems, people who have committed crimes or may have committed crimes, who may have mental disorders, personality disorders, violent tempers, all of that stuff. So it's tough work, and it certainly deserves our appreciation and recognition of the contribution that they make to make our communities safe and our lives easier.

That said, I will try to not repeat what has already been asked in terms of questions or observations that were made. I hope to limit my questions to matters that, perhaps, may not have been raised or raised in a specific way. In general, I do want to express my satisfaction and pleasure, actually, at the minister's emphasis on restorative justice as an important means of dealing particularly with youth who may err and commit actions which are deemed criminal, and the role that the youth justice committees play in the process of rehabilitating and putting those young people back on the path to behaviour and conduct that is right and proper. I had many years ago the privilege of serving on an all-party committee which came up with the recommendations for restorative justice as a model, particularly for young offenders. So I'm pleased that that has become an integral part of the policies of this government.

The third matter that I want to just raise is the relationship, not so much just the relationship but the plight of the members of the aboriginal community vis-à-vis police, incidence of crime, apprehension, incarceration. I've been looking through the business plan, and there are references here and there, but there isn't sort of an attempt to single out this as a challenge that we need to do some creative and innovative work on. This is something that I find missing. Maybe it's just an oversight on my part because I didn't look on the right pages, but I'd like the Solicitor General to perhaps expand on what's provided in the budget and in the business plan to tackle this very, very serious problem.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

I know and we know in the House that while the aboriginal population is growing at a rate that's much faster perhaps than for the nonaboriginal population in the province, it still remains at about 6 to 7 per cent of the total population of the province. Yet in terms of our incarceration rates and their presence in our provincial jails and apprehension rates, they represent close to perhaps 35 to 40 per cent of the cases, a sort of shocking overrepresentation. On the one hand, we could say that that shows the success of our law enforce-

ment authorities to apprehend people who, in fact, commit crime, but on the other hand, we've got to look at the social side of it.

4:10

The overrepresentation of a particular group of our provincial population at the scale at which it takes place with respect to the aboriginal population is a matter that should be of grave concern to us, and I'm sure that it is to the Solicitor General. I want to ask him what specific measures are proposed and reflected in the budget which draw attention to special attempts being made to make a dent in the numbers and the frightening statistics that we deal with year after year after year, with no major change having taken place. What is there that the Solicitor General proposes to do on that front by way of the budget and the business plan? Could he give us the most updated numbers on that in terms of the percentage of Albertans that are incarcerated in our jails and the crime rates? If he can give us some indication because I think that it's important for the House to have an up-to-date picture in terms of exact numbers. If he has them now, fine; if not, possibly later. This is information would be very helpful. Again, I don't find it in the documents that I have before me. I'm sure if I look hard enough, I'll find it somewhere in government documents, but certainly in the ones that I'm looking at now for the purpose of this debate, they're not readily available to me.

The next point I want to raise in general is on a matter of policy – that's what I'm using this debate as an opportunity for – on the community policing model. We have many of our urban communities growing, not just Edmonton and Calgary now. There's Red Deer. There's Fort McMurray. There's Grande Prairie. There's Lethbridge. There's Medicine Hat, so on and so forth. The business plan does very appropriately focus on prevention as much as on apprehension, prevention of crime and making communities safe through prevention. We know that particularly in large urban centres community policing is known to be the most effective way of doing that prevention.

I wonder if the Solicitor General will make some comments with respect to line items in the budget under Public Security; I think it's program support and policing programs. Will he highlight the resources that are being dedicated or directed towards increasing community policing and using it as a model that's more appropriate for prevention and enhancement of community safety? We know that in Edmonton some of the community policing services have been rolled back, and some community police stations have been closed. Norwood is an example of one. Where is the money going to for municipal policing, for example, in the budget? What kind of increases are there in order for urban municipal authorities or the police to move in that direction? I find, again, not much that I can see that I can identify as dedicated sources and funds that will help move with some effectiveness in the direction of community policing.

The next question has to do with private security firms and their use in situations where employers employ these services during strikes for policing pickets, keeping peace between people who want to go in and those who are on the picket. Certainly the practice of the use of private security forces and firms supplying those forces is being adopted by a variety of employers. I'm assuming that overall it's the responsibility of the Solicitor General to make sure regarding this deployment and employment of these private security police forces, peace officers I suppose one would call them, that they are properly trained, that they in fact observe and respect the laws and rules that the Solicitor General's department is responsible for enforcing in the province. There have been problems. During the Telus strike it was brought to our attention that the firm supplying

private security there, or people who were doing it on its behalf, certainly were not the most appropriately trained people. Therefore, there were lots of situations where unnecessary potential for violence was enhanced because these poorly trained security forces were the ones who were handling rather sensitive and difficult relations between different groups of employees, some on the picket line and outside and some who wanted to go in.

Those are my general policy-related questions, and I hope the minister will be able to relate my concerns to the way in which the budget and the business plan address these policy issues.

A few questions from page 394 of the departmental budget estimates. I notice that on crime prevention, while there is a great deal of commitment expressed in terms of the business plan – and rightly so. Minister, you have my support in this and the support of the House that that's the right direction to go. Yet I see that under policing programs, I think line 2.2.1, there's a minuscule, infinitesimally small increase in the budget to support crime prevention. This may be a particular kind of item, but I hope the minister will respond to this. I was concerned about not seeing more resources being channelled towards crime prevention in this item.

The policing assistance to municipalities. Again, a very, very small increase, about 4 per cent or less, I guess. I'm just making some general, sort of mental calculations here. Certainly, the urban municipal scene we know is growing very, very fast in terms of the size of the population. Calgary is growing very fast. We know that Fort Mac is just simply exploding. The population in this city is growing very fast. The same is the case with Grande Prairie and Red Deer, as far as I know, and many other municipalities.

The challenge with this, with the increase in population, with the more transient population being part of these communities does create much more serious challenges for policing, yet the resources that are being now committed to manage these increases don't seem to match the scale of the growth in the size of the challenge. So maybe the minister will take a minute or two to throw some light on this.

The last point, Mr. Chairman, that I want to make. I wonder how much time I have? [interjection] Five minutes. Okay. Good.

I know a serious concern to the Solicitor General and to all of us in this Assembly is the domestic violence issue. There are parts of the business plan that give me the, sort of, assurance that there is a focus on dealing with this issue. What I am concerned about is the escape from the domestic violence that requires the families, women with children in particular, to have to move out to escape serious harm under those conditions of domestic violence and move to women's shelters.

4:20

Women's shelters in this province have been extremely overcrowded, and my briefing notes tell me that last year alone there were over 8,000 women and/or their children who had to be turned away from the women's shelters because of a shortage of beds and space. It's an extremely serious matter. It's, again, a problem that doesn't seem to be declining in the province. If anything, Alberta has, unfortunately, the distinction of being one of the most violent provincial communities across the country, yet we haven't been able to provide even a temporary respite for families that need shelter space in order to escape those violent situations in the family.

So I would ask the minister to comment on where in the budget is an increase in funds to ensure that we have taken note of the desperate situation of shortage of beds in women's shelters and that those spaces will be increased because there is money in the budget. That's a big issue here, and I think we need to certainly take steps to mitigate the problem of these women's shelter space shortages.

Last point. The police college that the minister is proposing to establish in Alberta: where are we at with respect to that? I am hearing that the minister is considering some sort of P3, private/public partnership, on it. It concerns me greatly. I'd like to hear from the minister what his plans are and whether this budget in particular is indicative of some of the steps forward that the minister is taking in this regard. The P3 issue is a complex one both in terms of costs and in terms of quality of training. So I'd like the minister to perhaps visit this issue as part of this debate as well.

I keep on saying that this is my last point. I still have one more. I guess I have a minute or two to use. The point has been made before by a member who rose before me to comment on the budget. It's the increasing use of peace officers to replace more rigorously trained police officers to enforce law and provide safety in our communities. Given the very different training schedules that are used for these two groups, the police officers versus peace officers, it concerns me a great deal that these people, because of their very limited training . . .

The bell has rung. I guess I made my point, so I'll sit down, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. A lot of questions there that I'll try to get through here in the next 20 minutes. I did want to finish answering the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora just briefly, and then I'll move into answering of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's questions.

We talked about the sheriffs program. This may answer, as well, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona's concern regarding the use of peace officers. All we've done in the last 16 months is highlight the utilization of those peace officer skills that have already been working in Alberta, but nobody ever thought about them. Nobody knew that they were there. I mean, we had the provincial protection officers, 300 of them or so, in this ministry for years and years and years and years, probably 20 years now. All we did was change the name, and it's like we started something new, but we haven't. It's just a matter that now we did change their name.

We are providing them with new training, and we are providing them with opportunities for advancing their skills and their scope of practice, but it is really a practice that's been in place. Special constables have been working in the community of Rocky Mountain House and in Camrose and in Strathcona county for 20 to 30 years. They've been there, so this isn't something new that we just invented, where they just started working. They have been out there in the community.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora talked about the pilot project, though, and I did want to complete my comments regarding where we will be placing them. We are examining, through the data that we have, collision data that Infrastructure and Transportation has right now, where the major collisions have occurred, the fatalities and serious injury accidents, throughout the province. Those are the areas where we want to ensure that we can provide education and enforcement utilizing those sheriff positions.

Yes, we could have hired more RCMP officers. The problem is that the RCMP costs are very high. They are \$158,000. That's last year's costs. Those are going up to \$163,000 per RCMP officer. This is right across Canada. Now, of course, we only pay 70 per cent of that, but that again is still a substantial amount of money.

The officers that we are using are sheriffs. They are peace officers. They are trained to have the skills that we want them to have. In this case it's the ability to enforce provincial legislation – not criminal legislation, provincial legislation – whether it's the

Traffic Safety Act and, obviously, commercial vehicles on our highways, the Liquor and Gaming Act, or one of the other acts that obviously our partners in SRD and Community Development through the parks and fish and wildlife officers can enforce. Those are the types of acts and the legislation that they will be covering in the future as we move forward.

The whole idea behind this – and I think we're all in agreement in this Assembly – is that we want to see a reduction in the deaths, the number of fatalities, and serious injuries that are occurring in this province. I believe the numbers are roughly 400 fatalities, but about 12,000 serious injuries occur each year on our highways, and we have to make drivers more responsible. We have to educate drivers to slow down and/or ensure that they do follow the rules of the road.

I think I've answered all the questions from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, and I'll move to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I want to thank both members for their kind remarks regarding corrections officers, the value of these officers and of our police officers throughout the province as well as the sheriffs that we have that are government employees. As I mentioned earlier in my comments, our department holds the values of honesty and integrity, respect, ethics, commitment, compassion, and courage for all of our employees. This isn't just for police officers. These are for our employees in this ministry, all 2,300 of them, and those are the values I want to instill in our employees. They're there to respect each other but, as well, respect the public and those that they serve. That's their role while being employees of the Solicitor General and Public Security.

I do want to thank you for your nice comments, your kind comments regarding the hard work they do with their jobs every day, whether it's in a corrections facility or whether it's transporting prisoners or whether it's our police officers that are working throughout Alberta, from Rainbow Lake to Coutts.

The hon. member talked about the remand centre, some of the issues related to the remand centre, and I just wanted to talk to him briefly regarding the remand centre. Obviously, that is our top priority for a capital project. We are continuing to move forward with that as being a top priority for us. We have to do a lot of work, and obviously we have to take this before Treasury Board, but it is a top priority for us.

We also, in the meantime, have to ensure that we have the space that's available for our remanded offenders as well as our sentenced offenders. That's why we're working with the federal government to develop a contract with Corrections Canada to utilize additional space in Grande Cache for sentenced offenders, who would be transferred from the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre to Grande Cache, thus allowing us the utilization of space at Fort Saskatchewan for a remand centre.

4:30

Obviously, again, though, as the hon. member has mentioned, we have to be very aware of those issues where we have to segregate some of these offenders. Whether it's because they're gang members or whether it's a sexual assault or sexual offence that they are alleged to have committed, we have to segregate those individuals. They can't be left out in the open. Those are issues that we have to deal with every day. So it's not always having three individuals in a room. Sometimes it's one in a room because we're trying to protect them from the rest of the population in there. That does on occasion mean that we do have to put three people in a room.

I've eaten the food, and it's been very good. I'll take the hon. members for lunch one day, and we'll go try it. It's not bad. In fact, we do have a new contractor, and apparently, from comments that

I've heard from inmates, the food is even better than it was before. So that's a good thing. We're moving forward in that direction.

One of the areas we talked about again was the remand centre, and what we're looking at. We are making adjustments to how we're providing that service now. Obviously, we're moving forward with our capital plan as well.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona spoke briefly on restorative justice programs and the importance of those programs in our communities. As I mentioned earlier, we provide about \$350,000 per year regarding restorative justice grants to various communities throughout the province. The ministry continues to support and assist all communities that express an interest in establishing youth justice committees.

Currently there are 121 communities throughout Alberta that have sanctioned youth justice committees. The majority of the committees are involved in administering the extrajudicial sanctions program for first- and second-time offenders who have committed minor offences. Some of the youth justice committees provide sentencing advice to the local youth court judge. Our department supports the youth justice committees through annual grants, provincial, regional, and local training opportunities, ongoing case management liaison, office space and supplies, and volunteer recognition. Each committee is assigned a liaison probation officer who provides training and ongoing case management advice in that community where this youth justice committee is.

There are approximately 1,400 volunteers throughout Alberta that are involved in addressing youth crime in their communities. It's a tremendous program. It's working very well. It provides youth with alternatives to being incarcerated, and it provides youth with alternatives to a lifestyle that they may have enjoyed but now understand is wrong, that they committed a criminal act. So we are working on it. It's a very important project for us. Restorative justice or youth justice committees are extremely important in our Ministry of Solicitor General and Public Security.

The member mentioned the issues related to the aboriginal community. It is a very serious issue related to the small aboriginal population we have in the province of Alberta, the percentage that are involved in criminal activity and/or who are offenders in our corrections facilities. I've got some statistics here that you asked for. While aboriginal people represent 7 per cent of Alberta's population – and this was in '04-05 – they represented approximately 30 per cent of adult in-house correctional centre counts and approximately 38 per cent of young offender in-house correctional centre counts. These statistics are similar elsewhere in Canada, but these are extremely high numbers.

The average number of aboriginal offenders in custody has not increased while the average number of aboriginal youth in custody has decreased over the past several years despite a significant increase in the population of aboriginal people in our province. Despite these encouraging statistics, incarceration and victimization rates among aboriginal people continue to be a concern. Our department continues to work collaboratively with other ministries, aboriginal communities, and other stakeholders on front-end measures that seek to address the complex root causes of community-based strategies that promote safe communities.

We continue to support initiatives such as the youth justice committees, which we just spoke about, but in aboriginal communities: programs and services geared to the needs of aboriginal victims, First Nations police services, crime prevention and restorative justice initiatives, and community corrections agreements with aboriginal service providers. In 2006-07, in this year's budget, the ministry will contribute approximately \$11 million towards aboriginal justice initiatives. That's \$11 million, and these are extremely important

programs. We do have facilities and treatment programs for them throughout the province. So, again, a very, very important program and a very good question that the hon. member asked.

Regarding community policing models and the closing of a community policing centre, that's a very good question, but the issue is that although I do wish I had a say in providing more leadership within our police services, I don't really. I can't. I'm not their chief. We do look at those issues regarding what are best practice models, look at new models of service delivery for policing, but those are decisions that are made by the chief and his executive team, those determinations of what level, what style of policing it is. Is it a zone model style that is involved through the community, or is it a team model that might be utilized? Those are operational issues that I can't get involved in. I'd like to get involved in them, hon. member, but I can't because, of course, they have a chief that has been selected by their municipality and their mayor and council. But we do provide them with funding, and we do provide them with some opportunities to be involved in provincial programs such as our organized crime strategy.

You mentioned policing assistance to municipalities. There was an increase of \$2.1 million to municipalities. This was a new grant base that we came out with last year. Those communities under 5,000 receive free policing provided by the province. Those communities between 5,000 and 20,000 were provided with a \$200,000 grant, a basic grant, and then a per capita of \$8 in their community. Those with a population of 20,000 to 100,000 received a \$100,000 grant and a larger per capita grant, \$14 per capita, to assist them with their policing costs. Calgary and Edmonton received a straight \$16 per capita.

Now, I'm sure you're well aware of the concerns when the mayor of Edmonton and the mayor of Calgary said that all they got was roughly \$15 million and \$11 million and that they need more money for policing. Let me reassure you that Alberta is the only province where municipalities are allowed to keep their fine revenue. Every other province, every other municipality throughout this country provides the fine revenue back to the government. In Vancouver, a similar size to Calgary and Edmonton, Vancouver city itself, for their tickets that they write, the funding goes to the province. The province then writes a cheque for, oh, about half of that back to the municipal police service and says: here's your grant. That's how it works. So we are so much further ahead in this province, and our municipalities are so much further ahead. It really provides our municipalities with a stronger model for providing policing in those municipalities.

When Calgary says that they didn't get funding, we gave them \$15 million. They received about \$30 million in fine revenue that we didn't claw back. They received another \$5 million roughly for organized crime strategies that we have worked on with our integrated model of policing. Those are funds that they bill us for because we are actually paying for those officers in those various areas. Then Calgary also received \$6.5 million from Infrastructure and Transportation regarding the infrastructure of police buildings. They didn't talk about those. When you add all those up, we're looking at about \$55 million or so. So they didn't just get \$15 million when you look at it. The big picture is that they received about \$55 million.

4:40

Obviously, we're doing the same for Edmonton. We're going to get information for the mayor of Edmonton and all seven municipal police services to ensure that we can look at their programs down the road, but I do want to make them aware that they are by far better off in this province than in any other city throughout Canada.

On page 394 you listed line item 2.2.1, crime prevention. I just want to make some comments. You mentioned that it's really only an \$18,000 increase, and you're right. It isn't a great deal of additional money towards crime prevention. But I want to let you know that we do work closely with other levels of government. We have a close tie with the police services' crime prevention units, a very close partnership with them. We also have worked closely with nonprofit organizations regarding crime prevention in our communities. The urban and rural municipalities and, of course, first nations and Métis settlements, obviously, foster locally administered crime prevention programs, community safety, and restorative justice programs. We provide grant funding for them for a number of crime prevention programs.

The principles of crime prevention and restorative justice are supported as a necessary and viable adjunct to law enforcement and other criminal justice processes. Promoting grassroots crime prevention and restorative justice programs ensures that communities have opportunities to participate in the justice process and are empowered to address local crime concerns. Funding is directed to community-based crime prevention grants, \$600,000; restorative justice programs, as I mentioned earlier, \$350,000; as well as specific crime prevention contracts amounting to over \$500,000 in the areas of aboriginal crime prevention programs, provincial crime prevention service agreements, and public awareness activities such as Alberta Crime Prevention Week, which is going to be coming up here shortly, Restorative Justice Week, Fraud Awareness Month, which we began two months ago, and of course a number of crime prevention conferences that are held throughout the province.

The next question from hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona talked about domestic violence, and again both the hon. members mentioned this. This is a very, very serious issue throughout Alberta, and we as a government have not taken this issue lightly. We've worked alongside the Minister of Justice in developing a number of programs, as I mentioned earlier – and I won't repeat myself – regarding that domestic violence handbook for police officers and Crown prosecutors.

Addressing family violence is about a change in attitude and a shift in thinking, which has been occurring since family violence policing initiatives began in 1990. We continue to train police and other stakeholders in this regard. Because of this training, the incidence of family violence will continue to rise because people are becoming more and more aware of the fact that family violence is a crime. Through the family violence initiatives we continue to emphasize the criminal nature of family violence, the effects on children, and the consequences for the perpetrators of this type of violence. In Budget 2006 we've added an additional \$1.7 million, which has been allocated for ARTAMI, the Alberta relationship threat assessment and management initiative.

The Chair: The hon. Member for West-Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to thank the hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security for his passion. I've got a few questions I'd like to ask him. The first one is on his goal 1, providing "leadership in policing and services that promote safe communities." I want to thank him again for his staff that he allowed to come out to my area on the 28th of March and the 19th of April because we held two workshops in our community to get everybody involved from Edson, Hinton, Jasper, and Grande Cache because we've had a rash of different break-ins, petty theft, vandalism. We had some help from the Justice department from the aspect of the court systems. So what I'm really looking at today is, first of all, to thank him very much for the

policing money under 5,000. It has certainly helped things in my region, especially for two of my communities.

One issue on one of the communities that it's already helping is the aspect of the national parks, especially in the summertime. We're just wondering if they've got some rotating RCMP. In the national parks it's always nice if we can have somebody dressed up in the red serge so we can take pictures and promote our province. I'm just wondering if there are some aspects there.

I guess that on police funding I was just wondering as I looked through on your department. Especially on page 394 I was looking at line 2.2.2. As I went through, with your 2004-05 you had \$120,546,000. Then as I jump to 2005-06, you had \$143,601,000. So we looked at about a \$23,055,000 increase. Conversely, when I move into the aspect of 2006-07 with \$155,429,000, we only had an increase of \$11,828,000. On that provincial policing program, you know, the different aspects on crime, as you've talked previously with the other questioners, I was just wondering: what's entailed in that part? Conversely, I look at the policing assistance to the municipalities and that, where we get the lesser funding, which is 2.2.4, where in 2004-05 we had \$42,245,000. Then we moved up to 2005-06, where we had \$45,544,000, where we had an increase of \$3,299,000. Then we move into 2006-07. What we're looking at: we jumped up to \$47,726,000, but we only had an increase of \$2,182,000.

I guess my point is that when we look at these increases, when we have our population in our province increasing, I'm just wondering what type of factor you are you using for these increases. I just feel that we need more of that, and I guess that relates back to what I was talking about with the workshop we had on the two dates in West Yellowhead. We're finding where a lot of costs are incurring. We had one car dealership in 2004. They had over \$20,000 worth of damage in their car lot, and they were only able to collect \$3,200. So, you know, you look at: those costs are backed up onto consumers.

I guess the other thing is that with the petty theft and the break-ins we're finding a lot of that relating to the drug trade and especially to crystal meth. So I'm just wondering what we're doing on that in trying to move that along so we can work with the people.

Then, the vandalism is getting to be rather expensive and hurting a lot of the communities. A lot of it, you know, I just don't understand. In the community of Edson somebody set the soccer change room and confectionary on fire. Thank goodness it was just the roof on that that burnt off. The rest of it was a block building. But it's costing money, and it's costing a lot of strife in the community because they don't see anything. Then, of course, we get damage to our schools and that. I'm just wondering how we're working on that. I guess the bottom line, what I was talking about when I had these workshops – and we're working with your department to move along on that – is that what communities want and are looking at is trying to take back their communities from this type of action, and they're wanting to have safer communities. I'm just wondering how we're working on that so that we can try and help these communities.

4:50

Then I guess that when I look at your goal 4, where you talk about the aspect of providing "services and programs to support victims of crime," we have some crime watch people there, and they're saying that they're not really getting the notification now, especially on the rural crime watch. I'm just wondering what kind of a setup we've got now. Have we sort of let that fall by the wayside?

You look at certain areas. You take highway 16. It's a main

artery, but when you get back into the backcountry, where we've got a lot of oil and gas and forestry industry, I mean, even on one road which is an LOC we've got over 4,000 vehicles a day. In some of our communities, like Grande Cache, their population is around 4,000. They've got anywhere from 2,500 to 3,000 people in bush camps around the community. So we're getting a lot of stress there, a lot of stress on the officers too. I can appreciate that you've got a budget to work with. I've worked with the communities. I mean, the town of Grande Cache: we tried to get an extra officer there, but according to your makeup it wasn't allowed. So the municipality worked on it to get an enhanced policeman in the community.

I'm just wondering: what are we doing to work with the communities, especially on your goal 4, to work on the aspect of supporting different programs and to curtail a lot of this?

Once again I want to thank your people for coming out to my riding and working with us. We're making sure that we're going to move this program along. We're also looking at the aspect of possibly setting up a crime unit scenario for West Yellowhead rather than doing it individually with the communities so that we can look at the aspect of trying to curtail these, getting more people in the communities, might even possibly set up or entice different people to sort of have a crime watch block, and we can work with the RCMP because we're all part of the community.

So if you could give me some insight on those, I'd certainly appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to cover off two final points that I have here from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and I'll then move to the questions the hon. Member for West Yellowhead raised.

Before I ran out of time, we were talking about domestic violence and the real issues related to domestic violence. I just wanted to add, and I mentioned to the hon. members, that in this year's budget, 2006, we added \$1.7 million for the Alberta relationship threat assessment and management initiative – ARTAMI are the initials – which will better co-ordinate the police, legal, mental health, and other experts to assess threats, manage victim safety, and find ways to prevent domestic homicides.

Our department facilitates and chairs the Family Violence Police Advisory Committee. This committee works closely with Alberta Justice to develop and disseminate domestic violence, police, and Crown protocols. Members also collaborate on police-based training sessions throughout Alberta. A unique aspect of this Solicitor General and Public Security led training is that it is collaborative in nature. Participants come from all backgrounds to learn about family violence not only from the perspective of criminal justice practitioners but also from those who work in women's shelters, with children affected by family violence, or those who provide counselling intervention to offenders. The Family Violence Police Advisory Committee has also worked closely with Children's Services to develop criteria for clear police guidelines in domestic violence cases. The police guidelines have been developed and distributed.

As I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, these are very critical issues. These are very critical programs to our ministry. One other area when we talk about domestic violence or family violence is that of what we are doing as well with relation to Alberta's victims and victims of crime. To respond to several of the recommendations in the report of the Alberta victims of crime consultation, a revised organizational structure is being implemented by the victim services

branch. A grants administration manager, training officer, and an aboriginal programs and isolated communities co-ordinator have been hired by our department. A community and specialized programs co-ordinator and a standards and evaluation co-ordinator will be hired in the near future.

A concept will be developed during this year, '06-07, to provide funding to pay travel expenses for victims to attend trials, observe sentencings, and/or read victim impact statements allowed in court. A victim services awareness campaign was launched on March 6 of this year. The campaign consisted of three radio announcements, which aired on stations across Alberta until April 7, 2006. Advertisements have been posted in restaurants and bars in several communities and in Calgary and Edmonton transit vehicles, and a series of posters have been forwarded to victim assistance programs for posting throughout their communities. Since the awareness program was launched, there has been a 152 per cent increase in the number of hits to the victims' programs section of the Solicitor General and Public Security website.

Consultations with stakeholder groups will continue this year to develop a victims of crime protocol. So, Mr. Chairman, when we talk about family violence, we want to start with, again, education and prevention in the home, but we also want to ensure that our officers are trained and they have the ability to do a proper investigation and/or ensure the safety of the victim, ensuring that we can well recognize the level of threat that may be in the home that she's living in and ensuring her protection. If she is a victim of an assault or a victim of a crime, we want to as well be able to provide her with support services from the community as well as financial support if it's required.

The police training centre. I'll be very brief. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona questioned the model, and we are moving forward as well with the police and peace officer training centre. We are continuing to do more work within government but as well looking at the training issues of our other departments, like SRD, the fish and wildlife officers, the training needs that they have; the Community Development parks officers and the training needs that they have; inspection services officers for Transportation; and a whole host of others, Gaming for example. In Government Services there are officers there as well. Obviously, there are training needs for all of our government staff that are peace officers as well as those 400 to 450 police officers that would get trained.

We're moving forward just in building the package that we have to take forward to the government. As we move forward, though, we are also looking at other opportunities. We hope to announce the site location. We are studying the 30 submissions that have come in to the government to look at for the site of a centre. So we're hoping to do that in the next short while.

The hon. member mentioned: are we looking at a P3? Again, yes, there are always opportunities that we should be analyzing, any opportunities, whether it's government funding or whether it's a P3 model. I think we have to ask those questions on any major project that we look at doing. But, as well, looking at the location, not all provincial government projects have to be done in Edmonton and Calgary. We want to ensure that we're looking at those opportunities, especially in light of our new rural development strategy, that the minister of agriculture is moving forward with.

I think I answered all of my questions from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and I'd like to now address the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. He raised some points at the beginning regarding goal 1, I believe it was, and providing "leadership in policing and services that promote safe communities." I think he talked about it again at the end regarding crime prevention and

enhancing policing programs throughout his constituency but, really, Alberta in general.

5:00

For the police to be effective, there needs to be public confidence in law enforcement. Our goal is to set up and ensure that fair and objective processes are in place regarding looking at various programs as well as working in partnerships between municipalities and the RCMP, for example, to look at what is required in their community. The elected officials in the community as well as residents in the community have a huge and tremendous say in what level of policing they want, what the services are that are being provided, if they want to expand it. Those are some of the areas that, yes, we have to look at.

Crime is moving from our urban centres to those smaller centres, and as our province grows and as even our smaller communities grow, crime is ever present in all of these little areas. Whether it's petty thefts and break-ins, obviously the root causes are drugs and alcohol addiction, and I don't think that's going to change. We do have a plan in place in our presentation to the Crystal Meth Task Force. It is a very strategic plan, utilizing specialized officers that would be strategically located throughout the province that would have a tremendous impact not just in our urban areas, where they may be located, but as well in our rural areas to ensure that we can cover every area of this province via our regional bases, ensuring that if there were issues in Hinton or Edson or Grande Cache, we don't have to wait for officers to come out of Edmonton or Calgary to respond to issues in Grande Cache or Grande Prairie.

So those are what we're looking at. This is a tremendous project. I'm very excited about it. We're waiting for the recommendations, obviously, to come from the task force, but we've done a lot of work with the task force, and we'll continue to do so. It gave us an opportunity, though, as well to look and examine what programs we are providing presently. It really gave us an opportunity to look at: what are we providing through our ministry and through the Minister of Education's ministry? What are we providing regarding prevention programs in our schools? What are we providing regarding education programs for kids at community centres? This was a real opportunity for us to relook at what we were doing.

As well, if this is the end result, if we want to dismantle and disrupt organized crime, if we want to eliminate the majority of drugs in our community – that is a difficult task, but that's our goal – how are we going to do it? This is how we have to strategize. So everything from education and prevention was looked at and measured. Issues related to intelligence and enforcement and investigations were looked at as well as, again, as I mentioned, the healing and treatment side of the issues related to drugs such as crystal meth, crack cocaine, obviously heroin. Those are the issues that we're dealing with, and we want to ensure that we can address them in the future. So we are moving forward in that area.

Related to smaller communities and the petty thefts and break-ins, again, as I mentioned, these are some of the areas that we will be focusing on in the future. We want to ensure as well, though, that we have a close relationship with the RCMP in looking at their model of policing. We've seen 200 front-line RCMP officers added to the streets in rural Alberta in those communities less than 5,000. [interjection] Maybe a few too many is what I'm hearing.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to say that we want to ensure that our communities are safe and secure. We want to ensure that the ability to investigate criminal activity and arrest those that are responsible is there and that we have the resources there to do that job. We want to ensure that individuals, whether they're seniors or young kids, can

walk through their neighbourhood at night and not feel afraid that someone may attack them. It's that sense of fear that is there, and we want to try to dispel that sense of fear and make them feel that they are safe and secure in the community that they live in.

So we are looking at the number of officers and the number of sheriff's officers. Now there's an opportunity for us to look at the level of police officers that we need in the province as well as the level of traffic enforcement that we need in the province. We want to look at that formula and then determine how many officers or RCMP we will need next year. Where would they be located? In what parts of the province? So those are some of those areas. We're finding that in northern Alberta the crime rate and the criminal caseload is higher. Probably about roughly from the Wetaskiwin parallel going north the statistics appear that they are busier communities in the northern half of the province than in the southern half.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead mentioned rotating RCMP in our national parks, and it's a very good comment. That's something that we'll have to talk to the RCMP about and having RCMP officers in red serge so they could be, obviously, taking pictures with tourists. They are icons for tourism throughout Canada. Obviously, in Alberta with the mountains in the background I don't think you can get a much better picture unless you and I were in it. I did want to just mention, though, that that's something that we'll look at. If additional officers are required in the summer, there is an enhancement program that we do provide to municipalities to have additional RCMP officers in their communities. So that's one of those things that we can look at in the future.

Mr. Chairman, I think I've answered all of the hon. member's questions.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to be very brief because I guess there's not that much time left. I commend the minister and his department. It's one of the most important departments in government, you know, for ensuring that we have safe streets and that we have the sense of safety on the part of our seniors and the children and in all the ways that we can just be able to walk around our streets. I see that some of the performance factors are not as high as we would like to see in that area.

But I'd just like to look quickly at correctional officers and safety. The safety of our correctional officers is a primary concern. They need the best equipment to protect themselves. In the estimates, page 395, line item 3.2.1, adult remand and correctional centres, under Voted Equipment/Inventory Purchases there's only an allocation of \$150,000, which is the same as last year. Is this small allocation enough to provide the best equipment to correctional officers in order to protect themselves? Do they have the best protective vests available? Can the minister tell us what kind of protective vests the guards at the remand centres wear? Is the body armour issued to these officers capable of withstanding all types of knives or stabbing weapons? Do they all have trauma plates? Can the minister tell us if officers in the remand centres have the best equipment possible to provide for their safety?

What about the safety issue regarding the overcrowding? This creates an unsafe working condition for staff at the remand centres. What is the minister doing to fix this and enhance the safety of remand guards? We've heard from the officers themselves that the number of assaults in these facilities is growing as the population increases. Guards are threatened with serious harm every shift, yet there's no move made to address the conditions that lead to this. Gang members should be separated and isolated. Violent criminals

should not be housed with nonviolent criminals. What is the minister doing to address these issues?

I'll just have a quick point on the police academy. Now, I understand that there are, you know, 30-some submissions or something like that left, and there are two that I think are very strong. There's one from Edmonton, and there's one from Drumheller. They're both very strong, and they both have correctional facilities right near them. They both have good lands. When will the minister be choosing between those two?

I'll just defer to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. He just has one or two more questions.

5:10

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to respond to and answer the questions that the hon. member raised. Regarding the safety of corrections officers' vests and the amount that's listed in here, yes, those are the dollars that are listed for the vests. In fact, there's a media release going out; I think it went out today. In fact, we're going to be showing the new vests that the corrections officers will have; that's tomorrow at 1 o'clock at the remand centre, I believe. We just received them. They are state-of-the-art vests, so to speak. I'm very proud to have received these for our officers.

This is an issue regarding health and safety. This is an issue of protection of our officers who are working with some of the most dangerous offenders and potential criminals, so we want to ensure their safety. I'm very proud of each of those officers and the work that they do. Again, their safety is my concern, and that was one of the first things that I asked my staff to look at when I was first appointed to this position. It has taken some time. There were some issues with previous vests, but I can assure you that the vests that have been selected now are second to none. They are of the latest quality of stab-resistant material to protect officers. Really, it is an opportunity to look at that whole safety issue that you speak of there.

Safety concerns regarding the number of remand offenders that are in there: obviously, that is a concern for us as well. We are looking at addressing those problems by moving some of them out, moving them to the Fort Saskatchewan facility and, as I mentioned earlier, the opportunity to move sentenced offenders to the Grande Cache facility once a contract can be reached with the federal government, with the federal Corrections Canada. So we're working on that.

I heed your comments regarding the police training centre. As I mentioned, we are going through all 30 submissions. We want to develop a short list, obviously look at some site locations in the future. That is moving forward as we go.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(5), which provides for the Committee of Supply to rise and report no later than 5:15 on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday afternoons, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Solicitor General and Public Security for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$434,123,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, I would move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, for the following department.

Solicitor General and Public Security: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$434,123,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report of the budget estimates and business plan of the Department of Solicitor General and Public Security?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Hon. members, before I call on the Deputy Premier, I would like to remind everyone to clear off their desks because the Forum for Young Albertans will be meeting in here on the weekend, and it would be very helpful.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's been a week of good progress in work in the Legislature. It's been a very special week having Her Excellency here in the Assembly this afternoon. I would move that we call it 5:30 and that the House reconvene on Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 5:15 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

