

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, April 6, 1990 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 90/04/06

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, grant us a daily awareness of the precious gift of life which You have given us.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and our country.

Amen.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of motion under Standing Order 40 that at the end of question period today I wish to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly in order to deal with the following motion:

That the Assembly expresses its disappointment in the Prime Minister for his disrespect for and disregard of Albertans who have voted for a change in the method of selecting Senators, and for imposing the goods and services tax on Albertans and other Canadians.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 256

An Act to Amend the Widows' Pension Act

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 256, An Act to Amend the Widows' Pension Act.

This Act would correct the discriminatory nature of the present Widows' Pension Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 256 read a first time]

Bill 281

An Act to Amend the Interprovincial Lottery Act

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce Bill 281, An Act to Amend the Interprovincial Lottery Act.

The purpose of this Bill is something I know bothers the Conservative colleagues who sit opposite. It would be to put all the funds generated by the sale of lottery tickets into the General Revenue Fund for consideration during regular estimates debates prior to them being expended; in other words, to eliminate the slush fund.

[Leave granted; Bill 281 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a response to Written Question 192.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to table two reports: the first, the 1989 annual report of the Environment Council of Alberta, and the annual report of the Department of the Environment for the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Additional?

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 53 visitors from the Fort Saskatchewan elementary school in the constituency of Clover Bar. They are students from, I believe, grade 6 of that school, and they are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. E. Clark and Mr. Alexandruk. They're also accompanied by a number of parents: Mrs. Bouck, Mrs. Shank, Mr. Gollinger, Mrs. Kilburn, Mrs. Seich, and Mrs. Wanner. I would ask that our visitors rise – I believe they're seated in the members' gallery – and also ask that the members of the Assembly extend the traditional cordial welcome to them.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this morning to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a group of six students from Capilano school in Edmonton-Gold Bar. They're seated in the public gallery with their teacher Randi Knight, and I'd ask them to rise so the members of the Assembly can welcome them.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Palm Dairies

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Treasurer. The Gainers affair always reminds of us the mismanagement of this government when they get behind closed doors with their friends. Albertans got further evidence that this government can't be trusted to manage the financial affairs of this province. This week the Treasurer had the nerve to tell Albertans that they didn't get bilked when this government bailed out Peter Pocklington. Now, all Albertans, including Peter Pocklington, know this not to be the case. They know that Peter Pocklington took them for a ride. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Conservative friend let another bit of information slip out this week. He said that he expects Palm Dairies to be sold very soon. Now, my question is for the Treasurer. Since Palm Dairies is heavily indebted to the Alberta Treasury Branches, which are owned by the taxpayers of Alberta, what guarantees can this Treasurer give us that we won't be left holding the bag again by Mr. Pocklington?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the activities of the Treasury Branch, of course, are carefully maintained separate from the government. That is the way in which we intended to operate the Treasury Branch, that's the way we are operating the Treasury Branch, and that's the way we will operate the Treasury Branch. Otherwise, confidential commercial transactions would be made public at the whim of the opposition, certainly, and as

others have pointed out, we would not want to be involved in those commercial transactions.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that I have a great deal of faith in the managers of the Treasury Branch. I know from history that they have secured by good assets any advances they may have made. They will take all full pledges and security that they can secure, and should there be a disposition and should there be any amounts due to the Treasury Branch, I'm sure they'll be well protected by the security they have in place and by the strength of the law of this province.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the hands-off approach that the Treasurer is talking about is unacceptable, especially after what's happened with Gainers. As the Treasurer well knows, there's \$52.5 million that was lent. It may even be more; it may be less. We don't know. But I want this Treasurer, who's responsible for the Treasury Branches, to tell us again: would he give us an absolute guarantee that the Treasury Branches and the Alberta taxpayers will not take another bath from Mr. Pocklington?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that guarantees are being used here quite loosely. It may have been guarantees that raised the question. I can't give a guarantee about anything in the future except that I can assure everyone, and I can assure Albertans, that we will in fact take all the assets necessary to secure our position should the Treasury Branches be involved. I think it is a matter of public information that the Treasury Branch does have a debenture against Palm Dairies. But I know from the history of operations of the Treasury Branch that they are very scrupulous in the way in which they protect their assets. Should there be a proposal for sale, I can assure you that the proceeds will go to buy down any debt that may be outstanding against Treasury Branch loans, and that would be the first call on the assets.

It is interesting to see the mismatch on questions here now, Mr. Speaker, between the Gainers situation and the Palm Dairies situation. I am a bit amused by some of the statements the Leader of the Opposition is making in that on one hand he was claiming we didn't have enough assets to secure our position in the Gainers situation. Now, according to the former shareholder of Gainers, the assets that he claims are there are far above the amounts that I've reported to this Assembly. So it seems to me that in both cases the province is well secured. In the case of Palm Dairies we will maintain our security and protect the assets and the interests of Albertans and the taxpayers of this province.

MR. MARTIN: I'm a bit amused by that answer; you know, now going by Peter Pocklington's word that they have the assets. Why not open the books, then, Mr. Speaker; why not open the books?

But my question, Mr. Speaker, has to do with a very specific . . . The minister can't get around it by saying that he doesn't have control of this. Peter Pocklington used the credit of Palm Dairies and the Edmonton Oilers at the Treasury Branches to guarantee Gainers debts, and he has a letter of guarantee from Lloyds Bank that we've taken over for \$2 million. We worry about his moving his accounts out of the Treasury Branches if he sells Palm Dairies. So I ask: will this government immediately demand payment under this guarantee while it still has the opportunity, and if not, why not?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the dealings of the Treasury Branch with the former shareholder of Gainers, the owner of the Oilers, and the owner of Palm Dairies I don't think is appropriate to be discussed here because you would only see one aspect of the way in which Treasury Branch security is maintained. What I can say, as I have said before, is that the Treasury Branch takes all caution, all legal protection of any moneys they may have advanced to Mr. Pocklington, to Palm Dairies. If there is a disposition of those assets, full security will be maintained to protect the Treasury Branch, and if there are other liabilities or outstanding amounts due to other companies as a result of Mr. Pocklington's affairs at the Treasury Branch, those also will be fully protected, Mr. Speaker. I can give you that assurance. I know from the history of the Treasury Branch operations that that's the way they will maintain their position. I can assure you that is the record, and that will also be the future in terms of these negotiations.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: We've heard that song and dance before with Gainers, Mr. Speaker.

Goods and Services Tax

MR. MARTIN: My question is to the House leader. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, frankly, this government showed that its commitment to fighting the GST is a mile wide and an inch deep. They're obviously trying to put on the best face, lots of lip service: "We're against the GST, and, boy, we've fought it all the way," and the rest of it. It's nothing but rhetoric so far, nothing but rhetoric. That's too bad, because we perhaps could have defeated it. Especially this weekend: you have the federal Conservatives there; you could have really put the pressure on. In view of the answers from yesterday, or the lack of answers from the Treasurer, I ask the House leader: does this government plan to do anything at all before the GST becomes law?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, our Provincial Treasurer has been dealing very effectively with these questions over the last several weeks in this Legislative Assembly. I would remind the hon. member that we've brought forward a comprehensive paper in which we outlined the objections that our government takes to the goods and services tax, would remind the hon. member that back in August of last year our Premier was successful in getting every Premier in this country to oppose the goods and services tax, and that that was carried forward into a comprehensive meeting of first ministers in November in Ottawa, at which time once again all the provincial Premiers expressed their strong opposition to the goods and services tax. That was done under the leadership of the Premier of this province. Believe me, up until he took those actions, the other provinces were not prepared to take the strong stands that they have done. Nonetheless, the federal government has a certain responsibility, and if they wish to undertake to sign this legislation, put it into place, they are the people who are going to have to answer to the voters not only of Alberta but of Canada.

MR. MARTIN: Well, that's precisely the point. This is nothing but rhetoric again, paper tigers. Now, obviously you're not going

to say anything to the federal MPs at their convention. You'll just say hi and maybe have a drink with them, and that's it. Mr. Speaker, the question, then, and I'll try to get it down to a minimum level of participation. On Monday the New Democrat caucus will take part in a nationwide GST protest sponsored by the Coalition for Fair Taxes. The coalition, I know, has urged this government to join the protest. I want to ask the government specifically about this. What plans does the Conservative government here have for setting a public example for their federal colleagues and participating in this nationwide protest?

MR. HORSMAN: You know, this weekend in Calgary the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta will be meeting. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has pointed out how they conduct their affairs within their own party, because that's the only experience he's had: having drinks and patting each other on the back. The fact of the matter is that the delegates to our convention will be expressing their views not only to Members of the Legislative Assembly but to federal Members of Parliament. They will no doubt be expressing their views in a clear and concise way. That, of course, is something that is open and free within the open party that we have. It will not be one, I can assure the hon. member, where it will be just patting each other on the back. Quite the contrary: it is quite evident to all Albertans, to all Canadians, that the Members of this Legislative Assembly, supporting the government, strongly oppose the goods and services tax. We will be saying so in unequivocal terms to our Members of Parliament.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition should come as an observer if he doesn't believe what he reads in the newspapers. And I would suggest he doesn't necessarily want to believe everything he reads there either.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, if I want that type of entertainment, I'll go to Fantasyland in West Edmonton Mall.

Mr. Speaker, this GST day is not only on the weekend. I know they are busy, but let's give them one last, little, minimum chance. I have here a stack of anti-GST ballots. As part of that nationwide protest we are going to be voting on this in my office at 10:30 on Monday. I ask the House leader – and I'll hand these out to the page so everyone has a chance – would you give us this very minimum guarantee: that the House leader will urge all his members to cast these ballots on Monday to show that New Democrats aren't alone in opposing this tax?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, the hon. Leader of the Opposition can tell his members to do what he tells them to do. I will, however, not undertake to dictate to the Members of the Legislative Assembly supporting the Progressive Conservative Party what they do with that particular ballot. I would point out that that particular ballot, however, which I have seen, contains more than just opposition to the goods and services tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

MR. HORSMAN: Yes, it does. Yes. Uh huh. Quite a bit more actually. That ballot has a lot of other implications in it. As is usual, rather than speaking with a direct and clear voice, the NDP would like to invoke a hidden agenda upon the people of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Westlock-Sturgeon, sir.

Senate Reform

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of ballots, the Premier and the Deputy Premier are among the staunchest supporters of Meech Lake at a time when the Prime Minister so badly needs allies. One would think that the Prime Minister would be bending over even further backward than he already is to maintain the Premier's goodwill. However, yesterday the Prime Minister slapped us in the face when he said, "So what?" to his nonappointment of the Alberta Senator. Today we've learned also that the federal Meech Lake task force will not even stop in Alberta on its way to having hearings across Canada. Now, to the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier has undoubtedly consulted the Premier. Is he now prepared to react publicly to the Prime Minister's outrageously arrogant statement, "So what?" What are we going to do about it, lie down like pussycats?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, I find this rather interesting coming from a party that did not support the Senatorial Selection Act, did not support the opportunity that we gave to the people of Alberta to have a voice in democracy, a democratic voice. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. members of the Assembly and all Albertans and all Canadians that we still believe that the principle of democracy this Legislature approved last year and put to the people was the right thing to do and that the Prime Minister in his response is wrong. Does that satisfy the hon. member? No doubt it will not satisfy him. He wants me to make some outrageous statement.

MR. DECORE: So what are we going to do about it? Do you want to get kicked in the teeth again and again?

MR. HORSMAN: Oh, the leader of the Liberal Party, having passed on to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon the opportunity of asking the first question, now wishes to interject. Now, if he'd wanted to ask the question, Mr. Speaker, why didn't he do it in the first place?

MR. DECORE: Stand up and fight.

MR. SPEAKER: Sure I'll stand up and fight.

MR. DECORE: Stand up and fight, Horsman. Do something. We're waiting.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glengarry, you gave up your right to question period today. Perhaps you'd like to let the member continue.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, we just switched roles for today, that's all.

He says the Act wasn't supported. It had as many holes in it as the government's underwear, Mr. Speaker. That's why it wasn't supported.

What I want to ask the Deputy Premier: at least will the Deputy Premier screw up the courage amongst all his friends and recommend to his party's convention this weekend that they

vote on the Meech Lake accord? Whether they like it or not, that first little baby step towards standing up and fighting?

MR. HORSMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, having regained his leader of the opposition role, is probably . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, let's just stop this nonsense. Deputy Premier.

MR. HORSMAN: I was just going to compliment the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon for having asked his question in a provocative way. He actually perhaps should be given the opportunity more often.

The fact of the matter is that the delegates who come to Progressive Conservative Party conventions are not dictated to or directed by the leader or the Deputy Premier or by the members of cabinet. They come there prepared to discuss and vote on resolutions without being told from the top how to do it. Obviously, the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is not familiar with an open party. Debate, in fact, will take place at our convention, and I will be prepared to listen to that debate and not to try and control it. That's democracy.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I didn't ask him to pass it; I just asked him to bring it forward onto the floor.

But along that line – evidently we can't expect that bunch of patronage seekers in Calgary to do anything – would the Deputy Premier go so far as to announce public hearings on Meech Lake, public hearings in the province of Alberta? Albertans have never had a chance, one of the few provinces . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you; the question's been asked. [interjection] Thank you.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon refers to the delegates who will be coming to our convention as patronage seekers. Once again he's drawing on his own experience in his own party, and the front bench of his party are prime examples of knowing what it is to seek patronage from the federal Liberals. Yes, prime examples. They've had all that experience at the federal level; they want to bring it into Alberta.

Public hearings were held in Alberta.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, they weren't.

MR. HORSMAN: Yes, they were held in Alberta. I held public hearings in my constituency. I attended . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question to some degree follows up questions already raised in the House this morning, but I don't think with the amount of rhetoric that has passed this morning that we really have a definitive position with respect to the Prime Minister's comments. I would like to ask the Deputy Premier if he has had an opportunity to review those comments. I would say that the people of the Three Hills constituency, having worked for Senate reform for many, many years, are obviously interested in the government's response to those comments.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the role that's been taken by the Three Hills constituency, in particular one member there, Bert Brown, who has chaired the Canadian Committee for a Triple E Senate and who worked with me very diligently as a member of the Senate Reform Task Force to promote Senate reform across Canada. I know there is grave concern about the future of Senate reform as a result of the remarks made yesterday by the Prime Minister. I've had an opportunity of reviewing those. Having done so, I can tell members of the Assembly that what the Prime Minister said yesterday was nothing new in terms of his position. He has not brought any new element into the discussions except to say that a special select committee of the House of Commons would be given responsibilities in the near future of reviewing with Canadians a federal proposal.

Now, we have not seen that federal proposal. I think it extremely important to note that the federal government has been promising this for some time. When we see that, we will have a better idea as to how to respond. Our government is firmly committed, as this Legislature has told us to do unanimously on two occasions, to promote the Triple E Senate concept, which was part of the select committee report of this Legislative Assembly. That we are committed to do, and that is a message which we have translated to the Prime Minister, to the federal government, to every other government in Canada, and we will continue to support that. I expect that our convention this weekend will endorse our continued efforts in that respect.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that may be well and good, but I think it's fair to say that while we're approaching the discussion about our nationhood, trying to do it in a fair and even-handed manner, it has not gone unnoticed in my constituency that the Prime Minister in fact since Meech Lake was signed has appointed Senators from both Quebec and Newfoundland. As well now, Newfoundland, once having had their way, it appears to us, has now rescinded their support for Meech Lake. What are the implications of that on Senate reform?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've made it very clear on many occasions, and I will do so again, that the Prime Minister, having accepted the recommendations of the Premiers of Quebec and Newfoundland pursuant to Meech Lake and having appointed Senators under the process outlined there, is quite wrong to ignore the wishes of Albertans as expressed democratically last October 16. I say it again, and we have said it, and we will continue to do so. Now, as to Newfoundland's decision yesterday, Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that if that stays in place and it in fact is responsible for killing Meech Lake, it will kill Senate reform for the foreseeable future, and we will not be back at the Canadian constitutional table for decades. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: All right. Thank you. The Chair is quite prepared to cut off question period entirely if this keeps up. This is not to be a shouting match back and forth at the top of one's lungs. Thank you very much.

MR. TAYLOR: We're having lots of fun.

MR. SPEAKER: Not half as much fun as I'm having.
Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Environmental Impact Assessments

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 15 in this Chamber the Minister of the Environment said:

With the introduction of our new legislation, the right of the people to participate and to be heard will be enshrined.

He waxed eloquent on the subject of Bill 201, the Alberta Environmental Rights Act. He said:

All the initiatives suggested by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place will be addressed within the formation and the implementation of the natural resources conservation board.

I would like to ask the minister today if he would leave his cheap insults and politician's conjuring tricks outside the door and state whether that is an affirmation of government policy today.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I assume the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place is referring to a draft document that someone handed him. I find it very curious that about two weeks ago the hon. member went on and fumed and snorted and whined and complained about me not releasing the name of the individual who is involved in preparing new draft legislation for the environment. Now, if the hon. member will give me the name of the individual who provided him with the document, perhaps I can discuss with that individual the authenticity of that particular document and get a handle on it. And then, Mr. Speaker, I will have a good handle on what I'm supposed to be discussing, because I haven't seen any draft of anything.

MR. McINNIS: Well, it is too much to ask him to leave the cheap insults outside the door, unfortunately.

I didn't ask about draft legislation. I asked about government policy. I wonder if the minister will state today his guarantee of the right of Albertans to participate in the process, to have intervenor funding for EIAs on every major project: whether that's government policy today or not.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I assume that the hon. member has in front of him a draft document relative to the natural resources conservation board. It's clearly marked draft 1. It's full of blanks to be filled in, something like a *Dick & Jane* book, you know. In the intervening weeks draft 2 has been prepared and is now being circulated, and perhaps draft 3 is now in its initial stages. But you know, Mr. Speaker, the opposition wouldn't know anything about writing good legislation, having never had the experience of being involved in writing legislation. The difference between the government and the opposition, apart from the fact that we have won six elections and they have lost six elections, is that when we have draft 1 completed, we go to draft 2 and draft 3 and draft 4. When they have draft 1 completed, they would probably table it as completed legislation. That's the difference, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Day Care Funding

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. The furore and the uproar about day care hasn't ended. The fear and anxiety persist. Much of it was brought about by information that came

out before there was anything definite on it, and now we've got the white paper and the minister asking for comments and the minister telling us that this is going to benefit low-income parents. Well, we still need a lot more information; we still need more facts. My question to the minister is this: will the minister make available immediately the definite subsidy schedule? He must have had that to write the white paper. There is no excuse for delay here, Mr. Speaker. Parents and day cares must have the information.

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are going through a process of consulting with Albertans, of working with day care advocates, of working with parents, of working with day care operators. It would be pretty difficult for me to provide a finalized statement of the subsidized program until we finalize the white paper. This is a consultative process. We're out, we're getting input, and once we've had an opportunity to receive thoughts, suggestions, recommendations, again from parents and day care operators and day care advocates, then we'll be able to provide them with that final information.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that we are making every effort we can to provide to parents as much information as we have available. I can tell you that senior officials from my department have just completed visiting 22 different centres across this province, meeting with parents and day care operators. I can tell you that I as the minister responsible have met with many, many day care operators, day care umbrella organizations, with many, many parents across this province as well as in my own constituency. I'm really pleased with the feedback I'm getting, and I'm looking forward to continuing to work with parents and operators in finalizing a position paper that will allow us to continue to provide the highest quality day care in Canada.

MRS. HEWES: No, no, no, Mr. Speaker. The minister's got it backwards once again. You're the one with the proposal and the one that's supposed to tell us the facts, what you intend to do.

Mr. Speaker, the question is: if the minister doesn't or won't release the schedule, will he tell the people of Alberta who are dependent upon child care in this province: what is the turning point? At least give us that information. That's the point at which the fees equal the subsidy. He must have that information, and there's no reason under heaven that we can't have that publicly.

MR. OLDRING: "No, no, no," the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar says. To consultation? Is there something wrong with consultation, Mr. Speaker? We think it's important to work with Albertans in addressing these needs. In reference to the cutoff levels, again, we've indicated at this time that we are looking at shifting the subsidies that are currently cut off at about the 18 and a half thousand dollar level to the \$40,000 level. That figure hasn't been finalized yet. It hasn't been finalized yet because we want to hear from Albertans. Again, when we've had their input, when we've had the opportunity of hearing their concerns, we're prepared at that point to respond and address them and provide all the information that the member is talking about. We're providing to parents as much as is available to us at this time, and we'll continue to do that as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Redwater-Andrew.

Natural Gas Marketing

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Energy. Previously in this Assembly the minister has remarked on the enormous importance of the National Energy Board's hearing on the tolling methodology as it relates to natural gas pipeline expansion. I understand that the National Energy Board decision could affect pipeline expansion in eastern Canada and also into the United States. To the minister. Can the minister advise this House of the implications that these hearings have to the long-term viability of Alberta's natural gas resources?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard, this government together with the industry, to impress upon the rest of Canada the importance of diversity of markets for Alberta natural gas. The National Energy Board in their methodology hearings – the results of those hearings will have an impact on moving 800 million cubic feet a day of natural gas. We do not want to be held hostage to any one market, and at this particular time we are constrained to our market opportunities. The northeast United States, further expansion into Quebec and possibly into the maritimes is something that we see as important and have made our case to the National Energy Board that they should rule in favour of rolled-in tolling methodology.

Mr. Speaker, the difference between rolled-in tolling and incremental tolling could mean a cost of about \$500,000 a day to the industry and to the government. That's if incremental tolling is ruled by the National Energy Board. So obviously we have made a very strong case that the cost of expansion should be borne by the whole system rather than just by the incremental system.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Redwater-Andrew.

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the National Energy Board hearings are scheduled for later this month. To the minister. Does the Minister of Energy have any indication that rolled-in tolling methodology will succeed?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have, as I've indicated, filed our evidence, and our evidence includes a modified calculation to determine economic viability of pipeline expansion. Our view is basically consistent with the view of the Independent Petroleum Association of Canada. I should point out to the hon. member that Premier Getty has taken this matter up with Premier Peterson of Ontario because Ontario and some of their industrial gas users have taken a position that incremental tolling is the way to go. The problem with that is that it works to the advantage of only Ontario, and it would kill any further pipeline expansion beyond the borders of Ontario. I can tell the hon. member that at Kananaskis during informal discussions we were able to convince and get the support of the province of New Brunswick and the province of Quebec to support Alberta's position for rolled-in tolling methodology. It is a very important and significant gesture by those two provinces, Mr. Speaker. We feel and hope that their support at the National Energy Board hearings will win the day and that we will in the end have a rolled-in methodology for pipeline expansion costs.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Employment Equity

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for human rights. Yesterday the Human Rights Commission passed a resolution calling for the province to implement employment equity programs promoting women, visible minorities, disabled persons, and aboriginal people in the provincial public sector as well as the educational system. Commission members noted that education and marketing strategies are necessary to make employment equity work. To the minister. Will she commit to putting in place the necessary legislation and strategies to implement employment equity with measurable goals and enforceability?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly going to look forward to studying the proposal that the Human Rights Commission is even now preparing for us. I do think it is a step in the right direction, and of course I think that because we have already taken steps in that direction with our own civil servants as an employer. We introduced last year through the Plan for Action for Women an employment equity committee that has been working this year. We do have as well a special placement program for those who are disabled and over the age of 45. We also have an Avalon program that is delivered through the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism, which is available to any one of our departments and civil servants to learn about cultural diversity in the work force. So, in fact, we are taking steps in this direction, and I am looking forward to receiving from the Human Rights Commission their proposals when they've had a chance to flesh it out in more detail.

MS M. LAING: Yes. I hope the minister would speak with the minister of culture.

Inasmuch as educators provide strong role models, that there are very few aboriginal teachers in the schools aboriginal children attend, and that there are very few women in management positions and education generally, employment equity legislation needs to be applied to the educational system provincewide. Given this minister's strong commitment to providing appropriate role models, will the minister commit to implementing employment equity legislation for primary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions?

MS McCOY: The proposition is an intriguing one, but I will say that the Minister of Education, my colleague, and I have had several discussions on employment-equity type topics because we both recognize that one out of six Albertans today was born outside of Canada, and in the big cities, Edmonton and Calgary, the proportion of immigrants is even higher. We also recognize that our own native population is not represented in our education system or in our workplaces or in the government service to the degree that they are in our population, and we are interested in working with them to encourage opportunities.

So I think that over the next while, both in the education system under the leadership and encouragement of the Minister of Education and I think in the colleges and universities under the encouragement of the Minister of Advanced Education, you'll see some steps being taken.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-North West.

NAIT/Westerra Merger

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 1 the Minister of Advanced Education, acting on what I feel to be very bad advice, disbanded the Westerra Advisory Committee before their first report was even submitted and announced that NAIT would be expanded to absorb the Westerra campus in Stony Plain. Regarding this unilateral expansion of NAIT, the minister made assurances, which I fully endorse, that first priority would be given to protecting Westerra employees. Given that many Westerra staff may have superior salaries and benefits than NAIT employees, will the minister assure this Assembly that any staff forced to join NAIT staff associations will not be forced to take a cut in wages, benefits, or have their seniority readjusted?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members are aware, we have a very extensive and successful postsecondary system of which Westerra, which was established back in 1983, was envisioned to be a very meaningful and growing part. They've done a good job. On February 1, as the hon. Member for Stony Plain has indicated, I announced the expansion of NAIT. However, I did state at that time that a transition team consisting of the deputy minister, Mrs. Duncan, the president of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and the president of Westerra would, within a reasonable time, see to it that no program sufferings would result and that as far as possible the staff would be integrated from Westerra into NAIT. I'm still awaiting the results of that, and I have every hope that it will be a very successful transition.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the minister agrees with me that NAIT is supposed to assimilate and not eliminate Westerra, and I certainly endorse that position.

The budget has been cut by 50 percent. The budget cuts are going to come out of administration; faculty positions, cutting of salaries hopefully not. Therefore, the conclusion must be that programs will be cut. Will the minister guarantee that the students who have chosen Stony Plain Westerra campus will continue to benefit from the current level of programming, or even an enhanced level of programming, with NAIT's assistance now and in the future?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it must be recognized that NAIT is a self-governing, autonomous board which will make its own decisions within the program dollars allocated from the department. I cannot sit in judgment of what NAIT will do in the best interests of the students. I should point out that as hon. members know, the government, faced with very meaningful choices in terms of its fiscal responsibility, had indicated to Advanced Education that it, too, had to share in the allocation of those resources. I've shared earlier with the House, I believe during my estimates, that there was a substantial saving of some \$2.8 million which was then allocated to other institutions. Mr. Speaker, my preference, obviously, is that programs will not suffer, my preference is no student will suffer, and my preference is no one will lose employment. However, that lies entirely with the transition team and the self-governing board of NAIT.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West, followed if there's time by Edmonton-Whitemud.

Hotel Tax

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Provincial Treasurer. The implementation and passage of the GST Bill seems imminent, and the concern in Alberta is that that will have a really serious impact on the tourism industry in the province. Predictions are that the GST will slice approximately \$1 billion off the tourism industry in Canada, in Alberta perhaps as much as \$100 million off the tourism revenues. Now, if we are to continue the growth in our tourism industry, as indicated in the last two throne speeches, Alberta needs to have an edge. My question to the Treasurer is simply this: will the Treasurer help to promote the tourism industry by removing the current 5 percent hotel room tax once the GST is implemented?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not too sure that these two issues are connected at all. We have a fairly comprehensive and wide-ranging program to encourage the development of tourism in this province. The Minister of Tourism on many occasions has provided information to the House and to all Albertans and certainly to the private sector. I think it's a fair observation to say that the tourism sector in this province is in fact expanding very dynamically and growing very rapidly, contributing many dollars to our economy. New investment is taking place, and as the stats show, in fact, the number of jobs generated here is quite significant. We have complemented the private-sector initiative by a variety of our own programs, which the member has related and which the budget contains. But to suggest that the GST and the hotel tax are connected is just wrong. We do agree generally that the GST will have negative impact on the service sector, including the tourism sector. We have made that point very clear to Mike Wilson, to the federal MPs, and to the federal government. It is also at the heart of our GST paper as well, and that message has been carried.

The impact of the sales tax, or the so-called hotel tax, is not that significant to the industry, and we would not consider taking it off at this point because that would be driving our policies by GST policy. The impact of that tax is not a deterrent to the expansion of hotel rooms or to the tourism sector, but the GST, in fact, would be.

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have unanimous consent to complete this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: The concern or the relationship here, Mr. Speaker, is that what we would have with the GST is a tax on a tax, which would not give Alberta an edge. What I'm trying to get the minister to do is to suggest that we should promote it and give ourselves an edge. So my supplementary, then, to the minister is: does the minister not believe that the absence of a provincial hotel room tax could in fact give our province, Alberta, a bit of an advantage in that global market in which we are now competing?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, that's likely so, Mr. Speaker. I mean, if we had zero tax in Alberta, it'd be a tax haven. If he'd carry his point to the ultimate, that's what he's recommending. We couldn't, obviously, have that. We have to have some level of taxation; otherwise governments can't operate. This taxation that has been referred to, the hotel tax, which was put in place in 1987, was a result of the need to balance the budget, to get on with dealing with the deficit question. As we have said before in the Budget Address, our approach to taxation has been fair and even-handed across all sectors, not singling out any particular one.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, as we have said in this House – and I welcome the opportunity to say it again this Friday morning – Alberta has the lowest personal income taxes of any province in Canada, the lowest small business corporation tax of any province in Canada, and the lowest overall tax regime of any province in Canada, including the only province with no retail sales tax. Albertans understand that. That's the character of our tax regime. It's the best one in Canada, and it's going to drive new investment, including investment in the tourism sector, as sure as we're standing right here.

MR. SPEAKER: Before we deal with one point of order and one request under Standing Order 40, might we have unanimous consent to revert to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Public Works, Supply and Services, followed by the Attorney General.

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

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to members of the Assembly for that permission. In the members' gallery this morning are 16 young people from Grasmere school. Grasmere school is located at Alberta Beach on historic Lac Ste. Anne. The students are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Jim Muir and two parents, Linda Taylor and Jerry Lyons. I would ask our guests to rise, please, and would my colleagues extend to them the traditional welcome.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you 22 members of the New Sarepta community high school, a grade 12 class. They're here today with their teacher Roberta Hay and escorted by the bus driver Alfred Schlender. They're seated in the members' and public galleries. I'd ask that they stand and receive the usual warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. OLDRING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 30 bright and enthusiastic young students from St. Thomas Aquinas elementary school, located in the constituency of Red Deer-South. They are accompanied by their teacher Jeanette Thompson and by parents Nancy Shanks, Fay Dionne, Sharon Assen, and Jackie Ulrich. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm reception of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Additional? Thank you.
Point of order, Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition earlier asked a question that included reference to Gainers, that included reference to guarantees, that included reference to security, that included reference to Palm Dairies. I was pleased that the Speaker allowed – I'm going to shock you, Mr. Martin – the questions to be put forward and to be pursued and answered. I noted with interest that the Treasurer had no difficulty in standing up and talking about guarantees and Gainers and so on.

Yesterday I introduced a motion under Standing Order 30 which would allow for the ordinary business of the House to be adjourned so as to look at the matter involving Gainers and other investments. I stood up during the time when oral statements were made with respect to notices and indicated that I was concerned about the jeopardy that Albertans were facing with respect to assets involving the Pocklington empire.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's confusion on this matter, I would respectfully submit. If we look at Standing Orders, there is a very blanket statement saying that no questions or matters can be debated that involve a matter "that is pending in a court." "Pending in a court" isn't defined. We're not informed whether the matter is a criminal matter or a civil matter. We're not told what stage of the proceedings "pending" means. So we have to go to *Erskine May* and *Beauchesne*, and if we look at the sections in *Beauchesne*, section 505, sixth edition, page 153, – and I noted that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands brought this up yesterday – there is some assistance that's given to Assemblies in defining the word "pending" and defining what courts we're talking about. It's clear that if a matter is before the criminal courts, there may well be a prejudice, and no debate should take place. With respect to civil matters the *Beauchesne* sections say that "no settled practice has been developed in relation to civil cases." But it is clear in *Beauchesne* in 507(2) where it states that, "In civil cases the convention does not apply until the matter has reached the trial stage." *Erskine May* has exactly that same provision.

Now, it's been referred to in this Assembly – in fact, the Speaker has referred to it and members of cabinet have referred to it – that a number of statements of claim have been issued. Well, that's fine, but I think we all know that statements of claim can be issued but they can lie dormant for months and in many cases years before action is taken on them. I think that's the reason why *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May* have helped define "pending" under our standing order to say that it's got to be before the trial stage or in the trial stage of that civil action. It's before the court. It's before the judge at the moment. That's the time that you can't prejudice one side or the other. But if we're talking about examinations for discovery or we're talking about simply the issuance of a statement of claim, I think it's clear, and I respectfully submit it is clear, that questions can be put, that motions can be put, that debate can take place.

MR. SPEAKER: What is the wrap-up point, hon. member?

MR. DECORE: Now, I would respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that there is confusion on the matter, and there are two ways that perhaps the matter could be dealt with: either by a written set of guidelines that your office could prepare for members of

this Assembly; or, as appears to have been the case in the House of Commons in Canada and in the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, the matter was referred to select committees or standing committees that prepared a resolution that was brought back for acceptance by the House which clearly set out the rules and guidelines and gave assistance to hon. members so they knew exactly when they could and couldn't ask questions or put motions to debate.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad you allowed the hon. leader to ask the questions on Gainers . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No, it wasn't on Gainers.

MR. DECORE: Well, it was Gainers, it was security, it was Palm Dairies, all of which I intended to discuss yesterday.

Another point that I think should be raised at this time is 509 in *Beauchesne*, Mr. Speaker, which says:

The Special Committee on the Rights and Immunities of Members recommended that the responsibility of the Speaker during the question period should be minimal as regards the sub judice convention, and that the responsibility should principally rest upon the Member who asks the question and the Minister to whom it is addressed,

the Speaker acting as an arbiter when there is some difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, we need some assistance on this, and I'm pleading and asking that either a written statement be prepared by your office or the matter be referred to a select committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Before the Provincial Treasurer . . . The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry was good at supplying references from *Beauchesne*, but the Chair did not catch any specific ones from *Erskine May*.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I want to just suggest that those matters that are before the court on civil actions are, in fact, sub judice as well, and I intend to show that the references used by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry in fact confirm that, at least in my view. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the way in which we've proceeded to date in considering all those matters where there has been an action initiated does put it before the court and therefore takes it out of the jurisdiction of the realm of this Assembly.

I draw to the Speaker's attention the fact that, of course, it is clear that we are guided by the House of Commons judgments, and since *Erskine May* has been used here – I'm assuming that that has been stipulated – *Erskine May* is a substantive quote and we can use the conclusions of *Erskine May* to support arguments here. In fact, our Standing Orders under Standing Order 2 do, in fact, conclude that we are bound by the Legislative Assembly of London. Therefore, under that provision, Mr. Speaker, I would draw members' attention to, in *Erskine May*, that section on page 378 of the 21st edition – not the one I'm used to, but this one – where they talk to:

The resolution of 23 July 1963 also applies to the civil courts when they're referring to sub judice debate

and in general bars reference to matters awaiting or under adjudication in a civil court from the time that the case has been set down for trial or otherwise brought before the court.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see that, in the general sense, those items which are of a civil nature are not, in fact, eligible for us to discuss at this point. I think it's quite clear. I think the way in which we've proceeded before is the right one, and if it is before the court, then of course we cannot comment on it.

I would only add that the discussion today with respect to Gainers, with respect to Palm, with respect to the Oilers, was in a very broad kind of policy way and was not in reference to any particular action which we have taken. The record should show, as well, that we are under litigation against the former shareholder of Gainers on behalf of the government, and therefore I think the sub judice convention does, in fact, apply.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There's not a right of rebuttal, Edmonton-Glengarry, unless you're about to supply the reference that was missing from *Erskine May*.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. If the hon. Treasurer had read the rest of the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

MR. DECORE: . . . section, it's clear that these are interlocutory actions that are being referred to.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the guy ought to learn the rules, and for crying out loud . . . You know, when he's got a House leader who attends meetings and agrees to certain procedures, for crying out loud, they should be observed.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to the Provincial Treasurer and his selective citations. He was very careful not to read the concluding paragraph of the citation from *Erskine May*, which is critical under the circumstances, and I do wish . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Section?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, sure. It's on page 378, *Erskine May*. It's the last paragraph.

Successive Speakers have exercised their discretion to allow matters to be discussed on which (although they fall within the strict terms of the sub judice rule) they have considered that no substantial risk of prejudicing proceedings would arise.

Now, look, the whole argument is one of logic, if you start with Standing Orders and work your way back. I've had to run to the library during night sittings to look up the actual debates from which these rulings arise. You will find that, indeed, the sub judice rule is strictly applied under criminal cases. You will find the odd occasion when it is applied under civil cases, but ordinarily the strict application is when the matter is at trial or when it has been set down for trial. The hon. Treasurer knows that I'm telling the truth about this, for crying out loud. I've spent too many hours looking up the debates. I understand the context of the references, Mr. Speaker.

The point is this: questions have been allowed over the years in this Assembly – and I know, because I used to watch from up there before I got elected to be down here – lots of questions over the years on matters related to even government involvement in litigation. The point is: do you prejudice somebody? Do you put them at peril by discussing the matter? Particularly important in this case is whether or not a government policy could change things around, or the nature of the government policy having been involved in the cause for the litigation in the first place. That doesn't prejudice the individual, Mr. Speaker: that's the point.

You can go on endlessly citing references. For every one that these guys want, I'll find another one. I'll go back a century in debates if I have to. The point is that it need not be strictly applied all the time, and the Provincial Treasurer knows it. So why don't we just drop this issue?

MR. SPEAKER: Well, there are a number of points to be made. The first point to be made is that this is not reopening the decision of the Chair yesterday with respect to the Standing Order 30 request. The difficulty with that one is that had there been a full range of debate in the Assembly, it might be fine for some members who have legal backgrounds to be able to tread a very delicate line, but for the majority of members in the House it would be a very difficult situation indeed.

One reference made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry was *Beauchesne* 509, where indeed the role of the Speaker should – should – be not to have to be the real watchdog of whether a matter is sub judice or not. That was pointed out to the House by the Chair earlier in the week, that the onus of responsibility falls upon the member asking the question and upon the member of government who is giving the reply. If a reply happens to be at sub judice and they sit down, then so be it. But the responsibility is twofold. It's actually threefold in the sense that it is there for the member raising the question, it's there for the member responding, and it's also there for the Chair to try and keep an eye on.

Now, with respect to the question that was raised in question period today, that, of course, referred to question period. It doesn't refer to emergency debates or to debate in the House, where the role of the Chair then is going to have to be much more involved in the issue, as it was yesterday.

Now, with regard to the questions raised today, while there was the miasma and the smoke screen and so forth in terms of the introduction to the question as raised by the Leader of the Opposition, nevertheless, the focus was in upon the matter of Palm Dairies. The Chair was attempting to listen very carefully to that, and that's part of the difficulty of the introductions to questions: that we can start off making a statement here and a statement there, then come back to what the real question is, and then as all members of the House try to listen to what transpired, it's too easy to get distracted by one of the introductory sentences.

Now, the Chair wants, indeed, to point out with respect to the matter of Palm Dairies that it's the Chair's understanding after review of the documents – and indeed it's up to each individual caucus to do its own research with regard to what matters are before the courts. After perusal of the documents, it seems to be quite apparent that because Palm Dairies is suing the government and Gainers, not the other way around, nothing affects the rights of Palm in this litigation, even if it is sold. The court case continues without reference to anything that may change in the ownership of Palm. Palm is not required in this litigation to account for anything. While litigation names Palm Dairies as a party, the prospective sale of it cannot be considered sub judice because nothing in the litigation affects Palm's transfer of ownership. Palm is the plaintiff and not the defendant.

Now, the other thing here that we need to be absolutely clear about: it's not a sub judice convention; it is a sub judice rule under our own Standing Orders. And as the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has pointed out, one needs to read the complete section there, Standing Order 23(g)(i). We tend to get caught up on an issue

- (i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination, or

And this is where we got into the whole issue with respect to the Principal affair.

- (ii) that is before any quasi-judicial, administrative or investigative body . . .

So both aspects of subsection (i) and subsection (ii) come into play.

But then the final part of that subsection (g) is:

where any person may be prejudiced in such matter by the reference.

Now, that makes it very difficult for the Chair and for members of the House to try to determine.

The other point is that it's indeed a rule, just to underline that last point, and there are plenty of issues in terms of our own Legislature. If you want me to read them all off, we can do it. Be assured that many of us spend time going back into other matters that have been determined in the history of this House as well as in other Legislatures. But it is quite evident, and I will give some citations, if hon. members want to go and do the research, with regard to the sub judice rule: March 16, 1927; May 11, 1978; May 12, '78; March 27, '87; March 12 of '87 again; June 9 of '87; November 23 of '87; November 24 of '87; December 1 of '87; March 24 of '88; April 11 of '88; June 1 of '88; June 6 of '88; June 13 of '88. I wish all members well in trying to interpret what indeed the proper boundaries are with regard to the sub judice convention.

head: **Motions Under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: Now we have a request under Standing Order 40. Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Hawkesworth:

Be it resolved that the Assembly expresses its disappointment in the Prime Minister for his disrespect for and disregard of Albertans who have voted for a change in the method of selecting Senators, and for imposing the goods and services tax on Albertans and other Canadians.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak to the urgent and pressing necessity of this motion.

The Prime Minister has come to this province, and Albertans were hopeful that he'd listen to their concerns. But what happened? In a cavalier manner, with disregard, he said no to the people of this province, and I believe it's important that we respond immediately. Whether Albertans agreed with the process of senatorial selection or not, at least they had some say in the decision, and it ought to be respected, which is not what the Prime Minister has done. He has not shown that respect. What the Prime Minister committed himself to do is to consider a report next week on Senate reform. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly needs to tell him before he considers that report that his response has not been appreciated in Alberta.

On the goods and services tax, similarly the Prime Minister has refused to listen to Albertans and has brought in closure to stop debate on the Bill next week in the House of Commons. Albertans are angry about the goods and services tax, and they're angry about closure on the Bill. The Prime Minister's responses have not been sufficient, and they're not acceptable to Albertans. Albertans were expecting better than this.

With the Conservative convention this weekend, Mr. Speaker, the members here could convey a powerful message to the

delegates at that convention if this motion were passed. Also, this is a weekend of action by many Albertans around opposition to the goods and services tax. This motion, if passed today, would be supportive of their actions as well.

It's vital, Mr. Speaker, that we send a clear message to the Prime Minister from this Assembly before next week that his actions and his comments in Alberta are not supported by the people of this province. He must change his course, change his attitude, and change his priorities before the point of no return and key decisions are taken next week.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent of this Assembly for this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 40, the request for unanimous consent, those in favour of giving unanimous consent, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Education

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The estimates of the Department of Education are located on pages 113 to 123 of the government estimates and pages 45 to 47 of the element details book.

Does the hon. minister have some opening remarks?

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. Let me say at the outset, Mr. Chairman, that I consider it a very great honour, indeed, to introduce the 1990-91 estimates of expenditure for the Department of Education. Education in this province is a \$2.3 billion business, and I am very proud of the commitment of our government and the commitment of our Premier, Premier Getty, to education. I'm proud of the fact that our government places education right at the very top of its list of priorities.

Over the last few months I've had the opportunity to speak with trustees, teachers, parents, administrators, and a number of my colleagues in this Assembly. I've talked with them about three vital key themes: excellence, equity, and efficiency. Those three themes, Mr. Chairman, will guide my goals and activities over the coming months and years. As a framework for reviewing the estimates of the department this morning, I'd like to focus my remarks briefly on those three themes.

The first one is that of excellence. There have been a number of influential people who have been sharply critical of education and the quality of education in our province and, in fact, on our

continent. They have asked: is our education system preparing young people, preparing them to live, to compete, to be strong Canadian citizens, to succeed in an increasingly global and more complex world? President Bush is asking that question, Mr. Chairman. So, too, is our Prime Minister. Business leaders are asking. Voters, taxpayers, and of course parents are asking, and I say to all of them that the quality of education is a valid concern. It's a valid issue that we all must face head-on. We've got to look ahead to what our students need for the 1990s and for the 21st century. Our commitment to our students demands that. Our commitment to excellence for those students demands that as well.

When I speak of excellence, Mr. Chairman, I speak of the excellence of each and every individual child. This is not the case of one size fits all. We're talking of the excellence of our future lawyers, our future politicians, our future plumbers, our future mothers and fathers, doctors, artists, and artisans – excellence in whatever those individuals strive to achieve.

Mr. Chairman, the estimates before you and before our members today reflect that commitment to excellence. With an overall increase of 5.4 percent in the Financial Assistance to Schools, this government will be providing an additional \$73 million to help school boards and teachers maintain their commitment to excellence in education. As I said in the Assembly yesterday, taxpayers in Alberta are providing about \$5, 100 for each student in this province, or an average of about \$150,000 per classroom. That's a significant amount of money, and I'm confident that with that level of commitment, excellence in our schools is well, well, well within our grasp.

The second theme is equity. In this budget we will be putting an additional three and a half million dollars into fiscal equity grants, grants which help the poorer school jurisdictions in the province to be able to provide a quality education to their students. But as I've said on a number of occasions, even with these additional grants – and it's a significant commitment of some \$68 million – we are still not solving the problem of equity. In the discussion of equity during the course of the School Act debate about two and a half years ago, this government made a commitment to address the equity issue, and we have begun to fulfill that commitment through a combination of fiscal equity grants from the General Revenue Fund as well as our exciting new distance learning initiatives. We've gone that extra mile to address and to achieve equity.

But in spite of that, Mr. Chairman, we continue to have growing discrepancies among the local tax bases of the various school jurisdictions around the province. We have students living in one part of Alberta who cannot access substantially the same quality of education as a student living in another part of the province. Mr. Chairman, this can no longer be tolerated. I've raised this issue with trustees, with school businesspeople, with citizens, with taxpayers, and with my colleagues in this Assembly. I'm raising it again here this morning because it is an issue that we'll all be hearing more about in the coming months. Mr. Chairman, before the next set of estimates for the Department of Education are brought to this committee, to this Legislative Assembly, we must find a solution to this problem.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the theme of efficiency. This is a theme that makes some people a little uncomfortable at times. As long as we're talking about spending more money or as long as we're talking about initiating new programs, people are pretty comfortable. But the time of spending more money without paying very careful attention to efficiency, paying special attention to results – those days are gone. As I said in the

Assembly yesterday, Albertans have told all of us, have told this government very clearly two things. They've said they want funding for education to be maintained at a quality level, and they want the budget balanced. They want the deficit eliminated, and they want our budget, our provincial budget, balanced.

The estimates before you today reflect some tough decisions that had to be made. Now, we made those decisions by putting our first priority on grants to schools. We've increased those grants by 3 and a half percent, the highest grant rate increase of any sector of the provincial government. That means an injection of 45 million new dollars into Alberta's schools for the school year beginning September 1, 1990. Given the fiscal situation of the province, that is a generous contribution by Alberta taxpayers. I have told school boards that they will have to manage with that amount, and I've encouraged them to search for ways of being more efficient. I'm confident they can do just that.

I'm also not prepared to simply pass the responsibility on to school boards without doing the same thing myself. The Department of Education is being reorganized, and it's being downsized. The savings to Alberta taxpayers will be about \$1.2 million this year. We've made some very tough decisions, and I know it's been hard on the people in the department who have been affected by these decisions. But, Mr. Chairman, tough decisions are what this job is all about.

There will be some efficiencies, and there will be some streamlining of functions within the department. In our budget review we've placed top priority on maintaining programs and services that have a direct impact on students. I am confident, Mr. Chairman, that the Department of Education will continue to provide the kind of leadership and quality service that has made this department exemplary in Canada.

Before I finish, Mr. Chairman, I want to just say one word of deep and sincere thanks to all my colleagues that I have the good fortune to work with in the Department of Education, led by the Deputy Minister, Dr. Reno Bosetti, and a very talented and capable team of professionals – I'm proud to be able to work with that team of professionals – and, as well, to the four ladies and the gentleman in the office of the Minister of Education. To each of them I owe deep thanks and a lot of gratitude for the tremendous effort they put in on behalf of all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, those are the three themes I wanted to touch on in my remarks: excellence, equity, and efficiency. Albertans are indeed fortunate to have an education system which is second to none in quality and in commitment to excellence for our young people. I'm proud of our education system. I'm proud of the people that are involved in our education system. With that kind of commitment and that kind of dedication, we'll succeed in reaching the goals reflected in the three themes I've spoken about and in providing the best possible education for all Alberta students.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I find it's rather interesting but actually quite disappointing that this government can summarize over \$2 billion of expenditures on three pages of supplementary information and seven pages in the general estimates. It becomes very, very difficult to determine how moneys are actually spent. Although accurate, I suppose, some of the numbers tend to be somewhat misleading; for example, native education. You look into the area and it's got \$496,000 under Student Programs and Evaluation, a

decrease of 1.8 percent, yet we all know this is obviously not all the money that's being spent on native education. I would like to ask the minister how much money is directly given to support native education in this province. I would suspect that it's probably in excess of \$5 million. It would also be helpful to determine what is expended specifically on places like the Alberta response centres, the Interdepartmental Community School Committee, adult extension programs, teacher certification and development, COATS, the Appeals and Student Attendance Secretariat, and so on. I would hope, Mr. Chairman, that we can expect more detail as to where these moneys are really being allocated.

By viewing some of the fluctuations, and the minister has, in his comments today, recognized that the department is in fact undergoing a degree of reorganization, one thing is obvious: it is certainly intent on cutting staff. I would like the minister to table the new organizational chart for Alberta Education along with the specific criteria for staff reduction. The chart or the papers or the rationale, whatever, must exist somewhere, since this process is well under way.

I would like to also see the minister address the following concerns, if he might. Equity funding: one that is mentioned, and it's one of the triple E's. What is the criteria for getting into it? How is he going to establish a fair and equitable method of, in fact, distributing resources? There are other factors that enter into it, as happened last year out in the west end of the province with the creation of the new Twin Rivers school division and the spin-off effects it had on surrounding jurisdictions. Is this formula, or lack of formula, going to be applied in a broader range of funding; for example, in the area of special needs?

There's one rumour – I don't know if you want to call it a rumour or if it's a fact – that the minister or his people are looking at some sort of corporate pooling for funding education. I would imagine this would likely fall under his perception of equity funding. I would like to ask the minister if, in fact, this government is going on the path of corporate pooling to fund education or, rather, to redistribute local taxes in the area of education.

While we're on the topic of taxation and distribution of funds, I had occasion to be with the minister at an Alberta Teachers' Association function last October, and there was a term used there that I found rather interesting. It was called "undertaxation." Ever since October I've been wondering if the minister could, in fact, give me a definition of what is meant by undertaxation. I would wonder which jurisdictions are in fact being undertaxed in this province.

Getting back to the process of staff reductions, I understand there are 70. The minister alluded to the reorganization. I've asked for the chart. I would further like to ask if the minister can be quite specific in his statements on the reorganization. I will just mention one area as a matter of example, and that is curriculum support. The mission of the curriculum support branch – it goes on to say it's to ensure the best possible education for Alberta students by providing leadership and direction in the validation of curricular programs and in the design, development, acquisition, and implementation of integrated learning and teaching resources. I would hope this particular department gets the full support it needs. I would hope the reorganization of the department, if anything, is strengthened because of the services it does provide, and if you go to the minister's own comments with respect to the need for

excellence, this particular department must not be in any way curtailed.

Staying on curriculum, there is quite a bit of work left to do in the Alberta curriculum. One program, CALM 20, as it stands is primarily a very good program. Unfortunately, it is in the wrong age category. Supplying the CALM content to students 16 years of age is a lot like closing the barn door after the cows have left. It is primarily a life skills course. The majority of students who could benefit from the course will be shown to have left school before they have the opportunity to be exposed to CALM. I would strongly recommend to the minister that the CALM type of programming be moved down in grade level, probably to the grade 6 or 7 level, and that the concept of the CALM be, in fact, expanded so hopefully we can manage to help the children who are the potential dropouts and who have dropped out before they can be exposed to the good parts of the CALM program.

Going on in other areas in the curriculum, of particular interest is the health curriculum. I think Alberta Education should be commended for the direction they've taken over the years in both the development and implementation of the health curriculum, and especially in Theme 5, the teaching of human sexuality in the classroom. I think that's one initiative that should be continued, and it should be strengthened and strengthened dramatically. However, there must remain an opportunity for interested participants, if you will, whether they be parents, church groups, whoever, to have an ongoing dialogue with the schools or with the department itself. Dialogue would give the groups and the department a mutual understanding so the people who feel that this would have some sort of negative impact on the students would come to understand it's an extremely important component of teaching children in school.

I would also like to encourage Alberta Education to continue to try to build a stronger liaison with the local health units. I might point out specifically that the Lac St. Anne health unit has shown a large degree of leadership with various school boards with respect to supporting the presentation of the human sexuality content in the classrooms. There's always going to be the potential for differences, as has been indicated on the front page of recent big dailies. I would respectfully submit that we somehow pursue some sort of positive dialogue to get the uninformed individuals onside so they can understand that the thrust of the human sexuality content is educational and that depriving children of the opportunity for knowledge is a step backwards. I think anyone who does not appreciate the fact that we have a rather serious problem with sexually transmitted diseases, primarily AIDS, is deluding themselves. So I'd like to see Alberta Education in some way promoting the program with a little higher profile, preferably in conjunction with the health units.

Going on, I'd like to also stress that the environment should be highlighted. Although there are provisions for doing environmental kinds of projects in various subjects, I think the time is long overdue for the curriculum to some way or other be adjusted, shall we say, to give environment a higher and sharper focus. At the moment it's largely left to the personal wishes of particular teachers.

The effect of new programs on overall high school curriculum must be addressed. The shift has been very dramatic toward compulsory academic-oriented subjects, and I believe in excess of 70 credits out of 100 are now deemed compulsory toward your high school diploma. So I would suggest that we have to now address the reality of whether or not we are striving toward

a four-year high school program. There's sufficient information for children to pick up on that perhaps it could be added in a formal sense. Many students currently do go to school in excess of three high school years.

Mr. Chairman, one aspect of elementary education and, indeed, all education is the matter of articulation. We now call it program continuity, but it's the same thing. In simple terms, it means that learning goes on in a continuing process and it's very difficult to lockstep a child's mind. So it makes it difficult, if you will, for the traditionalist to look at the grading process. Much fine work has been done in this area and is going on. I would like to see the department continue to assist schools, school boards, and teachers in promoting the concept of articulation. At the same time that they are doing this, however, they have to be more and more conscious of what the effect of compulsory achievement testing will be on the whole process of articulation, because there's going to be the tendency to logjam students progressing through the system at particular points where testing is being implemented.

I would also like to state that it would be a step backwards to expand the achievement testing to cover all subjects in the three grades of 3, 6, and 9. The current program is costly enough, and until shortcomings are found and identified and corrected, in fact, in this whole area of achievement testing, I think we should be quite cautious as to how much it is expanded. That would enter into the minister's area of efficiency. Why spend more money on something that doesn't appear to be fine-tuned at this point?

It appears also that, more and more, all schools are being asked to deal with a broader range of problems that children have. For example, now we have references to special needs, to high-needs community schools. These are all off curriculum.

One area I'm really quite concerned about: to the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any policy on guidance and counseling which has ministerial approval. Individual school boards may or may not have these policies in place. In fact, that area must gain official need status in a school. The reason I'm bringing this up at this point is that schools, for whatever reasons, and school boards are going through a dramatic fiscal budgeting problem. It is now a fact that the number of teacher librarians in this province has decreased; the number of guidance counselors is decreasing. If this trend continues, I'm afraid we will be addressing another problem in the not too distant future, a rather serious one, especially given that the schools are expected to take on broader and broader areas of responsibility.

Going on with the business of funding and inadequate funding, I like this one, and the minister can appreciate that, Mr. Chairman. Rural boards unfortunately come under a much greater strain than urban boards. That strain is really exemplified in the field of transportation. All rural boards very, very frequently have to use busing for many basic curriculum activities. I would point to some of the more obvious ones: the skating, swimming, field trips. They don't appear to gain any extra financial support in this. The same small boards very frequently have a larger than usual enrollment in correspondence courses because of the mere fact that they want to give a broader range of opportunities for their students. These costs seem to be going up both at the correspondence level and at the busing level, creating an inordinately unfair burden on those small rural boards.

Currently Alberta education is undergoing a special education review. The review is long overdue, and I sincerely hope the recommendations will not be reviewed forever but will be viewed

with the aspect of implementation. I would strongly recommend that this particular report must identify clearly what special needs are and must identify the full spectrum of special needs. I think that given the information we've had with respect to the costs of special needs – I believe in the particular information circular they range from \$333 to \$28,510, and that, I would suggest, indicates to me that perhaps the need for this review is long overdue. I would like to see – and I don't know what the criteria are in there – where the responsibility of educational authority ceases in special needs and where health cuts in. Some of the students who are identified with special needs are attending public schools, and perhaps in some degree we should be looking at a better environment for them or, if not that, then at least some extra help for these schools on an individual client basis.

I feel there has to be also in the area of special needs a large degree of public education, if you will, both to parents and school boards. The costs are escalating, the expectations are escalating, and I think there has to be a rather definite stand taken as to what can be and what should be implemented and provided.

For the moment I'd like to address buildings, or rather the lack of them, the need of them. Something must be done to ensure that there continues to be an adequate supply of quality buildings. I will stress "an adequate supply of quality buildings." About two or two and a half years ago a study was performed on the quality of air in selected Alberta schools. That study gave a pretty clean bill of health to most of the permanent schools studied. However, I'm sad to say that it's not the case with the portables. Specifically, the heating units are (a) too noisy, and (b) they were not being used properly, and as a result, the level of carbon dioxide was inordinately high in the afternoons. I would like to ask the minister if the department has sought better heating systems to retrofit these old portables that appear to be quite inefficient and has in fact set standards for the construction of new portables to ensure that this problem does not recur in the new buildings. Also, I would like to ask if the department has taken the initiative to highlight this problem to all school boards that in fact have the portables in their tenure and caution them on the fact that the heating systems must be used according to manufacturers' standards or they in fact will be creating health problems. I will underline that by reading directly from part of the report. It says:

Facility managers are urged to inspect heating and ventilating systems in their schools in order to ensure that they are operating as designed. This is important in all schools and not just in portable classrooms, although portable classrooms seem to exhibit a greater likelihood that systems are not operating as designed.

I think that's a problem that should be addressed.

Mr. Chairman, also on the topic of buildings, I would like to address the needs of the people of Olds. I've had and I'm sure the minister has had letters with respect that they apparently have an inadequate, substandard, unhealthy building, an elementary school that both the parents and the board of education want replaced. Now I would like to put the question to the minister. Will the department authorize a new elementary school for Olds – yes or no – as opposed to a modernization or some sort of patch-up? With respect to the allocation of new school buildings on a project-by-project basis, I feel this process should be reviewed in the large jurisdictions. Very frequently the time between the identification and approval of a project is so lengthy that that particular project may have slipped in priority. Given that we are looking for efficient use of dollars, I would say the minister should look at some way to

in fact increase the independence of the board to perhaps change their mind without losing the allocated funds, if in fact in areas that are growing the need may have shifted or changed. This has been brought to me by some boards, and they felt that was something that should be looked at. I would suggest to the minister that it's one area that should be investigated.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to question how the minister really regards education. Education being priority number one I think sometimes is nothing more than empty rhetoric. Comments appeared recently like, "People want lean and mean governments." Statements attributed to his staff I think are contrary to putting education number one. That statement could very easily be construed to be "lean and mean to pupils," because cutting teachers and support staff, unless it's done properly, has that affect. I would also like to point out . . . We all know how the minister's personal 16 percent increase came about. That's a legislative decision, and I won't question that. However, the office of the minister has a 16 percent increase. That's the overall office. The office budget of the deputy minister is up 9.1 percent to \$343,000. The assistant deputy minister's increase in the office expenditures is 11 percent. Priorities seem to be quite clear: the top end gets the most; the bottom end loses their teachers.

The other area that's given me a great deal of concern is the confusion between distance education and correspondence schools. The correspondence programs, before they were pirated by the distance education concept – and I do say before they were pirated – provided a very essential service to Albertans. Rather than looking at the elimination of the correspondence schools, Mr. Chairman, I think the department could do well by looking at how to enhance the correspondence schools and how to make them more efficient. We are having a trend toward home schooling, which distance education does not address. We have children in grades 1 through 12 basically, and a lot of those distance education does not address. Distance education is a fax machine, a telephone, and a tutor/marker, and I think it's rather a shame that we take and can 10 people out of one particular building with the idea that they might show up somewhere else.

The other question on budgeting. Distance education in our estimates last year was allocated \$3.2 million. There's a statement made by one of the minister's employees that they actually spent \$14 million on the program. I'd like to know where that money came from, or if my information is incorrect.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, education is an investment in our future, and I don't want to see it treated shabbily. I don't want to see programs or areas of the department eliminated that, in fact, enhance things such as quality, efficiency, and equity. I think the time is long overdue that we have to become effective and efficient and also not forget the word "compassionate." Albertans certainly don't want to have a lean and mean government when it comes to their children.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to congratulate the minister for being positive, for being available – and I'm sincere about that – and for bringing a message of hope wherever he goes. However, here comes the other side of it. Hope isn't enough when there are serious problems in the education system which need to be addressed, and declining funding in real terms is one of these problems.

The Minister of Education said on March 22, 1990: our mission is to provide the best possible education for all Alberta students. These are nice words, and I believe again in his sincerity. But, overall, departmental expenditures would seem to betray the minister's statement and this government's commitment to ensuring quality and excellence with the education system. While it is true that funding has increased by 5.3 percent in this year's budget and 13.6 percent from 1988-89 levels, an analysis of the long-term trend since Mr. Getty's government was elected paints a less glowing picture.

Since 1986 expenditures on education have risen by an average of only 3.2 percent a year. At the same time, inflation rates have been 3.66 percent according to the Alberta Statistical Review. On a per capita basis, spending on education has increased by \$81.64 per person since 1986 or \$13.61 per person per year. On a percentage per capita basis, this translates into a 2.66 percent per person increase since 1986, fully 1 percent lower than the inflation rate. In addition to receiving grants which don't keep up with inflation, school boards must also meet the costs of contractual agreements, some at 9 or 10 percent over two years, plus additional costs for staff health care premiums and a propane tax of 2 cents per litre. This will force school boards to raise their mill rates or make staff or program cuts. The minister talks about efficiencies. Well, I want to tell him that all the fat has been cut; there are simply no more efficiencies to be made. There simply has to be more money coming from the province.

An Alberta Education document entitled *Education in Alberta: Some Facts and Figures, 1989*, page 40, says that among Canada's provinces Alberta ranked fourth in per student spending in 1989 behind Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba. We are regressing, since in 1985-86 we were second in the country and now we are fourth. This is happening at a time when enrollments here are going up. In the last three years enrollments have risen by 2.25 percent. Projections suggest that by the year 2000, enrollments will increase by 12.7 percent. In Calgary the public system projects an increase of 10,000 students in the next four years, and the Calgary Catholic school board's enrollment has grown by 3 percent each year for the last two years. This means that boards need more schools, more teachers, more resources, all while this government is lowering funding. Local taxpayers are burdened with more of the costs. In fact, since 1974 the provincial share of education has fallen from 81.3 percent to 60.89 percent. In certain municipalities, especially those with a low tax base, this is an enormous burden which they can no longer cope with.

The biggest problem is capital funding. I want to ask the minister why he has delayed making an announcement in regard to capital budget allocations. This delay is causing anxiety and apprehension. Alberta-wide, requests for capital expenditures were \$330 million and the backlog of projects worth much more. This is not just a wish list; it is a must list. There are many decrepit rural schools. There are many schools which need upgrading, renovation, modernization, and expansion. I've visited some of these schools in Olds, Red Deer, and Lac La Biche, just to name a few. Trustees and parents are frustrated and worried about overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and the fact that they can't offer all the new programs such as computer education, the new science program – they don't have room for labs – and the fine arts program. They are expected to do that by the department and by parents, yet they simply don't have the facilities to do so.

In some areas, especially urban areas, there are pressing needs for new schools. Some students literally will have no roof over their heads unless something is done soon. Some systems are now at one hundred percent utilization. They need new space now. Many of my constituents in Calgary and the constituents of my colleagues from Calgary are very concerned, because the two Calgary school boards, especially, face this problem. When a school system is already at one hundred percent utilization and they get permission to build only one or two schools a year, they simply cannot cope with this.

In five years' time, if nothing is done about capital needs now, the province will need \$1.2 billion to provide sufficient modern facilities for Alberta's growing population. Have you told your colleagues, Mr. Minister, that in five years 50 percent of all schools in Alberta will be 25 years old and in seven years 70 percent of all schools in Alberta will be 25 years old? Do you and they want to face the same problem which B.C. faced because they ignored capital needs? They now have to spend \$250 million per year to make up for past cuts. I hope you can convince your colleagues, Mr. Minister, to increase the capital allocations. The needs are enormous.

We all know that one out of six children in Alberta lives in poverty, and we know that poverty and school performance are closely linked. The high-needs pilot program in Calgary and Edmonton is a step in the right direction.

There must also be a better multidiscipline social services initiative in all schools. School boards are spending many education dollars offering what are really social services. One of the ways of handling this might be a type of Head Start program, which has been suggested, I believe has even been mandated, by the government of Ontario. They are not saying that all children must attend, but they are saying that school boards must offer this Head Start program.

The high needs in community schools initiatives should be expanded. ESL programs are still underfunded. Last session I suggested two funding dates, and I still believe that is necessary, as many ESL children arrive at schools between September 30 and June 30. The per pupil grant, when it has to be shared by pupils enrolled on September 30 and all of the new arrivals, just doesn't go far enough. Funding should also last for more than three years, since the ESL program is not completed in a three-year span of time. This is a concern for rural as well as urban areas, as some immigrants are moving to rural areas.

I'm happy that the minister is reviewing special education. There are more and more students with severe and moderate handicaps and learning disabilities. I'm also aware that the minister has asked for input regarding some form of income distribution to address those areas with a low tax base. Whatever the outcome of this equity study is – and I know nobody wants to call it corporate pooling – I just want to remind the minister that an equal amount of money per student does not necessarily result in equity because of economy of scale, differing costs, and so on. I also want to remind him that time is of the essence. Serious disparities do exist, and I do look forward to his next budget when he will indicate to all Albertans how this matter is to be addressed.

I also know that much concern is being expressed about the fragmentation of the education system: more and more school boards being formed and suggestions that amalgamations should take place. I believe it is time for the department to establish some underlying principles which recognize constitutional rights so that decisions in this area are not made for political reasons. I have some good research on this matter of fragmentation and

amalgamation, and I would enjoy sharing my research with the minister.

The minister's recognition of diversification and flexibility are commendable, but I'm concerned about vote 3.1, which provides delivery of a host of programs: Native Education Project, Distance Education Project, Language Services. Curriculum Support is actually down 1.5 percent from 1989-90 and 9.6 percent since 1988-89. Many schools co-operated in establishing, for instance, distance education. Now, they are told that the incentive grant is over and they have to go it alone. They are not ready to do so, and they pleaded with a number of MLAs in Calgary about a month ago to assure that we would indicate to the minister that the distance education program needs are still there, that boards can't do it alone, and that the funding must continue if we truly want to have equity of opportunity throughout the province.

Native education initiatives taken after the report of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding are also great, and I know some areas have been started, curriculum was prepared, and so on. But, again, I don't feel that enough has been done to complete the recommendations, such as the provision of liaison workers when students go from a school on the reserve to a junior high or high school in a town or village. So this particular vote, I think, should be looked at very carefully. If initiatives are worth while, are well received, seem to be addressing some of the programs, why is funding being cut?

The minister is aware of a looming teacher shortage, and I would like to ask him how he plans to address it. I've also heard that some student exchange programs are being cut at the time when we need more understanding, more intercultural exchanges across the country, so I would like him to tell me about that. What is happening with student exchange programs? Another question: I would like to know how this province intends to celebrate International Literacy Year, and I would also like to know if the move from providing speech pathology services in the schools to providing it in the health units is being monitored, if that is a successful move.

The minister suggested yesterday, I believe, that we should have a discussion this morning regarding who can become a trustee. I think his kite flying, suggesting that spouses of teachers be ineligible – and he'd have to include the parents of teachers, the children of teachers, and the in-laws of teachers because they are all there in the Act as people who have pecuniary interest – is an overreaction. Let the voters decide. Knowing whether someone is related in any way to a teacher, then let that voter decide if they still want that person to sit on a board of trustees. There are approximately 32,000 teachers in this province. The minister can't possibly believe that a potential 32,000 spouses, let alone parents, children, and in-laws should not be allowed to run as school trustees. I believe that would be a denial of human rights and natural justice.

I'd like to talk just a little bit about the matter of providing education for the whole child, of preparing young people to truly develop themselves, and the minister talked about that earlier. We all know that unless we do develop the whole child, we are missing the boat. One of the areas – and my colleague from the NDP mentioned it – is the matter of the compulsory credits at high school. There is such a credit crunch that a number of students are unable to take practical arts, any options, or a second language. If they want to get into a university, for instance in a premed program, there are so many compulsory credits, up to 104, that there's just no time left for anything else. So believing that we want to develop the whole child, that

the students should be able to take the practical arts, music, drama, phys ed, a second language, in some cases a religious education course, why don't we just say that we're going to have a four-year high school program, admit it, advise boards that they will have to start funding and staffing for that possibility, and get on with it? There are four-year programs in other parts of the country, and maybe that's what we have to start looking at here.

In closing I would just again like to say that I don't believe this government is living up to its stated commitment to the children and the future of this province, and if you look at capital funds, if you look at all of those needs that exist – especially ESL, inner-city needs, social needs – unless we spend the money now, we will face serious problems in the future.

Thank you for your attention.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-Bow.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been looking forward to this opportunity to respond to the Minister of Education's estimates. As you know, education is a very important topic to me, as a former teacher, as it is to the minister and this government. Mr. Chairman, it's obvious that considerable thought and care have gone into the preparation of these estimates, and I believe the members on both sides of this House should lend their support to the minister, to his department, and congratulate them for a job well done.

The education of Alberta's youth is of the utmost importance to all Albertans. This government is maintaining its commitment to education as one of the top priorities by ensuring that all Alberta students are being equipped for higher education and the workplace. The youth of Alberta are our future, Mr. Chairman. I can see several pieces of evidence to support this in and around my constituency of Calgary-Bow. This government's support for education for both the public and the separate school systems is very evident in the city of Calgary.

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

I would like to commend the minister and his department for the continued support of community schools. The community school program is a very unique program which helps meet the special needs of many young Albertans. Hillhurst community school is carrying out its mandate and doing an excellent job in Calgary-Bow. I would like to acknowledge the way that this government is addressing the special needs of students in our province. I'm thinking particularly of programs such as the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School, the high school in Calgary where native culture and academics merge. The native elders assist the teachers in preparing the students and teaching them. At the same time they work to preserve their culture. I attended their graduation ceremony last June, and I was very deeply touched by the testimony of the graduating students on how that program has turned their lives around, how for the first time they saw the possibility of postsecondary education and saw the professional careers open to them. I commend the staff at that school and also the Calgary school board for the support they give to that program.

The Alternative high school is another program that addresses the special needs of people. It's an excellent institution in Calgary, which provides a very unique program for those students who find the regular program too confining. I'm thinking also of the government's assistance for the hearing

impaired program, the GATE program for gifted and talented students, and the English as a Second Language program. All three of these are at Queen Elizabeth high school and elementary school in my constituency.

Fiscal responsibility has been seen also in the government's capital grants such as the modernization program. The Bowness senior high school was recently renovated and modernized. It has been a great rejuvenator for this fine facility. The school is doing an excellent job of educating the youth not just of Calgary-Bow but also many students from the other surrounding northwest communities.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend the Minister of Education for his leadership in the area of curriculum. The development and modification of the school curriculum initiated and implemented by this government is not only timely for the needs of today but insightful to the needs and concerns that will face our province well into the future.

As we have seen, environment has become a major focus for Albertans today, and the realization that what we do today impacts on all of mankind in the future is a fact of life. The development of a more environmentally based curriculum is already being addressed by the minister to ensure that Albertans of tomorrow will have a good understanding of these fine concepts.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to also congratulate the minister for his quick action on the revision of the proposed senior high school science curriculum. I'd like to acknowledge the input of the minister and his advisory council on science education for the very positive effect on this new science curriculum. I think also it was very insightful of the minister to set up the advisory council made up of Albertan citizens, many with expertise in the science field, and also for the very quick response that he made to the advisory committee's suggestions. Many constituents and teachers I have spoken to have expressed their admiration and their pleasure with the new curriculum and also with the quick response. Again, Mr. Chairman, the importance of science and technology in the future is indisputable. By providing today's students with a better science curriculum, we're giving them a head start to the opportunities of the future. The benefits of these changes don't just stop with the students themselves; the province is also bound to benefit from these changes, and a better education for students in science and the environment will enable Alberta to maintain its prominence as a leader in these fields.

It's also important to note the futuristic view which this government has in implementing these changes to the curriculum. We would like to also applaud them for the efforts to achieve these changes and to provide students with much needed curriculum. It's important to know that these changes are being done with the advice and the wishes of the public in the best interests of the youth.

Mr. Chairman, it's also a pleasure to note the increases in funding of basic education to over \$1.6 billion, or over \$3,500 per child. It's my understanding that the 3.5 percent increase for the education system is the largest basic operating grant increase of any of the local government partnered programs. I'm also pleased to note that approximately \$46 million has been allotted to cover the 5.5 percent grant rate increase that began on September 1, 1989, for the full year. These figures demonstrate clearly that our government is maintaining its commitment to education.

If I could, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Minister of Education to review the achievement

testing program that takes place in year 3. I question whether it is not a bit disruptive to the regular program and results in more inconsistent progress. I wonder if these children are still too immature at this age for this type of testing, and if so, this immaturity might make these tests rather inconclusive.

I would also like to urge Mr. Dinning to consider reinstating the volunteer teacher internship program. Motion 232, listed on the Order Paper, is one that I have proposed for this session. One of the spin-offs of this program might be luring or interesting some of the young graduate teachers to going out into more rural areas and establishing their careers there.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be beneficial for the Department of Education to review the goals of education. It seems that every time a new concern comes up, a new subject or a new group arises, they want to have access to the school audience. They want to come into the schools and teach consumer education. Other people feel they should be studying financing. There's just a whole number of subjects and things that people are trying to access through the schools, and I believe this distracts from the core purpose of the education system. We should try and keep some of these distractions down or incorporate them at an older age. Speaking of the core purpose of education, I'd like to applaud the minister for the steps taken to promote literacy and would like to emphasize the need to continue to give that a very important role in our goals.

I'd also like to see an increase in the resources for the ESL program, as there is a growing number, very evident in the Calgary school system, who come to our schools from other lands with very little knowledge of the English language.

At this time I would also like to mention the Excellence in Teaching Awards program. These awards were extremely well received by the teachers, the public, the school boards, and the Alberta Teachers' Association. I've had the pleasure to award three of those, and they were extremely well deserved. They've brought some well-earned recognition to some of the many excellent teachers who exist in Alberta's education system.

Lastly, I would like to urge the Department of Education to continue preparing Alberta's youth for a changing society. Students today are faced with an information explosion on a scale we have never seen before. They are also in the midst of a technological revolution, where today's breakthroughs can be tomorrow's antiques. Mr. Chairman, we have a responsibility to assist our children to cope with these realities. For many of these children the future will hold not one career but maybe four or five careers. We must be preparing them for change, and we must be preparing them now. The job of overseeing and leading Alberta's educational system into the future will be a very complex one, and judging by the Minister of Education's estimates, presented here today, and the government's record in the past, I know that this government is up to the challenge.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yesterday the Minister of Education drew attention to comments that were made in the throne speech to do with the importance that the government attaches to education. Of course, if you go back and look at the throne speech, these comments were made in one very brief paragraph. I just counted the number of lines; I believe there are seven lines actually and fewer than 100 words. Well, I say to the minister . . .

MR. GESELL: It's not the length; it's the substance.

MR. PASHAK: Well, okay, we'll get into the substance, and it is the length. I don't think that reflects very much commitment to education on the part of the government.

I do agree in part with the direction that's set out or implied in the statement. The statement says among other things that education is a top priority. Secondly, it says that all Alberta students should have access to education. However, the only comment I find in there that has to do with curricula is that it should "prepare students for higher education and the workplace." Now, my concern is that there's no mention of high-needs or special needs students. There's no mention of community schools. In my view community schools are especially essential for the kind of complex urban environments that we live in today. I think the failure to indicate these areas of educational programs in the throne speech belies the government's commitment to education. I'm further alarmed, Mr. Chairman, when I hear various government ministers such as the Minister of Agriculture and other backbenchers say that the government's top priority is agriculture. I think, conversely, that the government's top priority should be what is set out in the throne speech and that it should be . . .

MR. DINNING: Top economic priority.

MR. PASHAK: Ah, he didn't qualify it. [interjections] He didn't qualify it. That's a matter of fact. We can always go back to *Hansard* and check it out, and I propose to do exactly that. If he did, then I will apologize to the minister. As long as we understand that in this province the top priority should be, ought to be, and must be education, because education is the most critical institution in our society. It's the one that governments actually have some control over. It bridges the kinds of situations that exist in families, those kinds of situations in which the government has an opportunity to develop within youth the kinds of skills and attitudes that are essential for the ongoing, indeed, survival of the society itself.

I want to say, by the way, that I'm not dismissing agriculture. I think it is an important objective economically all right. Don't go sending out little statements to rural Alberta saying that the New Democrats don't attach any priority to agriculture, because that could be further from the truth.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hoisted with your petard.

MR. PASHAK: Not really, not really.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Anyway, the essential point I'm trying to make is that education really is this bridge between the family and society itself. Society, it seems to me, requires that we prepare students in part for higher education or for the workplace. I'll accept that those are legitimate goals of education, but they're not sufficient. We must go beyond that. I think education requires that we instill in all students a sense of social responsibility and that that sense of social responsibility has to be based on basically what I would consider to be essential Christian values, which would be that all people regardless of their colour, their creed must be able to develop a sense of social commitment, compassion for their fellow being. Our society must be organized along the basis of

truth, honesty, commitment to others, public service, and sharing.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I think public education must, in addition to meeting the needs of the workplace and the needs for higher educated people, provide increasingly for those students who through no fault of their own are at a disadvantage. Increasingly students are at a disadvantage because of the family situations that are developing in our society. We have more people who are single parents in society. We have more people on limited incomes. We have more situations in which two parents must go out into the workplace in order to provide the kind of measure of financial well-being that allows their families to even exist, but that means that traditional patterns and practices and family life have changed rather significantly. There are a lot of consequences from that, and the schools are often called upon to pick up that slack.

In particular, I'm concerned about what have been identified as areas or communities of high needs and the kinds of programs that governments have adopted to try to address those needs, particularly in the field of education. I want to say that I think it was really important that the Department of Education recognized the needs of certain schools. They've identified them as high-needs schools, and they've made some funding available for those purposes. I think the funding is really not adequate to deal with the problems that exist out there, however. It translates into maybe \$60,000 or \$70,000 for schools that are so identified. It does begin to allow these schools to put in some programs, but it really falls short of what ultimately must be done if these schools are going to provide some way of compensating for the fact that some children enter these schools at an incredible disadvantage relative to others.

In saying that, I think part of the problem here exists because I'm not convinced that the Minister of Education himself understands these problems. I get the sense from remarks I've heard him make to other bodies and from reports I get from other teachers and teaching groups he's spoken to that this minister's view of education consists of a model that involves classes of students, perhaps 30 students in a class. All these students are relatively homogeneous. They're all nicely scrubbed. All these students are attentive and obedient. They do what the teacher asks. They're all there because they want to learn so that they can become successful like their parents and get law degrees and medical degrees and take their place at the professional level within society.

There are no students in his classroom who have physical or mental disabilities. There are no students in his classroom who are part of a visible minority. There are no students in his classroom that have difficulties with English as a second language. There are no children who come to school hungry and are therefore inattentive. There are no students in his classroom who have been abused or neglected, often for reasons over which the parent has no control. But I'd like to say that in our urban areas today there are large areas of cities like Calgary and Edmonton that are characterized by precisely children who have these kinds of problems and come into schools with these backgrounds.

I'd just like to describe for a moment the kind of school situations that exist in the constituency that I represent, which is Calgary-Forest Lawn. I would say that in many of the schools in this constituency, first of all, you have children who live in low-income rental housing units. That means you have a problem of migration. Many of the young children who start school in the fall are not in that school in the spring. As many

as 60 to 70 percent of the kids in some of those classrooms who begin in the fall aren't there in the spring. You can imagine the kind of problems that creates in the classroom. In fact, you find that teachers spend more of their time doing social work or addressing health care issues rather than meeting basic educational needs.

The children who do come into these classrooms often come from broken homes of single-parent families. You've got patterns that exist in those communities where people move in and out of various houses, where people can't pay the rent so they move in the middle of the night. These children are often neglected not because the parents are necessarily irresponsible people. Often they haven't been taught parenting skills themselves, but the problems are visited on the children. The children come into school after staying up till all hours of the night or not being fed properly. They're inattentive. The teacher doesn't know why these children are inattentive and are sitting there, but the teacher has to take time away from the other nice kind of middle-class student the minister identifies with and spend time with these problem students. You can imagine the frustration that teachers experience, and you can imagine why it is that teachers feel almost like they're getting a life sentence as a teacher if they're sentenced to teach in a school in my constituency.

Now, not all teachers feel that way. We've got a lot of extremely dedicated principals and a lot of people who really respond well to that kind of educational challenge, but without adequate resources to support their activities, after five or six years in an environment like that they begin to feel burned out. They may drop out of the teaching profession and seek some other line of work, or they want to get transferred out and get back into a school where the students are more like the ones that the minister recognizes.

I could just indicate article that's by one of the principals who taught in a school in my constituency, the Penbrooke Meadows school. A former principal there by the name of Dr. Doug Mirtle, who's now teaching in a more middle-class school in southwest Calgary, is in an ideal position to make a comparison between the kinds of teaching situations that exist in these high-needs areas and those that exist in the kind of middle-class environments that I suspect most of us in this Assembly have been exposed to in our lives. Just let me go through some of the items he's indicated in a list that characterized the socio-educational dynamics that exist in high-needs areas. I won't go through all of them; he's listed some 12 points. I'll just go through the first three or four of them to give you a flavour of some of the characteristics of these high-needs school districts. First of all, he says that there's an

increase in violence as a way of solving problems on the playgrounds, in schools, and in the community. Anger and frustration are being acted out increasingly by all age groups.

As I'm fully aware, in my constituency some of this anger and hostility and violence has racial overtones. In some of the junior high schools in the community there are outbreaks of violence that are organized along ethnic lines. This is unfortunate, and as a society we have to address issues like that or these problems are just going to escalate and become even worse and more serious in the future.

There's "a lack of respect and responsibility towards teachers and administrators" in these schools. The attitude seems to be, "I am an exception to rules, procedures and expectations; they don't apply to me." And of course, that's the message that television today broadcasts rather widely. Young people spend so much time watching television that they begin to identify with

that message and act as if it's universal. "Increasing numbers of students who, for many reasons, don't care about being in school" are there. They see it as "a waste of time."

Finally, just in terms of points that I want to raise from this article, he says that

increasing numbers of students at all ages with social-emotional problems that manifest themselves in maladaptive behaviour characterize the schools. I think one of my colleagues in a moment will talk about behavioural maladaptation and the need to address these problems.

Causes can be traced to violence in the family, the impact of television . . . children raised in day-care settings where love and nurturing can be bought at a price, drugs and alcohol, abuse and neglect, the mobile family, and unrealistic demands on children to grow up in a hurry.

These are all part of the pressures that urban youth experience. For all I know, maybe these problems exist in some of the rural areas of the province, but I think it's really important that people who represent rural areas begin to understand the true nature of the difficulties that school authorities, boards, and teachers face in low-income areas of the cities where there's a lot of rental accommodation and a lot of social housing.

In addition to the problems of high-needs students in these areas, there are also serious concerns about how the students with special needs are treated in the school system. The Calgary board of education has a number of significant programs in this regard. They have programs called minimal incidence programs, that deal with the hearing handicapped, the severely retarded, those with physical handicaps, and those with very low functioning skills and abilities. I know that the province makes special educational funding available for those purposes, but there is always a need that's much greater than the funding that's provided. I think the ultimate moral measure of any society is how prepared that society is to go in the direction of meeting the needs of individuals who can't control their own circumstances, who for whatever reason are born with a social disadvantage. It's the ability of a society to show compassion and caring and provide support for those individuals that characterizes the moral worth, I would suggest, of a society. And we come up short-handed in those areas, Mr. Chairman.

I know that the government does make some effort in those directions. They do provide special block funding for children with learning disabilities, for the educable mentally handicapped, and in the Calgary case for some students who experience severe behaviour adaptation problems. I've met with representatives of the board of education in Calgary who tell me that in the schools I'm talking about, there are so many children with behaviour adaptation problems that they just can't begin to address the need; there is a need for three times as many spaces as are available. When there are children who are identified in the schools as having behaviour adaptation problems, it often takes up to eight months or longer to even get a hearing with psychologists or social service people who could begin to help and work with children in that category. It's one thing to have one or two children in a school who have severe behaviour problems, but when you have schools that have three or four children in each classroom with severe behavioural problems, then you've got a real problem on your hands. The teacher has to spend all of his time working with those kids and has no time left over for the rest of the children in that classroom, so a whole series of educational needs are not being met in these schools and in these situations.

I've indicated some of the problems. I'd like to now suggest some solutions, just rather briefly, Mr. Chairman, to deal with

these issues. It's obvious that there is a need for expanded support for English as a Second Language in these schools. At the moment we do provide some, but it's limited to two or three years. The kinds of immigrants we're getting today come from countries that are very, very different from our country in terms of basic language structure, in terms of values, general understandings, and this kind of thing. So the needs of new immigrants are very different from those of the older immigrants. That older population of immigrants could utilize two or three years of English as a Second Language training and make an adjustment to the Canadian way of life, but new immigrants whose basic language is Chinese or Arabic often need four or five years. In fact, there's an additional problem, because many of the youth who come to this country, particularly Vietnamese youth for example, have had no prior schooling. So they come here at 10 or 11 years of age with no prior schooling. You add onto that the language barrier, and you've got some real problems going into our junior high classrooms.

For the benefit of the members I'd just perhaps point out some statistics. Fully 7.8 percent of all immigrants and refugees entering Canada came to Alberta; of these, 74 percent came from non-English speaking countries. Here's the level of support that's provided, at least to the Calgary board of education. English as a Second Language assistance was provided to some 2,018 students in the Calgary board of education programs. The cost of these programs to the Calgary board of education was \$3,155,782. This is for 1987. In that year the provincial grants at \$618 per pupil made the total of money received to help students with this need only \$1,027,000. So what this really means is that the Calgary board of education only gets one-third of the funding it needs to meet the needs of children with English as a Second Language difficulties. So if they have to take money for these programs, it means that other students go short within the program. Actually, I think this is a federal matter, and as long as the federal government has policies that encourage immigration from abroad, which I think is reasonable in a just society – we need these people – I think the provincial government should make a very determined and strong effort to get the federal government to pay more money where you have needs that have to do with increasing support for English as a Second Language.

Other areas that I think the province could explore have to do with co-ordinating a little more effectively the services that are provided through the Department of Health and through social services, because the problems in the schools are not just educational problems. I see no co-ordination whatsoever in terms of the delivery of educational services with these other departments. There's one minor program that seemed to work to a certain extent in the Calgary-Forest Lawn area. One school managed to make some contact somehow with social services, and at least social services was able at regular intervals to report back to the school on the social backgrounds of students who were having difficulty in the school. That worked for that school, but as soon as other schools found out about it, they wanted to use that same social worker to do the same thing in their schools. What happened was that the social worker stopped coming to that original school. So instead of getting reports at weekly intervals, the reports started coming at half-yearly intervals, and therefore the tracking was lost. So there's much to be done in that area.

I'd just like to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by quoting in its entirety a very brief paragraph by Mr. Mirtle in which he says, and I quote:

As long as leadership remains out of touch, the political will remains archaic, and the vision of those in real power is grossly inaccurate, we are in big trouble. The storm is gathering now! Is our professional resolve strong enough to weather the storm? I think that adequately sums up the problems that exist in these high-needs areas.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Education.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comments made by some of my colleagues about the quality work that is being done in this province to meet our mission, to meet our objective, which is to provide the best possible education to all Alberta students. I'm going to try to go through one by one many of the comments made by my colleagues in the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party and of course my own colleague for Calgary-Bow.

The Member for Stony Plain asked questions about the details. It is unusual that you'd have a budget of nearly \$1.5 billion, but remember that the strength of our Alberta school system is that all the decisions are not made in this building; they're not all made in this Chamber. They're made by hundreds, in fact I suppose thousands, of locally elected school trustees, who are in the best position to take the province's direction, the province's curriculum, the province's funding that meets those local needs and make the decisions that best meet the needs of the students in the communities in which those trustees serve. I think that's the right way to go. Yes, Mr. Chairman, there are times when the Minister of Education would make a different decision. Yes, there are times when he feels that he might make a better decision. But by and large that is the strength of our school system across the province. So those details, I suppose, could be appended in the way of some 150 annual reports of how the moneys we are voting here today get spent, invested in fact, locally – whether it's in Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, Calgary, the county of Ponoka, the county of Warner, the county of Grande Prairie – all across this province by some very committed school trustees.

Mr. Chairman, the Member for Stony Plain asked for certain details. A number of them are spelled out in the element details. One in particular that Stony Plain asked about was native education funding. In fact, we fund native education in two ways. One is in vote 3 through a sum of about \$500,000 to administer the Native Education Project. Then on top of that there is a little over \$4.5 million that is granted to individual school boards – that's a 3 and a half percent increase this year over last year – to fund the Native Education Project within individual school boards and schools across the province. High-needs funding, \$2.6 million in this year's budget; language grants, \$9.6 million; vocational education grants, \$11.4 million. Total Special Education Grants: nearly \$100 million devoted to basic special education – high incidence, for the guardianship for handicapped Out-of-province students and for regional assessment services.

The hon. member went to equity and the whole notion of equity funding and asked some very good questions about the criteria by which this government will decide how we will change equity funding so that in fact all students have access, within reasonable limits, to the same quality of education no matter where they live, whether it's in the county of Warner or the county of Strathcona or the Cypress school division or the Redcliff school division.

I spelled out in a speech that I gave to trustees on March 19 a number of criteria. There were 10 in particular, and I just

want to briefly go through three or four of them. The number one criterion is that whatever conclusion we come up with, it must meet the criterion that we provide adequate funding to address the equity needs of all Alberta students. Secondly, our solution must maintain and facilitate improvement in the access and quality of our school programs. The solution must include a local contribution to education funding and must allow for local flexibility in the allocation of education funding. The solution must take into account the variation of educational costs among school jurisdictions. The Member for Calgary-McKnight touched on that, and she's absolutely right. The cost of educating a child in Edmonton is going to be different than in the county of Grande Prairie or in the Fort McMurray school division or in Redcliff or Warner because of a number of reasons, one of which is transportation costs. I visited the Fort Vermilion school division with the hon. Member for Peace River, and clearly, when you've got as few children living as far away from a school – whether it's Zama, whether it's Rainbow Lake, whether it's Rocky Lane – the costs of delivering quality education to those students is going to be different than it is in our home city of Calgary.

The proposal, the solution must address taxation equity. The hon. Member for Stony Plain talked about under or over taxation or normal taxation. The fact is that there are some property tax payers in Alberta in one jurisdiction who are paying a mill rate of three mills, and in another jurisdiction they're paying as high as nearly 60 mills on the equivalent value, the equivalent property in a totally different part of the province. To me, Mr. Chairman, to this government that is unfair and must be addressed in our solution. One other criterion: the solution cannot suggest an increase in expenditures from the General Revenue Fund of the province without suggesting an equal increase in revenue from other sources, revenue that would go into the General Revenue Fund to pay for that incremental extra cost that's being asked of the General Revenue Fund.

I'll go on, Mr. Chairman. Support for excellence: I think virtually every speaker spoke of that; I appreciate that kind of support. The health curriculum. They talked about community agencies and community involvement in our children's education. I was concerned; I remain concerned with special education and meeting the needs of children who have special needs. I am concerned because I hear from parents and I hear frustrations from school trustees that we are spending millions and millions of dollars on special education for these children. Are we really meeting their needs? I said: I'm concerned that we're not doing a good enough job.

We agreed to undertake a wholesale, comprehensive review of special education. It involves not just education, not just teachers and trustees, but we've pulled in the Premier's council on the disabled; we've pulled in the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Social Services and community agencies that will help us to define the cost of special education and what kind of funding is being provided provincially and locally. What is the mandate? What are we trying to accomplish in special education, and who is trying to meet those needs? Is it just the Department of Education? That's not good enough. It's got to be the departments of Health and Family and Social Services. It's got to be FCSS-funded agencies, family and community support services, in the local municipalities that help us to deliver those services. Most importantly the services have got to be co-ordinated so that you don't have 27 or 25 or 20 social agencies visiting the child in the home in a given

month. That just doesn't make sense. It speaks of all of government and the job that we must do in rethinking how we deliver government services, not just to students in schools, not just to families, not just to consumers or to the business community. We've got a responsibility to take a wholesale look at how we deliver those services.

Environment. All members, including the Member for Calgary-Bow, talked about environmental education in Alberta, and I think we've come a long way, Mr. Chairman. There's a concern out there amongst our citizens about the environment. Are we doing the right thing? Are we teaching our children? There's no better place than in the schools to start to make sure that our children are environmentally conscious and environmentally concerned, but so, too, must they understand that economic development can be sustainable economic development and that development in no way needs to be anti-environment. It's got to be done responsibly, but our students must learn and must know that that kind of economic development must occur and must continue in this province, because if it doesn't, we will not be able to afford to deliver the best possible education to all Alberta students. So we have put it into our science curriculum. We have put it into our social studies and health curricula. We have a physical education program in this province that helps students to learn, to understand, and to respect the environment. Our junior high school science, social studies, and agricultural programs, our environmental and outdoor education programs are being developed so that they address that important theme of environment, sustainable economic development.

Mr. Chairman, the four-year high school program: I don't think Albertans want to go to a four-year high school program. I've heard the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight, you know, as the Liberal party is wont to do, say: we should dictate; we should mandate from the Chamber, from this building, from Edmonton, make all those wise decisions that only this Chamber can make. That's the Liberal view, Mr. Chairman. That is not the view of this government. We've got to recognize that children and students and families and parents have to make choices. What we have provided in the advanced diploma program, the general diploma program, and the new integrated occupational program is the ability, the opportunity, the environment for students to make choices. If they want to pursue science – and I appreciated the comments from my colleague for Calgary-Bow – we are opening more and more fields to those students so that they can get the training in science to be prepared to go on to engineering, to nursing, to medicine, to chemistry, physics, or biology, or to become an electrician. We're providing those opportunities, but they must make choices. If the choice is that they want to go back for a seventh semester or an eighth semester of high school, we will facilitate that and we must facilitate that. I do not believe it is wise for us to dictate from this Chamber or from this Legislature that all students must take four years of high school.

Mr. Chairman, the comment about the Alberta Correspondence School and distance learning. In fact, we are continuing our efforts to develop new curriculum material within the department. That's found in vote 3. The grants to school boards: some 65 have taken up our distance learning opportunity; virtually all of them have purchased the capital equipment that's necessary now to deliver that program. That funding was available in 1989-90. It no longer needs to be available in '90-91 because virtually all school boards have taken up that funding. Our spending for distance learning grants will

be this year some \$5.27 million, and that is an increase for those school districts of some 3 and a half percent to meet their operating needs to deliver distance learning.

Not only do they get those grants, Mr. Chairman; they get the basic School Foundation Program Fund grant. They get the special ed grant. They get a grant for transportation. They get all that they need in addition to the distance learning equity grant. That's an additive grant that meets the needs of those 65 school boards. Nearly 130 remote rural schools – many of whom I've heard from, many my colleagues have told me about – are going that extra mile to meet the educational equity and the educational needs of our kids.

I talked about the special ed review. The hon. Member for Stony Plain raised block funding of modernization in urban areas, a notion that we ought to provide a sum of money to Calgary's and Edmonton's four school boards and let them make that decision. It's funny; I've heard mixed reviews from those four school boards. One in particular said: "No, don't do that. We're satisfied with the way you're doing it today." So we are getting some mixed reviews, and we've got some decisions to make about that in the next few weeks. I am before my colleagues now with a proposal for capital funding. It clearly recognizes the needs of many of my colleagues and their constituents around this province that we must maintain the funding for new schools to meet the needs of kids and the growing enrolments in those communities but also to restore and update and maintain the quality structures that we have around this province. Modernization dollars are equally important to maintain the 1,500 schools that we have around the province.

Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I want to just go to a comment made by the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight. I can't believe that she would say this, that here she's saying: spend, spend, spend. She refuses to recognize the context in which this government has had to operate since 1985-86. She fails to read her budget document, Alberta at a Glance, our economic and fiscal profile, which shows very, very clearly the growth that we've experienced in our overall spending. As well, she spoke very favourably about our education spending, how it has grown at a rate almost double if not triple what the overall average in program spending is for this provincial government. At the same time, she's got to realize that our annual average revenue growth during that same time has been less than one-half of 1 percent. So you've got to look at our spending in the context of our overall fiscal picture. To do otherwise would be a Liberal approach. It would be an irresponsible approach, and this government will not do that.

Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I know that all hon. members would enjoy an opportunity to speak about this further.

MR. McINNIS: Point of order.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I rise under *Beauchesne* 482 to ask the minister: if he wants to teach our children about sustainable, would he at least define it for us in the Assembly?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, I would be delighted to do that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just a moment, please. [inter-

jections] Just a moment. Order.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, are we on a point of order?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Perhaps the point of order raised by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place requires further review, but as a preliminary judgment I do not think it is a point of order.

MR. DINNING: May I suggest that if the hon. member is interested in doing that, perhaps his caucus colleagues would like to designate Education at a future date.

In the interest of time, Mr. Chairman, may I move that the committee rise and report.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of the motion to rise and report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I believe it's a matter of rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes. Could I just make a slight correction in that the motion accepted from the minister, if it's acceptable to the Assembly, was to adjourn?

Hon. deputy House leader, would you like to state your motion again, please.

MR. GOGO: That the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Education, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's the intent of the government on Monday next to deal with the estimates of the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs in the afternoon and to do various government Bills under Committee of the Whole and perhaps some second readings of government Bills in the evening.

[At 1 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]