

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 12, 2007**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 07/03/12

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

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

Internship Positions for Immigrants

501. Mr. Cao moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to create additional short-term internship positions within the government of Alberta to assist qualified immigrants who seek work experience for the first time in Canada.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to present Motion 501. The motive for this is very simple. This motion's aim is to help new Canadians establish themselves in Canada by creating opportunities for their first Canadian work experience with the introduction of additional short-term internship positions within the government of Alberta.

It is initially challenging to find work in Canada for any new Canadian. Employers always ask for Canadian work experience, and employers prefer to hire people with previous Canadian work experience. So many of my constituents and many Albertans whom I have encountered over the years have the dilemma that in order to secure employment, they need previous work experience in Canada. It's a catch-22. How can one meet the requirement of previous Canadian work experience if it is the first time they are applying for a job in Canada?

Yes, we can help and have helped many new Canadians by providing training in language, speaking, writing, in job search techniques, in writing resumés, and job applications. Yes, we can and have helped new Canadians in qualification assessment and skills certification. But the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that the most critical component is the real work experience in Canada that employers require. Employers always ask for Canadian experience, as I said before, and I have experience in seeing that employers prefer to hire people with previous Canadian work experience.

Mr. Speaker, to help new, qualified immigrants to gain appropriate, meaningful Canadian work experience for which they are qualified is very important, and it is the essence of Motion 501. It encourages other levels of governments and the private sector to do the same by setting an example with the government of Alberta. Helping immigrants use their skills to reach their full potential, to their highest productivity level is the purpose of Motion 501.

We also see that we need to help to develop Alberta in terms of human resources, help to meet the labour market needs of the future. As we all know, we have experienced unprecedented growth in Alberta. Addressing the labour force challenges requires interprovincial migration and immigration from outside Canada for appropriate skilled workers.

Now, I have seen so many programs and so many immigrant services in Alberta, in different cities in our province. They have done a great job. So this motion is just to reinforce that assurance that we help to introduce new Canadians into the Alberta workforce as quickly as possible so that we have the productivity out of our new citizens, and this also helps alleviate the provincial labour shortage.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans should have the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills, talents to apply themselves to our demanding labour market. To sustain our growth in Alberta, we require an adequate supply of workers with the right knowledge and skills. Currently, the demographic challenges are affecting the province's ability to meet the labour force demands for a prosperous economy.

We know that our population is aging. We have a low birth rate, and we have urbanization, and potential economic growth may be constrained by our supply of labour. Albertans' standard of living and the future opportunity for economic success should not be jeopardized by the lack of skilled workers. So getting more immigrants into the workforce would help alleviate staffing pressure faced by employers.

In managing the growth, the government has the priority. Mr. Speaker, immigrants must continue to play a role in countering the projected slowdown of the Alberta labour force growth, and to do that, the government is working to attract immigrants to Alberta and retain them here. I know that government actively campaigns to attract out-of-country workers and emphasizes the Alberta advantage, including high quality of life.

Motion 501 could be used as another recruiting tool to attract immigrants to Alberta. Mr. Speaker, a changing and increasingly competitive global landscape means that Alberta has to work diligently to attract and retain knowledgeable, skilful workers. As you know, many jurisdictions share the urgent need for more skilled workers, and Alberta will have to clearly differentiate itself if it is to be seen as a destination of choice.

The Alberta government also has the priority to improve Albertans' quality of life. Now, we make sure that the qualified immigrants find employment which they are rightfully trained for, suited to their ability, and that would help to increase the quality of life in Alberta. Our government also has the priority of building a stronger Alberta, and I see that Bill 501 could increase the cultural awareness in the workforce and would be transcended into personal lives and communities thereafter.

So increasing immigrants in the workforce will also help to build social cohesion, and providing first-time work experience in Canada for new Canadians will largely emphasize this point.

I look forward to hearing the debate on this mutually beneficial proposal. I urge all members of the House to support Motion 501, and I am looking forward to addressing any comments at the end of this debate.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I stand to respond to Motion 501. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort for bringing forward this motion. For me it's a simple issue of human rights, and I think that we are all sensitive to issues of human rights and especially situations in which disadvantaged groups are often the victims of discrimination in our country.

8:10

Of course, Canada has been a model for the rest of the world in its commitment to the basic human right that every human being has intrinsic worth. In fact, it was a great Canadian, John Humphrey, who had a hand in writing the UN declaration, the universal declaration of human rights in 1948, recognizing the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom and justice and peace in the world. So immigrants coming to Canada to live and work are entitled to freedom, fair treatment, and respect.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite easy to say these words, and there are lots

of conventions that have been signed by Canada to affirm these words, but moving them off the page into everyday reality is quite another matter. In fact, Justice Beverly McLachlin made this remark: "Formal declarations of equality are not enough to remove discrimination and exclusion." We need more than just rights talk. We need concrete actions. So I recognize that the hon. member is bringing this motion as a concrete action to put into practice what we believe about human rights in Canada.

Of course, it can be argued that the Canada in 1867 was born out of the necessity of recognizing two peoples and two different languages, so the spirit of tolerance and respect is actually built into our laws and institutions. Nevertheless, when you look at Canadian history, you see the old exclusionary thinking coming back again and again, that sees in the other a threat or someone who is different, so there's the whole process of exclusion and discrimination. We only need to think about the way our aboriginal Canadians have been treated down through the years, marginalized to the side into special groups considered separate and not so equal as they live in enclaves in this country.

Chinese Canadians came to build our railroads and were subjected to a head tax. Black Canadians came via the underground railroad to the Maritimes and were cheated of land and forced to work on public projects like slaves. Ukrainian Canadians were interned in World War I. Japanese Canadians were sent to camps during World War II. Anti-Semitism has led to discriminating practices against Jewish Canadians throughout our history. So formal declaration of equality does not translate automatically into inclusion in the workplace, and that's what this motion is addressed to, to include people who might be disadvantaged in our workplace. We have to again and again create programs to enable disadvantaged groups to participate in the workplace.

So what we're talking about here with this Motion 501 is actually an affirmative action program. We only need to look south of the border to see many, many years of affirmative action programs to make sure that all people are included in the workplace. Now, at first I thought that such a program might not be permitted by section 15 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the famous section on equality. It's one of my favourite sections in the Charter, and this upholds the equality of everyone.

(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

So an employer like the provincial government has to be very careful that it doesn't put into practice hiring practices that are in any way discriminative. But then we go on to subsection (2), which says:

Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin . . .

And so on. So, Mr. Speaker, actually the Charter adds a section that interprets this equality statement and affirms that affirmative action programs are extremely important.

I think the hon. member has already mentioned some references to the plight of immigrants when they come to Canada. I think the statistics speak for themselves. I mean, the key word in the Charter is "disadvantaged." It seems to me that when you look at the statistics about immigration – for example, research published by the Canadian Council on Social Development indicates that 20 per cent of those who arrived before 1986 lived in poverty for a number of years after they came here; after 1991, more than 50 per cent.

Actually, recent statistics issued by Statistics Canada state that the economic situation of new immigrants to Canada at the turn of the

millennium showed no improvement despite the higher levels of education and higher levels of skill among immigrants coming into Canada. A recent Statistics Canada report also showed that the probability of immigrants entering a period of low income was very high in their first year in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I just wonder in terms of the development of immigration programs in our country and in Alberta: what are we saying to immigrants, inviting them to come to our great province, yet they often enter into a time of dire poverty when they can't even find decent housing? So I applaud this step. This is an important step.

I received an e-mail from a local organization here in Edmonton, Changing Together: A Centre for Immigrant Women, which states that many of our women are professionals as medical doctors, nurses, accountants, lawyers, and teachers from their country of origin, yet they are the most economically marginalized immigrants when they come to Edmonton because they cannot find a job in their specialized field due to the lack of Canadian experience, just what the hon. member has mentioned: the lack of Canadian experience. So they can't get to first base in terms of entering into the workforce. In terms of opening up the internship program to immigrants, giving them the Canadian experience that I think they really need and enabling them to have their skills recognized is, I think, a step in the right direction. We need this kind of affirmative action program, and I thank the hon. member for suggesting it.

My only question is that in implementing this program, I hope that we're not just throwing people into the midst of government bureaucracy, which is difficult to fathom at the best of times, without some supportive system, some mentorship, without people there. Obviously, people who have come from another country have sometimes language problems. There's a culture shock, so there need to be mentors in place to help them along the way; otherwise, the whole idea is going to fail.

We want them to succeed. We want new people coming to Canada and succeeding, anything we can do to make that happen, and seeing this as a stepping stone to greater service in the public sector. So if they get a taste of what it's like to work in the public sector, they might consider a whole career in the public sector, and that's all to the good. That's what it's all about, I think. It's about jobs, about participating in the great wealth of Canada. The public service should be open to all Albertans regardless of their country of origin, and we must take the right steps to ensure that that happens.

So I support this motion, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have been given the opportunity to participate in the discussion regarding Motion 501, which recommends the implementation of internship positions within the government of Alberta, specifically for recent immigrants to the province. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort for introducing this motion as an opportunity to discuss possible methods of ensuring the success of newcomers.

One of the five major priorities set out by the government of Alberta is to manage growth by addressing Alberta's labour shortage and developing a made-in-Alberta immigration strategy, and we've got some of our most capable ministers working on that as we speak. The passing of this motion would be a step forward to a made-in-Alberta immigration strategy, and it would contribute to addressing the labour shortage within the public sector. However, I don't think that the labour crunch that's being experienced in Alberta is a phenomenon unique to the provincial government. This phenomenon spans the entire private sector.

8:20

I'd like to note that what this motion would not necessarily achieve is provide immigrants with opportunities to work in the areas in which they have been trained because government typically does not offer all of those kinds of jobs that immigrants come here for. I would prefer that all immigrants be offered an internship in the area of their training and experience. To restrict this proposal to internship spaces within the government is to limit the chances of its success. While this is a start to both easing integration into and addressing the labour shortage, I believe that much more needs to be done.

Why not go one step further and spread this requirement across all areas? This is an initiative that all professions and occupations would or should participate in. In Alberta we allow our professions and occupations to self-regulate. I don't think it would be a big step to actually ask the professions and occupations to provide each new immigrant a mentor and an internship in the area that they come here trained for. Imagine an Alberta where every single immigrant coming to this province would be brought together with a mentor and as an intern in the area that they have a passion for, in the area that they've studied for years overseas. I would much prefer to see a system like that. I'm told that there are over 500,000 immigrants in Canada that currently do not work in the area that they've been trained for. So not only would this kind of strategy attract immigrants from overseas, but it could attract 500,000 of them from other parts of the country who today cannot practise what they have studied for all these years in the province where they live. So imagine the potential that that might have.

I think that this is a very good start. I certainly don't want to sound like I'm being critical of the hon. member. I think it's a great start, but let's go beyond that. Let's become a province where, in fact, we do practise what we preach and we provide mentors and we provide internships for every single immigrant that comes here so that they can be gainfully employed from day one. Sure, maybe they need some upgrading. We'll let them work while they upgrade. Maybe they need some language skills. Let them work while they learn. Don't just set them aside driving cabs, as some of the examples would suggest.

Anyway, with respect to the motion I think, hon. member, that it's a good start. I just don't think it goes far enough. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually going to agree with the Member for Calgary-Egmont to a large degree. I want to say that we on this side will certainly support the motion because this is a serious problem if you talk to people. We bring immigrants over, and this is a much better solution than trying to bring temporary foreign workers over.

We're talking about people that want to have a life here and become Canadian and part of the mainstream, if I can put it that way. But when we bring them over, often we don't provide the proper backup, whether it be language skills or whatever, and many of them are struggling. If you talk to Jim Gurnett, who works with immigrants at the Mennonite association, this is a serious problem. We bring them here, and then there's not the proper backup. So I think that this is at least a serious attempt to deal with that sort of situation. I would think that if we're having internship programs within government, that would include language skills and other things that need to be there to make people function because, you know, it is a serious problem.

There are a couple of studies, we know, and I think the Member for Edmonton-Glenora talked about this. There is considerable empirical evidence that new immigrants, despite being Canadian in all legal aspects, are disadvantaged within the Canadian economic climate. I think there's some deep-rooted distrust over their abilities, skills, and qualifications. The studies show very clearly when you look at them – and I'll mention a couple of them – that new immigrants are more likely to live in poverty and receive less compensation for their level of work experience and education compared to birth Canadians with equitable skills, education, and experience. So something is wrong there. A part of the problem – and I think this is what the Member for Calgary-Egmont was talking about – lies in the systemic distrust of foreign credentials and experience.

I wanted to say that there are a couple of studies that I think come to the nub of this matter. There's a study done by Omidvar and Richmond in 2003. I won't quote the whole study, but they found that the things that the member is talking about – internship, bringing people in and making them feel welcome, providing the backup skills, valued recognition by conferring respect and recognition to this group, the human development that is involved, and involvement and engagement through citizenship – all lead to a better result for our new immigrants, and it begins to deal with the problems. It makes them a part of the culture more, but also we begin to get them into the proper jobs that they are trained for.

The other important one was Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market, by Reitz. I think this says it all, three sentences here. Finding 1 shouldn't surprise us: "Immigrants receive lower earnings premiums for education." We know that. Finding 2: "Immigrants receive lower earnings premiums for work experience." Again, part of the problem. Finding 3: "Immigrants from some origins groups earn less than immigrants from other origins." In other words, we know that if you come from a European background, you probably have a better chance of success and making more money.

I think it comes back, if I may, to the point that the Member for Calgary-Egmont was talking about. Certainly we can do this within government, but the problem is much broader than that. We are going to have to, I think, through government pressure, whatever it takes – and I see that the minister is here – move with these professional organizations and work with the unions and others to start to do the things that we're saying we need to do. We see qualified doctors driving taxis; I run into this occurring all over. I see doctors and engineers, you know, working at jobs for which they are well overqualified. Not only is this unfair to them, but when we have a shortage of all these people that we say we need, we are missing a golden opportunity here. I think that's the point that the Member for Calgary-Egmont was talking about.

So, yes, this is a good first step, and we certainly will support it, and I commend the member for bringing it forward for this discussion, but we also have to do something and work with the professional organizations, the unions, and others to begin to bring the people that we need and that are qualified into the mainstream because we need doctors, we need engineers, and we need skilled tradesmen. Some of these people already have the training. We're missing a bet here.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give other people time to get in on this debate. Again, I certainly thank the member for bringing this forward because it's an important discussion for all. Thank you.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to

rise and speak to Motion 501. First of all, I want to thank the MLA for Calgary-Fort for introducing Motion 501. The government's plan to increase the number of immigrants entering Alberta will not be effective if recent immigrants are not given an opportunity to work and be part of the community.

Internships would be a great first step for recent immigrants who are just getting settled and adjusting to life in Canada. It would be even better if we expanded the range of internship opportunity to include government agencies and public service. Increased immigration will require greater availability of opportunity, so there is no reason to limit the number of internships that are available. The Ontario internship program for recent immigrants opens up opportunities in the public service for individuals from a range of fields, including finance, chemistry, communication, environment, and sciences. Expanding the scope of this program would reach more people.

Change the text to "paid internships." Many recent immigrants need to find paid work quickly to get established, find housing, and support families because it's one of the major problems when they enter the country. Because of economic reasons they need some money immediately to settle themselves. It is unreasonable to expect recent immigrants, given the rapidly increasing cost of living in Alberta, to be able to afford to work without being paid.

8:30

Paid internships would also ensure that recent immigrants don't immediately enter a cycle of poverty. As I said before, economics is a great factor when somebody settles in a new place, a strange place, especially if somebody doesn't know anybody in the new country.

Immigration, Mr. Speaker, always plays a very important role in any society, and Alberta's current labour shortages make it even more essential. Many recent immigrants have difficulty finding a job upon entering the province, leading to poverty and sometimes causing immigrants to leave the province. Many recent immigrants have noted that jobs and opportunities are not well known or well advertised. By providing clear and accessible government internships, Alberta may be able to provide a good first step for many, many new Albertans.

Interacting in a work environment can increase English language skills and pave the way to future employment, improve access to services, and encourage interactions in the community. Immigrants come to Alberta expecting an incredible opportunity to live comfortably, work, and raise families. Sadly, they are met by unexpected challenges, difficulties having their skills recognized, and even poverty in this land of plenty. Any chance that we have to increase the number of opportunities available to recent immigrants receives my full support. The Alberta advantage is not reaching all Albertans equally, as has been discovered by recent immigrants to our province. Increasing access to opportunities will help to ensure a long and happy future for newcomers in Alberta.

Internships for recent immigrants would provide much-needed opportunities but would not be enough. We want accessible language training, educational opportunities, reduced bureaucracy, and greater community support to ensure that recent immigrants can adjust and flourish in our province.

Mr. Speaker, nearly half of Canada's citizens, 47 per cent, are neither British nor French nor born in Canada. Despite Alberta's booming economy recent immigrants often have problems finding employment that recognizes or makes use of their skill sets and education. There are many, many barriers that limit recent immigrants' ability to be successful and adapt to life in Canada. Poverty is certainly one of the biggest barriers. The Canada 2001 census

showed that 20 per cent of immigrants living in Canada's cities are considered low-income families compared to only 12 per cent of nonimmigrants living in the same areas. A recent Statistics Canada report also showed that the probability of immigrants entering a period of low income was very high in their first year in Canada, from 34 per cent to 46 per cent. However, if immigrants did not enter a low-income period in the year following entrance into Canada, the rate of poverty in subsequent years fell to 10 per cent or even less. Level of education didn't significantly alter this statistic.

Mr. Speaker, other barriers to employment include lack of Canadian experience. As some other speaker already mentioned, many employers who refuse to higher recent immigrants cite their lack of Canadian experience as the reason, lack of Canadian training. Even highly trained immigrants often have trouble finding jobs appropriate to their training and abilities.

Government bureaucracy. Many recent immigrants would like to work but have trouble navigating government bureaucracy. There are often strict timelines on finding work, difficulties obtaining work permits, and high fees to obtain work permits and apply for citizenship. Navigating bureaucracy is doubly challenging if recent immigrants do not have strong family/community ties or do not speak English or for some other social reasons or maybe culture shock when they arrive in a new place, new country, new way of life.

Language barrier. As I said before, lack of English language ability may lead to unemployment sometimes, unemployment and social isolation. English language training may not be available and/or affordable.

Mr. Speaker, you know, currently we have a career bridge program, a national program in which private employers can seek qualified international applicants. The program is not for profit and has managed 6,500 paid internships since 1996. In the Ontario public service internship programs for internationally trained individuals newcomers with a minimum of three years' international work experience will be eligible for a placement of up to six months with the Ontario public service. The program is working to place up to 70 interns and has partnered with career bridge.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 501 urges the government to create internship positions within the government service for qualified immigrants seeking full-time work experience in Canada. As you know, Alberta is currently undergoing a period of unprecedented growth. The government of Alberta is actively developing ways to accommodate labour demands in the province, having recognized the need to attract immigrants to Alberta and, more importantly, the retainment. There's a need for more people with the right knowledge and the right skill sets. Alberta is very fortunate to welcome many former petroleum industry workers from Venezuela, workers who are experienced, skilled, and hard working.

We must do everything we can to encourage immigrants like these to come to Alberta and to have the ability to experience their full potential in their fields, Mr. Speaker. We have to develop high-performance environments that maximize the development and application of new technologies in Alberta. Alberta employers are frustrated that more workers cannot be brought into the province faster. The program advocated by this motion is unlikely to disadvantage Albertans, who are already overwhelmed by the opportunity and the size of the growth in our economy.

8:40

Alberta's employers are able to benefit from immigration since it is one more way to address the skills shortages. Spending billions of dollars to educate and train Albertans for the workforce of the future and having hundreds of skilled and unskilled workers arriving each day from other parts of the country: this influx is not enough, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans' standard of living and future opportunities for economic success should not be jeopardized and will not be jeopardized by a lack of skilled workers. This motion is something that the Alberta government can do right now to help immigrants, Mr. Speaker. We already have exemplary programs encouraging the private sector to hire new immigrants like offering the publication *Welcome to Alberta: Information for Immigrants* and funding employment services for new immigrants. To set an example for the private sector and other levels of government, this program would go a long way. The importance of increased cultural awareness in the workforce, given the influx of immigrants from diverse backgrounds, would be another benefit.

The Alberta government employs knowledge workers and tradespeople, the exact kind of people we need to attract to Alberta to continue building a strong, diversified, and value-added economy. As is the case for all employers in a strong economy, it will be hard for the Alberta government to recruit and retain highly skilled workers. This, Mr. Speaker, would be a very good way to help fill the staffing needs of the government of Alberta while encouraging immigrants to come to this province and, more importantly, to remain here and continue to be contributing members of our society.

Recent immigrants have an unemployment rate that is only marginally higher than the provincial average. Inclusiveness requires removing barriers to immigrants' full participation as equal citizens in all aspects of life, Mr. Speaker. Everyone should share in Alberta's opportunity and prosperity.

The 2005 supporting immigrants and immigration in Alberta strategy aims to increase skill and knowledge levels, the mobility of labour, and the number of immigrants to this province. The goal is to increase Alberta's immigrant retention rate to 85 per cent. We not only want these people to come here, Mr. Speaker; we want them to feel welcome, to feel that they are contributing members of our society and that they will want to stay here and raise their children here. Alberta's approximate retention rate is currently between 70 and 75 per cent while in Ontario and British Columbia it is as high as 90 per cent.

Since industries are growing, there is need for an increasing labour force, but Alberta's labour force growth is actually slowing. Baby boomer retirees are knowledgeable, skilled workers with many years of experience, and they're not easily replaced. Over 400,000 new jobs will be created in Alberta between 2004 and 2014 at the current pace of growth in our economy, Mr. Speaker. Over 300,000 new workers are anticipated in the labour market, leaving a 100,000 worker shortfall over that time period.

Mr. Speaker, this motion proposes something whose time has come. I would suggest that its time is long overdue, and I would encourage all hon. members to support this motion.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I support the notion of this motion, but I have a number of questions and concerns. If this government believes in helping new immigrants get established, why does it undermine their chances of success by bringing in competition from temporary foreign workers, who don't have the rights of citizenship to protect them?

I would like to know what the member's definition of qualified is. Why doesn't this government facilitate the speedier recognition of foreign credentials, whether blue or white collar? We have all had immigrants come to our constituency offices with stories of the hardships they have faced. Recently I had a lady in her mid-30s who had a degree in science from a Romanian university as well as a law degree. While her degree in science was recognized, her law degree wasn't, and even with that so-called recognition the paperwork meant nothing when she applied for jobs. There has to be some kind of a test or qualification.

In high school, for example, if an immigrant has come from a country where a particular language is spoken and that language is offered at the high school level, that individual has the right to challenge the language exam and prove their capabilities. To my knowledge there does not seem to be any equivalent challenge for an immigrant to prove their qualifications and get some kind of paperwork from the government that indicates that, yes, we recognize that whether you came from Zimbabwe or Poland or Romania in the particular case with my constituent, you're qualified.

My school experience and the experiences that I've seen of a number of immigrants is that both Canada and Alberta sort of hold their arms out wide to immigrants. We encourage immigrants to come to our country, and then very quickly we abandon them. In some cases we require them to pay the new equivalent of a head tax if they're seeking economic immigration, yet when their children come to our schools, we do not provide sufficient English as a Second Language support to ensure that they're successful. Now, this is a betrayal of our invitation. I'm suggesting that if we're going to invite people, we don't abandon them. Currently 70 to 75 per cent of high school ESL students drop out before completing their matric. I don't want a similar circumstance happening to adult immigrants; in other words, we raise their hopes, but we don't provide them with the supports necessary to ensure their success.

With regard to ESL students, this past weekend in papers across Alberta the results of standardized testing were released. I can't think of anything that has a heavier negative impact on students, especially ESL students, than the publishing of their scores. This is the way this government currently treats ESL students. They offer very few exemptions to ESL students who have had very little language training and expect them to basically jump into the deep end of the pool and survive. This has been the school experience. There has been a lack of support from this government in terms of extending the number of years of support for ESL students, and until we extend that support for the students, we're not going to see an improvement in the achievement results.

The First Nations school boards in this province refuse to have their standardized test results published because they recognize the embarrassment. They have that option of keeping their scores to themselves. I wish that same option were extended to ESL students.

We have homeless refugees on the streets of Calgary. When my colleagues from Calgary participated with me this past spring in the homeless count, a number of the individuals we came across were individuals whose language was poor, most likely within their first language as opposed to their second language. There was no support for these individuals, so as a result of their language they were out on the streets. A number of them were young adults. Alberta does not have a very sterling record of having supported these individuals.

8:50

Now, before I can support this motion, which has wonderful intent, I would like to hear the practical steps that this member has to achieve his intended goals. For example, how many positions would he like to see made available? What types of public service

jobs would he suggest might be filled by qualified immigrants? What tests has the member in mind that will determine that an immigrant is qualified? How long would the internship last? What wage ranges is the member suggesting? Would this program operate similarly to a STEP program whereby the government would fund a certain amount of it and would seek some private philanthropy or industrial support to bring the wage to a living wage?

What types of support systems would there be for the immigrant on the job? What supports is the government willing to provide to maintain stability for the immigrant while they are employed in their internship? Does the support include affordable housing, educational upgrading, child care support, health care? To what extent is the government willing to go to make the immigrant motion dream a reality? What is the plan for the immigrants once they have completed the internship? Is there a program for helping a successful intern to enter the job market other than a certificate of completion? What benefits – health, dental, et cetera – would be available for both the employed immigrant and their families?

Without the specific detail and a plan this motion is doomed to fail, which would be another in a series of blows faced by the immigrant, raising their hopes only to be dashed.

Currently over 40 per cent of Albertans are considered to be operating below a functional literacy level. Recently the federal government cut half a billion dollars in the literacy support programs. Is the province willing to make up for the lost funds, which are having an adverse effect on both Canadian citizens as well as assisting immigrants?

Unless the government has answers to these questions and a detailed plan in mind to ensure a significant positive impact on immigrants beyond this philosophical concepts discussion, then nothing tangible will come from this motion. Please provide me with the detail that would allow me to support the wonderful intent of this motion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure indeed to rise on behalf of my colleague the Member for Calgary-Fort, who provides a motion and an opportunity for debate on something that is exceedingly important. In this past few months and few weeks I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of the nonprofit societies in Alberta that provide supports for our immigrant population, and I can assure you that their level of frustration is both complex and important for us to both define and work towards achieving our common goals.

For one thing, Mr. Speaker, this evening many people have spoken about workers that come and immigrate to Canada through the temporary foreign worker program, and I want to correct an erroneous impression, that this is a program that this government has in fact been a part of. We have counselled with the officials from the federal government about the concerns that we've had about the temporary foreign worker program, one of which was recently addressed by their extension of the program to at least two years to give foreign workers an opportunity to be both fully participatory and enjoy some of the benefits of exploring new opportunities in our country.

This particular program is a program that enables businesses, companies who have not been able to secure proper employees to fulfill the obligations that they see fit to offer. It gives them an opportunity to engage temporary foreign workers through a contractual arrangement, with the employer providing the housing, ameni-

ties such as a telephone, opportunity for adequate and affordable housing as well as other supports, including a round-trip ticket which permits the temporary foreign worker candidate to go home any time. These candidates are secured through contractors, many of whom do both assessments and coaching and training of the temporary foreign worker candidate off site in the country of origin and then provide them an opportunity to link with an employer in Canada.

It is a very complex program in that there's a variety of contractors that secure immigrants for such a program, and as such frequently we receive complaints that these groups have not given them an adequate picture of what really takes place when they arrive. Perhaps the immigrant worker that is least satisfied is the worker that enters Canada through the security of a contract or an arrangement, either economic or refugee status or family arrangement, in another province and then after a few short weeks travels to Alberta. Let me tell you what's available for that worker: absolutely nothing from supports that are provided originally originating from our federal government and provided to the province in which they gained entry.

We have a situation where people from Quebec, people from Ontario, people from Manitoba, people from British Columbia are coming in with the dollars supporting their immigrant status already secured in the province in which they landed, and they come to Alberta without these supports. Currently we have some 25,000 to 30,000 North Africans in the northeast part of this very city who are here hoping to find new lives and supports without any of that federal support that was originally gifted to the province in which they arrived. They are here because they believe that there will be job opportunities. They believe that the streets are paved with gold and that there will be something that secures for them a better opportunity economically than what they had in the province in which they landed.

Mr. Speaker, this is posing a very real challenge not only for our government and for this city but for the nonprofit agencies who provide supports for these workers. These individuals and these nonprofit groups have approached me to find out how we can best take care of these individuals and give them some hope and opportunity. One of the things that we're doing through ALIS, which is a website, is providing people in other countries an expectation of what they can expect when they arrive in Alberta both in certification as well as in the circumstances that they find themselves in in their new home.

Speaking today to the consul from the Philippines, she said that sometimes people come, and they think that if they come to Edmonton and it's 20 below, it might feel like it does in their freezer, when they open the freezer door, and it's 18 below. They don't realize that if they go to Fort McMurray, she tells me, if they find 40 below or 30 below, it is not just twice as cold, it is very cold, and it's quite a different cold than they experience in their home country. So we are challenged to make sure that people know, whether they're here on the temporary foreign worker program or through the provincial nominee program, exactly what the circumstances can be like when they get here and try to provide additional supports.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the immigrant societies tell me is just something I've heard on all sides of the House, and that is that the integration of individuals that come as immigrants is something we should give primary emphasis to. I am very pleased that Calgary – particularly Calgary, which gathers more immigrants by far, about one and a half times the immigrants that land and stay in Edmonton – as well as Edmonton, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, and Vegreville all have integrated settlement programs for immigrants in their communities. These communities have gone the extra mile to make

sure that there are welcoming opportunities not only to work with the nonprofit sector but work through family and community support groups, work through the other kinds of agencies to really make the immigrant population feel welcome.

They deal with issues that emerge, like the foreign credential program, which moved from the human resource ministry to immigration just recently with the movement of federal minister Diane Finley, who has taken that responsibility very seriously. We're aware that the foreign credential program needs work, needs improvement, and we are working on a national level with the people that are part of the various associations and professional organizations that can help this happen.

9:00

I'm pleased to report that the chartered accountants, that engineering associations, that geophysicists, and other groups that are professional groups that have looked at these issues are willing and able to provide us supports so that on our foreign credentialing program we can make it simpler for people to have an interpretation of statistics and certificates that they bring from their achievements in their own country for a better review. Recently, speaking with Colin Hansen, the Minister of Economic Development and trade in British Columbia, we have determined that on the heels of the TILMA agreement, the trade and labour mobility agreement that Alberta has with B.C., we can look together at the foreign credentialing and see if we can accelerate our capacity here.

So it's been a pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry, but under Standing Orders 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would now invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort to close debate on Motion 501.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry, for your information and input. I want to thank the members for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Edmonton-Glenora, Calgary-Egmont, Edmonton-Ellerslie, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, and Calgary-Varsity for your input.

I just want to make it really simple. Just imagine if you are a new Canadian landed here already, and you go and apply for a job, and they ask: do you have Canadian experience? This is your first time applying for a job, and you say: well, I don't. The one who has Canadian experience has a preference or advantage. So I want to have a level playing field. It's nothing to do with any other motives or other requirements and so on. The Member for Calgary-Varsity asked all these details. This is a private member's motion. It's not a government program. It's suggesting the government, and the government will take it and develop all those details as they see fit. So that's the number one answer to your question.

Number two, I thank the members from Egmont and Beverly-Clareview on your expanded view on that. I agree with that, but this is the first step. If we don't take the first step, we cannot have the other steps. The expansion of that is encouraging the federal government, the private sector to create this internship program for first Canadian experience.

I want very, very much to see that something like this has also something to do with integration and a feeling for our province, for our country. Just imagine that a new Canadian settles here, and then the government helps them. The loyalty goes to where? To Canada. To Alberta. So it's not just work but a mental attitude. So that's

another part that I want to emphasize. I know that if we create an example by the government of Alberta, we can ask the private sectors and federal government to walk with us.

Now, I just want to keep on this, that we have about 20,000-25,000 employees in the Alberta public service. Just imagine a small percentage of that is internship for this opportunity. It would be beautiful. So I just want to conclude there, and I ask all members of the Assembly to support this motion. It is a first step in a bigger march.

Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried]

head: **Government Motions**
Amendment to Standing Orders

12. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the following temporary amendments be made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in order to give effect to the March 7, 2007, House leaders' agreement:

- 1 Standing Order 3(1) is amended by striking out "1:30 p.m." and substituting "1 p.m."
- 2 The following is added after Standing Order 3:
2007 Sitting schedule

3.1(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the Assembly shall stand adjourned every 4th week during the 2007 Spring Sitting.

(2) Unless otherwise ordered and subject to suborder (3), the Assembly shall meet for the 2007 Fall Sitting from the first Monday in November to the first Thursday in December, inclusive.

(3) The 2007 Fall Sitting may be varied by House Leaders' agreement, which shall be provided to the Clerk who shall immediately publish a revised calendar.

(4) Nothing in this Standing Order precludes the Government from advising the Speaker that the public interest requires the Assembly to meet on a certain date, and the Speaker shall give notice that the Assembly shall meet at that time to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time.

- 3 Standing Order 4 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

4(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the sitting hours of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Monday: 1 p.m. to conclusion of Motions Other Than Government Motions

Tuesday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Thursday: 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

(2) Notwithstanding suborder (1), upon passage of a Government Motion before 6 p.m. which may be made on one day's notice and is subject to debate, the Assembly may meet on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

(3) If there is no evening sitting, at 6 p.m. or on Monday at the conclusion of Motions Other Than Government Motions, the Speaker adjourns the Assembly until the next sitting day.

(4) On Monday, if there is an evening sitting, at the conclusion of Motions Other Than Government Motions, the Speaker leaves the chair until 7 p.m.

- (5) On Tuesday and Wednesday, if there is an evening sitting and at 6 p.m. the business of the Assembly or Committee of the Whole has not concluded, the Speaker or Chair, as the case may be, leaves the chair until 7 p.m.
- (6) On evenings when the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole and the business of the committee is not concluded, at 10 p.m. the Committee shall rise and report immediately.
- 4 Standing Order 7 is amended
- (a) in suborder (1) by adding “at 1:30 p.m.,” before “Oral Question Period”;
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (1):
- (1.1) At 1:30 p.m., the Assembly shall proceed to Oral Question Period with the balance of the daily Routine to follow.
- 5 Standing Order 8 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborders (1) to (3) and substituting the following:
- 8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily Routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:
- Written Questions
Motions for Returns
Public Bills and Orders Other Than Government Bills and Orders
at 4:55 p.m.: Motions Other Than Government Motions.
- (2) Subject to suborder (3), on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:
- Government Motions
Government Bills and Orders
Private Bills.
- (3) If the business enumerated in suborder (1) has not received a total of 3 hours of consideration, then Public Bills and Orders Other Than Government Bills and Orders shall be the first order of business for the Assembly on Thursday afternoon for such time until the total time for consideration for those items enumerated in suborder (1) reaches 3 hours for that week.
- (b) in suborder (6) by striking out “evening” and substituting “afternoon”.
- 6 Standing Order 34 is amended by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:
- (3) On the Wednesday preceding the consideration of Written Questions and Motions for Returns, the Government House Leader shall indicate to the Assembly which ones the Government will be accepting, accepting with amendments and rejecting.
- (3.1) The Clerk shall read the number, text and name of the sponsor of any Written Question or Motion for Return that has been accepted by the Government when this item of business is called.
- 7 Standing Order 53 is struck out, and the following is substituted:
- 53 Public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available.
- 8 Standing Order 56 is amended by adding the following after suborder (2):
- (2.1) A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or special committee may be made upon written

notification signed by the original Member and filed with the Clerk and Committee Chair, provided such notice is given not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

(2.2) A substituted Member under suborder (2.1) shall be considered for all purposes to be acting in the place of the original Member.

(2.3) A temporary substitution in the membership shall be permitted for a specific time period or for committee consideration of a specific issue.

(2.4) A temporary substitution may be terminated at any time by the original Member of the committee.

9 These amendments shall have effect from Tuesday, March 13, 2007, until the conclusion of the 2007 Fall Sitting.

10 As soon as possible after approval of this motion, the Clerk shall publish a calendar which shows the days on which the Assembly shall meet in 2007.

And be it further resolved that the Assembly shall give further consideration on a timely basis to the necessary temporary Standing Orders that will be required to give effect to the balance of the House leaders’ agreement.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise tonight to move Government Motion 12 as it exists on the Order Paper. Government Motion 12 has the intention and the impact of implementing a portion of the House leaders’ agreement which was tabled in the House on Thursday, and I just want to speak briefly to the purpose and intent.

The House leaders’ agreement came together because, I believe, all members of the House would like to see the House, and private members particularly, more engaged in discussion, an opportunity to really make the Legislature the pinnacle of the governance and legislative process in this province. To that effect, we wanted to look at issues of the hours and the time that the House sits so that it was a place which had good work/life balance where members could actually engage enthusiastically in debate and in governance processes but could also go home and see their families from time to time. We could attract candidates, attract people to aspire to be members of this place but understand that they have to have a life, and they have to have health.

As Minister of Health and Wellness I particularly would like to emphasize that: that our practices in the past of sitting long hours, for which we got no credit either from members of the House or from members of the public for the hours that we sat in this place, in fact, having developed a reputation of having a short sitting time when in fact we were putting in as many minutes or hours as most legislators across the country, was not good for our health and, quite frankly, was not good public policy.

So the House leaders’ agreement is an attempt to address the hours of sitting by having us sit from 1 to 6 p.m. each day, Monday through Thursday, with the opportunity for an earlier closing on Thursday if business permits it so that members can get back to their constituencies on a timely basis. Not every member will be able to do that, obviously. Members from the far south of the province and the far north of the province may not, but most members could be able to get back to their constituencies on a timely basis so they can participate in constituency events on the Thursday evening. They can have a constituency day Friday. They can participate on the weekend if necessary, but they can also have the opportunity to see their families. So the first change is to suggest that we should sit from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

There is some value in having a certainty to the timing of question

period, so the House leaders' agreement suggests that question period, notwithstanding that we start at 1 o'clock, should start precisely at 1:30 every day if possible. That doesn't preclude it starting earlier if the rest of routine has been done but to start at 1:30 each day so that we know that question period runs from 1:30 to 2:20 each day.

The concept of being able to plan lives and plan events is also important. So the concept under the House leaders' agreement would be that in a normal sitting year, realizing that we've already started this year, the House would start in the first week in February, and it would normally be scheduled to end on the first Thursday of June. I say normally scheduled to end because it may end earlier if there's no business. It may go later on motion to be debated. But that would be the normal sitting schedule that members could then plan their lives around with a provision that every fourth week be a constituency week. Some people have gotten into the vernacular of talking about a week off, but it's not a week off, Mr. Speaker. It's a week to be back in the constituency every fourth week, to be back in the constituency and to touch base with your constituents and, again, for those who travel for distances to be here to be connected with their families, which is very, very important.

So the motion that's before the House tonight implements those reforms, the reforms with respect to the House sitting time, the reform with respect to having a constituency week, setting in place a fall sitting to commence on the first Monday in November and normally to conclude on the first Thursday in December. Now, the way the motion is written, it says to sit "from the first Monday . . . to the first Thursday," but the House leaders' agreement said normally scheduled or something to that effect, so we may have to fine-tune the language later on. But it's important to get these pieces of the House leaders' agreement implemented early with the temporary Standing Orders so that we can use these time frames for the rest of the session.

The motion that's before the House tonight allows for private members' business to happen on Monday afternoon, as it does now, but the private members' motions, such as we just concluded the first one of, would commence at 4:55 on Monday afternoon and go until completion, and the House would adjourn after it was completed. The provision of the motion that's before the House tonight allows that in the event that private members' business is not afforded a full three hours on a Monday afternoon, if there was some other matter—a question of privilege, a debate on whether we should have emergency debate, or some other provision—which took us through and ate up some of the private members' time, time would be afforded on Thursday afternoon to allow that time to be made up.

9:10

I won't go through in detail the balance of the provisions here. I think there are two that bear mentioning. One is the amendment to Standing Order 53, which provides that public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available, and the amendment to Standing Order 56, which allows for substitutions on committees, so that a member of the House who is named to a special or select standing committee of the House who wishes to allow another member to sit in their place, for reasons of conflict of calendar or for reasons of allowing another member to bring an issue to the table, could substitute that member into their place.

The pieces on the House leaders' agreement which are not part of this motion tonight have to deal with the establishment of all-party committees of the House and how we deal with Committee of Supply. I'm looking forward to both of those items coming forward at an appropriate time soon because I think those as well are

significant changes which will make the operation of the House more open to the public, will allow us to bring the public into the process in a more eloquent way, and I think will really allow private members of the House to have a more robust opportunity to hold the government accountable for the money which Albertans give us and to examine legislation and policy and bring forward new policy ideas. But I'll save the rest of my comments with respect to that for when that is actually before the House.

The motion before the House tonight implements the front end of the House leaders' agreement, which specifically references the time of sitting, the date of sitting, the provision for a constituency week every fourth week, the time for the fall sitting, the specific time for question period, and the amendments relative to public accounts and substitutions on committees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Opposition House Leader in just a second, but first of all I'd just point out to all members that there is an errata with respect to this. The motion that's printed in the Order Paper is incorrect. That's why today you had received an erratum, the bigger document. That's the one we should be talking to and from, not the Order Paper.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This was a very interesting process to participate in as the Opposition House Leader. Interestingly, the Government House Leader and I had started talking about some of these changes in 2004, previous to the last election, because I think, as many parliamentarians were sensing, the rules under which we'd been operating were increasingly onerous. I had been responsible for recruiting candidates to run for the Liberal Party for the 2004 election and found it almost impossible to get women to agree to even consider running.

I know I wasn't alone. There's been quite a bit of discussion amongst many different parties provincially and federally about the difficulty of this, and what on earth, you know, have we done that people, and particularly women, would not even consider running for political office? A lot of times, you know, the point was often raised about the tone of the House and the adversarial nature of it—speaking from experience, that's true—but something we could do something about was what was seen as really unfriendly to families and in many cases unfriendly to women: the sitting hours and that kind of locked-in feeling that we got.

As many of you know, I came from the theatre, and when you got a film job, you basically sent a note to your family and friends and said: "I'm on a film shoot. You won't hear from me for whatever period of time, eight weeks, 12 weeks. Don't call. Don't expect a message. I'm gone." You got up and went to work on the site every day, and you got home at some stupid hour, and you went to bed and got up six hours later and did it all over again. To me, that's what sitting in this House felt like sometimes. You really wondered very late at night whether you were in fact being very productive, trying to negotiate legislation in the small hours of the night. So that was something that I had been interested in prior to the 2004 election, and as I said, the Government House Leader and I had talked about some of the things that could be done. I think we were both alive to it and had started to look for opportunities to improve what we were seeing.

So the night sittings are gone. The day sittings are extended by an hour. We'll see how that works. It's a longer go at a stretch. Members are certainly free to move about and to enter and leave the Chamber. I'm hoping that this is going to work, and I did agree to it in the House leaders' agreement. We're hoping that that longer day sitting will help us.

Part of what I was looking for was to spread out the hours over more time but less intense every day and in particular to try to not have to do that “Well, good-bye; I won’t see you for eight weeks or 12 weeks” because I felt that this was impacting our ability to be good constituency representatives when it was just such a mad dash to get back into your constituency. Let’s face it, this is my constituency. I didn’t have very far to go. I’m aware that most of my colleagues in this House had a very long way to go to get back to their constituency, to serve well on the Friday constituency day and through the weekend.

To me the idea that I originally started at, that we could spend two weeks in the House and one week in the constituency, seemed to make sense to me. I’m quite encouraged that this is going to help us be better balanced between being legislators and policy-makers here in this House and doing our constituency representation work, serving our constituents back in the constituency offices. I wanted the sitting to be more humane – and that was my key word – and to be more attractive to women, more family friendly.

I also wanted to see substantive issue-based all-party committees. We’ve come a fair long way towards that. I think we can still improve on it, but we’ve come a fair long way. That’s not under discussion today.

I also wanted to improve and enhance the time spent on private members’ business. We have captured that in that we will have more Mondays to spend on private members’ day. I actually was at one point pushing for Monday night sittings for private members’ business as well, but given people’s attitude to the night sittings, I think I’m not going to be successful on that one. So more private members’ business.

Of course, I have raised motions three times in the last 10 years to try and improve the Public Accounts Committee, as has my colleague the current chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. So we’re very pleased to see the improvements that have been made to the Public Accounts Committee.

I think there was a very interesting innovation that flowed from negotiations on the Public Accounts Committee where we had been allowing – well, it’s always allowed – that other MLAs could come into committee meetings and could in fact have a voice but no vote. I think the innovation of allowing people to designate an alternate to take their place on the committee with a voice and a vote is a good innovation, and I’m looking forward to that. For example, my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, who is currently on the housing task force, should he have been sitting on an all-party committee, could designate an alternate for the period of time that he was away working on the task force and have someone who is equally interested in whatever that committee’s work is come in and do it and participate fully. I think that’s an enhancement that we will all be very happy with.

I’m pleased to see that we have some solid idea of when we’re going to start. We spent a lot of time in negotiation about how we were going to end. I’m also pleased to see the guaranteed fall sitting. There is some flexibility around that, so if there’s a larger legislative agenda, then we have more time: we could add on in the fall and have a longer fall sitting. But it’s very nice to have certainty around when we would be coming into session and more or less when we would be coming out of session. I think that is very helpful.

9:20

What we have in front of us is the motion. We did six parts, I think. Essentially, what you have in front of you if you are reading the House leaders’ agreement would be captured in parts 1 to 4

approximately, which is around the actual sitting hours in the day, the constituency week, and the certainty of the start time for question period. That does allow us, by the way, to do all the business of the Routine. Nothing has been excluded there, and there are no additional time limits put on anything and no ability to sort of squish something off the Routine paper. We do start question period at a specified time, but following question period we continue with the Routine, picking up where we left off and completing it fully, which I am pleased to see.

We’ve maintained the integrity of the private members’ day with written questions and motions for returns, followed by a debate on private members’ public bills and, of course, the motions at a designated time period at the end of the day. We were trying to retain the one motion per week and to make sure that it would be able to be voted through, so I think we’ve been successful in doing that as well.

As I said, I’m happy with the Public Accounts work that’s been done here and with the innovations that we have around being able to put in place alternates with a voice and a vote.

Another change that is in here that I’ll just highlight is written questions and motions for returns, which have been a point of contention in this House in the past, I’ll admit. There was an agreement that those written questions and motions for returns that have been agreed to fully by the government, not with amendments but fully agreed to, would no longer come up for debate in the House but would be read into the record by the Clerk: the full sponsor’s name, the text, and the number. So there is a recording in *Hansard* of what was agreed to, but it doesn’t come onto the floor anymore.

I think oftentimes we found that that was a bit of a routine of sort of nodding on to take the vote and standing up and down moving things when we all knew that we were going to agree on it. So that may well offer us some more time to spend on private members’ bills and private members’ business. That will be indicated on the Wednesday previous to the Monday and will be laid out by the Government House Leader, who will tell us which ones are going to be accepted, which ones will be put forward with an amendment, and which ones will not be accepted by the government, so we have some idea in advance about that, which I think is helpful.

It’s certainly been a long process. I remember my first request for a House leaders’ meeting was immediately following the leadership race vote in December, I think, by a couple of days. We did come together for the first time on the 4th of January, by my notes, and we met pretty much every week. By the last while we met every day.

I think we’ve done good work here. I am mindful that the last significant and meaningful positive changes we saw in the Standing Orders were negotiated some time ago by the member who is now the Speaker of the House. I am hoping that the work the Government House Leader and myself and the House leader for the third party have done will stand for a similar amount of time as something that will be seen as being helpful to the House and in its own way being as innovative as what was done by the Speaker previously.

I look forward to subsequent government motions on the final two parts of the work that we’ve done in the House leaders’ agreement. Thank you for the opportunity to outline that.

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

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I obviously support the motion because my name is on it. I won’t go on long. We know what’s in it. It’s fairly straightforward.

I think that it’s a step in the right direction in terms of making the Legislature as relevant as we can and, as the others have said, as humane as possible. When we go back in the past to where we sat

all night at some sessions, I'm not sure that the level of debate was that good later on at night. I think as a general rule we'll do better work, you know, if we're not sitting here until all hours of the night.

I think what's just as important, though, for me is the idea of the three weeks on and one week back, and I especially think it would be important for people that don't live in the city to get back to their constituency for a week. Having the session go longer: I think, as was mentioned by the Government House Leader, there was a perception, I know, and, Mr. Speaker, you've said this yourself, about the minutes that we spend in here. You know, the comparison was how many days we sat, but it didn't look at the number of hours. I remember you bringing this forward to the Legislature. Now we'll be going longer in days. Eventually, it will be fixed days, and I think we'll even be above the norm. There will not be a criticism, I don't think, of anybody. I think it's an important step forward.

It was sort of interesting having to be on the housing task force. I did a lot of my work by BlackBerry. I never thought that would ever happen to me, where I had to rely on a BlackBerry, but there was a lot of back and forth during that time because we were also very busy in that committee.

The last thing I'd like to say – because I'm not going to go through it all; you people can read – is that there's often a perception because people follow question period that all politicians do is come and argue and fight. Unfortunately, that is the perception out there. But I think, in fact, that when parties get together – and it happened with the hon. member from Calgary when I was on the ethics committee – we can do good work in committees even if we have different values. I think the fact that the three House leaders could meet over a period of time and come together with this document shows the Legislature working at its best, frankly, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's a good step forward.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Hinman: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to have a few moments of democracy and discuss this.

An Hon. Member: It's always a democracy.

Mr. Hinman: Yes, and it's always decorum, I believe, hon. Opposition House Leader, that is the real problem, why the gentler side of our society doesn't want to be in here, not the hours that we work. I find that they work just as long if not longer.

There are several areas that I'd like to address. I guess I'd start off with a few things that I agree with, and that is that the fourth week, constituency week, is an excellent proposal. I would go with the hon. Opposition House Leader that with perhaps every two weeks on and one week off we would be more in tune with our constituents and be able to serve and to recognize their needs in this House. The 1:30 QP time: I believe a set time will be of benefit to the members of the House in knowing when people want to be here to listen and participate.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of concerns that I guess I'd like to address. The first one is on the original document they sent out that says, "All Party* Agreement". There's an asterisk. Then down at the bottom it says, "Party defined per Legislative Assembly Act: to be recognized as a party in the House if the group of MLA's seeking that status is at least 4 Members." [interjection] Yes, your respect for democracy I suppose you're cheering for.

In the province here we state that we recognize MLAs, and the throne speech talked about that respect for those duly elected. Yet there seems to be very little respect unless this Assembly decides

how to recognize MLAs and their party status. I must say that it has been very arbitrary and very disappointing when you look back in history to where they are now. My question would be for the one Opposition House Leader that squeaked by and got the four members: how would he feel at this point if he was excluded? Last time, in 2001, with two members they seemed to be recognized and have privileges, but the arbitration line that they've drawn in the sand is disappointing. I think that it would serve all Albertans and democracy better if they recognized elected MLAs as Elections Alberta has set it out instead of the rules in here.

9:30

To address the first concern, no more evening sittings. I can appreciate the thought process and those things that have gone into that. I think that it would have benefited to have had other elected MLAs in the discussion because those that made this agreement all live here in Edmonton, and they don't understand or recognize what it means to sneak home at night, if you want to call it that, to a function in their riding. That's great for those here, but I remember that last year in the Standing Orders we made a correction, if you want to call it that, for those members that live too far away to be able to get home. We reduced the mileage from over 100 kilometres down to 60 because they weren't able to get home. From my way of figuring, there are 60 MLAs that will not be able to get home in the evenings to enhance their quality of life and to be with their families or, for sure, to be in their constituencies. So I don't think that even on a majority rule, if you want to go with that poor system, this serves the interests of Albertans or the MLAs that have been elected here.

They talk about the importance of having the evenings off and the late-night discussion that goes on. I haven't been in this House as long as most of the members in here, so perhaps I'm not as tired of the late nights, but I find that the quality late in the evening sometimes becomes more succinct and to the point instead of going on to try and fill time. Like I say, I haven't recognized the change. It seems that more often than not we recognize the time spent talking and not the words that are said, so I feel that it isn't in the best interest to say that we'll have the nights off.

I compare this to a convention. If we were to have one and assemble people from the province at a convention here and we want to serve the people, by sitting an extra 20 or 40 days and not combining that to days and evenings, what's the cost to the Alberta taxpayers to have to sit and to pay for all of that extra time when we could be more productive and in here, if you want to say, crash coursing it? It seems like a positive move to me. I think it's an education when people say to me that we don't sit very long. I sometimes think that we sit too long and that we don't have enough time in our constituency, so I do look forward to the constituency weeks, when we can get back to talk to and relate to them.

The number of times the document comes up with "inclusive" just doesn't ring true to me. Why would they use such a term when they won't look at members that have less than four sitting MLAs and say that this is a unanimous agreement when it is anything but that?

I'm very concerned with the other path that we're going to be coming up with, that isn't in discussion tonight, but the House leader referred to it a little bit. The hours and the exclusivity that they've got in the agreement are very disturbing. Once again, I don't think it's in the best interest of those that have been duly elected to represent all Albertans, and this is very much wanting to go to just a status quo system rather than allowing an open and equal opportunity for people to get in and to speak and have their time in the House.

It's interesting with my predecessor from Cardston-Taber-Warner.

His grandchildren live close to me, and I've had the opportunity of speaking with them many times. It was sad to see when talking to them. They talk about their grandfather: "Oh, is that the one that's never here? He isn't able to come to functions." By sitting longer here in the House and extending it one or two months, that will continue to make matters worse for families, to be able to be home for family functions or activities going on. I think that by trying to shorten the session and the time each day that we're here in Edmonton will be an economic benefit and also a family benefit for being able to get back to our constituencies.

I'll just refer for a minute to the all-party committees and Public Accounts. They say that they want to be able to have some alternative appointments. Again, I feel that the committees should look at and recognize all of those members that have been elected. I have asked in the past to be on the Public Accounts Committee. The House leader has said no. It feels once again that this is not an inclusive House but an exclusive one, and they will determine who can and who cannot be part of the committees and participate and have a vote in those committees. I don't see that the alternative appointment is going to be duly decided by those governing parties. There will not be a space made open to an MLA that has been elected here.

I think the Public Accounts Committee, as I said before, is perhaps the most important. Perhaps we just need to do it on a percentage of the vote that is cast throughout the province. If a person's party has received 9 per cent of votes, then maybe they should be able to have 1 in 10 on the committee and certainly overall, when you look at all the committees, the five committees, 1 in 83. I think that there should be room, and that room should be on Public Accounts.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, I'm very disappointed in many of those aspects that they've brought forward and the exclusivity of this agreement. It will continue to get worse as we go forward into the other areas of discussion later on this week. I would very much disagree with this House agreement and hope that those members who live outside the Edmonton corridor would recognize that this will not enhance the debate, it will not enhance constituency representation, it will not enhance family life, and it will not enhance the women of Alberta wanting to participate in this Assembly. So I am not in favour of this House agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the motion remains before us. Are there additional members that would like to participate?

That being the case, then I'll call on the hon. Government House Leader to close debate?

[Government Motion 12 carried]

head: **Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mr. Ducharme moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned March 8]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, did you rise?

Mr. Hinman: Yes.

The Speaker: Well, we'll recognize you first, sir, and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Please remember, ladies and gentlemen, that when we leave here tonight, we're back here tomorrow at 1 o'clock.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll put away a few papers and try and get out the next ones.

It's a privilege to be able to rise and address the throne speech. To me that's always the first and exciting day, much like spring. As we sit here in this Assembly, we look forward to: what is our potential, and what are we going to do to make Alberta better? We have an opportunity. Our potential is really unlimited, yet the vision seems very limited. Perhaps we're looking through foggy eyes.

I'd like to speak a little bit on what the Alberta Alliance sees as the vision for Alberta and what we could accomplish. The first one I'd like to talk about is the good governance that we can and should have here in the province. The importance, I feel, of elected people is to truly be accountable to those that you're representing. I looked up Webster's dictionary to read two different definitions. One is: what is a democracy, and what is a commonwealth? It says that a democracy is the doctrine that the numerical majority of an organization or organized group can make decisions binding on the whole group. A commonwealth is a political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them. We are part of a commonwealth.

9:40

The first thing that I see as a vision to make Alberta a better and more productive province is to have those elected accountable to the people. That would be to bring forth an introduction of recall for elected officials throughout the province to thereby be held accountable when they're doing things that the people are not pleased with. An example is that I very much get the feeling that this province is going to give away 50 per cent of our natural resources, and there's nothing that the people of Alberta really can do about it until the next election, and then it will be too late. The barn door will be open, the horse will be out, and it'll be flattened on the road and of little value, maybe horse glue.

The next thing would be to have set election dates. That would let the people realize when it's coming up, and the political games would stop. It's very easy for the government to sit there and to always say, "Maybe we're going to start," not allowing the people of Alberta to be engaged and Albertans to get very offish on trying to decide when the next election is going to be.

What I really feel would be important and critical in the House here – and I know that we'll have a disagreement on this – is the importance of an open and honest debate. The current government goes into caucus; it goes into cabinet. We're told that that is where the great debate occurs, yet there is no *Hansard*. There is no information on what that debate is, and every member can go back to his constituency and say "Oh, I brought that up in caucus" or "Oh, we went over that" or "Cabinet spoke on that," but there is no *Hansard*. There is no record. If anywhere, we have that debate behind closed doors. So it would be much better if we had the debate here in the Legislature and had Albertans able to look and realize what went on where.

I'd like to move on to the economy a little bit. What potential we have here in the province. It is so exciting that we've had a huge surplus the last three years, and we look at it and wonder what we are doing with it. It seems like it's slipping through our fingers. It's

sad to see that most individuals, when they have a sudden windfall that they weren't expecting, don't know how to handle it. Within a year or two they're back to the same situation. I very much feel that that's the way this current government is. This windfall has come in. They don't know how to handle it. It's a matter of: "Where can we spend it fast enough and quick enough? If we don't, someone else might get it. We can do a lot and buy popularity by doing that."

It's been mentioned, and there are different levels, but we need to look at our budget surplus. We need to look at the royalties coming in, and we need to be putting that into the heritage trust fund. We should be putting, I feel, at least 50 per cent into the heritage trust fund during these boom times and setting up and having a goal of where we want it to be. I would say that we need to build that to at least \$60 billion. The reason I'd do that is because I have a farm background, and I very much understand the importance of having two years of seed in my bin. I understand as a cattle producer the importance of having enough hay for two years because a drought can come and you're caught.

Our current fiscal spending is out of control. If we even had a bit of a down year, we'd be immediately stepping into a position where we're running a deficit, and our programs that we have running would be beyond support by the taxpayers of this province. So we need to start putting that money into the heritage trust fund, and we should be refunding it to the taxpayers via provincial income tax or the property tax, to those people that are paying it. But the vision and the opportunity are immense: where we can go and what we should do.

I'd like to spend a few minutes on the Alberta advantage. To me, an advantage is when you have the energy, when you have the knowledge, when you have the opportunity to take that, to grasp it, and to run with it. We have an immense amount of carbon energy here in the province, but we must ask and address: how are we getting it out, and is that good for our environment? As new technology is being discovered and worked on, we realize that we're not using our resources wisely. I must say that I very much agree with those who say that we need to put a moratorium on the old technology that wants to be implemented on any new infrastructure. We need to limit that and to put the moratorium on now and say that we're only going to go forward with new environmentally friendly projects. We have an opportunity. Will we seize it and do it now? It's exciting.

I went out to Ottawa to the nuclear conference. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was there as well. It's exciting to see the opportunity, what we could do here in the province with nuclear power, and I think that that should be a debate here in the House and with Albertans to bring them up to speed on how nuclear energy has transformed in the last 40 years. We seem to be caught up in history, to say that the Bennett buggy doesn't work very good or the CANDU 1 reactor is a high risk. We can and we should be looking at that and having a debate here in the province because that is the only energy that we can produce that does eliminate CO₂ production.

It's very synergistic with the oil sands. First, it would eliminate the need of burning up an immense amount of natural gas and the amount of water that we're currently using. What's also interesting is the fact that with the electricity that you can produce through electrolysis, the hydrogen that we need to upgrade the bitumen and not have to take it from natural gas. We can actually take it through the electricity and the water to upgrade that. But we have a great opportunity here in the province to address those things.

I'd also like to address a little bit on what is the future of Alberta. We seem to be getting more and more tied up with our federal counterparts with their programs and the things that they're offering us. The most disappointing thing is that these programs continue to

be less than efficient for what we need here in the province. Because I wasn't able to get in on the debate on immigration, I'll speak a little bit on that. We need to look at the federal programs and realize that they're not serving the interest of Alberta and what we can and should start to do in an orderly fashion to get ourselves out of those programs.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The first and most important one would be the failing Canada pension plan, the equalization payments that we currently are sending out to Ottawa. It's funny that Quebec, with their personal pension plan, has a vast amount of money that they can and will reward their workers in Quebec. However, when we look at Alberta and the number that the past Finance minister says, we have a \$60 billion unfunded liability to the Canada pension plan, and that is over and above the unfunded liability to the teachers' pension plan that we always hear about. We need to look at and address and realize that we need an Alberta pension plan. If we took those expenses and what it would cost to put in there, it would truly benefit Alberta and reduce our equalization payments.

The immigration program does not work for Alberta. We just debated that in this House. I agree with the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort that we need to do something about it. But what I feel we need to do is to have an Alberta immigration program, and the Alberta Alliance would very much promote getting one. What we don't need is more government interference and more problems. What we need is an immigration program that would truly bring in immigrants that can and will stay and create a family life and have that quality and the Alberta advantage.

I speak to many employers that have got foreign workers in here. Their time is up after a year, and we're shipping them out. What we need to do is have a sponsorship program for Alberta industry that can sponsor and bring in a foreign worker and then keep them here and do away with a federal one that just isn't working. We bring in these foreign workers, and then we ship them back, and we start over with someone else. It's just as hard on their life. It's hard on their family back there. We dash their hopes by bringing them here and then shipping them out, almost like a common criminal: you've done your time here in the province, and now you're going home. We have an opportunity to do that. We need to grasp it and to set up our own.

We have a major problem with the employment insurance program. It's not set up equitably across the country. It's another one that we need to address.

9:50

The education that we have here in the province. We need to be more innovative in allowing our own students here in the province to get into our university programs. I'm amazed at how many people that I continue to talk to that say: "I wasn't able to make it into a local university here in the province. I've had to go to Saskatoon. I've gone down to the States." Whether it's for pharmacy, veterinarian, engineering, we need to readdress that and realize the importance of being able to put Alberta students first and not look at foreign students because we capture a bigger dollar and try to make universities balance that off.

Alberta Alliance would see to it that the spaces are available for Alberta students, but more important, if a student was to leave, we would still recognize them and allow them access to student loans and those things when they go out. That's literally an even better opportunity for us because we're not paying the full price, just as they come here and don't always pay the full price.

We have other problems in the Justice area. Albertans aren't able to get into and to have what I guess I would call small claims court. It's not cost effective. It's not timely. People are discouraged; they don't do it.

We need to change our funding program for small communities and not just have a cap at 5,000. It needs to be graduated and to pay for the first 5,000, the police force, and then to start reducing it after that. Once again, it's not on an equal basis and very disappointing for many communities and not cost effective.

The health care system: we have such an opportunity here with foreign doctors who want to come and not only just study but to actually practise. It's very disappointing to hear that some of the regional hospitals aren't able to bring in foreign workers because they can't get them accredited here in the province. We need to address that. We need to recognize those foreign doctors. I've lost one from my good town of Milk River that returned to South Africa because he wasn't allowed to use his full scope of practice. We've got to allow regional health boards to decide what they feel are essential services for their areas and not to wait for the province. We need to allow that competition between regional areas and to let them be innovative in the doctors they bring in to practise in their area.

Mr. Speaker, to finish off, perhaps what I'd like to do is to say that it's important that we recognize that we need to stand up for Albertans. We need to strengthen our province, and the way we strengthen our province, our communities is by strengthening our families.

We are as Canadians overtaxed. We send a huge amount of money out of the province. It's damaging to our province, to our infrastructure, to our communities, and we need to stand up and set the example here in the province on how we could do that. If our province was to start by returning 10 per cent of the taxes collected by municipal governments and income tax and corporate tax and return that to those municipal governments, they would be revitalized. Our communities would start to grow, and they'd have the money to make the decisions locally on what they want to do instead of having to look for provincial and federal programs.

We need to stand up for our families. In the coming federal budget they say that they're not going to go to income splitting. They can't afford it because they'd lose \$5 billion or \$6 billion, Mr. Speaker. What we can't afford is to continue to take that money from families and redistribute in government programs destroying our families.

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

Seeing no one wanting to take advantage of that, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to reply to the Speech from the Throne. I have talked to many Albertans in the past number of days since this Speech from the Throne was presented in the Legislature. Almost to a person the perception that has been related to me is that Albertans are pleased with this new road map, are happy with the structure and the direction that the new Premier and his government are taking.

I suspect the recent approval ratings, which had the Premier sitting at close to 50 per cent and the opposition leader languishing at an historical low of 14 per cent, will only get better for the Premier. I expect that one of the reasons for these numbers is the commitment to govern with integrity and transparency. The Lobbyists Act and access to the blue book are very important measures in moving ahead on that commitment. The promise to review the way

agencies, boards, and commissions are governed to ensure greater accountability by them is a crucial measure in gaining the trust of Albertans. People want these organizations such as health boards, the Workers' Compensation Board, the Labour Relations Board to be fair and to live up to their mandate in a way that serves the best interests of all Albertans.

The second priority of managing growth pressures is crucial to maintaining the quality of life of both new and long-time Albertans. We all expect the greatest effort to maintain clean air and clean water. The challenge of climate change must be looked at in a way that will realistically attack the question, not through the ideological, rose-coloured perspectives which so often cloud the view on this subject. Why not support the search for economical ways to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? Just fix it. There must be a way. Why not look at hydro from the Slave River for the purpose of not using natural gas for oil sands production?

One of the greatest pressures in managing growth and spending costs is the lack of skilled, experienced people. This has brought about the need for much longer hours of work to complete jobs, more rework and mistakes, and less productivity. Training, training, training: learning and new experience must be the answer. Outrageously long hours of work, often out of town, are not the answer and often hurt families as well as community-oriented volunteer time. Why don't we just bring back Sunday, having Sunday off not just as a religious holiday but a family day? Just think about the number of hours that would be saved and therefore the number of people not needed to fill the jobs in those times.

Soon much work and workers will shift to the Edmonton region. The Heartland upgraders and other development will soon strain our transportation infrastructure in the northeast capital region. Anthony Henday and other roads must be upgraded quickly through whatever funding structure is necessary to get them operational in decent time. Co-ordination in many areas is crucial, and a comprehensive and fully supported system to do so must be devised quickly. We have enough congestion on northeast roads already, for example.

Let us be careful with our oil sands resource. Development may be at too high a level to be sustained with any efficiency, safety, or proper resource management, but we must develop the bitumen here in Alberta.

The priority of improving quality of life through learning is also a key and important aspect of this Speech from the Throne. We must be innovative. We must involve the trades in trades training. We must look at how we indenture apprentices. We must ensure that no Albertan is left behind because education is too costly.

The quality of life of children and seniors must be enhanced. I just look at the joy that the programs of the Northgate Lions seniors' centre in Edmonton-Manning have brought to many hundreds if not thousands of families, and the value of such facilities and programs cannot be underestimated.

Safety and security are vital. Providing safe and secure communities, safe and caring communities, will only enhance the lives of all Albertans. It was just a few days ago that I stood together on the steps of our Alberta Legislature with Gary Hunt, his family, and many other families that have suffered tragic and unnecessary losses due to predatory violence. The good need not die young. I very much support the crime reduction and safe communities task force that was mentioned in this throne speech and wish it Godspeed in its work as well as the work undertaken by the 13 partnering ministries.

Research and diversification are also key. There are many areas such as the important National Institute for Nanotechnology in Edmonton mentioned in the throne speech. There are others. Earlier today I spoke at the Canadian Institute for Health Information meeting presently being held here in Edmonton. It was specifically

the Institute for Human Development, Child and Youth Health, and representatives are here from across the country. Research in this area and respect for our universities and research centres will only grow, but these do need ongoing and continued support. Not only the children of Alberta and Canada but also those of countries around the world, indeed all the world, will benefit. The children are our future.

10:00

Proper stewardship of our finances and our potential surpluses are also key, and I look forward to the government's initiatives in this area. We must never, however, forget the necessity to run government so that it is efficient and run without waste and unnecessary cost. Albertans expect no less. They like to make things happen to get things done. They don't like excessive rules and useless red tape.

I support the government in its goal of increased efficiency, but I will be introducing a private member's bill on red tape reduction later in the session. Red tape is not only a concern for small and large businesses; it is also a burden on community leagues, charities, other volunteer organizations, and, indeed, individuals in many areas of life in our Alberta. In our computerized age we must find ways to get the job done without excessive delay and reams of rules and paper.

In closing, I must say that the reaction to this throne speech that

I have received from Albertans is very good. There is a very real sense that a new government is taking hold of the reins. We do await the substance, the meat on the bones, so to speak, but the reaction has been favourable. Congratulations, and I say that independently and with the unanimous support of my caucus.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Again, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for any questions, comments.

Seeing none, are there others who wish to participate? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move that we adjourn debate on this matter tonight.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that given the hour we now adjourn.

[Motion carried; at 10:02 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1 p.m.]

