

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, May 18, 2006

1:30 p.m.

Date: 06/05/18

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

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

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour for me to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly my summer student, Kelsey Roos. She is attending Concordia University and working on a bachelor's degree in management. She's seated in I think the public gallery, and I'd ask that she stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several introductions today, and they're all seated in your gallery. Today marks the last time that hon. members in this House will see three Legislative Assembly security service staff in uniform for they are retiring at the end of May. Dedication, loyalty, and good humour are the qualities these men have so capably given to this House. We are most grateful to them for all that they have given in support of our provincial parliamentary process. In your gallery are Ben Walker, Nick Kutash, and Bob Baker. I ask them to rise and receive the much-deserved thanks of this House.

Also in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are spouses of some of our MLAs. They are Mrs. Shirley Johnston, the wife of the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, and Mrs. Liz VanderBurg, the wife of the hon. Minister of Government Services. I'd ask them to rise at this time and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Last but certainly not least, Mr. Speaker, is a young lady who on May 26 will be celebrating 20 years as the executive assistant of Mr. Speaker. She's also seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask Bev Alenius to rise and receive the very warm thanks of the Assembly.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we have an angel among us today. Her name is Ellen McGregor. She's here with her mother and her grandmother Jean Fraser. Her mother is Mary McGregor, and when Mary found that she had MS, Ellen undertook to not only raise money for multiple sclerosis but as a 12-year-old sacrificed her birthday presents to make sure that fundraising was done for the MS Society. She is, indeed, a young lady that we could all model ourselves after. I'd ask that Ellen and her mother and grandmother, who are seated in our members' gallery, please rise so that we can applaud such generosity.

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

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 33 grade 6 students from Tempo school, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Tempo school is a private school in Riverbend. I've had the privilege of visiting the school on a number

of occasions, and I can say without a doubt that this school is gifted with extraordinarily intelligent and inspiring students and staff. The Minister of Education and myself last attended the school last fall when we were honouring a young lady, Aysha Wills, who organized a tsunami relief effort. She was a student at that school.

The Tempo school students are seated in the members' gallery and the public gallery, and they're accompanied by parent helpers Mrs. Rosa Ziegler, Mrs. Shadia Fares, Mr. George Kuhse, Mrs. Lorraine Verbeke, Mrs. Kate Freeman, Mrs. Sandy Redmond, Mr. Ireneusz Mackowiak, and by their teacher, Ms Cathryn van Kessel. I believe this is the first visit of Tempo school to the Legislature. Just one more second, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to draw to your attention that Mrs. Kate Freeman and her daughter Emma Freeman, who is one of the students there, are direct descendants of the first Premier of this province, Mr. Alexander Rutherford, and are proudly wearing his campaign pins. I'd ask all members of Tempo school to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a wonderful, wonderful person who served 15 years in this House as the MLA representing the fine people of my fine constituency of Calgary-Foothills. Mrs. Patricia Nelson, or Pat as we call her, served under our beloved Premier, served in many portfolios, including Minister of Finance, up until her retirement in 2004. We love her in Calgary-Foothills, and we thank her for her many years of service to Albertans. Pat Nelson is seated somewhere in this House; I'm not too sure where. I ask that she rise and receive 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. As the first one, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Pam Barrett. Pam served as the New Democratic MLA for Edmonton-Highlands from 1986 to 1993 and from 1997 to the year 2000. She won the leadership of the Alberta New Democrats in 1996 and was the party's dynamic and dedicated leader until 2000. Before her first term as an MLA and during her break from politics in the 1990s, Pam was an active public figure in Edmonton, with newspaper columns and regular political commentary and talk show slots on television and radio. Though retired, she continues to work as a freelance journalist. Throughout her career Pam has been dedicated to social justice issues, financial responsibility, and the maintenance of strong public health care and education. She is fiercely passionate in her beliefs and as a politician was consistently committed to standing up for the underdog. As a public figure Pam's charisma and dedication inspired the love and respect of the people of Alberta. We're very pleased to have Pam join us today. She's seated in your gallery, and I would now ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

I'm delighted to also introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Julianna Charchun. She is the summer STEP student assistant for the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood constituency. She is currently a master's student in family studies in the department of human ecology at the University of Alberta. She's been working on evaluations for Mother Earth's Children's Charter School in Wabamun and on Health Canada's Nobody's Perfect parenting program. Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to having Julianna

work with us for the summer. I would now ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very delighted today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Lyndsey Henderson. Lyndsey is the summer STEP student assistant for my constituency. Lyndsey was originally born in Fort McMurray and came to Edmonton to pursue her bachelor of arts at the University of Alberta. She volunteers for the Centre for Equal Justice and has a keen interest in Canadian history. I'd ask Lyndsey to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you three people today. The first two have actually just arrived here from Perth, Australia, and they're my niece and her boyfriend. Evy Hoge and Ivan Denys have recently come from Perth, Australia, for a visit. Ivan has been very acclimatized in that he's already wearing an Oilers jersey today. The third person is my lovely wife, Evelyn, who is well known to the Members of the Legislative Assembly. I'd ask them to all rise to receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Barb McLean. Barb is the summer STEP assistant for the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview constituency. She will complete her combined honours degree in political science and women's studies next year at the University of Alberta. Barb is also one of the recipients of the Lois Hole humanities and social science scholarships awarded earlier this year. She plans to continue researching aboriginal women's issues. We are delighted to have Barb join us for the summer and would now ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my extreme pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Barry Cavanaugh, who's the chief executive officer of the Alberta Pharmacists Association, which acts as an advocacy and representative organization for the thousands of hard-working pharmacists throughout this province. Barry's growing and ever-evolving role includes making presentations to government and liaising with both sides of this House, and he's here to observe democracy in action. I would now ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Dashiell Brasen. Dashiell is a summer STEP assistant for the Edmonton-Strathcona constituency. He is currently a student at Grant MacEwan College and will be attending the University of Alberta next year. Dashiell has lived in the constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona his whole life.

His parents live in the same area. We are excited to have Dashiell work with us for the summer, and I would now ask Dashiell to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My pleasure to echo the comments of the Minister of Health and Wellness. We do indeed have an angel among us today. We have with us a lady who literally glides through a room full of people with grace and dignity. She oozes caring and compassion. She's been known to make chocolate cake for hungry MLAs in the middle of the night when they're working a late session, and we found out this morning that she is in possession of one of the most amazing recipes for cinnamon buns. She is indeed the first lady of the Official Opposition, the partner of the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I would ask Jeanette Boman to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we've arrived at a portion of the Routine where we have certain rules associated with ministerial statements, the length thereof and who can participate as well. Today I intend to exercise my authority as the Speaker to waive that, and I'm going to call on three individuals to participate. I mean waive by way of time. First of all, I'll call on the hon. Deputy Premier, then I'm going to call on the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, and I'll call on the hon. leader of the third party. At the conclusion of that, I'll invite the hon. the Premier to participate as well.

Tribute to the Hon. Ralph Klein Premier of Alberta

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's with enormous pride and, I must admit, some sense of sadness that I rise today to speak about a great leader, an outstanding Albertan, and I believe the most popular Premier in Canadian history. That, of course, is our very own hon. Premier of Alberta.

As this session of the Legislature moves to completion, my caucus colleagues and I are very much aware that the next time we gather in this Chamber, we will do so without the guidance and wisdom of this man to my right, a man who has held the Premier's chair in this Assembly since 1992. This is, of course, because of our Premier's announcement earlier this spring that he will be stepping down as our Premier later this fall. It was an announcement we all knew would come some day but always hoped would be some time in the very distant future. But the time has arrived, and we now prepare for the departure of a man who has dedicated 17 incredibly productive years to the service of his province, almost 14 of those as Premier.

Our Premier's list of accomplishments is very long, distinguished, and historic. It was our Premier's personal vision and leadership that led to the elimination of Alberta's deficit and then Alberta's debt. Mr. Speaker, today, with our fiscal house in order and a robust economy that leads the nation, it's easy to forget how difficult the early 1990s were for Alberta and for our Premier personally, but as a government and a province we were incredibly fortunate to have had at the helm a man of courage, a man of vision, and a man of conviction.

Albertans recognized a man of honesty and sincerity and believed our Premier when he spoke about the importance of getting rid of the deficit and debt, and Albertans trusted him to deliver on his promise that the tough decisions would lead to benefits in the future. As all Albertans know, our Premier lived up to his word. It was his

strength of vision and his natural leadership that helped create the prosperous and growing province that we enjoy today.

Even with the debt and the deficit gone, our Premier indicated that there was still work to be done. He always said that there was a greater purpose to achieving fiscal responsibility than simply showing balanced numbers on a budget spreadsheet. The tough fiscal work was just a prologue to bringing to life his vision of a strong Alberta for the future, a future with a world-class heart centre in Edmonton, a state-of-the-art bone and joint centre in Calgary, being at the forefront of medical research and, perhaps, Alberta being the home of a cure for cancer; a future where children would be protected from the violence of prostitution and the nightmare of crystal meth; a future where Alberta's economy would be strengthened by diversity and the entire province would be brought closer together by SuperNet; a future where postsecondary education would be accessible to any Albertan with a desire to improve themselves; a future where Albertans would pay far less overall taxes than all other Canadians; a future where the family farm would remain an enduring symbol of Alberta; a future where jobs would be plentiful, giving Albertans the opportunity to achieve their dreams. Mr. Speaker, thanks to the drive and determination, the persuasiveness and the dedication of our Premier that future envisioned by one man has already become Alberta's reality today.

It's been those kinds of accomplishments that led our Premier to being named Calgary's outstanding citizen of the century in 1995, a B'nai Brith citizen of the year in 1994, an honorary chief of the Blood tribe in 1996, an honorary degree recipient from Olds College and from Kangwon National University in Korea. Mr. Speaker, I've only scratched the surface of our Premier's many, many accomplishments.

1:50

One other I must mention, however. Our Premier has distinguished himself and our province for his wise counsel to fellow Premiers and championship of Alberta's interests at first ministers and Council of the Federation meetings. However, beyond the public awards and achievements beats the heart of a man whom I have admired and respected since the first day I met him. What an incredible honour it has been for me to be a part of his team.

Throughout his public life our Premier has embodied the very best characteristics of this province. He has shown integrity. He has been open, honest, and accessible, slow to anger, quick to forgive. His staff know him as a boss who treats them with kindness and friendship. I am so delighted, Mr. Speaker, to see so many of them here today and so many other familiar faces from around the Legislature Building and Annex to witness this occasion.

Mr. Speaker, his caucus colleagues know him as a leader who respects their views and their goals for their constituents, and of course Albertans know him as Ralph. Above all else it's been his incredible connection with ordinary Albertans that has defined this man and his career and made him the most unique political leader of his time. No matter where you go in this province, the Premier is known for being just Ralph. Our Premier has always been a man of the people in the truest sense. He is Ralph, a man whose words and vision reflected the dreams and aspirations of Albertans from all walks of life. This is not simply a skill he worked on developing or a technique that he learned from a book. It's who he is. He is a man with true interest in every person that he meets.

Today as all Alberta tries to imagine a province without Ralph as Premier, I know I speak for everyone in this House in expressing my deepest thanks to our Premier for all that he has done. Premier, thank you for bringing integrity and honour to this House and to the world of public service. Thank you for your countless unsung acts of kindness and humility, that touched the most cynical among us.

Thank you for the friendship that you have shown in the toughest of times and the dedication you've shown in the most trying of times. Thank you for always being Ralph.

As you prepare for retirement in a few short months, I hope you will always be inspired by the love and admiration that are in the hearts of all of us on your caucus team and in the hearts of millions of Albertans.

You've been so fortunate to have beside you a supportive wife, who has also brought honour and distinction to our province. Colleen Klein has been a caring mentor for thousands of Alberta children and a shining light for thousands of Alberta women. I hope that you and Colleen enjoy the peace and good fortune that you've both so richly earned. I hope that you achieve many new goals and dreams in the next chapter of your life, and of course I hope you have some time to golf and to fish. I hope that I may always have the honour and pleasure of calling you friend. Your voice, your spirit, and your laughter will be missed in this Chamber and across the province.

Mr. Speaker, when the Premier was asked on many occasions what he would wish for his legacy, he has always said, and I quote: to leave this province in better shape than I found it. Mr. Premier, you have accomplished this in spades. What you've achieved on behalf of all Albertans will never ever be forgotten.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Premier. [Standing ovation]

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

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that today marks the last time that this Premier will sit in this Assembly as an elected member of the House, so I would like to offer a few words of acknowledgement and thanks to a man who will long be remembered, no doubt, as one of Canada's most dynamic public figures.

Life is full of irony. It folds and curves and loops on itself in the most unexpected ways. Nine years ago, after I had continuously challenged the policies and actions of his government as a member of the public, this Premier, I think in sheer exasperation, issued a challenge to me. He said: if you think anyone agrees with you, you'd better run for office. Well, I had never even considered the notion, but four years later I did run for office, and now here I stand today as Leader of the Official Opposition, with a great team around me, rising to wish the Premier well in his retirement.

One of the things about this Premier is that you never quite know what he's going to say next. The media loved that, of course, and so did many in the public who saw it as a refreshing contrast to the usual drone of politicians. I got my fair share of those unexpected moments, more numerous than we can talk about. I do still remember a Saturday morning in 1997, long before I ever considered running for office. It was a day after a book I wrote was published, and I'll admit that it was a book that was pretty critical of this government. I was having breakfast in our kitchen when I glanced at the morning newspaper and nearly choked on my coffee. There was the headline: Premier accuses Taft of spreading communism. [laughter] Well, I've never thanked you for that, Mr. Premier. Though it was completely untrue, it was the best publicity a book could ever have.

The Premier's career has been remarkable. There's no doubt about it. He served the public as an elected representative of one kind or another for nearly three decades, including almost 14 years as Premier. That sort of electoral success speaks to the connection the Premier has enjoyed with the people of Alberta. In fact, he is rare among Canadian politicians in that more people refer to him by

his first name than by his title. Most of us who have chosen careers in public life would love to have the same kind of rapport with the people that our Premier has.

It takes a lot of courage to pursue a career in politics, particularly a job as important as the Premier's, which places huge demands on the man and his family. The scrutiny is constant and intense, and the pressure is unrelenting, coming from all directions day and night. Anyone who can bear that kind of pressure for as long as this Premier has is clearly someone to be reckoned with.

2:00

Mr. Speaker, we should also acknowledge the strength and support of the Premier's wife, Colleen, and the rest of his family. Though they have lived on the verge of the spotlight cast upon the Premier, they have shared the burdens of his position, and in that sense they are as much servants of the public as the Premier himself. They are equally deserving of our gratitude.

I must also, if it's all right, make particular mention of the Premier's father, who is a constituent of mine. I'm pretty sure he's never voted for me, but we do often meet at events, and we chat and we joke. Many a time he has said to me, "You keep Ralph on his toes." Well, Mr. Klein Sr., I have tried. Believe me; I have tried.

In an age when many Canadians are cynical about politics, the Premier has shown that it's possible to maintain a real connection with the public while at the same time making the difficult decisions required by the office. The Premier has never been afraid to wear his humanity on his sleeve, and I think everyone sitting in this Legislature and in Legislatures across Canada should learn from the Premier's example. To serve the public good, you must risk your health, your reputation, your family life, and so much more. It's a risk taken on behalf of your fellow citizens with no guarantee of thanks, no guarantee of remembrance. The Premier took the risk because he wanted to help build a better Alberta.

So, if I may, to the Premier, on behalf of the Alberta Liberal caucus you have our thanks, our best wishes, and our sincerest hopes that you will enjoy a fulfilling retirement and many, many happy years with your wife and children and grandchildren.

May the golf balls fly and the fish bite. [Standing ovation]

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, what can you say about this Premier? It's almost hard to know where to start. I guess you might go to the front of any given parade – well, almost any parade – and you'll see the Premier happily out front. It's hard to think of any personality that has dominated Alberta politics as thoroughly as has the Premier.

For the Premier politics has always been deeply personal. He showed an almost unique ability to relate to the average Albertan, and they relate to him. It's an important quality because it makes politics more relevant to the average person in Alberta.

Getting out from under the dome has become part of the thinking of any successful politician in Alberta. Martha and Henry have been the symbols of this populist approach to politics. They have arguably become the most famous fictional couple in Alberta's political folklore. Looking at an issue the way Martha and Henry might look at it before opening your mouth has become standard operating procedure for us over here and I'm sure in other political parties in this province as well. The result, and a very positive one, is that everyday people are more engaged in politics and feel a greater sense of ownership of their government.

We all like to believe that a person of humble beginnings can rise to any office in the land. The Premier has inspired many people by demonstrating that this is possible. One such person, Mr. Speaker,

is me. When I first considered running for Edmonton city council, I wondered whether or not a bus driver could be elected. But when I heard the story of the TV reporter who took on the Calgary political establishment and won the mayor's chair, it really helped me to make up my own mind to throw my hat into the ring.

The one aspect of being an opposition leader that I've enjoyed perhaps the most is taking on the Premier each day in question period. He's a formidable adversary in these exchanges. I've looked forward to the daily matching of wits, and I can tell you that nothing feels better than to score a couple of good points, causing the Premier to launch into one his tirades about how bad things are in socialist Manitoba. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the converse is also true. Nothing is more discouraging than to have him blow a carefully crafted question out of the water and have to sit down to the hoots and thumping of the Tory caucus.

Ultimately, though, I think all members here can agree that the Premier's most significant accomplishment has been his single-minded determination to pay off the debt. I know that he will take pride in this accomplishment. While we may disagree on many things, I will say that this opens up many wonderful opportunities for our children and our grandchildren.

I hope the Premier gets all the fishing and golfing he wants, but I know he has lots more to contribute to this province. It's been an honour and a privilege to work with him. I wish him and Colleen all the best.

With the indulgence of the Speaker I want to say that it won't be the same around here without you, Ralph. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Hon. members, those were three very wonderful statements.

We're now in the 100th year of democracy in the province of Alberta and the 101st year in the history of the province of Alberta. To the hon. the Premier and to all of you, hon. members, we have designed a very special new Mace pin. It's a Mace pin of the province of Alberta, and it has the number 100 on it. I am now going to ask my head page to take it and deliver it to the hon. Deputy Premier, who I will ask to pin it on the Premier as the first recipient of this Legislature.

Mr. Klein: Oh, isn't that beautiful.

Mrs. McClellan: It's gorgeous.

First they should have explained how to get it out of the box.

Mr. Klein: There are two pins.

Mrs. McClellan: See. I needed my boss, as always.

Mr. Klein: Isn't that nice.

Mrs. McClellan: It's beautiful.

The Speaker: Now, hon. members, may I call on Alberta's Premier in its 100th year, the hon. Premier for the province of Alberta.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To say that I'm overwhelmed would be an understatement. I really am, and I'm honoured that you would allow me this opportunity to respond to the very kind words of my Legislature colleagues, including members of the opposition. I really do appreciate them.

I would first like to thank my friend and colleague the Deputy Premier for her remarks. Her words mean a lot to me because they come from a loyal and trusted friend – and I mean that – a friend

who has stood by me through good times and bad. She's brought tremendous strength and integrity to the government and to this Legislature. She is, in short, a great Albertan, and it's been a pleasure to serve with her on the same team.

2:10

I would also like to thank the members of my caucus both past and present. You've been absolutely wonderful throughout the years. The things that have been achieved during my time in government were only achieved by their collective efforts. The will was theirs, the faith was theirs, the hard work was theirs, and the credit is theirs.

I would like to thank members of the opposition parties, both those who sit in the House today and their predecessors with whom I've crossed swords in the past. In fact, one of their predecessors, my friend Pam Barrett, was introduced earlier in the Speaker's gallery. I really enjoyed sparring with Pam. I really did.

Now, philosophically I haven't always agreed with the opposition points of view, as many of you have noticed, but I've never questioned their commitment and the commitment they bring to their jobs, the energy with which they serve their constituents, or their dedication to this province and its people. So I would especially like to thank the leaders of the Liberal and New Democratic caucuses. They are men and women of conscience and honour who bring a great deal of fire and passion to their work, and Alberta is a better place for it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the team that has stood behind me all the way. My wife, Colleen, who has been mentioned by all three parties, has been a steady source of comfort, friendship, support, strength, and love. Without her I could and would have achieved absolutely nothing. I can tell you that for sure. To my staff in the Premier's office, who have handled more mail, phone calls, crazy schedules, and pressure always with grace, I know that every single detail of every single thing I do as Premier is always taken care of. I learned a lot from you, Mr. Speaker, about how to be organized. Before I met you and before coming into this office, I was totally and absolutely disorganized. Making this all happen, of course, is a huge undertaking that requires a very capable, dedicated team. In fact, my staff are more than staff. They've become like family.

Finally, I also want to thank all the Legislature staff who keep this place running. I know there are lots of things they do that I don't know about. They just seem to happen as if by magic, but I know it's not magic. It is hard work. I know that everything they do to support members of this House serves the people of this province.

Those of us who have enjoyed the privilege of working here know that the Legislature is a very special place. As much as I've often talked – and it was alluded to – about being out from under the dome, there hasn't been a single day that I've walked into this building when I haven't felt that I'm blessed to be here. Important work takes place in this building, extremely important work. Whether you're sitting in these Chambers or you're one of the dedicated people that take care of this magnificent building, you're all a part of it. You're part of a team that has been given the privilege of serving Albertans in a unique way. At least that's how I've always felt. I've felt blessed to be here, privileged to be part of this team, and honoured to serve the great people of this great province.

Thank you. [Extended standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier. I thank those who participated today, and I thank the response from all the members in the public galleries, the Speaker's gallery, and in the media gallery as well. That's a remarkable form of love.

Now I'll call on the Clerk to take us to the next point of the

Routine, called the Oral Question Period, so may I ask for 50 more minutes of love?

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Premier Klein's Advice for His Successor

Dr. Taft: I'm sure we all just feel the love, Mr. Speaker.

Well, last round. This Premier's legacy and the legacy of the 35 long years of Tory rule in this province will in fact be mixed. Great credit is taken by this Tory government for paying off the Tory debt, and indeed this was an important development. It was important enough to have been the central plank in the Alberta Liberal election platform of 1993. The real credit, however, belongs more to high oil and gas prices than to sound fiscal management or a real vision for Alberta's future. My questions are to the Premier. Given that Alberta's economy is more reliant on nonrenewable resource revenues now than it has ever been, what advice does this Premier have for his successor on how to build a genuinely sustainable economy?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Klein: Actually, it is a very good question, and we have been going through this as a caucus. That's why we have developed a plan – and it may change at the next caucus planning session – to not get ourselves in the situation where we have to finance on an ongoing basis programs that might not be affordable in the future. That's why we adopted a program of spend some, but spend it on capital projects, needed infrastructure, that won't result in substantial operating expenses down the road; give some back, which we did in the form of rebate cheques or, as some people like to call them, Ralph bucks; and save, and we have done that through investments in the heritage savings trust fund, investments in various endowments. So, Mr. Speaker, that is the policy and that is the advice that I would have for whoever succeeds me: do not get yourself into a spending problem.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the democratic deficit in Alberta is bigger now than when the Premier first became leader, what advice does the Premier have for his successor on how to make Alberta truly open, accountable, and democratic?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, you know, I really do think that we are open, we are accessible, and we are transparent. I can't think of a Premier or ministers who make themselves more accessible anywhere in Canada. Now, relative to the FOIP legislation, Bill 20, which I know has been the topic of a lot of discussion both within the Liberal caucus and the ND caucus, I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that the very briefing books that are in question and the briefing books that they have been railing about have always been protected. As a matter of fact, they have been protected indefinitely, forever. Now we're saying that we want to amend the legislation so that at least they can have them in five years. I don't see what is wrong with that. They would never, never, never in their lives prior to this amendment get these briefing books. Now at least they can get them after five years. There is a reason for everything. One of the reasons might be – and now they'll really be scrambling – maybe the Minister of Gaming has the 6/49 numbers in his book. Ho, ho, ho. Who knows?

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, again to the Premier: given that Albertans' reliance on food banks has soared across the province – there are now over 75 of them – what advice does the Premier have for his successor on how to make the Alberta advantage, as he calls it, apply to everyone?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, my advice to my successor, whoever he or she might be, would be to be compassionate and to remember that while there is a responsibility on the part of government, there also is a responsibility on the part of society to look after those who are less fortunate in society.

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

Education Funding

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, as the spring session comes to a close, educators and parents across the province are frustrated that this government has still not addressed their concerns. School administrators have notified us and the Liberal opposition that they simply won't have enough money in their budget next year to keep all their current teaching staff. My question is to the Minister of Education. Given that school administrators and the Edmonton public school board have indicated that they are expecting teacher layoffs next year, what will the minister do before school budgets are set to ensure that this doesn't happen?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful for the question because it will give me a chance to again emphasize that the school boards will submit their budgets to me on or before June 30, and at that time, as is customary in this tradition we have, I will spend a considerable amount of time with my staff reviewing those numbers and seeing where some of their pressure points stand and looking at things like shifting enrolments or declining enrolments or increasing enrolments, infrastructure needs, busing concerns, the numbers enrolled in ESL, the numbers of FNMI students. The list goes on and on to about 35 or 40 different categories. Once that review is completed and once the populations of students settle down, we will come up with a final budget with those school boards to be in effect as of September 30, which is the ultimate cut-off day. So with respect to the hon. leader's question, which is a good question, we will have to just wait until those budget numbers come in, and then they'll be reviewed.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is implying or, in fact, stating in his response that the budget may be adjusted through the summer, yet we just voted on the budget. Is this minister saying that the Education budget may be changing before the fiscal year is out?

Mr. Zwozdesky: No, Mr. Speaker. We have a fixed amount of money, which is a provincial budget, but it gets apportioned to school boards on the basis of things like, for example, base funding on a per capita basis. Obviously, the more students you have, the more funding you would get. What I'm simply saying is that there are shifting dynamics that occur over the summer. July and August tend to be the largest migratory months for families who want to be in a fixed location so that when school starts up, they're ready to go, so you see some shifting demographic information such as popula-

tion counts and enrolment counts. Secondly, we also have a similar formula, albeit on a per-credit-taken-and-completed basis, and we'll know that count, at least the number of students enrolled in high school, very soon as well. All I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that when you take those two factors plus the factor of May 31 being the cut-off date for teachers to let others know whether they're retiring or not, those are some of the factors that determine final budgets on a per-jurisdiction basis.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that teacher layoffs will mean fewer teachers are paying into the teachers' pension fund, what effect will layoffs have on the unfunded liability of teachers?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, if memory serves, we will be contributing for both the unfunded pension liability of teachers and the current pension of teachers an amount over \$300 million, and about \$153 million of that will go to the unfunded portion. So teachers who are active – and there will be approximately 33,000 to 36,000 of them come September, I expect – will be contributing on an active basis in accordance with the agreement struck in 1992-93 between the government and the Teachers' Association.

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

Alberta/Montana Electricity Transmission Line

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night in Lethbridge citizens from throughout the province gathered to discuss this government's electricity transmission policy. Both farmers and environmentalists want a public hearing at the National Energy Board before the export line for electricity is constructed between Lethbridge and Montana. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Will the minister on behalf of the government and the citizens of Alberta ask the National Energy Board for a full public hearing before construction of this line is to go ahead?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, this is a merchant line being proposed by the Montana/Alberta tie-line group, and it will primarily be in Alberta and then crossing into the United States, into Montana. Jurisdiction, really, initially will start with the Energy and Utilities Board, and I think that's appropriate, to start there and let the process take its due course.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister: will this government act as an intervenor if there is a public hearing at the National Energy Board in regard to this export electricity line?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, at this stage that's far too hypothetical as to what we might do in the future if some things might happen.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the minister: given that under the Hydro and Electric Energy Act before a transmission line is even contemplated to be constructed, it must receive a permit under section 14 of this act, can the minister tell the citizens whether or not a permit has been granted to the Alberta/Montana tie-line from the EUB under this act?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the specific details with

respect to the permit. They have to go through all of the permitting and regulatory requirements. Transmission is a very important and key ingredient to ensuring that we have reliable power available to us as needed, but this will have to follow all the regulatory processes.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Education Funding (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta teachers and school boards are sounding the warning that once again funding for education is inadequate to sustain teachable classrooms and quality education. In fact, the ATA said today that “it has become clear that Budget 2006 does not provide adequate funding . . . resulting in larger class sizes or running deficits – all of which are completely unacceptable in a province having successive multi-billion dollar surpluses.” My question is to the Premier. Given the financial wealth of this government, what excuse is there for program cuts and teacher and staff layoffs in Alberta schools?

2:30

Mr. Klein: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I guess I have a difficult time understanding where these particular complaints come from because we have increased funding to school boards and to education generally, K to 12, by \$330 million. There are no cuts. There haven't been cuts since 1993-94. It's been more and more and more and more each and every year. So \$330 million is a lot of money. That's just for operating, and that's in addition to all the dollars we've poured in for capital construction.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Premier will not be surprised when teacher layoffs and bigger class sizes occur, because he's been warned.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Education: given that school boards and the ATA are sounding the alarm acknowledging a looming education deficit, when will the minister also acknowledge the problem and do something to prevent these layoffs and increases in class sizes?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will be providing approximately \$126 million in the forthcoming budget for the class size reduction initiative. With those monies we will be able to help school boards retain all 1,688 teaching positions that were funded in September of '04 and September of '05, and we hope to see another 100 to 200 brand new teachers over and above that added in this coming September school year.

Mr. Mason: That's great, Mr. Speaker, but will the minister promise here and now in this Assembly on this last day of the spring sitting that when children return to school in September, they won't be once again sitting on windowsills and sitting in overcrowded classrooms?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be very surprised if we had students in that situation. But if the hon. member is aware of some of those circumstances, he can certainly let the local school board know that, or he can let my office know that, and I can assure him that we will follow up with it. We have \$5.3 billion with which to work. We portion out 98 or 99 per cent of that money to the school boards. They make the local decisions. For the most part things are

going extremely well in kindergarten to grade 12, and we wish them great success in their budgeting.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Statement of Appreciation

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My comments today are to the Premier. On behalf of the constituents of Strathmore-Brooks I simply want to say thank you to the Premier for 14 years of great government. And from me personally: thank you for giving me the impetus to run for political office.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Farm Safety

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All congratulations to the Premier, but the business of Alberta must go on, and this is a serious question. Over two-thirds of Alberta farm deaths last year were aged over 60 or under 20. Many would say that Alberta has the worst farm safety record in Canada. Economically stretched farmers cannot afford expensive new insurance programs, but their taxes provide little in terms of government support for safety. The cost in death and injury is large to farmers, their families, our health care system, and our Alberta economy. My question is to the minister of agriculture. What will the minister be targeting? What will the minister be doing to try and reduce that death rate, and hopefully to zero this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member, that is an excellent question because it's an excellent opportunity for us to talk about an issue that is very, very important in agriculture, and that is deaths on farms, not only deaths of farm workers or the owners of those farms but also the tragic occurrence of children who meet a tragic end on farms. There are a number of educational components that we have in the schools today. There are a number of educational components that we have at all of the farm fairs. There are a number of educational components that we have with the 1-800 line about chemical mixtures, about utilization of equipment. In fact, in this House, I believe it was a couple of weeks ago, we also had a question on this where we were talking about ensuring that equipment guards were in place and that we need to make sure that we have a communications program to producers that teaches them that it is a dangerous place. The problem is that it's also a place of residence. It's also a place of recreation. We need to be cognizant of that when we're talking about putting in rules and regulations. Our goal is to ensure that the producers in the province are educated about safety around equipment, chemicals, and their operations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next question is to the minister of human resources. Just to diverge a little bit, I had a short chat with the minister as we came in this afternoon, and the minister informed me that this could very well be the last question to him in this Legislature.

The Speaker: Is that the question? There are no preambles, hon. member. Come on. Let's go. We've got lots of members here.

Mr. Backs: I'd just like to congratulate the minister.

When will the minister's department move to have our Alberta safety legislation cover agricultural businesses with more than three nonfamily employees?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question because agriculture continues to be very important in Alberta and has been for a long period of time. It's part of our overall economic diversification plan. In fact, I believe agriculture creates more jobs than the oil industry itself, so it is very important. Unfortunately, agriculture continues to face many challenges due to the fact that we have to export most of our agricultural products. Therefore, when it comes to agriculture, agriculture cannot afford at this time, because of the status there, to have too many standards imposed on it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister has been a great role model for many First Nations people in our province.

The second supplementary to the Minister of Finance: given the need for sound finance but understanding the potential for savings in health care and other areas, can the minister find money somewhere in the Alberta treasury to provide occupational insurance coverage and better safety for all Alberta farmers and their farmhands for the next three years?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not about finding money. It's about the producers' desire. I know that if the producers, in their wisdom not ours, were to come forward in a majority view to the minister of agriculture, he would bring that forward to this table. He represents them extraordinarily well. But I must inform the hon. member, being a part of the agricultural community myself, that they are very independent thinkers, and they like to make their decisions and ask us to carry out policy they believe is in their best interest.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Elimination of the Provincial Debt

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fourteen years ago a brave and courageous leader, our Premier, embarked upon one of the toughest challenges, to eliminate the provincial debt and to bring our financial house to order. I'm sure that he received a lot of advice on how to spend taxpayers' dollars, and some may even have questioned how he arrived at those decisions. At this juncture as we evaluate how far we have come, I wish to direct my questions to the hon. Premier. Mr. Premier, how do you justify the fast-track elimination of debt when there were other priorities that could have used some of those needed dollars?

Mr. Klein: You know, you have to hearken back to '92-93. The hon. leader of the Liberal Party at that time was also concentrating on eliminating the debt and fast-tracking it. It was: who could do it better? Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental principles of economics is that you don't have unsupported debt and that you get rid of that unsupported debt as quickly as you possibly can. In the case that existed in 1993, we had \$23 billion in unsupported debt that had accumulated through deficit financing; in other words, using the credit card to pay the light bills and buy the groceries. So we had to get rid of that, and our first act was to eliminate the deficit, then the

net debt, then the gross debt. We achieved that 20 years ahead of schedule.

2:40

Mr. Shariff: On behalf of the people of Alberta who have benefited from your sound policies I wish to say that Alberta is a better place because of you, Ralph.

Confined Feeding Operations

Mr. Bonko: Confined feeding operations continue to concern rural Albertans. The ministers of Sustainable Resource Development and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development will claim that their policies and standards are excellent, but manure from sewage holding ponds has made water at Harnack Ranch near Airdrie undrinkable by people and livestock twice in the last three years. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given that flooding has caused manure to enter the surface water two times in the last three years, can the minister tell us whether regulations are too weak or if the NRCB is failing to enforce the regulations?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, when we have situations that are reported to the NRCB and to our enforcement people and our compliance people that are in place to operate under the AOPA legislation, those calls are taken seriously. We have compliance people that go out and check on the complaint. They try to offer suggestions. We have a process in place through AOPA, through the legislation, as well as through the NRCB to make sure that when there is a breach of the act, when there is a breach of any regulation, there is a process in place to make sure that that is looked after. The hon. member mentioned one specific instance, but I could cite many more specific instances across Alberta where we've had breaches, and our enforcement staff have gone in there and properly looked after the situation in view of the public interest. We will continue to work through that.

Mr. Bonko: To the same minister: given that there are 50 staff in the entire NRCB and no new staff in this year's budget, can the minister explain how he plans to enforce the regulations then?

Mr. Coutts: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker. We've just gone through a governance review with the NRCB. We have just put in place a very qualified, very knowledgeable individual who will be the chief operating officer that looks after the development of applications, the process that applications go through, the compliance and the enforcement as well. That particular individual will make sure that the proper staff is in place to look after the demands that are driven by a very hot economy and an industry that's thriving in Alberta.

Mr. Bonko: My last question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Will the minister review the one in 25 years flooding guideline in light of the increasing rates of flooding identified by the water researchers?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure of the exact circumstance that the hon. member is talking about. But as the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has advised, if he has some particulars that he could send over to me, I'd be pleased to give him a written response to that in view of the circumstances in flooding we had last year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Importance of Postsecondary Education

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to be able to rise and ask a question of what I think is the greatest Premier in the history of the province of Alberta today. Advanced education has been a top priority for this government. When our Premier did his television address last year, he did it in a brand new high school that, interestingly, was nestled in the heart of the Calgary-Shaw constituency. The name of that high school is Centennial high school after and in honour of the centennial year. In that televised address he was gathered with a group of grade 11 students. Now, in their minds he was such a great man that they were surprised that he was not taller. That was their first comment to me. He spent the day with them, and he was focusing on postsecondary education in that speech. One of the highlights of that was access to the future.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you should have a question.

Mrs. Ady: My questions are to the Premier. If those grade 11 students were in front of you today, what action would you tell them that government is taking today to ensure that they can pursue a postsecondary education?

Mr. Klein: Well, shortly after that taping, Mr. Speaker, at Centennial high school in Calgary-Shaw, we introduced, of course, in the spring session as Bill 1 the Access to the Future Act, which will allow for the creation of some 15,000 immediate new learning opportunities. In addition, 7,000 new apprenticeships were added to the system, bringing the total number of apprentices in Alberta to 47,000. Our overall objective under the Access to the Future Act is to create 60,000 spaces by the year 2020. This is all part of Alberta's efforts to give students the best access to postsecondary education in Canada.

The Speaker: I did recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, but did the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford want to proceed? Proceed.

Constituency Association Offices

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After 35 years of Tory rule the line between partisan party politics and legitimate government business is becoming more and more fuzzy by the day. My questions are for the Premier. Is it this government's policy to allow government members to have their partisan constituency associations share addresses with their taxpayer-funded constituency offices?

Mr. Klein: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. To share what addresses? I really don't know. The hon. member is not quite clear.

The Speaker: The question should not be directed to the government. It has nothing to do with the government. If such a situation exists, it should be directed to the office of the Legislative Assembly, in this case the Speaker, but you can't do it in question period, so you'll have to do it later.

Do you have another question? Is there another question, sir?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Provincial Land-use Strategy

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's seemingly open prairies are rapidly becoming overcrowded. As oil development, intensive livestock operations, industrial development compete with

residential expansion, Alberta's health, water supplies, and quality of life are being jeopardized. We're rapidly losing agricultural land, and rural communities and towns and cities are in conflict. Despite this, the province has presented no land-use management strategy to ensure orderly and sustainable development. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Will the minister acknowledge that the lack of a land-use strategy is creating friction, pitting, if you like, cities and towns against rural municipalities and that this is not a healthy situation?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, in 1995, when the Municipal Government Act was rewritten, it replaced what was in place at that time, regional planning commissions, with natural person powers in the hands of municipalities. It created an environment where municipalities for the very first time were able to negotiate win-win situations and allow for development of both urban and rural areas in a manner which served the interests of both.

Mr. Speaker, in the ensuing time – and the member is absolutely right – there have been some problems that have arisen. Those problems are precisely the target that is under discussion by the minister's council at this time. One of the working groups is dealing with relationship issues, and we expect to have a very thorough and full discussion on ways to deal with that in the ensuing few months.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:50

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From what we're hearing, people are not seeing it as a win-win situation.

Given the strain placed on urban infrastructure, public transportation, water supplies, what is the minister doing now to promote smart growth for cities and to protect agricultural land in rural communities?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the answer to the first question, I'm working with municipalities to put together a new strategy for long-term planning. One of the things that's under discussion is whether or not the intermunicipal development plan, that is now optional under the act, should at some point in time be made mandatory. That's one of the issues.

With respect to infrastructure and that kind of thing there are opportunities where municipalities could work together, and in fact we encourage partnerships. We encourage intermunicipal partnerships and have a limited amount of funding within our ministry to assist those partnerships in their developmental stage.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister would be aware that the longer this problem grows and festers, the worse it's going to get.

To follow up, then, my question to the minister is: when can we expect a comprehensive land-use strategy to specifically address constraining urban sprawl, protecting agricultural land, and sustainable industrial development?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I have asked the members of the Minister's Council on Municipal Sustainability to have their final recommendations in place so that the government can deal with them in the government planning process by this fall. That's not to say that all of the answers will be there, but that's to say that we should be able to begin a very meaningful discussion with municipalities and other stakeholders as we address this very difficult situation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Achievements in Health Care

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my tenure in the Alberta Legislature certainly the biggest issue and probably the issue facing most Albertans and the one they care most deeply about is their health care. My mother is currently in continuing care. Both my parents are near 80. I have four children, and someday I hope to have grandchildren. We're a typical Alberta family with typical Alberta family concerns about their health care. Faced with the rapidly changing nature of health care delivery and health-related technology, sustainability and innovation are probably now more critical than ever. My question to the Premier: under his leadership what has the government of Alberta done to ensure that all Albertans continue to receive world-class care not just for today but, more importantly, for the future?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we didn't address the question of long-term sustainability, but that will have to be dealt with down the road, believe me. But that's not to say that we haven't accomplished a lot relative to health care. The Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute will open very soon, and this institute will play a prominent role. It will be a centre of excellence for heart treatment and surgery. We have the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. That fund is now worth well in excess of a billion dollars, has attracted top researchers from around the world. We have instituted the electronic health record. We have instituted through the AMA the bone and joint surgery initiative. Plus, there is the centre of expertise for bone and joint surgery in Calgary. The Edmonton protocol was developed to transplant healthy islet cells into people with type 1 diabetes. We were the first province to launch a wait-list registry so that Albertans could view waiting lists for surgical and medical procedures. We eliminated health care premiums for senior citizens in this province. Just this session, of course, we passed the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act. The Stollery children's hospital has become a global leader in pediatric care, as will the new Children's hospital in Calgary.

So the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. It's not as if we've been standing by idly. We've been making some tremendous innovations and improvements in the health care system.

Mr. Snelgrove: My second is to simply wish the Premier and his family many, many wonderful years of health and happiness.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Tobacco Reduction Strategy

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the same time that this government identifies wellness as a priority, they invest almost \$34 million in tobacco-based companies through the heritage savings fund. Interestingly, Tory members have been presenting petitions throughout the spring session from Albertans urging the government to take action on teen smoking. It is clear that the priorities of Albertans and the priorities of this government are at odds. My first question is to the Premier. How does this government reconcile cancer prevention initiatives, like the cancer legacy fund, with continued investment in tobacco companies?

Mrs. McClellan: There is no tobacco investment allowed in that, Laurie, and you know it.

Mr. Klein: Well, I don't know. The hon. Minister of Finance is speaking to the hon. member, so I'll have her respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that the cancer legacy fund does not permit investment in tobacco companies. Let's make that very clear in this House.

On the issue of the heritage fund I was requested for this information by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and I provided it to him by tabling it in the House yesterday. To refresh your memory, it's about a \$33 million investment in companies that are associated with or are tobacco companies. It's .25 per cent of 1 per cent of a \$49 billion investment: \$33 million.

Now, we talked about this and said that in some cases in investment, Mr. Speaker, there are conglomerates, investment structures so that it may not be a direct investment. This government does not interfere with investment. We charge an investment management group to provide the best return. However, I repeat: on the issue of the cancer legacy fund there was an amendment in this House that this government agreed to, and there is no investment in tobacco companies in that fund.

Ms Blakeman: Still \$34 million invested.

To the minister of health: has the minister conducted any studies on whether the profit made from investing in tobacco companies outweighs the health costs associated with treating smoking-related illness?

Ms Evans: No, Mr. Speaker, but on the last weekend at the discussion with other ministers from across the country while we looked at pandemic preparedness, we had a conversation between the western ministers of health about what we could do to look at some common elements of a tobacco tax so that we could do whatever possible to discourage smoking. We looked at the tax per carton. We looked at the research from the University of California on effectiveness of increasing tobacco taxation. Although we didn't examine profitability on investment, we did look at other ways to look at deterrents for smoking, particularly targeted at youth and those that might be most vulnerable.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the minister of health: given that Tory backbenchers and I have both been urging the government to introduce legislation to control tobacco sales and marketing, will the minister join with other provinces and develop legislation to ban power walls?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be useful for a better understanding by this Legislature about power walls. I would just simply say this. We are making some progress. We are spending a considerable amount of time with the AADAC board, as well as the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, that is working in concert with the advisory committee chaired by Mrs. Colleen Klein and Dr. Bob Westbury. Stay tuned for more recommendations that will target addictions and will target the broader scope of how we manage those that are most vulnerable that have been affected.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

3:00

Alberta's Environment

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are truly fortunate to be living

in a province with the most robust economy in North America, but at the same time we're fortunate to have a government and a Premier who value Alberta's natural environment. It's an environment that provides Albertans with fresh air to breathe, clean water to drink, sparkling rivers and lakes for fishing and other recreation. My question is to the Premier. Can he tell us how Alberta came to be in such an enviable state of affairs?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, it started many, many years ago, indeed when the hon. Speaker was Minister of Environment. I can recall that when I was honoured to have that portfolio, the recycling program, deposit for return: one of the only programs of its kind in North America. That was expanded to the tire recycling program, now to computers and television sets and other electronics. The Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act provides for some very strict enforcement measures against those who would pollute and violate our environment. More recently, of course, we've had the Water for Life strategy, Climate Change Central. The list goes on and on. So we have not been idle relative to issues facing the environment.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Applewood Park Community Association

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we learned that the province's Crown debt collection was unable to collect a \$20,000 grant from the Applewood Park Community Association. As a result the file was transferred to the Department of Justice for possible legal action. My question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Why did your department fail to collect funds from the Applewood Park Community Association?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we looked at it. It looked like it was going to be possibly a court situation, so we referred it to Justice for them to do an analysis and get back to us with advice on which way to go.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next supplemental is to the Minister of Justice. If the department's cost-benefit analysis fails to warrant taking Applewood to court, what is the department's plan?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, the matter is still under consideration.

Mr. Agnihotri: My next supplemental is a repeat of yesterday's question. To the Minister of Government Services: why is access to information refusing to disclose the Department of Justice's 719 pages of records pertaining to Applewood Park Community Association?

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe I didn't make it clear yesterday. You know, Government Services is responsible for this legislation, but the Privacy Commissioner does not work with me every day on the 3,168 inquiries that they had last year. He works independently. He does not report that information to me directly. I'm sorry that I don't have the specifics that you'd like, but that's not how this legislation works. He works completely independent of the minister.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Alberta's Energy Resources

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's energy picture couldn't be brighter, but there are critics who say that our resources and the wealth that we derive from our resources come about more as a result of luck than by design. My question is to the Premier. In the past 14 years under his leadership what has this government done to ensure Alberta's place as a global energy leader today and in the future?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that our province is blessed with natural resources, and indeed energy revenues have helped to pay down Alberta's \$23 billion net debt.

Mr. Speaker, we are wise stewards of our natural resources through the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. Our energy sector is attracting attention from all over the world now that synthetic crude has been recognized as real oil. We've been featured on *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, *The West Wing*, and the French, Australian, and Chinese television networks. We're deemed to be the safest, most secure and viable place to invest, and the world is interested indeed. Energy investment in the next couple of years alone is in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion.

Mr. Speaker, it's where we are going tomorrow that concerns me the most because the oil and gas will run out. Therefore, we need to develop an integrated energy policy, which we are developing now, to look at how we generate electricity through clean burning coal to make sure that coal-bed methane is extracted safely, coal gasification, hydropower, wind power, biodiesel, biogasoline. That is the future: an integrated energy policy.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for his answer. I wish to ask him: does he see a future, then, where Alberta is a leader not just in conventional energy but in alternative energy?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that's what I was talking about. That's really what tomorrow is all about. That is the next step in our energy policy. I would encourage all of the energy companies to join with institutions like the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, the Alberta Research Council, the Coal Research Centre, and all of the agencies involved in research to develop these integrated forms of energy to make sure that we remain the energy capital of Canada, certainly, of North America, and of the world.

3:10

Spring Session Statistics

The Speaker: Before calling on a number of hon. members to participate in Members' Statements, a bit of history today. Most of what we'll talk about today are statistics associated with the Second Session of the 26th Legislature; in essence, the session that began February 22, 2006, to the end of yesterday, Wednesday, May 17, 2006, except for the first item.

This session of the spring Legislature has sat for 42 days, including 28 evening sittings. That is the identical number to last year, 2005: 42 days, including 28 evening sittings. The number of minutes that you have sat to nearly 5:30 yesterday afternoon is 14,198 minutes. This compares to 13,394 minutes in the spring 2005 sitting. In terms of the number of hours that you've sat this year compared to last year, this year you sat 236 hours, 38 minutes. Last year you sat less time: 223 hours and 14 minutes.

Now, what is really significant – and you might want to know how we come up with these numbers. Well, we get up very, very early in the morning. The number of words spoken by members to adjournment yesterday afternoon was 1,827,493. That compares to last spring, which had 1,800,176 words. Now, we've had some longer speeches this spring, it seems, but we may also have had the shortest speech ever in the history of Alberta too, yesterday afternoon from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. We're checking that for verification.

In terms of Oral Question Period, for those days on which we had more than 14 sets of questions – that is, when the Speaker had the privilege of recognizing 14 or more members – this spring we had six occasions when there were 15 sets of questions asked and two occasions when there were 16 sets of questions asked. Now, compare it to last spring. Last spring hon. members spent less time asking their questions and less time answering their questions than they did this spring. Last year we had 14 occasions when there were 15 sets of questions, 10 occasions with 16 sets of questions, eight occasions with 17 sets of questions, and on one occasion we were able to get in 18 different members to participate in question period.

Government bills that received royal assent or third reading this year is 41, compared to 40 in 2005. Government bills left on the Order Paper this spring is two, compared to four in 2005. Private members' public bills that received royal assent is one in 2006, compared to two in 2005. Since 1993, when we started this policy associated with private members' public bills, there have been 40 such bills that have received royal assent.

This spring we had more tablings than we had last year. We had 633 in the spring session of 2006, compared to 516 in 2005. The total number of members' statements this session not including the ones later this afternoon is 231, and if we have six more today, that will be 237. Last year we had 168, but we changed the process and eliminated recognitions last year and then moved to the two-minute members' statements.

Hon. members, just to conclude the statement for today with respect to the historical side of it. Earlier this year we published one book, entitled *100 Years at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: A Centennial Celebration*. I've indicated to hon. members that we've been working for nearly four years on a four-volume set of books that weighs a tonne. There are nearly 2,200 pages associated with those four books. They will be published, and we'll make them available to the public in the fall of this year. They will be called the Legislative Assembly of Alberta *Centennial Series*. Title 1 is *On Behalf of the Crown*. Title 2 is *The Mantle of Leadership*. Title 3 is *A Higher Duty*. Title 4 is *A Century of Democracy*. This has been four years in the making.

In addition to that, three additional books are being worked on, and we will have them done, hopefully, by the end of this calendar year. Because of a number of petitions from members with respect to this, one will deal with the historical vignette series. Two volumes will be associated. Then I intend on taking all members' statements made last year and this year and having them published in a book. It's called the historical vignette series: the statements of members, 2005-2006. Hopefully, by the end of the calendar year, at the latest the spring of next year, we will have concluded this.

I wanted to bring you up to date in case somebody wants to know what I'll be doing this summer.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Contributions to Alberta's Youth by the Kleins

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely

honoured and privileged to rise and make a statement on this very significant day to make special recognition of what our hon. Premier and Colleen Klein have done for Alberta's children and youth. Our Premier established the Ministry of Children's Services, which has led the way to the creation of similar ministries across this country, created the Great Kids awards program so that the contributions of our children and youth do not go unnoticed. Our Premier established both the Youth Secretariat and the Youth Advisory Panel to make sure that the voices of our children and youth are heard. The Premier does everything he can to give children and youth the attention and focus they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, he doesn't do it alone. With him, working just as hard every step of the way, is Colleen Klein. The Children's Forum, youth forums, Children's Cottage, the Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying, and most recently the Crystal Meth Task Force: behind each and every one of these initiatives is the dedication to and the genuine love of Alberta's youth. Colleen has made incredible strides bringing communities together to engage, listen to the voices of our children and youth, and take action on many issues that they face.

What sets the Premier and Colleen apart is the personal touch they bring to everything they do. They truly take their work to heart. I can say with confidence that there are no others who do so much. The Premier and Colleen want more for Alberta's children and youth, and when these two put their minds together, their dreams and visions become realities. They are tireless champions for their cause. We the Alberta government and Alberta's children and youth are very fortunate to have the Premier and Colleen on our side. Their legacy is one that will never be forgotten.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Larry Fleming

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak about an extraordinary coach and mentor, Larry Fleming. Larry has recently been inducted into the Canadian amateur Boxing Hall of Fame. Through his years of involvement Larry has coached such names as Scotty "Bulldog" Olson, Jason "the Troll" Adam, Jalena Mrdjnovich, and Amanda "Bone Rack" Bonko. The minute you meet Larry, you can tell that his heart and dedication are making a difference for all kids. Larry teaches life lessons and the power of positive thinking. He reminds kids that they can do anything they want if they put their mind to it. Larry is always in the corner cheering them on and encouraging them regardless of their ability or experience.

Larry has recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer and may not have many rounds left, but his devotion and dedication to the sport, to Cougar Boxing and the kids it trains, is amazing. Larry continues to make a difference. We all strive to lead our lives and hope that we make a difference, but Larry has touched the lives and enriched the world around him one fighter at a time. "You can make a difference," Larry says. "You just have to try." Larry's money often is used to continue to operate the Cougar Boxing Club and continues to provide youth with an experience, giving them confidence and a unique experience by a unique individual. A community at large is grateful for your dedication and commitment. Thank you, Larry.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

1988 Calgary Winter Olympics

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to

reflect on a vision cited by our Premier which resonated with many of us nearly 20 years ago. I wish to share with you what then Mayor Ralph Klein told the world in his letter to the official report to the International Olympic Committee at the completion of the 1988 Winter Games.

They were the 15th Olympic Winter Games. They were the Calgary Games. But aside from the official titles, the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary will forever be remembered as “the people’s Games,” for it was the people of Calgary who gave so willingly of their time, and of their community, that made the Games a success.

Mayor Klein then shared what makes a success of an international sporting event such as the Olympics: the fair competition, the financial balance, the artistic and cultural celebrations, the technical and organizational precision. He reminded us: “Above all, they must be a success of, and by, and for the people who open their city to the world.” That, Mr. Speaker, was what really counted to this man, to our Premier.

3:20

I’d also like to share from this letter what Mayor Ralph Klein predicted that we would have today as a result of the 1988 Winter Olympics: “A legacy of spectacular winter sports facilities, roads and transportation systems, parks and pathways, and endowment funds for future Canadian athletes.” Nowhere more than in my own constituency of Banff-Cochrane, Mr. Speaker, is the truth of this vision more truly seen by the thousands who continue to use Kananaskis Country and enjoy the spectacular and challenging facilities of the Canmore Nordic Centre on the shoulder of the magnificent Rundle Ridge. The mayor of Calgary told the world in 1988 that the legacy of those games would live on “in this great city, in the foothills of Alberta, in a nation called Canada.”

Mr. Speaker, I submit that the legacy of this man, Premier Ralph Klein, will also live on in the great communities of Alberta, across our prairies, foothills, and mountains, and indeed throughout a nation called Canada.

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

Alberta Society for Pension Reform

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fair play is one of the values that Albertans hold dear. We believe in honesty, justice, and the value of deals that benefit all parties involved, but fair play is not always a matter of course when it comes to deals between Albertans and the government that serves them. That is why I rise today to recognize the hard work and dedication of the members of the Alberta Society for Pension Reform.

In April 2001 a small group of retired and working public servants sat down to address an issue that they felt was unfair. Essentially, they feel that they were promised a much better pension deal by the Alberta government than what they received. In true Alberta spirit they decided to tackle their issue head-on. Led by the founding president, Mr. Ken Smith, they’ve shown what a group of hard-working Albertans can do when they believe in a principle strongly enough to fight for it.

In just four short years they’ve managed to assemble a membership 8,000 strong. They have held annual general meetings to discuss the issue and earned significant donations from a concerned public to fight for this cause. Unfortunately, this group’s voice, like a growing number of others in Alberta, is being shut out by this Conservative government. Rather than having their issue dealt with properly by the province, the society has had to collect significant donations from its members in order to take the province to court. During the course of the last several months it has become more and

more evident that seniors are being ignored, neglected, and marginalized in this province. Where is the Alberta advantage for men and women who built this province? This government doesn’t seem to know, so seniors have to go after it themselves.

I can attest from attending this society’s annual convention last fall that this group will not back down. The members’ commitment and determination truly represent what this province was built on, and I give them my full respect for fighting for what they believe in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Contributions to Alberta’s Youth by the Kleins

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, there is no greater legacy one can leave than to make a lasting commitment to the children of our great province. From the beginning the hon. Premier has made the future of our children and youth, the next leaders of our province, the government’s highest priority, and it’s no surprise that his wife, Colleen Klein, has been a visionary and driving force behind many initiatives undertaken by this government to improve the lives of the youngest Albertans.

Alberta’s Promise is just one example of the legacy they will leave for our province’s children. Our Premier made Alberta the first jurisdiction in Canada to enshrine the initiative in legislation, in 2003 through Bill 1, the Premier’s Council on Alberta’s Promise Act. This innovative initiative has created opportunities for children and youth by encouraging the corporate sector, communities, not-for-profit organizations, and governments to increase resources for programs benefiting the youngest Albertans. They committed to making every Albertan aware of Alberta’s Promise and that the little red wagon is pulling for our children.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta’s Promise has been an overwhelming success. Since it was introduced in 2003, more than 400 corporations, agencies, and communities have been inspired by the Premier’s and Colleen Klein’s vision. Through Alberta’s Promise they have made a marked and meaningful difference in the lives of our children. Their work has helped ensure that children and youth have the skills and support they need to reach their potential and lead healthy, happy lives. Their tireless advocacy has fostered an incredible commitment to our children and to the future of our province.

The hon. Premier and Colleen Klein have truly helped make Alberta the best place to raise our children, a place I call paradise and where my five grandchildren and all children have the chance to grow up to be the best that they can be and to have the real opportunity to make their dreams come true.

Thank you, Premier. Thank you, Colleen. Thanks to you our hope for the future and for our children is bright and exciting.

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

Democratic Reform

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is long overdue, but democratic reform is finally starting to get the attention it deserves. Alberta has struggled with declining participation rates in elections and a general dissatisfaction with politics among many Albertans. I’m deeply troubled by this trend because there are important decisions to be made that will affect the future of our communities, and all voices need to be included in wide-ranging debates on this issue.

The NDP has put forward numerous proposals for improving our democratic institutions. My colleague from Edmonton-Calder has

been fighting for improvements to the Public Accounts Committee. My colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona has proposed legislation to examine the potential for proportional representation in this province. We continue to call for a citizens' assembly, similar to the one that reported in B.C. in 2004. Such an assembly should carefully examine the many ways which our electoral system can be improved.

There is one piece of electoral reform that we should address immediately. Last year the Liberals and PCs accepted a combined \$1.5 million in donations from corporations. This week the two parties joined together to defeat an NDP amendment that would have cancelled \$370 million in a corporate tax cut. The NDP believes that cutting corporate taxes shifts the tax burden onto individuals and jeopardizes stable funding for core provincial programs. We live in a world where he who pays the piper calls the tune. Last year the Conservative piper received 73 per cent of its payments from big corporations while the Liberal piper got half of his pay from big money. It's no wonder that they were playing the same corporate-friendly tax tune.

Reforming rules around election donations is not a radical proposal. Manitoba and Quebec already prohibit donations from corporations and unions, as do the federal election rules. The only thing stopping such reforms in Alberta is a lack of political will.

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

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My pleasure to rise this afternoon and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three very hard working members of the society that I referred to in my member's statement a few minutes ago. Representing the executive of the Alberta Society for Pension Reform, we have with us today Mr. Ken Smith, a retired power engineer, who serves as the president of the society. We have with us Mr. Bill Robertson, who is the secretary, and he is also a retired power engineer. Also with us today is Mr. Barry Richardson, a retired teacher, who serves as the membership chairman of the society. I would ask all members to please give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Martin: Yes. I have a couple of introductions, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Rose and Edward Yanitski. Rose has colon cancer, and she and her husband have been fighting to get the cancer medication Oxaliplatin covered by Alberta Health. Although the drug is currently covered in jurisdictions such as British Columbia and Quebec, Albertans are left paying thousands to access this medication. The Yanitskis have been residents of Alberta all their lives. Edward is a retired mechanic, and Rose worked for CN Rail for 25 years. They currently reside in Beverly. We are honoured to have this courageous couple join us today. I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure today to introduce to you and

to the members of the Assembly Michael Marlowe and Albert Opstad. Mr. Marlowe is a former president of the Alberta Retired Public Employees Society and the former vice-president of the Alberta Council on Aging. Mr. Opstad is the former president of Seniors United Now. Both are active advocates for seniors' issues in Alberta. Mr. Marlowe and Mr. Opstad are seated in the public gallery. I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

3:30

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

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a young lady who is serving as an apprentice to the executive assistant to the Government House Leader, David Gillies. Michelle Zolner is a constituent of Edmonton-Whitemud, a very strong and active member of our political community down there, and has been learning well at the hands of the dome gnome, as he's affectionately called. I'd like Michelle to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

head: **Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee I'm pleased to table five copies of the committee's final report, which contains its recommendations regarding the Conflicts of Interest Act. This completes the committee's mandate. Copies are also being circulated to all members.

I want to take this opportunity to thank members of the committee from all three parties for their co-operation in completing the committee's work over the past year.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: These are petitions now. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, and then Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition from a number of concerned Edmontonians calling on the government to "prohibit two-tier medicare."

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am presenting a petition signed by 68 concerned Albertans from throughout the province but mostly from St. Albert petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to

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

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate tablings on the same subject. They urge the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to oppose any action that would contravene the Canada Health Act, basically to oppose a two-tier health care system.

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

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a petition with the names of 44 people from the Edmonton area asking that the government "amend the Gaming and Liquor Act to provide for harsher penalties where liquor licensees allow activities that may be injurious to the health or safety of people," urge the government to "implement policies that will enhance the safety of staff and patrons at licensed premises," and urge the government and the city of Edmonton to "improve the enforcement of any regulations or by-laws governing occupancy limits in licensed premises."

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that should the House be sitting on Monday, May 29, I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 28, 30, 31, and 32.

I'm also giving notice that should the House be sitting on Monday, May 29, 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 35.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Would that be the list of them?

head: **Introduction of Bills**

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

Bill 215
Labour Relations Code (First Collective Agreement)
Amendment Act, 2006

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 215, Labour Relations Code (First Collective Agreement) Amendment Act, 2006.

The purpose of Bill 215 is to provide for first contract collective agreements to avoid labour relations situations such as arose in the Lakeside Packers UFCW strike of last year. This bill represents an idea supported by prominent members on both sides of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 215 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure today to have three tablings. The first is a letter from the Hon. Jean Charest, Premier of the province of Quebec, thanking Sustainable Resource Development, under the mutual aid and resource sharing agreement, for our assistance in the 1,250 forest fires and the 400,000 hectares of forests that were destroyed last year during the summer.

The next one I have is from the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association to our department thanking us for the leadership shown in standardizing and improving practices in Alberta's zoos.

The last one I have is the appropriate number of copies of the

annual report 2005 of the Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table Breakfast for Learning, an assessment of provincial/territorial government support for school food programs as of May 2006.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table 1,117 health care petitions that did not pass parliamentary approval to recognize every effort of the individuals that took action to try and prevent this Legislature from passing anything that would expand private, for-profit health care in the province.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of two letters from Michael Marlowe. Mr. Marlowe is with Seniors United Now and wants to ask the Premier why he "failed to keep his promise" made in 1993 to the effect that universal seniors' support programs reduced or eliminated at that time would be returned to seniors after the province was out of debt.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is actually a letter from Edmonton-McClung constituents Donna and Randy Kormos. They're basically talking about the arbitrary school boundaries issue, and they highlight some of the unfairness when only one lottery draw is conducted and the practice of a waiting list or a backup list has been stopped. They also talk about how people register invalid addresses for their kids to be able to make that draw.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is actually a copy of a mock invoice by the Windsor Park Fundraising Society from Windsor Park school issued to the attention of the Minister of Education in the amount of \$51,651 for items they fund raised for, including classroom computers and computer desks, library computers, music room computers, physical education equipment, and volunteer services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have several tablings today, the first being a letter from a constituent, Terry Neraasen, writing about Bill 20, the FOIP legislation. He expresses that he would like to see "openness and transparency in government," and he's concerned that this particular piece of legislation that was "pushed through is completely unacceptable."

I also have some more photographs, Mr. Speaker, of government backbench MLAs presenting cheques. In this case they're all community facility enhancement program grants, CFEP grants. There are three separate ones, each with the name or signature of the MLA written on the signatory line as if to express that the money was actually coming from the MLA.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tablings here from John and Lori Harnack, who are concerned about protecting springs, streams, waterways, and groundwater around confined feedlot operations. The letters were to the Minister of Environment, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, their MLA, and the MD of Rocky View.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of my letter with some attachments to the Ethics Commissioner regarding Applewood Park Community Association and the Member for Calgary-Montrose.

head: 3:40 **Projected Government Business**

Ms Blakeman: Well, I invite the Government House Leader to rise and share with us any projected government business we might expect for next week.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, and thank you to the hon. Opposition House Leader for that especially good question. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to respond in this way: should the House be sitting, we would proceed with the only two remaining pieces of government business that I see. That would be Bill 39 and Bill 41.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before calling Orders of the Day, I would just like to acknowledge the presence of and acknowledge the departure of a number of our pages who are retiring as of today. There are actually a number of them. I'm going to read their names into the record, and then I'm going to read to you a very delightful letter that they sent to me as a message to all of us, to all of you. So to Janiesh Bali, Elaine Hoekstra, Daylan Hoffman, Desirée MacNeil, Chelsea Mitchell, Mikkel Paulson, Jenelle Pederson, and Stacy Schell, this is their last day. They're retiring. They will be retirees as of tomorrow. [applause]

You should all know, hon. members, and they should know as well, that in the fall of this year, in the month of November, I will be hosting a special dinner for all former pages in the history of the province of Alberta. So there's a great big test right now to try and locate these people. Somebody who may have been a page in 1921 may be just a little long, but, yes, we're advertising. Here's their letter, dated May 16, 2006.

Mr. Speaker,

As the days of this session come to a close, we have had a chance to reflect on the past couple years of paging. It goes without saying that an interest in politics, the parliamentary system of democracy and a desire to learn more drove us to seek out this job, but we leave with far more. We leave not only with a superb understanding of politics, parliamentary procedure, pomp and ceremony, but of the lesser known side of politicians and those who support them, the human side.

The ability to see through our own impressionable eyes, the parliamentary process at work, has changed our perspective dramatically. Being in this environment has expanded and deepened our awareness and appreciation for politicians, their hard work, and the true passion that drives them all.

We have worked with members and their staff, our fellow

Legislative Assembly Office employees and members of the public from all walks of life. Every person we encountered in our time here has taught us something and has enriched every moment of being a Page. We would especially like to thank the Legislative Assembly Security Staff, including Nick Kutash, Bob Baker, and Bennett Walker, who will be retiring this year.

The enriching experiences and the knowledge we have gained over the past years will forever be entrenched in our memories and will surely shape our lives and dreams for years to come. This has been memorable, inspirational, and a true privilege! For this, we thank you!

It was signed by the names that I mentioned. That's wonderful.

I'd now like to call on the Deputy Speaker to make a recognition for our pages.

Mr. Marz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Deputy Chair of Committees and myself, it has been a pleasure getting to know these wonderful young people. I recently was part of the group that judged the pages' speech competition, and although there were some absentees that haven't yet made their speeches, I can tell you that the competition was extremely close and very difficult to judge. I can say that if any of these young people decides to take us on in the next election, we will have our work cut out for us.

On behalf of all the members – page Janiesh Bali is here – I'd like to give each retiring page a gift with our best wishes to each and every one. We're honoured to have had you all work for us and with us this last year, and we'd like to thank you very much. [applause]

head:

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This spring session will truly be recorded as one of the most historic and most memorable sittings of the Alberta Legislature, and it's so fitting, in this 100th year of democracy, to be saying that. I say that not only because of the more than 40 bills debated and passed and the hundreds of questions asked and answered and so on but also because it may well be the last sitting for our hon. Premier, as we've heard. Therefore, on behalf of our deputy House leaders from Calgary-Glenmore and from Medicine Hat, and I am sure I would echo the sentiments of the opposition House leaders from the Liberals and from the NDs, we want to thank all the members for their co-operation during this particular session.

On a personal note I, too, would like to extend the very best to our Premier and his lovely wife, Colleen, for a very successful retirement.

On that note, and in thanking all the members yet again for the inspiring debates that occurred, I would now move that pursuant to Government Motion 14, agreed to on March 20, 2006, the House now stand adjourned.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the House is adjourned. The Government House Leader can't do that, by the way. The Speaker can do that. The House Leader can't.

So the House is adjourned pursuant to this particular motion. Have a very safe – underline safe – summer, and until we meet again, all the best.

[Pursuant to Government Motion 14 the Assembly adjourned at 3:47 p.m.]