

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 15, 1990 2:30 p.m.**
Date: 90/05/15

[The House met at 2:30 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Each day in this place each one of us is expected to face the ongoing challenge of representing the concerns of all Albertans.

May God grant us strength and wisdom to carry out our responsibilities.

Amen.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. ROSTAD: It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly three colleagues from British Columbia, Ontario, and New Brunswick. Seated in your gallery are the Hon. Bud Smith, the Hon. Ian Scott, and the Hon. James Lockyer, the respective attorneys general from those provinces. They're also accompanied by their assistants: Mr. John Aisenstat from B.C. and Miss Shelley Spiegel from Ontario. I'd ask that they rise and receive the usual warm welcome from our Assembly.

head: Introduction of Bills**Bill 29****Public Utilities Board Amendment Act, 1990**

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 29, the Public Utilities Board Amendment Act, 1990. This being a money Bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 29 read a first time]

Bill 24**Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, 1990**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 24, the Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, 1990.

The purpose of this Bill is to implement lease rental rate increases from \$2.50 to \$3.50 per hectare as announced by the Hon. Dick Johnston in his March 22, 1990, budget speech; to make changes to the Act to enable the implementation of complementary exploration regulations; and to introduce several housekeeping amendments. The housekeeping amendments I just referred to will clarify certain provisions of the Act and increase the overall flexibility of the Act.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 24 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

Bill 263**An Act to Amend****the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act**

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 263, An Act to Amend the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act.

This Bill, if passed, would make mandatory the holding of producer plebiscites prior to the establishment of any commission that would collect levies from producers. In other words, it gives the power to the producers rather than the politicians.

[Leave granted; Bill 263 read a first time]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 24, introduced by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to file motions for returns 248 and 250, at least a tree's worth.

It also gives me pleasure to table with the Assembly a report developing a framework for a conservation strategy for the province of Alberta.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file four copies of A Critique of Proposed Federal Regulations for Pulp and Paper Effluents, and Recent Evidence Implicating Dioxins as Hazards to Human Health, by Professor D.W. Schindler, a Killam Memorial professor of ecology, departments of zoology and botany, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, in the members' gallery today is Dr. John Rottger, a medical doctor from the Pincher Creek area, who is in Edmonton today to participate in the announcement of the Alberta Office of Renewable Energy Technology and also to announce his appointment as chairman of that board. Dr. Rottger was the chairman of the Southwest Alberta Solar, Wind and Renewable Energy Advisory Board, established by the Premier, based on a commitment he made in 1986. I'd like Dr. Rottger to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Banff-Cochrane, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Jack Tennant, a noted newspaper publisher and columnist who publishes two newspapers in wide circulation in the Banff-Cochrane constituency, both *Cochrane This Week* and the *Calgary Rural Rocky View Times*. Mr. Tennant is seated in your gallery, and I'd ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place, I would like to introduce . . . I'm sorry; Edmonton-Strathcona. I'm Edmonton-Jasper Place.

I would like to introduce five members of the student legal services group at the University of Alberta. They do some fine work in research and providing legal services to people who can't afford them. They are Stephen Leach of the legal education project; Joe Hunder, legal reform project; Kathleen Spelliscy, criminal law office, west end; Allison Francis, criminal office, south side; and Gordon Putnam, McLeod, downtown. I'd like them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature 55 students. They come both from McNally composite high school in Edmonton-Gold Bar and from Charlesbourg, Quebec, on an exchange to McNally school. They are accompanied by teachers Suzette Gagné and Carole Desmarais from Quebec and Geoff Salmon and Francis Goupil from Edmonton. They're in the public gallery, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by the Minister of the Environment.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today 15 corrections facility workers and guards from Fort Saskatchewan visiting our Assembly. They are joined, I believe, by eight social workers representing local 6. I'd ask them to rise in the public gallery and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Dr. Natalia Krawetz, who is chief executive officer of the Environment Council of Alberta, and Dr. Joan Snyder, who's chairman of the public advisory committees for the ECA and was also chairman of the steering committee that prepared the framework for an Alberta Conservation Strategy, filed earlier in the Assembly. I would ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have another introduction, if I may. I would like to introduce, also, through you and to members of the Assembly a very special friend of mine. His name is Lynn Klein. He's superintendent of the B.C. Ambulance Service. He's my brother. He's accompanied by his dad and my dad, Phil. I would ask that they receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder, then the Solicitor General.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 27 grade 6 students from Dunluce community school, located in the constituency of Edmonton-Calder. They are accompanied by their teacher Miss Charlotte Quelch and five parents as well. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Solicitor General, followed by Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you nine young, enthusiastic people from the city of St. Albert who I was able to lunch with today and who have a deep interest in government as well as the process of government. They are led today by Joel Borle from St. Albert. I would ask them to rise in the members' gallery and receive the usual welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 16 students from the Adult Development Centre in my riding. They are in the public gallery, and they are accompanied by teachers Kim Read, Jill Chesley, and Scott Cline. I request that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

Transfer Payments

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to our esteemed Treasurer. The Treasurer had some of his usual rhetoric for his federal cousins in Ottawa when they brought down their budget earlier this year. As you recall, that budget singled out Alberta for drastic cuts in a number of areas, in particular in the area of federal transfer payments. We waited and we waited for the Treasurer to back up his rhetoric with action, and finally he said Alberta would join B.C.'s court challenge of the cuts. Mr. Speaker, right now the House of Commons Finance Committee is considering Bill C-69, the government's Expenditures Restraint Act, which will allow the federal Tories to cut Canada Assistance Plan payments, exploration incentive grants, postsecondary and health payments to the province of Alberta. That's a real kick to this province, and it probably will cost us over \$250 million in the next couple of years. My question to the Treasurer is: what representations has the government of Alberta made to this committee to fight these proposed cuts?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a common policy that this government deals on a minister to minister basis or a first minister to first minister basis. Now, I know that the opposition leader would like us to go down there with cap in hand, but that's not how the government of Alberta operates. Let me point out, though, that we have taken some important action with respect to the CAP limit. I can assure you that my colleague the Attorney General has advised that as of tomorrow, as a matter of fact, the four western provinces along with Ontario are in court to take on this very issue, Mr. Speaker, an issue which the federal government has imposed on the provinces unilaterally, which has capped the transfers under the assistance program. We think that is wrong, and we're going to fight it out in court along with the leadership of Ontario and B.C. We're behind that issue.

Secondly, we have all over Canada talked about the way in which equalization has worked, the way in which the transfers on established programs financing has worked. We believe these are a matter of contract that should be negotiated between governments, that reflect the necessity of our government and other provinces in meeting the needs. Now, we don't do that in preparation before a committee, Mr. Speaker; we do that on a

minister to minister basis. The first ministers have an opportunity to outline that, and that's the way we operate.

Thirdly, I know that the Leader of the Opposition is going to get up and talk about stabilization. That also is under negotiation. We're continuing pressure on Mr. Wilson and the federal government to ensure that Alberta gets its share of the stabilization program payments which reflect in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I appreciate him trying to anticipate my questions, but as usual, as he is with his budget, he's wrong.

I'm sure after that little speech Michael Wilson is just quaking in his boots – quaking in his boots.

Minister to minister: just like they did with the GST, just like they did with the interest rates. Now we're going to lose this battle. Instead of being so prideful and saying it has to be minister to minister, it seems to me that this Treasurer should take every opportunity, because it's \$250 million coming out of his budget. I'm saying to the Treasurer, asking him this question: if he's really serious about this matter and that we cannot afford to lose this \$250 million, why didn't you simply file a notice and go and make your case to that committee and forget about minister to minister?

MR. JOHNSTON: It must be Tuesday morning, or something must be wrong here, Mr. Speaker. I just indicated to the Member for Edmonton-Norwood that the province of Alberta along with four other provinces are in fact taking the federal government to court to find out, on principle, what is at issue here, and that's the way in which the resolution of these questions should be done. If you can't do it on a political basis and it is a unilateral change, as we have argued with respect to the agreement, then it must be sorted out in court, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Now, although the province of Alberta has a position that we do not appear before parliamentary committees, I should point out that doesn't mean we don't communicate with them; for example, we find another way to talk to them so that they understand the Alberta position. Over the course of the last 15 years that I've been involved, while we have never appeared before a committee except on one exceptional circumstance, we make it very clear to the members of the committee where we stand. We will have, for example, an informal gathering to talk to them about our issues. That's in fact what we did with respect to GST, with respect to other issues which face Canada, and that's the way in which governments should operate. We have a constitutional responsibility, which is pointed out in our Constitution, and I suggest that the Member for Edmonton-Norwood should have a look at the Constitution to see how governments operate.

MR. MARTIN: I've certainly watched this government operate and get its teeth kicked out on the GST, get its teeth kicked out on the interest rates, and now we're going to lose this battle, Mr. Speaker. Informal gatherings: how nice.

My question to the Treasurer is simply this. All this tough talk isn't worth anything if this goes through. It's going to cost at least \$250 million. I've asked the minister this. This committee is meeting right now. As I understand, the B.C. Court of Appeal hears the challenge. That starts tomorrow. Why didn't he at least go to the committee and say, "Will you wait until we hear what happens in court"? That's the least he could do, instead of worrying about talking minister to minister and informal gatherings.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the Premier and other ministers had communication with the federal government, and they did not indicate any flexibility. They said that they were going to proceed with their budget principles, and they told us that there was no other choice but they were going to proceed with their policy. So in a reasonable fashion, trying to resolve this, we went to the courts along with the other provinces I've indicated. That's the way this process should be sorted out, despite what the Member for Edmonton-Norwood may say.

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

MR. MARTIN: Just tell \$250 million good-bye, Mr. Speaker.

Corrections Employees' Contract Negotiations

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to direct my second question to the Solicitor General. This government's track record on labour relations with its employees will go down in history as a textbook case of how not to run the public service. Unfair legislation, a steadfast refusal to negotiate meaningfully on critical issues, especially issues that can't go to arbitration, court injunctions, intimidation, inflammatory media campaigns: it's hard to believe that these are the tactics of a western democracy in the '90s.

Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General has so far resisted many of the big-stick tactics used by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Family and Social Services. Tomorrow the negotiating team for AUPE local 3, the corrections workers, will be meeting in Edmonton. I'm sure they would appreciate receiving a proposal on the issue of pensions that amounts to something more than study. My question: will the Solicitor General take advantage of this opportunity to meet with the union negotiators and try to resolve this dispute?

MR. FOWLER: I think the preamble, Mr. Speaker, calls for some response. Unfair legislation: it's only 13 months ago that I pounded on many thousands of doors, as did everybody here; I didn't hear one word, not one word during that campaign about Alberta's unfair labour legislation. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, so we can get at the answer. [interjections] Order. Order.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, it has been indicated that there is a willingness to look at the matter of pensions the same as there is in respect to the salaries. The salaries offered by the government are 5 and 5; the demand is 10 and 10. This government has indicated repeatedly since the strike started: there will be no negotiating on any of these matters so long as an illegal strike is in place. That illegal strike is still in place.

MR. MARTIN: I was, frankly, hoping for more from the Solicitor General, but if the Solicitor General didn't hear this while he was out, knocking on doors, he just wasn't listening. Ask the two former ministers of Labour. They heard the message.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister. I want him to consider this. He has a big responsibility here. Instead of hiding behind the Minister of Labour, who is, frankly, a big part of the problem rather than a solution, I'm saying to him: would he personally intervene? They're going to be here in Edmonton.

Would he personally intervene and sit down with these people and see if there is some resolution to this dispute?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, 275 pounds of brawn and muscle doesn't hide behind anybody.

I'm fully aware, Mr. Speaker, of my responsibilities, and I agree it is a big responsibility. I have a daily concern about my workers and correctional officers that are out on strike. I have a concern about what that's doing to their daily life and their family life and their social life and their business life and their working life. I feel very deeply about that. I feel deeply about the fact that many people that want to work, in fact, are being threatened. I feel badly about that. If these people are meeting tomorrow, I am extremely happy about it. I can do nothing to force them to meet. I can do nothing about what they talk about when they do meet. I can only say that I sincerely hope they will come to an agreement to get back to work so that then I can ensure that the proper people are in proper bargaining, fair bargaining, and open bargaining.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I certainly wasn't talking about body weight, to begin with.

His concerns are noble. I'm glad he is concerned. I believe that to be the case. But it's time this government stopped hiding behind unfair laws, intimidation, court injunctions, and all the rest of it. You were not here when those laws were passed. I want to repeat this question to the Solicitor General. These people will be here in Edmonton, and I'm sure if the Solicitor General wanted to take it upon himself, he could meet with these people and see if there was a resolution. I'm saying: rather than the concerns and feeling sorry, will the minister do something concrete and meet tomorrow with these people?

MR. FOWLER: Surely it is inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, for the leader of a political party to be putting out an invitation on behalf of an established union that is taking a job action. How could I say yes to such a question if I didn't know it would be accepted in the first place? So, no, I cannot give the assurance that I would meet tomorrow, based on a question from the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Liberal Party, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. [interjections] Order please. Edmonton-Glengarry.

Meech Lake Accord

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the hon. Premier. Yesterday a former Premier of Alberta indicated that Albertans would lose economically if Quebec pulled out of Confederation. I think that's a correct statement. The former Premier also indicated that more public debate should take place by first ministers in relationship to the whole Meech Lake process. Nobody wants our country to fall apart, but Albertans want our agenda attended to. We don't want to be using the words "western alienation" for the next decade. My question to the Premier is, firstly, this. It appears that positive action is taking place with respect to Meech, but the June 23 time limit is moving faster and faster upon us. In order to ensure that nothing happens, no difficulty ensues, will the Premier undertake, will he commit to getting rid, insofar as Alberta is concerned, of that June 23 deadline? We don't need it.

MR. GETTY: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DECORE: Well, I think that's the kind of discussion that leads to more difficulty and not to solutions of problems.

My second question, Mr. Speaker, is this. Alberta is anxious for a reformed Triple E Senate. We're on the offensive on that issue, except for the NDP. There is an obstacle in the way of getting a reformed Senate, and that is the unanimity provision of Meech. Will the Premier agree to remove our steadfast concern and holding to that unanimity provision so as to allow Senate reform to be real?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the reason Senate reform is the number one constitutional issue concerning Canadians right now is because of this government and this Premier. I recall over some period of years when there was only one government and one Premier who was talking about Senate reform, only one government and one Premier talking about a Triple E Senate, and only one government and one Premier who went to work across the country in order to try and build and develop a consensus towards meaningful Senate reform. Now, I believe Meech Lake unlocks the door to meaningful Senate reform. There are a variety of discussions going on right now, and I don't think it would be helpful to the process for me to focus in on any one of them, because a variety of provinces are expressing concerns about different matters. But as I said before in the Legislature, and I confirm it again for the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, in the coming days and weeks I will be working towards the following three principles: one, that we have a united Canada; second, that we have strong, equal provinces who cannot be dictated to from the centre; and third, that we are able to open the door to meaningful Senate reform. Those are the principles that we'll be following.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier continues to be out of step with the majority of Albertans on this issue, and it's regrettable.

My final question to the Premier is this. It is reported today that the special House of Commons committee dealing with the companion resolution has suggested that constitutional changes to Meech take place so as to ensure paramountcy of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to ensure that women and their rights have paramountcy in the Charter, and that multiculturalism and native groups have paramountcy. Will the Premier commit on Alberta's behalf to that kind of change suggested by the Commons committee?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we didn't sign Meech Lake without knowing what was in it. We had no problems with signing Meech Lake because we believe it in no way derogates from the rights of any Canadians.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drumheller, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the hon. Premier. In view of the fact that the House of Commons committee, as already has been mentioned by the preceding questioner, is reporting earlier than anticipated and that there are now only 39 days left for the ratification of the Meech Lake accord, can the hon. Premier say if the first ministers will be meeting soon in an attempt to salvage the agreement?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the House of Commons committee will be reporting either tomorrow or Thursday, which is earlier than originally planned. I think that's wise. The hon. member mentions 39 days, and there are some complications with regard to a constitutional resolution proceeding through, for instance, the Manitoba Legislature in less than a month. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, there is getting to be a compression of dates. I hope that the committee does report quickly. I think that if you consider the dates that are now before us, we should be having a first ministers' meeting no later than next week. It seems to me that we should have had one before now, but even now we are down to the last minutes, in a constitutional manner of speaking, and I think the Prime Minister should call the Premiers together as first ministers to Ottawa no later than next week.

MR. SCHUMACHER: As has also been pointed out by the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, the House of Commons committee seems to be recommending a rather large shift towards restoring and strengthening central paramountcy in our Confederation. Can the hon. Premier say how our government will react to the recommendation relating to federal spending power in areas of provincial jurisdiction?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, there is one problem that I see the first ministers having to deal with as they try and close the constitutional reform impasse that faces our nation, and that is the almost overload of issues that seems to be growing. Manitoba has some five or six that their committee recommended. We hear it in a way by leaks, I guess. Nevertheless, it seems like there is an expanded list of issues that people want to deal with. We know that New Brunswick has some concerns, and we also know that the Premier of Newfoundland has concerns. I think that we will be unable to proceed to close the constitutional reform impasse if we have a huge shopping list. I consider that to be overload. I feel that we must focus in on a few meaningful issues at this time. I think Senate reform is number one. I think that on other issues we can deal with them as we go into the future with a Constitution which we can deal with all together, with all the members of the constitutional family working around the same table and dealing with these issues.

The hon. member did mention a particular one, and that is the spending powers. I wonder that any member of this Legislature could argue that we would allow the federal government to exercise, within exclusive provincial jurisdictions, their taxation powers in order to end run the Constitution and force down our throats national policies in areas of our exclusive jurisdictional responsibilities. If they suggest that, they are prepared to give up the responsibilities and the rights of Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder.

Social Workers' Strike

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. This minister and this government are incredibly hypocritical. They say that they really care about their employees and their clients, but in fact they are harassing and intimidating social workers and trying to scare the public. This minister has said that cheques to clients

may be delayed, when the minister knows full well that his department is ready, able, and willing to get month-end cheques out on time. The May 9 memo from his associate deputy minister states this very clearly. I would ask: why is this minister using intimidation tactics instead of concentrating and dealing with the genuine concerns of social workers in this province, like high caseloads?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, as is so often the case, again their information is wrong. Obviously there's a strike in progress, and we are at this time making preparations to issue month-end cheques. What I said is that, yes, there's the potential, obviously, for some disruption to this. There are 700-plus social workers out on strike, and it's bound to have an impact. At this time we are working from last month's information, not current. We haven't had the opportunity of updating it the way we normally would. Nonetheless, we are going to proceed on that information. We're going to proceed on a timely and appropriate basis. We're certainly going to make every effort to make sure that cheques get out at the end of the month, and I think for the most part we will succeed. But again a word of caution: obviously there are bound to be some disruptions; there are bound to be some shortages. There are bound to be some calculations that were appropriate for last month that aren't necessarily appropriate or reflecting this month's circumstances.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MS MJOLSNESS: Okay. Mr. Speaker, the memo states very clearly that there won't be problems, that the cheques will get out on time. I think that this minister is trying to pit social workers against clients, and it won't work. Supplementary: when is this minister going to stop using intimidation and fear mongering and negotiate a meaningful solution to this dispute?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting if we were to compare agendas, because this government has said all along that we are anxious to resolve outstanding issues, that we are anxious to see social workers obey the laws that were established in this very Assembly, that we are anxious to see social workers return to the jobsite and return to the work force. It's perplexing, Mr. Speaker. I feel very badly. I feel badly for the way people like the leader of this party are abusing social workers right now. We know what their agenda is. Their agenda isn't social workers. It's really interesting to see people like this leader join hand in hand with people like Dave Werlin. I hadn't heard from Dave Werlin for a long time, but all of a sudden Dave Werlin, running for the presidency of the CLC, is out on the front steps creating all kinds of . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Mr. Werlin really hasn't got anything to do with this, but it does raise a case in point where other members of the public in the last year have suffered abuse at the hands or at the mouth of this House. So if one calls about one case, you're going to find the rest of the House calling about other cases. So indeed we'll see what happens in the next series of questions.

The Chair also points out that the Member for Edmonton-Calder used the word "hypocritical" with respect to the minister, and that's clearly out of order under *Beauchesne* 489. Perhaps the member will withdraw it at the end of question period.

Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Conservation Strategy

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An Alberta conservation strategy must be an integral part of a proper provincial and national environmental policy. The Alberta Conservation Strategy document, released today, shows some great promise because it states, and it is true, that a fundamental restructuring of government decision-making processes and objective-setting processes must be put into place if we are to do environmental policy properly. Sadly, this document will come to nothing if there isn't appropriate commitment at the senior-most levels in this government. To the Premier: why should anyone in this province believe that that level of commitment exists when we see a Premier who purposefully undermines the role of the Al-Pac review panel, we see a Minister of Recreation and Parks who complains about the size of ecological reserves, and we see a minister of forestry who has thwarted the calling of environmental impact assessments for forestry management agreements every step of the way?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I should almost ask: why should I answer a question that is based on so much false information? Perhaps the Minister of the Environment may wish to respond to the hon. member since he filed the paper today in the Legislature. But based on that terrible list of faulty lead-ins to his questions, I can hardly try and work an answer back to him through that.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I feel sort of left out. I must be doing something wrong.

Basically, Mr. Speaker, the conservation strategy that was filed today develops a philosophy that really is consistent with this government's thinking. It's consistent with this government's policy, for instance, of putting in place the highest standards in the world for pulp mill development, for the discharge of dioxins and furans and other chlorinated organics. It's consistent with the policy established by this government to look after our hazardous waste as no other province has been able to do. It's consistent, Mr. Speaker, with many other environmental policies that have established this province as being probably the leader in Canada.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, principle 4 on page 3 states: "Integrate as much information as possible in planning and managing resources." How can the Minister of the Environment state that that particular statement is consistent with his government's policy while at the same time failing to subject six of seven or eight major northern pulp mill projects to a proper environmental impact assessment process, which would give us that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] Thank you, hon. member.

MR. KLEIN: It's very, very subjective, Mr. Speaker, because indeed the pulp mills that have been assessed, first of all, have agreed to put in the best technology available to meet the highest environmental standards achievable in this day and age. They've submitted themselves to the preparation of environmental impact assessment documents. Those documents went through a public consultation process. They were submitted to the department for a deficiency review in the case of Al-Pac. We submitted that particular proposal to a full-blown public

hearing, as the hon. member well knows. That project is on hold at this particular time. We're doing full-scale studies on chlorinated organics in the Peace and the Athabasca rivers. We've asked an independent consulting firm, again, to look at this whole issue of dioxins and furans. If this is not leadership, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is. I think we're taking the lead role once again.

MR. SPEAKER: Wainwright, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll refuse my question.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, that's a nice new tradition.
Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Pulp Mill Emissions

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, dioxin is an unfortunate product of the chlorine bleached kraft pulping system. Alberta is the only jurisdiction in the world I know of which is currently licensing new sources of dioxin pollution in the environment. The paper I tabled earlier today by Professor Schindler indicates that

industry scientists eliminated data for cancer deaths from the exposed populations, added cancer deaths to the control group, or "padded" exposed groups with unexposed individuals in order to "prove" that dioxin exposures did not harm humans.

I'm wondering if the Minister of the Environment would indicate today whether he was personally aware of this information before he issued a licence to Procter & Gamble to dump 2,460 kilograms per day of chlorinated organic dioxin substances, or 860 tonnes per year, or the permit that he issued to Weldwood for 848 kilograms of AOX, amounting to 297 tonnes per year.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I really don't know where the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place is coming from. I've really had a hard time understanding that in the year I've been in this Legislative Assembly. According to his rules and the way he operates, when those mills were bad and when they were old, they could operate, but when they are cleaned up and when they meet the highest achievable standards in the world, he complains about them. I guess, Mr. Speaker, when they're absolutely perfect, that's when he'll say they should be shut down.

MR. McINNIS: I'm sure the minister's mom and dad taught him to tell the truth, and maybe today would be a good time to start.

When the fraud is removed from the data, it's clear that workers who are exposed to dioxin, among other things suffer high rates of cancer death, substantial increase in heart disease, evidence of neurological disorders, and possible incidence of nonterminal concerns. These are not laughing matters, Mr. Member for Edmonton-Parkallen. These are serious human health problems from people who work in these pulp mills. You sold us out on Procter & Gamble and Weldwood, and in view of these health hazards I would like the minister to indicate today, since he wouldn't have a public hearing on the Daishowa mill at Peace River, before he issues a pollution permit for dioxin to Daishowa, will he guarantee us a public hearing before that permit is issued?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the people at Daishowa have agreed to install – and as a matter of fact went back and did a major refit on that mill – the best available technology to reduce the total emissions of chlorinated organics to 1.5 kilograms per air-dried tonne. No mill in the world is doing any better than that insofar as bleached kraft pulp is concerned. What this hon. member is suggesting is that as of today we should get rid of all the paper. A good way to start is for him to stop filing motions for returns and killing thousands and thousands of trees, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Bow, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

Family Life and Drug Abuse Foundation

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Hon. minister, several of my constituents would like to know when the family life and drug abuse foundation committee report will be released.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the family life and drug abuse committee was one that was an advisory committee to the Minister of Health, chaired by the hon. Member for Lloydminster. It's my intention to release the report within the next two weeks.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Calgary-Bow.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question to the Minister of Health is: what would be the sequence of events once this report is released? Thank you.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue of the family life and drug abuse foundation is one that is of extreme importance to this government. The sequence of events will be that the report will be made public. Obviously there's going to be some discussion about it by Albertans and members of this House, and it would be our intention and certainly mine as Minister of Health to ensure that we provide the best possible legislative and regulatory format for the foundation to serve Albertans in the best possible way.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Advanced Education Institutions

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Advanced Education minister is in the habit of making excuses every time his government cuts funding to postsecondary education institutions. He says, "Oh, gee, it was the institution that decided they had to raise tuitions, impose quotas, or shut programs down." But now I notice with the Bill that the minister introduced last week that he's making sure that self-governance isn't possible for the future. In a major power grab the minister is now giving himself complete authority with no limitations to establish, extend, or expand services, facilities, or programs of study across the board with every institution over which he has jurisdiction. My question to the minister is this: what sort of paranoia has caused this power grab, or has the minister finally decided to recognize that it's his government that caused the problems with the institutions in the first place?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to disappoint the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight. There are 29 institutions . . . [laughter]

With regard to the question from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, Mr. Speaker, that authority she's referring to has been vested in the Minister of Advanced Education for at least 10 years.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, that is absolute nonsense. The minister has had for at least 10 years the power to run interference when there's a problem, and the powers are very limited. There are many Acts, but I would, for instance, cite for him 27.1 of the Technical Institutes Act. So his excuse is phoney.

My question to the minister, assuming that he acknowledges the truth of the facts as they have been in the past, is this: isn't he admitting to the Alberta public and to students that what he really wants to do is impose his ideology and his government's ideology on what programs are able to expand and what programs are not?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I have some difficulty in understanding where the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands is coming from. Indeed, I have difficulty understanding where she's going, because section 67(b) of the Universities Act has been quite clear for many years. The matters proposed by this minister in introducing Bill 27 will be dealt with in second reading, but quite frankly they're quite contrary with respect to what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands is talking about. I would urge her to participate in the debate at second reading on the very principle that's proposed.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Social Workers' Strike

(continued)

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Community bewilderment, confusion, anxiety, and in fact anger regarding the Department of Family and Social Services continues to accelerate in Alberta. First we had the minister's continual references to department reforms without any details, and now the workers are forced to go on strike over excessive caseloads. Municipal services, private agencies, consumer advocates, consumers are experiencing many added pressures. There's no consultation. There are no details on where the department is headed. In short, Mr. Speaker, no leadership. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Will the minister table his reform package immediately so that we can get some clues about where he's heading, some stability into the operation?

MR. OLDRING: No, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. HEWES: Well, there's the first clue, Mr. Speaker.

My supplementary. The strike has forced community agencies, municipal social services, food banks, local police to pick up the slack. Has the minister consulted with these persons or these institutions, or has he provided any support to help them fill the void?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, we applaud the efforts of department personnel that have worked extremely hard throughout this strike to make sure that support services that are being

offered by this department continue to be offered as effectively and efficiently as is humanly possible. We also applaud the co-operation that we have received from numerous community groups and agencies. We recognize, as does the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, that, yes, some of agencies are being stretched and stressed to the limits. We've said that all along. Again, it comes back to this government's agenda. What we are anxious to do is to assure that these services are maintained in a timely and appropriate fashion; what we are anxious to do is to see the situation resolved. We've made it very clear that the way to resolve it is, again, for social workers to return to the jobsite so that they can in turn return to the negotiating table. This Premier has made it very clear to our negotiating team that he expects us to resolve the caseload issue; he expects us to address the salary issue. We're prepared to do that; we're anxious to do that. We're anxious to do it in partnership.

MR. SPEAKER: Clover Bar, followed by Stony Plain and Westlock-Sturgeon.

Electric Utility Rates

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Energy, and it relates to electrical energy charges. The Pottery Guild in Fort Saskatchewan is a nonprofit, civic craft group that is subjected to the commercial ratchet; i.e., commercial demand charge. It appears that the rate would be lower if they were located in the residentially zoned area of the community. Rates appear to be set in accordance with land use zoning rather than the type of operation or power requirements. I want to ask the minister for an explanation for such a discrepancy in the way the volunteer community organizations are charged for power.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, the demand charge that is levied is designed to recover the infrastructure costs of delivering gas to the customers through the electrical system, and the classes of customers are segregated based on their volume of uptake of electricity and based on load characteristics. That load threshold is about 1,000 kilowatts per week. Now, if your pottery guild, whether it's nonprofit or whether it's a small business or even if they happen to be a residential customer, is under the 1,000 kilowatts per week threshold amount, they would be charged the same. They don't distinguish between the nature of the business or whether they're just straight residential consumers or businesses. Conversely, if they were designated a small business and their consumption went below the 1,000 kilowatts per week, they would be charged about the same as a residential consumer. So that's basically the manner in which the demand charges are levied on the system.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. GESELL: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that answer.

Now, apparently this group is below the threshold the minister has mentioned, and they've been advised to appeal and make an application to the Public Utilities Board in order to get the lower residential rate. Would the minister ensure that such groups are charged right from the start with the proper residential rate rather than having to jump through the hoops in appeal?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, it would be very difficult for the utilities to set in place a policy that discriminated based on whether or not it's a profit-generating organization, whether it's nonprofit, or whether it's a residential consumer.

There are two alternatives that I'd recommend to the hon. member. The first would be that he make an application to the Public Utilities Board, and I'm sure the PUB would take into account the fact that they are not for profit and possibly do a redetermination of the rate they're charged. The second alternative – and that is my preference, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure it would be the preference of the user group – would be to go to the franchise holder in the area, I believe it would be TransAlta, and work out with them some kind of special arrangement given the nature of the business that they're in. I'm sure that TransAlta would be more than pleased to work on a one-on-one basis with the organization. Failing that, the Public Utilities Board would be more than pleased to hear their case.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The time for question period has expired.

Orders of the Day

head: Written Questions

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that all written questions appearing on the Order Paper, except 260, stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

260. Mr. Mitchell asked the government the following question: With respect to developments in the Bow corridor, what is the policy of the government for

- (1) determining whether an environmental impact assessment is required and
- (2) carrying out an environmental impact assessment?

MR. FOX: We accept.

MR. KLEIN: I accept.

MR. FOX: Thanks, Ralph.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Vegreville. If you'd like this job up here, you can run for it.

head: Motions for Returns

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that all motions for returns stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

209. Moved by Mr. Jonson:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to review its education programs to ensure young Albertans are well prepared for the 21st century.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it's been some years since the Assembly had the time to debate the overall direction of education in this province. I don't think anyone in this Assembly doubts the importance of planning the best possible educational programs for our students so that they will be prepared for the 21st century; in fact, for the next decade.

I'd like to just trace a little bit of the history of our efforts within the province as far as setting the direction for education is concerned over the past decade or two. In 1978, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly debated the goals of schooling and the goals of education. At that time we had broad participation from members of the Assembly. If one looks at the *Hansard* copies from those days, you will find there was a great deal of interest in the topic, some excellent recommendations and suggestions made by members in this Assembly. I was also certainly impressed by the fact that although there were certain differences of opinion, certainly certain divergence in thought on certain points, there seemed to be an overall general recognition of the need for the best possible consensus on the goals of education and the goals of schooling for Alberta students. I hope that spirit of debate can continue in any discussion that we have in this Assembly pertaining to the direction education should take in the future.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go on to first of all just take stock of where we are right now in this province in terms of having put in place policies and programs as far as education is concerned. First of all, we do have in place the goals of schooling and the goals of education. I think it is appropriate to reconsider them to see whether they need to be adjusted in some way, although I might point out that over the 12 years they've been in existence, the goals of schooling and the goals of education that this government did establish have received very little criticism. In fact, they are often referred to within the province by school boards, by people involved in various stakeholder groups in education, and by individuals, both students and parents, by way of drawing people back to the goals of education that our system should be following on into the future. So they seem to have had some merit at the time and will have application into the '90s and into the 21st century.

In addition to the broad goals of schooling and goals of education we have the secondary education policy of 1985 which is, you might say, in its mid-implementation stages. There have been some suggestions and recommendations as to how that policy should be adjusted. We have the essentials skills document for our elementary school programs. We have a policy document on what's referred to as "continuous progress" by some and "continuity" by others. I hope it is interpreted the way it's supposed to be in that it is supposed to draw the attention of the system and of its programs to the individuality of students and not to bringing back a system of continuous progress which failed a long time ago in educational circles. We have the management and finance plan in terms of directing the resources of this government and the Department of Education towards education. And most recently, Mr. Speaker, we have the legislative framework, the new School Act, designed to provide the direction, the legislative authority for the implementation of educational programs on into the future.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, I think those major initiatives that I've mentioned and many others that could be added have put in place a fairly thorough, thoroughly established framework for

our educational programs. However, we should not be complacent about what has been established, and as one example of the government's willingness to take suggestions and to engage in dialogue with stakeholders and the public, I would like to commend the Minister of Education for his commitment to attend a broadly based curriculum conference to look at the implementation of various programs that are underway and look at new directions for the future.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the theme of the motion, I would like to go on to offer some recommendations, some suggestions, and yes, to express some opinions about some of the things that should be happening or should be prepared for in terms of our educational programs.

First of all, in the area of curriculum developments. As a government we've been making a major effort in terms of revising and modernizing curriculum. One of the things you have to note, however, and we must not move away from, is that when you look at the various documents, hear the various speeches and media reports about educators and noneducators looking into the future for education, you find that they are talking and predicting that there is going to continue to be and in fact there's going to be an increased need, Mr. Speaker, for a broad, solid, general education for our students, one that is broadly applicable, one that provides for the essential skills and basic knowledge that will allow our young people to be adaptable as they go on into future careers and they look forward to achieving and maintaining a good quality of life and being a great credit to themselves, to their families, and the society they live in.

So what I'm referring to here in more specific terms, Mr. Speaker, is that when we are designing our curriculum for the future, we must try to focus on, first of all, what I would call the constants, or those aspects of our educational programming which have been important, are important, and will continue to be important on into the 21st century. Certainly the manner in which these subjects or these skills are taught, the supporting knowledge and so on and details that go with this effort are going to change. Communication skills, critical thinking, the ability to compute and to quantify and to understand that process, an appreciation and understanding of the scientific method and its application in our society, and the elements of citizenship and the accruing responsibilities are certain constants that must be kept in our program: modernized certainly, but they should not be de-emphasized in any way. Because I'd like to emphasize once again, Mr. Speaker, that those that talk about the future and the needs of education for the future in our country and in North America come back to those essentials. They might use different terminology to describe them, but they are very, very important to the 21st century and the preparation of people for that in terms of education.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we need to modernize and change our curriculum, and that process of modernization and change must be managed as well as possible. One of the areas there have been additional initiatives in but there has to be more done, is in the whole area of careful planning and providing resources and in-service education for teachers when new initiatives in curriculum are being put forth. This has been mentioned before in this Assembly. I won't dwell on it here, but it's certainly something that needs to be emphasized and should not be in any way downplayed. It is of ever increasing importance.

Another area where we have to look at our programming and our organizing of the educational system is with respect to the

application of technology to education delivery. The whole area might be called changing delivery systems as far as education is concerned. The province is currently noted for its initiatives in distance education in terms of bringing some equity, some equality of opportunity to the smaller and isolated schools of this province. It is certainly something that is going very well and gaining a good reputation at least nationwide if not beyond our borders. But I would like to emphasize that the technology which is being applied through those distance education initiatives is really applicable to every classroom and every learner in this province, and I hope that as we look towards the next years, we're going to be planning for the classroom of the future. In fact, the classroom of the future is already here, Mr. Speaker.

I would like, by way of illustration, to refer to the application that Mrs. Gloria Cathcart submitted to qualify for the esteemed Marshall McLuhan excellence in teaching award that was recently given to her. I'd just like to quote one statement from her very impressive application. "All of the computers in my classroom are network, using AppleShare and AppleTalk and software that is networkable. This feature of our classroom operates at a level pretty much unnoticed by the students, but is a feature of great interest to other educators who are in the development stages in their schools."

The reason I mention that particular quotation, Mr. Speaker, is that we are, I think, doing a very effective job, along with the general society in which we live, in familiarizing young people at a very early age with the computer and with the various other technology that can be applied to the educational setting. It's a challenge then, therefore, to the Department of Education and to the whole educational system to take advantage of the potential that is inherent in this technology, to increase the effectiveness of our teaching strategies, our delivery of education, and to make it even better. We should not be looking at technology as something that cannot be coped with, because certainly the students are coping with it rather well, and the educational system has to adjust in terms of the utilization of technology.

Another area that I feel is going very well in the province but has to be expanded – its potential has to be developed – is the whole area of using human and physical resources outside of the school through another type of networking or, as it's sometimes referred to, partnerships. There are many very, very fine examples within the province of Alberta where the partnership concept is going well and students' education is being enriched. That is something that is going to, I hope, and I think it's predicted that it will, expand on into the future.

Very important, of course, to the whole educational process are many dedicated professional teachers across this province. I think there are two or three things by way of related programming that should be addressed perhaps with more zeal than is currently the case, and this involves our postsecondary institutions as well as the Department of Education and school boards. First of all, we seem to avoid making projections about the supply and demand for people in certain professions and making them widely known to our students. Right now, Mr. Speaker, certain shortages exist in terms of the supply of teachers, and there are also certain surpluses. I do think that we need to have a better system not only for teaching but in all occupations – but certainly for teaching – in projecting and publicizing for prospective entrants the opportunities that will be there in various teaching areas.

We also need to be developing at our postsecondary institutions, I would say, a more modern approach to teacher education. One type of teacher training or type of teaching model which is going to be needed increasingly in the years ahead is that of what might be referred to as the mentor model, where the teacher is skilled in providing individual help, in calling forth through the electronic medium and through computer networking various sources of information; in other words, not perhaps being the first-line delivery person as far as information is concerned but being the person who organizes, interprets, assists, and works very closely with students on a more individualized basis. That model of teacher education needs more attention in terms of our preparation programs. Also on the topic of teacher preparation, we certainly could use an internship program in the province, and I could go on with some other suggestions.

Perhaps, though, Mr. Speaker, the one area where we face the greatest challenge as far as planning for the 21st century is in the whole area of dealing with the increased scope of, school based services and programs and the increased expectations and pressures that are being put on our schools. That is, in my view, probably the biggest challenge. We have to remember what schools are there for, at least what they were established for initially, and we have to make sure that there's a proper emphasis on the offering of a sound education for students of all ability levels. But there's certainly been a change over the past decade or two in what is expected of the schools. This topic could be the subject for a half-hour or one-hour address in itself, but I'd just like to give a few illustrations. Perhaps speakers later on might want to agree or disagree or elaborate.

In the past 10 to 20 years we've had a constant adding-on of expectations, of issues, of problems. It is not that those things do not need to be addressed, but if they are going to be off-loaded to the school system, then there must be the resources, both human and physical, to support the schools providing that service. In the area of content we have more on environmental education, as we should. We have more expectations from the general public in terms of recreation, physical fitness, extra-curricular activities. We have booklets and programs and units on Occupational Health and Safety. We have the whole area of an expanded mandate as far as health education is concerned, consumer education, and now a very exciting new initiative or perspective as far as social studies, and I suppose other areas of study, are concerned: the whole global education initiative, which is currently gathering a great deal of popularity and of course is very important. We have added on, to the duties of the school, child rearing and custodial duties; we have the whole area of food services. And I could go on, Mr. Speaker, as I said, for two or three pages.

The point here, though, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to devise strategies and policies and programs for coping with this tremendous additional load that is placed on the schools of this province. I think the Alberta School Trustees' Association has put it very well; at least, they've come forward with one very good suggestion. They've talked about the need for greater co-ordination among government departments in terms of the delivery of various services. It seems that we have a phenomenon, which I'm sure at least some members of this Assembly have run across, Mr. Speaker, and that is that co-operation is sometimes very difficult to achieve among departments, particularly when it involves the transfer of money. Therefore, I think it's a challenge that the members of the government have to address. A good example would be the area of speech

therapy. A very important initiative was taken, I believe about two years ago now, to increase the funding for speech therapy: very much appreciated across this province. However, with respect, there is no doubt that it would be better delivered through the Department of Education than through the Department of Health, simply because your clients are there, you could more effectively use the speech therapists' time, and so forth. But the overall initiative was good. So certainly one of the solutions to this problem of dealing with this increased load is that you could have greater co-ordination among government departments and certainly among school boards, and school boards to the Department of Education and other departments.

Another area where we could address this is in a new alignment of funding. Perhaps the Department of Education budget should define its responsibilities in terms of funding the basic education program of the province – that is, the credits, the subjects, and so forth – and perhaps we should have a new category of funding provided by, heaven forbid, not a new department but perhaps what is called the service area, the area where we would pool money from education, social services, postsecondary education, and there you could have the funding which would be identified for the counseling, the health care services, and all the support services which the educational system is supposed to provide.

MR. GOGO: The others don't have to . . .

MR. JONSON: That may sound a little bit futuristic to the Minister of Advanced Education, but it's something we have to face, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to adequately fund education down the road.

I'd like to go on, then, in a more extensive way to the whole area of funding. Certainly as we go into the 21st century – and I think the issue has hit us right now, Mr. Speaker – we have to look at the whole issue of education equity. I would commend the Minister of Education for the initiatives that have been taken in terms of providing for more equal opportunity fundingwise to the schools across this province, and I know that he is working on improving the current system. That certainly has to be addressed, but, in addition, in the whole area of funding we have to be a little bit more creative and have a few more initiatives, I think, in the whole area of realigning our funding.

Some time ago I sponsored another motion in this Assembly which advocated that the provincial government should be picking up 85 percent of the cost of the basic education funding in this province. I still feel that would be the ideal. I'd go for 75, but nevertheless I do think that there should be a greater share of educational funding paid at the provincial level. That, Mr. Speaker, has sometimes been dismissed in the sense that you can't have 25 percent of school board funding driving 75 percent of provincial funding, but there are ways of coping with that. I think you could come to an agreement on what constitutes the minimum educational program that should be offered in every school of this province and fund it to that 75 percent level.

I also think that when you're looking for money, perhaps we should be funding education to the level of 75 or 85 percent, and perhaps some of the assistance packages that we have in this province directed towards municipalities to lower the property tax should be eliminated and that money could be shifted over to education. [interjection] I'm sure that makes some people cringe, but it is, I think, quite practical in terms of doing it.

The other area I'd like to touch upon in terms of funding is that as we move along, the overall student enrollment in this province is increasing fairly significantly, Mr. Speaker, and we have a great need across this province for additional funding to the already very significant amount of funding going into school buildings and modernization. I would hope that we can come up with a long-term program for school financing with some additional dollars in it which will allow this government to meet the needs that are out there in terms of the facilities to house our educational programs.

There are two other points I'd like to quickly deal with. One of the initiatives that's being talked about all across this nation right now is the whole area of measuring educational outcomes. Certainly our Department of Education has been a leader, specifically in the area of testing but also in the area of developing measures of educational outcomes. Among the many areas of leadership, the Department of Education is indicating that this is a very important initiative for the future: we've got to evaluate our system more, we've got to measure our outcomes, and this will make the whole system much more credible in the eyes of the public. That is all well and good, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to enter one note of caution on that whole area of emphasis on outcomes. I think that the use of outcomes to evaluate the educational system is a very legitimate exercise, but there has to be a recognition of the input side in terms of the whole educational equation. If you look at the funding of education over the last several years, you'll find that the actual dollars to education have increased dramatically. In fact, when the goals of education and schooling were established, the total provincial budget was \$3.8 billion in 1978. As an educational and postsecondary system we're now, I think, up to \$2 billion in total.

AN HON. MEMBER: Two point five.

MR. JONSON: Two point five; I'm way behind. I'm sorry.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, the real dollars provided to the educational system of this province have also been significantly above inflation over that period of time, over the last decade.

The pupil/teacher ratio has gone down, and those who evaluate achievement say, "Well, our achievement levels have changed very little." However, if you back up and look at what's happening in the educational system – the increased amount of money being spent on administration and governance; the great time-consuming expansion of paper-based requirements: forms, all sorts of things; the rapidly escalating prices of buildings and equipment; salaries, which have not gone up too badly, they've done rather well – these, I think, may account for the fact that these dollars have gone up so rapidly in total amount and perhaps there's not been the output that some people are looking for. But the one item which I think is the most important factor in sort of taking away the value of these dollars that have been put into education is the item I referred to earlier, and that is: the school system is carrying a greater and greater load in terms of the total care of the students in their care and in terms of additional programs. Perhaps we have to recognize the fact that there is that tremendous burden, you might say, on the school system. I think we have to target our funds more specifically, and we have to make sure they're adequate if we're going to put a greatly increased emphasis on outcomes.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think that in terms of our priorities for the 21st century we should be making sure that our programs have a student focus; that we continue to emphasize, and

emphasize into the future, teaching excellence; that we emphasize the value of shared responsibility for learning between the family, the community, the general public, and the school; that yes, there be a focus on outcomes, providing there is adequate support for those expectations; and that we continue to provide schools which are exciting places where students want to come and learn. I think we have an excellent education system in this province, and we need everybody's support and thoughts and input so that we have the best possible programs for the future.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Thank you very much.

I'd like to commend the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey for his motion, and generally I'm quite supportive of it. I'd like to reflect on some of the initiatives that have come from the past and have not been too well updated, not too well looked at. Goals of education I think we can all pretty much adhere to and respect and follow and, hopefully, as time goes on, even perhaps improve and change a little bit.

One of the directions, if you will, that has not been very well implemented and perhaps has not even been very well addressed is the whole business of the secondary education review and the new directions taken there. The confusion surrounding the creation and the implementation of the science curriculum is just one example of how there was a total lack of leadership, a total lack of initiative in what should be done.

There has been a real thrust towards an increase in assigned credit load at the high school level without any clear direction as to what the opportunities and expectations are going to be for high school students. There's been the dilution, if you will, of the hands-on kinds of curriculum activities for the sake of more assigned time in the compulsories in order to qualify for the diplomas. Now, we all know that we do want to have a well-rounded education for our children, and unless the department and the minister have a good look at it and somehow sort it out, this particular thrust will take away from it. We'll have strictly academic oriented schools, and that, I would suggest to you, would not be healthy. That we could have along with perhaps a whole stream of strictly vocational programs, and that would not be healthy. Certainly the lack of opportunity for academic students to take courses of a nonacademic nature has to be addressed. In fact, due to the increasing amount of knowledge that is available out there, that we are expecting our young people to take in, perhaps we should be honest with them and with ourselves and be looking at a four-year high school program.

The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey alluded to the management and finance plan. That's one disaster created to try and unwind another disaster, and I think we've got total chaos there. The only thing that came out of that was a whole proliferation of expectations for policy creation on the local levels that I would suspect many boards are still struggling with and Alberta Education is desperately trying to monitor, and I can't see an awful lot of good having come out of that.

The whole business of educational finance is an interesting one, and I'd certainly like to commend the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey for taking on the New Democrat initiative of at least an 80 to 90 percent funding – I'm going up; he's going down – and the New Democrat initiative of having the province in some way, shape, or form responsible for funding this. I really think that

was very good of him, to help me out on that particular aspect. At the same time, I would have to concur with some of the member's observations also in the area of perhaps having the provincial government identify more what is expected of the school systems of a mandatory nature.

This brings me to what is going to be, I believe, an issue very shortly in this province, and that is the area of the funding of kindergarten programs. It is no secret that the proportion of provincially generated revenues to local school boards is decreasing relative to the total cost, and no matter which way you play funny finance figures, the proportion that the central government picks up is diminishing. At the same time, for whatever reasons, the school expectations are increasing. We have now created a new level of expectations, and that is one that's referred to as kindergarten. The provincial government is going to have to make a decision as to whether kindergartens are going to be a part of the school system and be funded accordingly or whether they're going to become a totally optional parent-operated program as they had started out to be. I would suggest that the crisis is coming with respect to school boards, school jurisdictions not having the finances to in fact fund these programs properly. They are just another example of how Alberta Education introduces a program, puts in a bit of seed money, then backs off on the funding, and the local jurisdiction is burdened with generating the revenue to pick it up.

Another area that's of concern with funding again is the whole business of special needs. I understand that the department is currently undergoing a review, and a rather extensive review, although it seems to be based on a somewhat limited sample of jurisdictions. The bottom line in this whole area again is the inadequacy of the funding, and I understand some school jurisdictions want to go back to individual participant funding as opposed to the block funding. In any event, regardless of which avenue is taken, the funding has to be there in order to deliver a program that meets the expectations of the people who are participating in it.

Recently, in the last few years, rightly or wrongly, Alberta Education through the minister has embarked on the funding of private schools. This initiative is soon going to become another demand on the public purse in that the private schools are now suggesting that in addition to the basic program funding, they are entitled to get all the supplemental program funding, specifically the ones to do with special needs. So I can see another problem that is going to have to be addressed fairly soon.

The hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey alluded to equity funding, and I'm glad he made mention that the minister has some work to do there, because I would suggest that the minister has an awful lot of work to do there. The only thing equitable about equity funding is the name. The poorer school boards don't have the money to get by. The so-called richer boards are having a problem. Statements like equity funding or the changing of the formula's being revenue neutral are, quite frankly, scary because they still don't address the bottom line, and that is the overall lack of sufficient funds being generated from the provincial government. The business of perhaps some of the local taxes going into a central pot to be redistributed much the same, I would imagine, as the foundation program moneys I wouldn't have a terrible amount of difficulty with, provided – and I stress provided – that it was done on a fair basis and provided that it wasn't just an excuse to go along with the so-called corporate pooling business and having a reduction in the net taxes paid into education. That's one aspect that's

going to have to be looked at and I think going to have to be looked at very closely.

There is also a whole new dimension that's going to impact on funding sooner or later, and that is this business of home schooling. I don't feel that the current set of regulations, the particular provisions in the School Act, are sufficient to cover the shortcomings of home schooling. Just having a statement that says that school jurisdictions will monitor them I think is quite insufficient. But now the people who are starting to embark on home schooling, for whatever their reasons may be, are starting to make noises that they want the moneys the foundation program pays into the local boards on behalf of their children. So now we have either inadvertently or intentionally created another drain on where the dollars – the inadequate dollars, I might add – are going to possibly be redistributed.

The whole area of the funding of schools is an interesting one. In the last three or four years – five years – we have not kept pace with the needs. As the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey pointed out, the needs are going to be increasing, and I'm quite frankly concerned over how the province is going to be able to meet these commitments. They're now in a catch-up mode. Edmonton and Calgary both have a very, very long list of schools that are required now. Rural areas – Olds is one that comes to mind – have inadequate schools. At the same time, the large urban areas are faced with the problem of how they close down schools that aren't being used. I would think that the initiative is long overdue for Alberta Education, via the minister, to show some leadership and take off the hands of the big boards some of these properties that are not being properly utilized and in some way, shape, or form get them off the books so that we can have an honest accounting of what the real number of school spaces is and what the real needs are.

The other area that I think has to be looked at in this field of capital funding is that, on the one hand, there appears to be some degree of autonomy given to the local school boards to identify their needs, but the time line between the need identification and the actual procurement of the building sometimes is so long that that need may have shifted. There may be a higher priority need elsewhere within that jurisdiction, and because of the archaic set of guidelines or policies, that particular jurisdiction either goes along with what has been approved without any chance of adjusting it or gets nothing at all. At the same time, although the funding level for the operating grants is down to roughly 60 percent of the overall cost, it appears now that the funding for capital projects is down to about 50 percent. I find it rather interesting that the levels of support are not calculated on the basis of the actual tendered value of the structure but are calculated on some mystical formula, and people don't seem to be aware of really what it is. In addition to that, the furnishings to make the school operational seem to be more the total responsibility of the jurisdiction than they are of Alberta Education as a whole.

I would suggest that one of the ways to make equity funding a little bit more equitable in the area of capital funding is to pick up closer to 100 percent of the cost instead of trying to jockey around and get out of (a) no schools being built or refurbished or (b) just getting enough to get them started and then having the local jurisdiction get deeper and deeper into debt.

Along with capital funding I think one area that has to be looked at is this business of school modernizations. On the surface they seem to be quite okay. If you have a look at what's really going on in very specific instances, I quite frankly feel that

with the cost of the structures that are being modernized, financially and in a lot of other ways the department and the local jurisdiction would be further ahead to eliminate the structure and replace it with a new one totally. It is a false economy to have a structure such as I visited the other day where they had about three or four different age groups. As you went through the building, it was in varying degrees of disrepair, as they were opening up a whole new section. I don't know; that was probably the fourth or fifth modernization, and due again to the formula, there will be some more coming up on that same structure. So it seems to be in a continual phase of construction, and I don't think that's either healthy or economical or, in fact, practical.

So if we get on to the other areas, curriculum in itself is an interesting one. Curriculum development has taken a step backwards in the last few years by decreasing the number of people who can be involved in it. I think the department has to have a good, solid look at what is expected out of the curriculum, who's going to do it, and how it's going to be done. There definitely is and always will be and always has been a need to modernize and change curriculum. But to do it in a haphazard, ad hoc fashion periodically is not the way to do it. We must develop a consistent method of continually reviewing and evaluating the curriculum that's in place and, at the same time, upgrading and systematically phasing in the new curriculum, paying attention to how it's going to be implemented, the costs involved, teacher training, if any, required, and so on.

A good example of overreacting in the field of curriculum was the spin-offs from the Gitter commission report. After the Gitter commission report came in, we were scurrying all over in all the schools, and we were afraid to leave all sorts of things in. A lot of the material was supposedly upgraded, while a lot of other material was thrown out for no good reasons. Again, in reaction largely to the Gitter commission, we had a whole new department set up. It's called the native education project. The goals of it are very worth while, but unfortunately I think what will happen with this is that, through neglect, it will be forgotten, and that would be a very, very grave disservice to our native community.

The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey alluded to the curriculum for the future, and I couldn't agree with him more. As he'll notice on the Order Paper, I have a motion with respect to the environment and curriculum, and I'm sure he'll be very supportive of it when it comes up. I think the environment is at long last becoming the central focus for all citizens, and that's going to show up through the schools, hopefully, more and more.

The literacy of our students has always been first and foremost, and we've approached it in a variety of ways. One of the approaches that seems to be coming around the board is the expansion of the current achievement tests, and I think that's one big step backwards. The achievement tests as they currently stand, without expansion, I think are doing a fairly reasonable job of in fact assessing where students are and doing comparisons, if applicable, although that's not what their intention is supposed to be. But to spend more money to do more testing, to do broader testing – I quite frankly don't know what we're going to accomplish by that.

The one area that we sort of perhaps get ourselves too tied up in is technological adaptability. I would suggest to you that many of our children can teach us a thing or two on computers and whatnot from what they have in their homes. There's a whole broad range of little items that children are exposed to that have brought them into the 21st century before they ever hit

school, and we should be looking very seriously at what we expect of them in the area of computers, computer programming, and so on. I think one of the biggest errors that Alberta Education ever made was a few years ago when they went out and bought a whole batch of Black Apples and figured out after the fact that there wasn't anyone there who knew how to use them. Then they looked a little further, and they didn't know what they bought them for. And then, lo and behold, a year or two later they found out the whole bloody works was obsolete. So now we've got a bunch of Black Apples becoming rotten apples in the basements of schools all over this province. I would hope never to see that kind of initiative again, because that was certainly one of the bigger disasters in terms of trying to bring technology into the school.

So it begs the question: how do we do these things? I would suggest perhaps a little bit more concentration, a little bit more understanding of where we're going, and a broader involvement of the people with the vested interest. Now, there are two bodies in this province that regularly lobby the minister, and I don't think they are given enough credit for what they are there for. Although some people would put them as being opposed to one another, I would strongly suggest that they are very supportive of education and, to a large degree, supportive of one another. The two bodies are the Alberta School Trustees' Association and the Alberta Teachers' Association. I would strongly recommend to the minister that apart from accepting the briefs, accepting the various presentations, if you will, he would take the time to listen to them. He may, in fact, pick up some very, very good advice that would help him do a better job and actually improve education in Alberta.

One of the initiatives that I think is more hype than reality is distance education. The seed money placed out for it three or four years ago – at that time it was a fax machine, a telephone, and something called a tutor/marker, whose wages were shared between three or four jurisdictions. The only problem with distance education was that enough planning had not gone into it. It was essentially a pirating of the Alberta Correspondence School courses, which created a degree of conflict between the Alberta Correspondence School and whoever it was that was promoting distance education.

The other thing I find interesting with the distance education concept – and I think it has a lot of potential if it's promoted properly – is that suddenly the amount of funding to get it implemented on the individual board level is diminishing. A few of the boards down south who got in on the prospect in the beginning ended up getting an extra staff member, getting the capital equipment, getting assistance to hire the tutor/markers: this all happened. Then all of a sudden that's being backed off. So now the carrot is out there, and the dollars aren't there to pay for it. Along with it, the boards that are being discriminated against, the ones who need the distance education, whatever form it might be, are the same boards who are on the receiving end of the equity financing, or the pay-in formula, if you will, to the board. So we're presenting boards with a good idea, turning around and saying: "Now, here's the idea. You should do this; you're expected to do this. Oh, but by the way, do it out of your own pocket that's already empty."

There were some reactions and the usual glossy materials and television presentations on distance education. And, son of a gun, we found out we had a correspondence school, and someone, in their lack of wisdom, thought the correspondence school and distance education were one and the same thing. They didn't realize that all it was was that the people who

started distance education implemented it too soon and pirated correspondence. So we had a great effort into getting the correspondence courses all regenerated and brought up to date. Now all of a sudden I find in the estimates that the correspondence school is being phased down or phased out or phased somewhere. The truth of the matter is that had the distance education been implemented properly in the first instance, in the first few years, and permitted to grow, it would have been just a direct phone hookup with the Alberta Correspondence School in Barrhead. I, for the life of me, can't understand why that didn't happen.

I sincerely hope that it will be broadened, it will be improved, and it at some point will become what it's intended to be, and that is a real, honest supplement to students who are in fact living far enough away from the facilities that other children enjoy, and they will have, at least to some degree, a bit of a supplement so that their educations can be a bit closer to the ones that are in the larger centres. To suggest that distance education is going to equalize the opportunities is nothing more than misleading, and it's just strictly a farce. Yes, it will improve it. Equalize it? Never.

When we look at the 21st century . . . We always heard, back 20 years ago, of the classroom of the future. We hear of computers coming in and replacing teachers, and I sort of sit back and chuckle. There was that fear when they first dreamt of a computer, and that will be brought up again and again. The truth of the matter is that the teacher, the human element, can never be replaced by any kind of technological gadget no matter who created it or how it's created or how it's promoted, in fact. So I would strongly suggest that we are going to have a classroom of the future, yes, but it's still going to have a teacher in it.

The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey briefly alluded to the expectations of the schools, and I think I would have to agree with him. We have to define, basically, what the school is expected to do for the child. Is it going to become a nursery, a hospital, a learning centre, a cafeteria to feed them three meals a day? If it's going to take on all these different roles, if that is in fact the way it's going to go, then the member's suggestion that there be a review of where the money comes from and that other departments assume responsibilities I think is a very good one. I cannot, however, condone what I fear to be the direction that is being taken with respect to what I feel is coming in terms of community schools and high-needs schools. I've been waiting for a definition of a high-needs school. I've been waiting to find out how schools qualify for high needs, and all that we hear in the House here are periodic little suggestions from the minister that maybe we'll have something to do with community schools, maybe this, maybe that. I'm quite fearful that the community school concept, which is one of the better initiatives taken by Alberta Education, will be frozen or continue to remain frozen, and I am quite fearful that the funding for these schools may gradually be redirected into the so-called high-needs schools and the hot lunch program and whatever else would be going on in the high-needs places. So I would hope that the minister takes the trouble to have a good look at what is working well, and let's retain that.

As we're winding down the last 10 years of this century, I think it's a good time to have a good look at what we're going to be needing in the 21st century. I think it's a good time to reassess what are parental responsibilities and what are system responsibilities. I think this motion, and I do speak in support of it, should be taken very, very seriously, and I hope that it is.

On that note I would like to emphasize again that I support the basic thrust of it, and I'm glad to see, in closing, that the Member for Ponoka supports my position on having 80-plus percent funding.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to offer my full support for the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey and his motion. It's of paramount importance that the programs and policies that comprise our education system are periodically reviewed to ensure that the system is operating in the most effective and efficient manner possible; that is, in preparing our young for the 21st century. As a former educator myself, I consider the education of our young people to be the most important task of society today. For young Albertans, education is the gift of the future.

Mr. Speaker, the years I spent in the classroom teaching as well as learning from young Albertans were some of the best years that I have ever known. To work with young people, to help them open their minds to ideas and new experiences is a fascinating and rewarding job. It's also a very demanding job and one that has in recent years been growing more and more demanding. Today's world is vastly different from the world that many of the members of this House grew up in. There has been an unprecedented range of change in the world around us: social change; demographic change; economic, technological, and scientific breakthroughs – changes in just about every part of our lives that we can think of. These changes have placed many new demands on our education system. It's the role of the education system to graduate people who have the ability to deal with the world they live in. I do not mean simply to cope, but to prepare them for the future so that they can enter it with confidence and rise to the many challenges and opportunities it brings.

Today's world is increasingly dependent on knowledge and the transfer of knowledge. It's a world where human knowledge doubles almost every 20 months, a world where new scientific research is constantly overturning yesterday's facts. Our education system has to respond to these. In the face of such change, Mr. Speaker, it's ludicrous to base education on the simple absorption of facts; there are just too many facts to absorb. The best that educators can do to help students learn is to learn. We must continue to teach the basic facts, but it's more important than ever that we also teach how to critically assess the facts so that they can now be applied in solving many difficult problems. We need knowledgeable workers who can effectively apply information, who can direct and implement research and development, and who have learned how to learn so that they can adapt to the rapid changes that will characterize the business of the future.

Our education system must give the children the tools that are needed to be creative, critical thinkers. They must be prepared to compete in international markets and address and solve international problems that literally will determine the future of the planet. Einstein said that imagination is more important than knowledge. The most important thing that challenges the teachers of today is to ensure that the students possess both knowledge and imagination.

I know that this sounds like a very large order, Mr. Speaker, and I also know and am happy to note that this government's Education minister and his department are acutely aware of how

the education system must, change to prepare students for the 21st century. The hon. Minister of Education, in his many speeches to various groups, has said on more than one occasion that education is learning to learn. Education is not simply acquiring knowledge. Knowledge in and of itself has no particular value. It is knowing how to apply knowledge that really counts, and the role of the education system today is to graduate people who have the ability to deal with the world as it is now. I also know that there have been and are ongoing, significant reviews and changes being made in curriculum and other areas of education to ensure that Alberta students receive the best education possible and are fully qualified to live and work in the 21st century.

The minister is to be commended for his foresight in the work he has done to date. The objectives set out in the secondary education review policy say we must strive to graduate young people who are well educated, have a firm foundation of basic knowledge and skills. More important, young people must be inspired and challenged to continue their learning, to use their education for constructive purposes. They must be creative. They must be innovative. They must be prepared to take risks to achieve their goals. They must be prepared to tackle the most difficult problems our society faces and to shape the course of the future by their own actions. I know that this government is committed to accomplishing these objectives.

There is one area of great challenge facing our education system right now, Mr. Speaker, and that is that I believe if we are to focus on the student, which is the stated mandate of the goals of education, then we must free up the teachers to do so. Over the years the curriculum and other expectations have continued to grow, placing more and more responsibilities on the schools and ultimately the teachers to provide more and more services that were not traditionally expected of them. Because the structure of the economy has changed to an information age, schools must adapt quickly to technological change in order to prepare students for the changing requirements of the workplace.

Technological changes are not the only changes schools must keep abreast of and respond to. There are many social changes which also result in the expansion of the role of the school. The shape of the family has changed. Large numbers of two-parent families, both parents working outside the home, and the increase in single-parent families have placed pressure on the schools to provide before school, noon hour, and after school care for children. The social patterns of our youth are changing. For example, increased sexual activity, alcohol use, and increased part-time employment are among the youth. These all contribute to additional pressures for increased services being provided by schools in the area of social and moral education such as life skills courses, substance abuse, and sexual education programs. These things were once the responsibility of the family and the church.

There is increased sensitivity towards the disadvantaged students either because they are in poverty or because their lives have been affected by family violence, child abuse, and/or marital breakup. The school is now expected to provide special services and assistance to these disadvantaged students. There is increased activity by special-needs interest groups to promote the full integration of students with special needs into the classroom. This has resulted in more pressure being placed on teachers to deal with a wider range of student capabilities in one classroom and the need for access to increased health care and behavioural expertise.

Due to the ever increasing complexities in administrative duties and expectations placed on principals and administration staff, these valued professional teachers are forced to spend less and less time with children and in classrooms. In today's school more and more staff such as administrators and counselors are being taken from the classroom to provide 'specialized services to high-needs children in the system. Unfortunately for the classroom teacher, all staff members are calculated into the total school child/staff ratio, and as more and more experts are needed to cope today with high-needs children, the number of children in each classroom increases. This puts even more stress on the classroom and the teacher. In the last school where I taught, approximately one-fifth of the staff did not have responsibility for a classroom. Contrary to the quoted ratio of 18 to 1, the class size is closer to 30 in many classrooms.

The child of today has many different needs from the child of the '50s or the '60s. They require a great deal of individual attention. The expectation for the teacher is to provide for each child's individual needs. This includes academic, social, physical, and emotional needs. To do this task effectively, there must be assessment of the child's skills and ability; a program must be prescribed to enhance the abilities and meet the needs of the child. Materials and lessons need to be prepared and then taught, and evaluation at frequent intervals must be carried out to determine progress. This sounds very idealistic, and it is. The range of abilities and needs of the average classroom today is ever widening. Not every child progresses at the same rate, and in the average classroom there are children performing below grade level in at least one area, some children who are emotionally disturbed and have disruptive behaviour, one or more children with mental or physical impairment, and gifted and talented children who are very bright and need intellectual stimulation. Programs must be adapted to meet the needs of all these children.

Teachers are also expected to adapt their teaching styles to meet the special needs of today's child. Learning styles are acknowledged to be a very important factor in learning, and they also must be provided for. Teachers must also be on watch for signs of sexual and other abuse of children. Teachers frequently spend much energy and time in helping a child cope with the stress in his or her personal life. School often becomes a child's safe haven rather than the home. Once trust has been established between teacher and child, the child usually begins to progress and then frequently the family breaks up and/or moves away, leaving the teacher frustrated and emotionally drained and the child in the position of having to start all over again in a new school with new teachers and new classmates. Often, if faced with frequent moves, the child gives up trying to re-establish new relationships and becomes withdrawn, making it very difficult for the next teacher to establish a learning environment for that child. Schools are also expected to organize and supply entertainment and recreational opportunities such as swimming, skiing lessons, and outdoor camping trips, things that used to be community and family responsibilities. There is the new expectation that the school should feed the children, and many schools now serve hot lunch programs which are often administered by teachers. All of these expectations have to be filled.

I've been speaking in a vague manner about what's expected in our schools today. In reality this translates into what is expected of one teacher in one day. Mr. Speaker, it makes me tired even just to think about it. The teacher must grapple with increasingly sophisticated and demanding curriculum, spend time

meeting with a variety of experts and specialists to establish programs for special-needs students, make time for extra-curricular programs, coach the volleyball team, supervise the lunchroom, fund-raising, and then there is actually teaching. The job keeps getting more and more demanding until it's hard to believe that teachers continue to function. We're asking teachers to devote too much time to activities with only the most oblique relationship to student learning.

I would like at this time to quote from a fictional letter written by a teacher from the city of Calgary, and I think it expresses the frustration many teachers feel. It's a letter to a parent who's complained that the teacher is not administering her daughter's hot lunch program correctly.

Dear Mrs. Ames,

There must be some mistake here. I got into this whole circus so I could share poems and stories with kids. I'm a teacher. I wanted to write with them and turn them on to rhymes and images and ideas. I'm not against children having hot lunches. How could anyone who lives in this climate be against hot lunches? You want me to collect the lunch money, take orders for the book club, be the guardian of the winter footwear. When I got into this business, I somehow imagined I'd be talking with and listening to kids, not writing swimming receipts, tallying book club moneys, collecting rummage for the sale, and organizing school picture packages. Now mind you, I'm not against school picture packages. Who can object to a child having a picture of himself and his classmates of 1990? I do want children to ski. I want them to learn to play chess and to compete in the speech festival. I just didn't know that so much of it would depend on us, the teachers.

I'm not against children having wonderful opportunities, but I am concerned about honouring what I believe to be the real responsibility to your daughter. I wonder what will be your reaction when you discover that Barbie's had so little chance to talk that she is inarticulate, or that she's had so little occasion to think, to plan, to choose that she lacks the confidence to take charge of her own learning, her own decisions of her life. What if she has read so little and been read to less so that she's actually illiterate? What if Barbie can't fill in an application form or write a letter? Will she in retrospect see that the school photos, the hot lunches, the ski club, and the fluoride treatments are compensation and justification for that situation, or will I be held responsible in your mind or by her, I who wanted so much just to read and talk and think with her?

Sincerely, a grade 4 teacher.

Every single task seems reasonable, worthy, even necessary. It's the combining and the compounding that begins to crush the dedicated teacher. Teachers are finite resources – finite in energy, in time, and in ability. We have to be careful not to burn them out with tasks unrelated to their true purpose. Mr. Speaker, I think if one teacher in our system has reached such a point of frustration, a point where the extra duties and expectations of parents, trustees, and society in general have placed him or her so that he or she cannot find time or energy to talk and share ideas with the students, then he or she is not alone. There are many teachers facing this dilemma. If that's the case, we must review our education system and decide what exactly we want it to accomplish and then ensure that by our policies we allow that to happen.

I think it's very important that we make a distinction between education and schooling and that we place some parameters on our education system. Education is the learning experience that every individual has when interacting with the physical and social environment. Schooling has a much more limited purpose. It's the learning activities planned and conducted by a formally structured institution for a specific time period. We cannot ask

more of our education system than to school. It should not have to be the safety net for all of society's shortcomings. If we continue to give greater and greater responsibility to schools for a child's total education, we run the risk of eroding the effectiveness of our schools.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when it is so important that our schools graduate creative, innovative thinkers, we must ensure that environment is conducive to that kind of learning. I would ask you to support the hon. member's motion. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also am very pleased that the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey has given us this opportunity to again discuss education, which, of course, is the most important challenge we as adults face as we look to the future.

The basic question is: what are the skills our young people will need as they prepare themselves to live in the 21st century? I think much of what the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey has said shows that he has some vision, and I certainly intend to support his motion. I agree there has to be not only occasional review but ongoing review of our education programs and the ways in which we provide education not only at the K to 12 level but at the postsecondary and continuing education level.

Of course, to prepare our students for the 21st century, I believe we must ensure that we have quality education, and our quality is at stake right now. The government is unprepared to sufficiently fund education to meet the current demands of the system and to adapt to evolving needs and technologies. Despite claims that this government has education as its top priority, support in inflation-adjusted constant dollars has declined steadily. At one time Alberta spent more per capita on education than any other province. Today we rank sixth. In terms of per capita increases in operating grants, Alberta has had the worst provincial record over the last four years. In contrast, the enrollment growth in Alberta was virtually double the Canadian average. The average growth in Alberta's education expenditure was 2 percent, while the national average was 6 percent. All provinces except Alberta are moving to refund their education systems.

There are enormous pressures on boards right now in regards to capital funding. The facilities are overcrowded and out of date. I don't want to be repetitious; I have said much of this before during budget estimates. The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey himself admitted that there was a problem in the funding of the capital budget, and the Member for Stony Plain referred to it as well. The needs are enormous. I have visited a number of these schools all over the province. Some of them do not have room to offer the new curriculum – the science program, the computer programs, the fine arts program – which they are expected to offer, which parents are demanding, and which is necessary if the students are to be well prepared for the 21st century. In Calgary alone there is a need for \$500 million in capital projects. Many schools are 50 years old or older. Some students are even misrepresenting their residential address in order to attend schools in other areas. So this whole area of expenditures in capital projects definitely needs to be reviewed.

In terms of education expenditures as a percentage of provincial expenditures, Alberta now ranks eighth. By cutting back support for education, the province is shifting the burden

to the local taxpayer. In 1977-78 the province paid 71 percent of direct government expenditures. In 1988-89 that had fallen to 55.6 percent. This is most serious in areas where the local jurisdiction has a very low tax base. The lower the provincial share, the more impact there is on those so-called poor jurisdictions who have a low tax base. I know the minister is preparing a paper on equity, has asked for input, and I do hope the recommendations coming out of that review will address some of the problems with equity. However, the basic solution would be for the government to raise its proportion of the cost.

Education, as we know, does not stop at the primary and secondary levels. The record of neglect extends to the post-secondary level. School boards are now concerned about what is going to happen to their graduates. Many boards of governors, senates, student councils, administrations of postsecondary institutions are now very worried about the existing quality, let alone the quality they can offer in five or 10 years. The accessibility to postsecondary institutions is being cut by presidents and boards of governors who feel that they can no longer live with the crush of students, with the demands, without further funding. Therefore, they cut accessibility, this at a time when demand exists throughout the province. This is extremely shortsighted if we are trying to prepare a society of Albertans who will be very progressive, who will not only contribute to the life of this province but also live a fulfilled life themselves. Many of these people will leave this province because they cannot get into a postsecondary institution, and they will never come back. That is certainly our loss.

If funding for advanced education had kept pace with both inflation and enrollment, operating grants would be fully \$335 million higher today. In three years Alberta has fallen from first to fifth in terms of provincial funding for full-time equivalent students. In terms of funding as a percentage of the GDP, Alberta today ranks eighth. Again, the province is passing the buck on to others. Nearly 60 percent of the \$1 billion Advanced Education budget is paid by the federal government, not provincial taxpayers. The system definitely needs flexibility because of the age-group changing. No longer is it true that a majority of our people entering postsecondary institutions are 18-year-old high school graduates; a number of people are now in an older age category, and many of them are women. They do need flexibility, but they also need improvement in government funding so that the quality is assured, so the education they receive will be assured.

In a book I have read called *Megatrends 2000*, futurists are predicting what will be happening in the 21st century in the next 10 to 20 years. There will be a renaissance in the arts. Arts will become just as popular as hockey games, believe it or not, and people will be flocking to music festivals, band festivals, art displays, and so on. Yet it seems we are not emphasizing the arts at the high school level. There should be a requirement for the arts in a high school diploma. The Member for Stony Plain did talk about the high school diploma program, the credit crunch, the stress on academic education which ignores that whole area of trying to educate the whole child, the whole person. An appreciation for the arts will certainly hold anyone in good stead as they face the future and face adult life. Because of inadequate funding, for instance, at Red Deer College, two programs had to be cut in their arts centre. This is extremely shortsighted and a real tragedy.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was their decision.

MRS. GAGNON: They had no choice in making the decision if they simply did not have the dollars they needed to continue with those programs.

Another thing that was mentioned by my colleagues earlier and which I would support is that the schools have to clarify their mandate. It is expanded and expanding daily because of the pressures that are placed upon schools; however, the sources of funding are not commensurate with the expanded role. Many children are coming to school hungry, and of course they cannot learn. Many children are coming to school from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are emotionally, culturally disadvantaged. They are wounded. No one ever reads to them. No one smiles at them. No one is feeding them properly. No one is seeing to it that they have a regular routine in their home. This does put an enormous burden on the schools and on the teachers, and I believe somehow the whole matter of integrating and liaising with social services and community health must be emphasized.

I've already talked about a Head Start program, something which is probably necessary especially in the inner city. I know we have the inner needs project. I hope it is succeeding and will be expanded according to an evaluation showing which things had to be improved and which things could be dropped.

The Member for Stony Plain mentioned the native education project. I support it entirely. Many of our young native people have absolutely no future unless more initiatives are undertaken to assure that they do not drop out of our schools, that they do stay at least long enough to get a trade, a technical course if that is where their strength lies.

Another area that I think must be looked at – and this is something we could do very simply by revising the School Act – would be to make sure school boards are no longer allowed to use the strap or corporal punishment. I think it's an abuse of human rights. It certainly does not fit in with what we know today about abuse, about the big guy being able to abuse the little guy, and we absolutely must change the School Act in that regard. What we have now is an archaic, permissive statement in the Act which allows this type of discipline, which by the way is totally ineffective. People do not learn because might makes right; they learn because they are motivated and because they have felt self-esteem and wish to please those who have given them the self-esteem.

I think we also have to look at the dropout rate. There is no future for the 30 to 38 percent of young people who drop out of school, either junior high or high school. We have to find out why this is happening. Is it because the programs are not meeting their needs? Is it because of inadequate counseling? What is happening with these students? We simply cannot afford to write off 30 to 38 percent of our young people.

Other initiatives have been mentioned, and I would like to reiterate them. That would be the need for more environment education, or else there won't even be a 21st century. It is very important that the environment and the whole idea of all of us living in a global village be a cornerstone of all our curriculum. We cannot give our students a sense of hope or a sense that there will be a hopeful future for them unless they are equipped with the knowledge they need, with the skills they need, and with an interest in helping to turn around what is looming as an environmental crisis.

I can't understand how any government can talk about preparing for the 21st century when no one seems to be addressing the matter of a looming teacher shortage. I agree that projections must be made; they must be more accurate. I

would also agree that the internship program should be revisited. It was an excellent program.

In order to address some of the structures, I think we really should look at cutting up the larger boards. The ward system was seen as a solution to the matter of input from parents and so on with the Calgary and Edmonton public school boards, but I have heard from a number of interested people that the ward system was not the solution that was hoped for. A better solution would be to divide those two very huge boards into two smaller boards. So while we have some school jurisdictions that may be too small, we have these two jurisdictions that are just too large and almost impossible to administer, also creating a sense of alienation for a number of parents who feel the system is too big for them to access the trustees and so on. As I said, the ward system goes a way to resolving this issue but certainly not far enough.

We heard earlier today about the need for better ESL. There is no future for people who are illiterate. We have a number of young people who simply can't read. They get turned off, they leave school, they can't get jobs, they get into a gang situation, they create a number of problems for society, but they are trapped within themselves in a situation where they feel totally useless and have absolutely nothing to look for. Therefore, I think we have to look very, very carefully at whether our ESL programs at the K to 12 level and then later in the continuing education area are meeting the needs of so many people who are coming to our country from other countries, but also people who were born in Alberta, some of them entering our schools and not able to speak the major language here, which is English.

The ASTA has prepared a very good report on distance learning, outlining its successes and concerns that still exist. I do hope that the minister, someone who is a visionary, will take a very good look at this report and address those areas of concern in the distance learning area.

Again I would like to say, on behalf of my caucus, that we believe education is the cornerstone for any government. There must be an evident plan. We must prepare our young people and all our citizens who desire further education to live and function in a healthy and full way through the 21st century. I again thank the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey for the vision he has shown by presenting this motion.

Thank you.

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

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you'd permit me to introduce somebody who's sitting in the gallery.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education has moved that we revert to Introduction of Special Guests. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

(reversion)

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, it's a pleasure for me to introduce a very important and committed partner in education, the chairman of the Alberta School Trustees' Association, the chairman of the school board in the

county of Lacombe, Mrs. Sandra Weidner. I'd ask her to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**head: Motions Other than
Government Motions**
(continued)

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I too welcome this opportunity to address my colleagues briefly on this very important issue and motion brought forward by my colleague the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, a man who holds an important position in our caucus as the chairman of the education caucus committee, someone who is awfully helpful to me in the performance of my responsibilities. I value his contribution. It's quite typical of him that he would be bringing this kind of motion before the Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'm going to just focus my remarks, perhaps echo some of the things and second overall the remarks made by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey. But I want to talk about two key aspects of education as I see them as we lead into the 21st century. There are a number of others, but I want to speak about two in particular. Number one is being accountable to the public we serve, the results side of education, focusing on providing being accountable to our young people who are getting the education, to parents, to teachers, to voters, to taxpayers for whom the system of education must provide confidence that we are providing children with the best possible education. And that's our mandate in the Department of Education. The second is change and the need to continually adapt to change.

I refer to a letter, Mr. Speaker, that I saw in the *Edmonton Journal* a few days ago. There's been quite a debate in Edmonton about the Edmonton public school board's decision to publicize the results of the achievement tests on a school-by-school basis. What's remarkable about this letter is that it is so common, because I hear variations of this theme wherever I go about the province. The letter writer had this to say:

Please do not cloak your fear of comparison with educational rhetoric. Do not presume to imply that the public is not capable of properly evaluating these results.

Our children require (and we are paying for) success. It is mandatory that our teachers, our principals, and our school board design, co-ordinate and implement a program, which will ensure our children's success in the working world.

Far from being counterproductive, the printing of these [provincial achievement test] results may yet serve to mobilize the community to demand accountability from our educational system. That is the end of the letter.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people are asking, many people are asking: are our schools cutting it? It's a very legitimate question. Are they preparing our kids to compete nationally and internationally? Are they preparing our students to be capable, responsible, caring Canadian citizens? I place a great deal of importance on that. I put to you that success in education depends, first, on knowing what we want to achieve – where are we going? – and then knowing and having a way of knowing when we get there. Are we stacking up? I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members of the Assembly: yes, we are.

I can tell you that we are achieving results in Alberta schools, and we've put together some pretty sophisticated ways of measuring and assessing student achievement. For example, the grade 12 diploma examination program was reinstituted in 1984. Statistics collected since then tell me that Alberta students are meeting increasingly higher expectations in much larger num-

bers. There's been a steady improvement in student skills and knowledge since 1984, and the most dramatic improvements have occurred in grade 12 biology, English, and social studies, even when the expected levels of performance have also been on the rise. Our diploma examination results are not scaled. The marks on these exams indicate real performance on those examinations.

Mr. Speaker, all members of the Assembly would be interested in knowing that the number of students who receive and are eligible to receive Rutherford scholarships, students who enter their first year of postsecondary studies, is up over 60 percent since 1982. Another example I'll give to you is that in 1984 we instituted the achievement tests in grades 3, 6, and 9. Over a four-year cycle we test English, social studies, mathematics, and science, and I think we can be proud of those results. They're not all 100 percent, the way we want them to be, but what we are doing is looking at ourselves. We're doing a critical self-appraisal and a critical self-analysis as to how well we are helping children to achieve what we set out, what we expect them to know, and what we expect them to accomplish when they're in school.

I want to move quickly to national and international assessment. In the beginning of 1992 we will test the performance of 13- and 16-year-olds in each of the 10 provinces in Canada. We will start with English language and math skills, and then in subsequent years we hope to move to the sciences and to other skills that we expect our students to learn. Those comparisons are not easy to make, you'll appreciate, as all members will, because of the many variables involved. There are 10 different departments of education in the 10 provinces as well as two in the territories. But it's important to know how well we are measuring up, and there's more to it than just simply knowing what our kids are doing, how well they're achieving on the other end, on the output side. We need the information so we can share that in our schools, share that with teachers, share it with parents, share it with students, so that we know where our strengths are. But we can also identify where our weaknesses are and where we need to help students and do it better than we've been doing, because those output indicators help us to assess where those weaknesses are and where our students, where our teachers, where our schools, and where our school boards need help.

On the international assessment side we're doing the same thing. We're joining seven other Canadian provinces and 18 other countries, and we'll be participating in the second international assessment of educational progress. We'll be testing the achievement of 13-year-old students in mathematics, science, and geography, beginning in 1992. As a matter of fact, Alberta Education has been asked to develop those test materials and to participate in the development of those important materials.

But we're also looking at what we expect schools to do in other parts, other than just student achievement. We're saying that we want schools and teachers to help build children's self-esteem, to help them build their confidence, to make sure they've got healthy attitudes, to teach them something about entrepreneurship. Some members on the other side don't quite understand what that's all about, but I won't get into that partisan kind of debate when we're talking about education. But, Mr. Speaker, those are important things that our students learn, that they learn something about motivation, trust, values, and responsibility. We say that we want our students to learn that. I want that; we all want that. But if that's what a teacher – if that's what a school board wants the teachers to teach those

students, then let's devise ways, creative new ways for the 21st century of measuring how well we've accomplished that, if that's what we want to accomplish; most importantly, to be able to share that good news, share that good experience so that other teachers can use that and help those teachers to deliver a better education for our students.

I come back to what I said earlier, Mr. Speaker: self-appraisal, self-criticism, a cold, hard look at what we are doing in our schools, what we are really achieving in our schools. We are prepared to be accountable. We must be prepared to be accountable in order to achieve greater confidence among businesspeople, among voters and taxpayers, among parents, and especially among those students.

Our second challenge is change and the continuing need to adapt to change, and the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey has referred to that. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the world around us and what's going on behind what was the Iron Curtain, can you imagine designing a social studies curriculum 12 months ago, a social studies curriculum that would have looked at governments in Europe, governments in eastern Europe and in Asia, governments in the Soviet Union? Can you imagine writing a textbook on how things were just one year ago? Well, today that kind of textbook, that kind of curriculum, could well be quite outdated. It would be outdated, and that is a very important reason why we must make sure that our curriculum responds and is able to adapt to that change. We live in a world where human knowledge is doubling in a matter of months, where new scientific research is overturning yesterday's facts and turning them into myths, and where most people can expect to have three or four careers in a single lifetime. We live in a world where graduates of our schools will have to compete in international markets, and they will also have to address world problems that affect virtually the very existence and the very future of our planet.

Our school curriculum must give our children the tools they need to do just that. We have to find a way to prepare kids for the world as they are going to find it, not the world as some of us would like it to be but the world as they are going to find it. That's not an easy job, Mr. Speaker, to look ahead 10 or 20 or more years and decide what students will need to know. In my view, they're going to need to know an awful lot more about mathematics and science and technology, because it's going to have a prominent place in our future. The ability to find information, to do research, and to constantly acquire new knowledge and skills is going to be vitally important. And each of us can add to that list, Mr. Speaker.

But how do we help schools to do these tasks, to do these jobs? I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we've got two ways to handle the challenges. Briefly I want to summarize. First, as the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey and I know my colleague from Calgary-Bow said, we have to help schools to establish priorities, priorities that reflect community values – the values of parents but the larger community as well – priorities which are realistic and do-able, because we've got to remember that there is a difference between education and schooling and that while the school makes a very important contribution to the education of our children, it is only one of the agencies that gives our children the education they need. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we've let the family, the church, the larger community, and the media – four very important influences on our children's lives – off the hook. We have said: "No, we'll take it on. We'll do it. We're a school; we're teachers; we're boards of trustees; we're the Minister of Educa-

tion. We'll do it for you." Well, I think that is a tragedy, and we have to reverse that trend, because if we don't, schools will sink and will continue to sink under the weight of their unlimited responsibilities. That's a tragedy, and we've got to reverse that.

Secondly, we've got to focus on co-operation, and we've talked an awful lot about that in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We need to help schools. We need to help parents and teachers and the business community and others to become true partners in the education of our children. We will take a different way of looking at the gaps and the overlaps in our children's education. We're currently trying to do that in special education. I'm working with my colleague the Minister of Health and the two ministers of Family and Social Services, as well as the School Trustees' Association and the ATA and others, to focus on the cost and the funding of special education, to look at the co-ordination of activities of community and government agencies and the programs we provide to students and then measuring the outcome. When will we know we have accomplished what we set out to do in special education? When can we say we've done our job? We've got to assess that because the call is there; the pressure is on us to show that we're able to respond.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

So partnership, co-operation in bringing all that we can, all those who are interested, into schools to help with the education of our children: Mr. Speaker, we have a big task. We have a big task ahead of us as the managers of our education system and making sure that our children are ready for the 21st century. But I'm confident that although there are challenges there, our success and the good things that are going on in our schools today should give confidence to those voters, those taxpayers, and especially those parents and those children that we can meet the needs of children of the 21st century.

MR. SPEAKER: Banff-Cochrane, followed by Calgary-North West.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just delighted to have an opportunity to rise in support of this motion from the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey. I want to spend a couple of minutes on really the philosophy of education, and it's been led into very well by our Minister of Education.

I'm firmly committed to the principle that Alberta can be the centre of education in Canada, should be the centre of education in Canada, and has the vision and the forward thinking that will make it the centre of education in this country. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that we will have an opportunity to diversify our economy in this province, utilizing something that can never be taken away: the personal growth that occurs through education. I am convinced, because I am convinced that education is where the 21st century is going to be, that that is going to ensure that Alberta maintains its position in western Canada, in Canada, and in North America.

How do we accomplish that? Well, we accomplish it by dedicating resources, by making sure that we start at the kindergarten level. We are not satisfied to just educate our children to be able to deal with the challenges of living in Alberta, but we make sure that our children are educated to deal with the challenges of an increasingly global situation. With technology improving as it is, with instantaneous communication becoming the norm and not the exception, we must recognize that we live in this global market, and we must further recognize

that to be able to compete, to be able to understand where we are and where we're going, we have to be very conscious of that global market. By integrating education and the broadest possible perspective into everyday life in Alberta, we can be ready to face the challenges that are in front of us in the 21st century and we can make sure we are the leaders.

Competitiveness in the world market requires us to dedicate not only funds but to focus and be flexible and responsive to what is happening in the world around us. It's just not enough to take money and throw it at the problem. That is often called the solution to all the problems in the world, and that is just not enough. We have to be flexible and responsive. We have to always be ready to jump into the next opportunity that is available to us as the world progresses. The way we can do that is to continue to focus on the world around us, not being insular but rather making sure that we look at that global situation.

I have an opportunity myself, Mr. Speaker, to deal with an educational opportunity that's available in Alberta as a result of an initiative from our Department of Tourism. It recognizes the two components that I've been speaking about. Number one: in Alberta we have great opportunities; we have industries that are our strength right now and will be in the future. But it also recognizes what is happening in the world today. I'm speaking specifically about the Alberta Tourism Education Council. The Alberta Tourism Education Council takes into account what is Alberta's third major industry, tourism, and what will be the world's number one industry by the year 2000.

MR. FOX: Hi, Stockwell.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. If you wish to meet, please go out the back.

MR. EVANS: This innovative approach to education comprises government, our educational facilities, and the private sector. It's run by the private sector, because it's the private sector that should be identifying where opportunities exist, Mr. Speaker. What we have in the Alberta Tourism Education Council is a union of those three important parts of our society, and through the able leadership of our Minister of Tourism and through the dedication of the people on the Alberta Tourism Education Council, I'm convinced that tourism will continue to be a growth industry in Alberta and that we will be prepared to accept the challenges of the future and take advantage of the fact that tourism will be that number one world industry by the year 2000.

We've heard a projection of what will happen in the 21st century: that the arts will take their place as really a paramount force and that the focus will turn towards the arts. I'm very pleased to hear that kind of forward thinking, particularly when I consider the Banff Centre, which is located in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane. I congratulate the Minister of Advanced Education for the support he has given to the Banff Centre since he took on this important portfolio, and I congratulate this government for recognizing that the smaller, regional education facilities will make this province great, that we have in Banff a facility that is world-renowned, that allows young people to come to a magnificent physical setting and learn about the arts. It is a tremendous opportunity, and I'm very, very pleased that it exists and that its importance will become even more evident in the years to come.

I would like to say just a few words about another aspect of education that's very important to me, and that's the environment. As the chairman of our environment caucus committee,

I've had the opportunity to get a sense of where the environmental focus is going in our education system in the province of Alberta today. I'm pleased that the Minister of Education feels the same way I do, that rather than trying to create a course that deals with the environment, we should be trying to integrate environmental awareness and concerns into all aspects of the educational process. It's not the kind of pursuit, it's not the kind of undertaking that can be put into a compartment and dealt with in a course. It must be a pervasive part of our society, and I'm delighted with the minister's commitment to integrating it into the process and to making sure that Albertans again, Mr. Speaker, have that opportunity to be as environmentally aware as possible from the very beginning of their education process to the time they are out in the work force and beyond.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and allow other members to have some input into this discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall attempt to tailor my comments in the time remaining to fit with what has gone before. I would like, first of all, to compliment the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey for promoting this motion. I'm aware of his commitment to education in this province, and I salute him both for his past service to education and for this particular motion.

I think one of the most important things in the consideration of education is that really what we're talking about is a partnership in education, a partnership between family, between the school, between the student, between the school system, and between the government. One of the things we have to look toward doing in order to ensure that our young Albertans are well prepared for the 21st century, I believe, is that we need to look at the vehicle we are presenting to the children, to our students, the young children that come in at six years of age and leave as young adults, basically, at 18 years of age or thereabouts, some 12 years later.

My feeling on this is that one of the most important things we can do for children is not necessarily to be so concerned with the curriculum itself, the particular topic, be it social studies, math, science, and so forth. While the content is important, we have to recognize that we are in an age where information is exploding and increasing at an ever increasing rate. Rather than forcing a particular topic or a particular subject into those students, one of the philosophies I espoused personally as a classroom teacher that we need to do for our children to help them become ready for the 21st century is that we need to help them learn how to learn. One of the most important things we have to do, then, is allow children the opportunity to explore a variety of avenues. We need to allow them the opportunity to try different techniques of learning for themselves, whether it's self-learning, whether it's a distance-learning program, as has been alluded to by some other members, whether it's in a traditional classroom setting, as I'm sure many of us have had the vast majority of our educational experiences involve.

I want to talk briefly a little bit about the teachers that will deliver the program, and some comments have been made by other members as well regarding the teachers. One of the things I think we need to do – mention was made previously about the internship program and the need for the assistance an intern can provide in a classroom and in a school to spend more one-on-one, or closer to one-on-one, time with the kids. But along with that, one of the problems we have to face is that teachers need

to be able to spend time with their students and they need to be current. One of the things that was mentioned before was the partnership in education program, whereby a school will partner with a particular business. One of the things I heard on a frequent basis is that schools are often behind in terms of what's happening in industry and in technology and need to be more current. Perhaps if we promoted more actively the partners in education so that in fact the partners in education, the business groups, could help shape – not direct, but help to shape – new curriculum initiatives, what might end up happening is that the teachers would get new input, the curriculum would be more current, and the students that came out would be more readily prepared to take their place in the business community.

I would like to talk very briefly about some staffing concerns that I have heard regarding at least the Calgary board of education, which is the board where I was most recently employed, and it deals with the special needs children we have in our schools. One of the concerns I heard is that staffing occurs on a systemwide basis, wherein we get teachers allocated based upon the total number of pupils and then a teacher is allocated to look after those 10 or 12 special needs students. While the total population of students has remained the same, you take one teacher out of the population of teachers and the end result is that class sizes get a little larger.

Education is a very difficult field, and I think we certainly do need to move ahead in that area. So along that line I think what I would like to do, since this is such an important motion, is to move that at this point in time the question be put and a vote taken on this very important motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Those in favour that the question be put, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.
Those in favour of the motion then.

[Motion carried]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair wonders if the Member for Edmonton-Calder has had a chance to review the Blues and sees fit to withdraw a certain comment made earlier today.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I haven't had a chance to review the Blues, but I would withdraw the term "hypocrisy" . . . Is that what it was?

AN HON. MEMBER: "Hypocritical."

MS MJOLSNESS: . . . "hypocritical" – sorry – and replace it with, "The government is full of hypocrites," which I believe is parliamentary.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm afraid the Chair will not accept that as being an acceptable apology. I'm sorry the member chooses to deal that way with the House.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, tonight's business called by the government will be the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division. I would move that when members reassemble at 8 p.m., they do so in Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

[The House recessed at 5:29 p.m.]