

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 9, 1991**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 91/04/09

head: **Committee of Supply**

head: **Main Estimates 1991-92**

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the committee please come to order. Order please. This evening we're scheduled to consider the estimates of the Department of Advanced Education. However, we have two items to deal with.

head: **Subcommittees of Supply**

Moved by Mr. Chumir:

Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply strike four subcommittees comprised of not more than 21 members each, nominated by each caucus on a proportionate basis to membership; i.e., New Democrat four members, Liberal two members, PC balance of members.

Be it further resolved that each subcommittee be directed to examine in detail the following estimates:

Human services: Advanced Education, Attorney General, Culture and Multiculturalism, Education, Family and Social Services, Health, Labour, occupational health and workers' safety, and Solicitor General.

Economic development: Career Development and Employment, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Economic Development and Trade, Technology, Research and Telecommunications, Transportation and Utilities, and Tourism.

Environment and natural resources: Agriculture, Energy, Environment, Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, and Recreation and Parks.

Government affairs: Executive Council, Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Municipal Affairs, and Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: First of all, there is the motion by the Member for Calgary-Foothills that the previous question be put on the motion by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Are there any speakers on that particular issue? Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Moving, then, to the motion proposed by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Copies of the motion have been circulated to all members. Are you ready for the question? I guess you are. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The motion is defeated, but you're ready for a vote. So please push the button. My apologies to the Assembly; I didn't realize I had to do that.

[The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Hawkesworth	Pashak
Chumir	Hewes	Roberts
Ewasiuk	Martin	Woloshyn
Gagnon	Mjolsness	

Against the motion:

Ady	Elliott	Musgrove
Black	Evans	Nelson
Bogle	Fischer	Orman
Bradley	Fox	Paszkowski
Brassard	Gogo	Shrake
Calahasen	Hyland	Sparrow
Cardinal	Laing, B.	Thurber
Cherry	Lund	Trynchy
Clegg	Mirosh	Weiss
Day	Moore	Zaruský
Drobot		

Totals:	For - 11	Against - 31
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[Motion lost]

8:10

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Prior to going to the next order of business, I would ask if the committee would give unanimous consent for the Introduction of Special Guests.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.
Edmonton-Calder.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure this evening to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 35 girl guides that have joined us this evening. They're from the 116th Edmonton Guide Company, and they are accompanied by guiders Hilda Irwin, Christine Fortin, Jean England, Elaine Zdebliak, parents Dave Platzner, Phil Spicer, and also Louise Chwyl, John Bergin, and Darlene Stefaniszyn. I would ask them to rise, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Committee of Supply**

head: **Main Estimates 1991-92**
(continued)

Advanced Education

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The estimates of the Department of Advanced Education are located starting on page 23 in your estimates book and starting on page 1 in the elements or details book. I would like to first of all call upon the Minister of Advanced Education to make any opening comments.

MR. GOGO: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the opportunity to not only present but defend my estimates in the committee tonight.

I'd like to say at the outset that we've had what I believe has been a very successful year in the postsecondary system of education here in the province, and I think that came about for a variety of reasons. First of all, as you know, our 28 institutions funded by the proverbial billion dollars can only be and have only been successful as a result of a lot of people's involvement and, first and foremost, the self-governance concept whereby decisions are made by boards of governors who, in my view, are best able to represent the needs, desires, and wants within their own constituencies, be they universities, colleges, technical institutes, or in the case of the vocational colleges, departmental people. They take their jobs very seriously. We have some uniqueness to Alberta that's not found elsewhere, and without those boards of governors, Mr. Chairman, I really don't think we would have been as successful as we've been.

The uniqueness, for example, of the Banff Centre. It's unique to North America. The uniqueness of the Alberta College of Art in Calgary, one of only four in Canada. The uniqueness of our four universities speaks for itself in terms of the degree granting. Our college and technical institutes, be they Keyano in the north or Medicine Hat in the south, bring to their special interests within their communities a variety of programs, Mr. Chairman, to see the objectives of the Alberta government, to see that Albertans are prepared in terms of training and education to compete worldwide. I think it's only because of the board-governed concept that we're able to achieve those objectives. No institution could possibly function without the dedication of the administration found with their presidents, the faculty – the people who actually do the teaching – and some who are often forgotten, the support staff that keep those places together. I think we all have one goal in common, and that is to serve the student.

In Alberta we should feel very proud of the fact that we have some 116,000 students in our credit programs throughout our system, but we still serve some 650,000 Albertans. I would ask committee members just to bear in mind that if we have two and a half million people, which the latest statistic indicates, and you take out the Minister of Education's responsibility of 430,000 students in the K to 12, recognizing our 200,000-plus seniors for the most part don't attend the postsecondary system, you get a remarkable result of less than 2 million people, I think 1.9 million Albertans, of which 650,000 access the postsecondary system. That's about one in every three. So if anybody is in doubt about the attractiveness and the participation rate of Albertans in the postsecondary system, whether it be in university programs, whether it be in tourism training programs, whether it be in apprenticeship programs, whether it be in upgrading programs, Mr. Chairman, we have a very, very exciting and successful postsecondary system of education.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, in defending this budget, I'd like to speak, in essence, to a report card of what's happened over these past two years. One of the first tasks I had and set as Minister of Advanced Education two years ago this month was to establish a set of four goals that I thought were not only important but would guarantee an effective and efficient postsecondary system. I know that probably most ministers new to a portfolio will have a similar goal, but it's one that I thought about long and hard. I decided those four goals were essential if I were to serve in this portfolio in a meaningful way.

The first one was to provide leadership. I think that's what ministers are for. The second was to enable qualified and

motivated students in Alberta to be able to access our system. It's presenting, as I'll discuss later, some unique problems because of its success. Nonetheless, it was the second goal. The third one was to provide a system for allocation and the reallocation of resources to maintain and improve the various quality programs. Recognizing, Mr. Chairman, that we have some four and a quarter billion dollars in bricks and mortar around Alberta, where one doesn't have to travel more than 90 kilometres anywhere in this province to access our system, obviously it creates an appetite for operating funds. It becomes a challenge, then, to be able to say, "Where should the resources be deployed, and if they're inefficient where they are, how can they be redeployed?" I suggest to you as minister over self-governing institutions that it takes a fair amount of leadership, perhaps moral suasion, and perhaps serious discussion to try and redeploy funds that go into existing programs. The fourth was to provide a system of postsecondary education that is responsive to the educational, research, and training needs of our citizens. I shared these four goals, Mr. Chairman, back in '89 with the postsecondary institutions, and they've become the focus of my work since then. The many accomplishments we've achieved in the last two years all primarily relate directly to these goals.

8:20

Under leadership, Mr. Chairman: the ministry carries out its leadership, in my view, by giving direction to the postsecondary system, by co-ordinating programs and institutional mandates. So we discover from these institutions, in consultation with them, what their mandates should be. We put out a document a year ago July, called Guidelines for System Development, where we said: "You institutions, you boards of governors, you vocational centres will advise me as minister so I can advise the government about necessary changes in allocations or reallocations. What do you feel your goals should be and your mandate statement should be, and will you put it in writing and get it to me and tell me what you're best at? Because you're not best at everything" – which deals with the whole question of duplication, the whole question of how we can rationalize the system to be more efficient. I mean, who is to say for the postsecondary system that everybody has the right to walk next door into the institution of their choice, be it the University of Calgary, Medicine Hat College, Keyano College, Athabasca U, and take the program they want to take? Mr. Chairman, those days are behind us because of the participation rate and the insatiable appetite in terms of higher education. Those days are history. For some 60 years Albertans traversed this province because we had one university, and for some reason that was adequate. But as times changed, as population grew, we had to have additional institutions, and that's why we have them. But the fact remains that the day of attending an institution of your first choice or the program of your first choice is perhaps history.

Hon. members may recall, Mr. Chairman, that it was not very long ago that we had a Bill before this Assembly called Bill 27. Hon. members of the opposition recall it because they said: "The sky is falling. How dare you, minister, have the audacity to tell an institution what they can and what they cannot do in terms of programs." I recall vividly that the world was coming to an end. It was fine for this minister to find the money to approve new programs, but it somehow wasn't fine for this minister, who has a view of all Alberta, to say, "You can't cancel that program because the students want it; you must have permission." Today everybody's onside and it's okay. Isn't it interesting: the first great challenge and it's worked out extremely well. I simply point out to hon. members it was only

because of co-operation by this minister and those institutions that we were able to achieve what I call a watershed or benchmark. Albeit none of the other provinces have it, I haven't heard any complaints. One of the jobs of leadership is to provide that kind of leadership.

AN HON. MEMBER: Be grateful. Say thanks.

MR. GOGO: We'll hear in a few minutes, I know, from Calgary-McKnight the pitfalls of that.

Mr. Chairman, one of the advantages the department obviously has in terms of the ministry that institutions maybe don't have is to look at the rest of the nation and see what's happening and develop trends. For example, the demographics of Alberta are extremely unique. You've heard and you'll hear more from my colleague here about in-migration to the province. As long as those people continue to come into Alberta and as long as you get schools in northwest Calgary where in three out of four English is not the first language, you find unique challenges in not only language training but the nature of people in terms of the programs they need. In many cases it's a matter of upgrading.

Mr. Chairman, my government does not like to fight with Ottawa, and yet in representing our students and our institutions we've had to. We've had to take on some issues: student assistance, which is extremely important to this government in assisting our students; challenging Ottawa in terms of the 3 percent administration fee on student loans. I didn't hear anybody talking about it. We challenged it because we don't believe our students should be faced with a 3 percent administration charge on a student loan before the fact. If you want to talk about after the fact, after the finished study, that's something else.

Literacy has been a high priority of this government, Mr. Chairman. We spend over \$90 million a year. It's become a focal point, and from that discussion on literacy programs, as you know – I read in the House not long ago, and it's now out for discussion, a program on adult learning. I guess one of the important things I would feel strongly about is visiting the institutions around Alberta, visiting the stakeholders in the system, hearing what their views are, and coming up with ways that I believe make it easier for them to perform their role. In the final analysis, obviously people must make decisions. Those decisions are not always easy.

Members are familiar, I'm sure, with some of the problems we've had, evidenced in the Auditor General's report: the situation in Calgary at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. I mean, it's not easy to lose \$8 million or \$9 million and still be able to serve your students. This minister took that in a very, very serious way, because recognizing the governance of our institutions, ministers don't learn until the Auditor General reports. The minister has no right. Fortunately, I was able to appoint an advisor to sit with that board, work its way out of it, and now I think it's on the road to recovery and Batam Island hopefully is a matter of the past.

Members will know – certainly the Edmonton members – there were certain allegations about NAIT, the northern Alberta institute. I think an example of leadership, Mr. Chairman, was to get the Auditor General involved. The net result of that: the board chairman was relieved of responsibilities; a new chairman . . . [interjections] Maybe the hon. leader was responsible for anonymous mail; I don't know. But it was this minister who took the leadership to see the problem was resolved. I think it's on the road to recovery under its new chairman, Mr. Shaw. I

appreciate hon. members who did their share in the interests of the students and the institution to keep this minister informed.

But one of the primary goals – and I'll comment a little later about the whole question of the tuition fee policy that's been under review for a year, and I announced the culmination of that today. That's been tied directly to what my priorities are. My priorities really lie in three areas: first of all, with the student in terms of access and quality. That has got to be the number one priority, Mr. Chairman. When Albertans devote three, four, or five years of their life in a postsecondary institution, surely they're entitled to quality. That's become, I think, the focal point: allowing any Albertan who has the ability and is motivated to attend a postsecondary institution, and having once done that, I think they're entitled to quality. I recognize that's a concern to many members, and I would expect the committee members to raise the whole question of access with me.

But in order to do that, we had to deal with the question of finances. As members know, we've carried out what may appear to some to be an endless series of reviews. I think they number about 10. The latest one was to review the whole question of the Students Finance Board. As members will note in the estimates tonight, vote 3 appears, with an 8 percent reduction, to somehow reduce student aid. Frankly, it's quite the contrary, as I'll explain in a few moments. But having reviewed the Students Finance Board, Mr. Chairman, the net result was to increase the amount of student assistance available, to make the program more meaningful, and to guarantee that any Albertan who is qualified and motivated would not be prohibited from attending our institutions because of financial resources. That's the whole concept, purpose, mission, and objective of the Students Finance Board. Access, as I say, is a concern, and it continues to be a concern. I'll deal with that a little more in general.

Funding, of course, for the whole question of degree granting has been a concern in the past year with various institutions wanting to have what universities have in terms of degree granting, but I would point out that you don't have to have a fifth university in this province in order to have additional degrees. We have provided funding, for example, to Red Deer College for completion programs. The U of A nursing baccalaureate program is a prime example at Red Deer College. In Athabasca U, Canada's probably outstanding distance learning institution, degrees are being issued there; studies at Keyano College in administration, arts, and general studies. The new tuition fee policy, which we'll get to in a few moments, will deal with one of the major impediments, according to certain institutions, as to why they can't offer further degree opportunities. That deals with the whole question of off campus.

8:30

Mr. Chairman, over 3,000 new university-level student spaces have been created in the past four years: 3,000 spaces in the past four years through the expansion of the university transfer programs at Grant MacEwan here in the city, Red Deer and Mount Royal colleges, and business programs that members will remember we announced back in '89 for four universities at a cost of some \$6 million or \$7 million, which has prompted the decision for the professional faculties building at the University of Calgary.

We provide about \$2 million a year, Mr. Chairman, for those who have special needs, such as interpretation services, disabled people, at 10 of our institutions as well as the Calgary learning centre. So we try to do whatever we can to make it easier for disabled Alberta students.

Since 1989, again, Mr. Chairman, we spent \$6.3 million to enhance the access to the colleges through Grande Prairie Regional College expansion, some \$34 million of capital, the new facility for the Alberta Vocational College at Lesser Slave Lake, and the Lloydminster campus at Lakeland College.

For those who question the lack of co-operation, co-ordination within a community, I simply draw their attention to the Lloydminster campus and the Husky upgrader where the one centre needed in terms of the college residence spaces for its students; Husky upgrader needed spaces for 800 employees. They got together. They came up with a magical solution where Husky provided the majority of the funds to build the student residence at the Lloydminster campus to be utilized by their workers, and when their workers are concluded, of course, the Lakeland College Lloydminster campus has those spaces for their students. The hon. Member for Lloydminster was very instrumental and this government was very supportive to see we were able to put that together. An excellent example of co-operation between the public sector and the private sector, and I would be looking for more of those.

Something that may not sit entirely comfortable with certain members, Mr. Chairman, was the establishment of a new funding policy for private colleges which are degree granting: King's, Concordia, and Camrose Lutheran University College. Tuition fees there are double anywhere else, but we committed ourselves to a policy, because they grant degrees, which means they meet the accreditation board standard in terms of libraries, faculty, and all those elements necessary to grant arts degrees and science degrees. We've committed to a policy of providing 75 percent funding of the public institution to those institutions. We're on year three. I think we're at 60 percent this year. That's another example whereby we recognize the needs and aspirations of Albertans who want further study in accredited programs.

Mr. Chairman, a very sensitive area has been the allocation of our resources. Members look at the estimates before them. We're looking at an allocation of \$1,051,000,000. In a time of restraint, in a time when government's attempting to balance its budget and get its fiscal house in order, we were able to achieve another \$29 million commitment in terms of funding for our system. I would draw your attention to the fact that if there are a million taxpayers in Alberta, then \$29 million represents about \$30 for every taxpayer. I suggest that's a very significant commitment by our taxpayers to the goals and aspirations of the postsecondary system.

Members, I'm sure, are aware of the endowment fund commenced in 1980 for the '80s. It was \$80 million. Little did anybody dream that kick-start program would have the effect it's had. Today, 1991, it's surpassed \$412 million into the postsecondary system. There are many institutions in this province with assets in terms of equipment, in terms of buildings, and it simply wouldn't have happened unless the government had the foresight back in 1980 to create that endowment fund. The fact it ran out of money twice because of its success is testament, I think, to the success of the private sector and the individuals who contributed.

As you know, a year ago January I announced a review of the tuition fee policy. It's been the most in-depth review of tuition fees, to my knowledge, in the history of Alberta. The last policy was in 1982. It started in '77 and took about five years. We believe that a review of that tuition fee policy is essential to the future well-being of not only our students but the quality of programs in our system. In effect, Mr. Chairman, it will raise additional funds for our system. Members may be aware that we presently contribute about 85 to 90 cents on the dollar on behalf

of the taxpayers. Students pay the lowest tuition in the nation next to Quebec, and Quebec has recently awakened after a 20-year moratorium and raised tuition fees 60 percent. I don't know what the future holds. I do know that our institutions must have funds if they're able to maintain quality and access to the system. I would hope that with today's announcement we'll see an additional \$16 million to \$17 million go into our system to offset operating expenses.

We've had what's known as capital formula funding, today known as the capital renewal program. In addition to all the bricks and mortar we've provided, we've had that system in place, and it's interesting to note that in 10 years we've now surpassed a half a billion dollars in formula funding assistance in terms of capital replacement, furniture replacement, and utility replacement. Now, Mr. Chairman, I think we have in place a very up-to-date and modern, for the most part, set of buildings in terms of infrastructure. Our concentration, in my view, should now be on the whole question of renewing, upgrading, replacing, instead of building new buildings. I think those days are behind us. I look at such minor things as spending some \$16 million removing asbestos because the health needs of our people were such that they wanted the asbestos removed because of the risk, and that doesn't come easily. Six and a half million to remove PCBs because in many people's minds they're dangerous. As you know, the jury is still out as to whether or not they're dangerous if they remain in certain containers. I think in many ways, Mr. Chairman, the government and this department through a lot of efforts by a lot of people, from the deputy minister down, have played a very caring, sensitive role to the needs of our citizens.

I'd like to turn to the whole question of the tuition policy which was announced today. Members note in their estimates that there appears to be a decrease of some 8.2 percent. Oddly enough, Mr. Chairman, we've raised the amount of student loans available from \$218 million to \$221 million. So let's be very clear at the outset: the amount of money available for needy students today has never been greater. But how did we achieve this? There'll be hon. members very interested in achieving this. Well, let me say at the outset that we've raised the amount of student loans per student. I don't think anybody argues with the concept that the role of student loans is to help the needy students. In my view the level of tuition fees in this province has rewarded those who are well off, because they haven't paid their way. When you pay 10 or 11 cents on the dollar, you're not paying your way.

So, Mr. Chairman, we reviewed the student tuition policy, sent out discussion papers that hon. members are probably familiar with, 140 of them, I believe. That's 37 responses. My advisory committee met with a variety of people. There's not a students' group or a board or a citizens' group that's not been met with and got advice. The advice was to do the following: retain the student finance program for the needy. That's been done.

8:40

When one looks at the figures, Mr. Chairman, there are some obvious things that stick out. Why have remission or forgiveness in a program unless it's going to mean an unmanageable debt for the graduate. Well, when we recognize that 85 to 92 percent of our graduates find meaningful work based on the training they've had, we don't believe that a \$14,280 debt, to be exact, is an excessive load to carry into your career, recognizing a university degree probably provides you with \$600,000 in additional earnings. So we reduced the remissions. We, first of all, removed them from Canada student loan - let Canada

worry about that, not Alberta taxpayers – and we reduced our remission program, which was costing \$32 million a year in taxpayers' funds, to \$27 million. As a matter of fact, it's a \$4 million reduction in remissions.

Then, Mr. Chairman, in terms of the grants. As hon. members know, the student loan was raised 20 percent a year ago to \$5,000. We then provided for the needy a \$2,500 grant. We've raised the student loan, lessening the pressure on the grants. So out of some 50,000 the number of people who require the full is really only 2,000. About one out of every two students in our system borrows.

Mr. Chairman, we instituted an audit system. About 7 percent of our applicants were found to be erroneous in their applications. That's had the effect of saving us, under the audit program, about \$3 million, very significant dollars. I won't say they were cheating; I will say the information was erroneous. I would say they applied for rent to rent a place when they still lived at home. Nonetheless, we've recovered about \$3 million. I think that's very significant.

I met with the student leaders today and explained the tuition fee policy to them. Obviously, they're not happy if tuitions are going up; that's a given. But now that they had a say in the formation of the policy, I think there's a better understanding.

So I simply want to conclude on this note. It's been a very exciting year. I've had the co-operation of a lot of people. I'm honoured to be minister of this portfolio. I'm confident that with the programs and changes we've instituted in terms of reviews, the days ahead will be rewarding and yet challenging, not only for our board-governed institutions and vocational colleges but for the beneficiaries of the system who continue to be the students of Alberta, some of Canada's future finest citizens.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Nice talk, Mr. Minister. Nice talk and it doesn't mean very much. I'd like to set the record straight before I go into details in the analysis on the minister's budget estimates for this year.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, the minister does not yet enjoy the support of the Official Opposition with respect to the powers he grabbed through implementation of Bill 27 last year. We objected to it; now we continue to object to it. It constituted unwarranted elimination of the arm's-length relationship between the government and universities, colleges, and technical institutes. I can assure you that the New Democrats will never support that kind of policy, so let the minister not fool himself in this regard.

Let the minister also be advised that the New Democrats have similarly not only not ever changed our minds on the way boards are appointed by one minister or by cabinet; we have sponsored a Bill that would allow for the total democratization of board appointments for universities, colleges, and technical institutes. We stand by that as well, because we believe the stakeholders should be electing from their own organizations the boards of directors of postsecondary education institutions for the primary purpose of eliminating political interference.

You know, Mr. Chairman, there's another advantage in this position that the New Democrats have, and that is this: it gets the minister off the hook, because if those boards don't play by their own rules, then there is no political accountability that is put back into the lap of the minister. It's too bad that the

Conservatives will no longer be in government by the time this Bill is introduced by the NDP government. It's too bad that they won't have learned their lesson before then, but I don't hold my breath.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, this minister has learned spin doctoring to an almost offensive degree. On the other hand, I want to give him credit first for at least having had the guts to announce the tuition policy changes prior to tonight's estimates. I have seen – I'm probably not allowed to use some of the adjectives I would like to use – ministers, dot dot dot ministers who have made their announcements at 5 o'clock on a Friday afternoon after their estimates had been dealt with. I think that's sneaky and underhanded, and I will at least give the minister credit for having released the information prior to estimates tonight. It's because this minister's a good guy. The problem with him is that he's being pushed around by his other colleague from Lethbridge, the Provincial Treasurer, who has basically said – and everybody knows this – "You shall have X amount of budget, and by God you're going to live with it." It's too bad that this minister isn't the Treasurer and the other minister isn't the Advanced Education minister. Maybe things would be a bit different. I don't know.

MR. FOX: West is best; east is least.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, okay. But now that I've mentioned the kudos that I think are necessary, I want to go on to say that the minister has also become a professional spin doctor, because what we're talking about, Mr. Chairman, is the 13th consecutive year of declining support on a full-time equivalent basis for universities' funding from the provincial government. Let's start in 1978-79. In constant dollars, now, that's the first year that we're going to use constant dollars for, and so that year 100 equals 100. Constant dollars per full-time equivalent student: \$5,534. It's a sad story what's happened every year since. Even in the election years where they pretend they're increasing the funding, in fact, the real funding by now per full-time equivalent student at university has dropped in real terms, constant dollars, to \$4,349. Shame on the minister. Shame on this government. How can they talk about the most important resource being Alberta's education system and the products therefrom when they refuse to fund on an appropriate basis?

The same is also true, by the way, for the formula funding. Now, formula funding is not some mystical creature, folks. Formula funding is used for the fixing of old or damaged buildings and the upgrading or repairing of equipment. Now, I'm going to tell you this little story. This one blows me away. This is for real; it really did happen. At the University of Alberta they've got this pharmacy department, which I have visited. I've seen the incredible state of disrepair over there. I knew that the lab equipment was old largely because it was big. It was gargantuan. You know, you can tell computer equipment's old when it's really gigantic. Anyway, there was a Stanford University prof visiting the faculty last year, and when he got shown through the lab he said, "Oh, I see you guys have a museum here too." It's true. It took them a couple of minutes to realize. They said: "You're joking, right? Are you trying to just insult our lab or something?" And the guy from Stanford said: "No, we have a museum where we have stuff like this. We actually keep it as a museum. I mean our equipment is much more up-to-date, obviously, and I just thought that this

equipment I was looking at was a museum." In fact, this is the stuff they're working with on a day-to-day basis right now.

I can tell you, I was over in this building, and it was pretty warm out, and they described to me some of the circumstances that happen because they don't have money to upgrade their facilities. In the middle of summer – the western exposure on this building is pretty large – it gets really hot, like mid-30s inside. They don't have any air conditioning because the university doesn't have money for air conditioning, right? They've got these specialized instruments that lose their ability to calibrate when they get too hot. They're sort of steaming, you know what I mean? And guess what? The inert chemicals start reacting because they're hot because they're not controlled. You know what happens then? They give off fumes, and everybody says, "Oh, God, I gotta get out of here." Now this is efficiency? My friend, this is counterefficiency. This is no way to be training the pharmacists of the future. Now, see, capital funding and formal funding are nothing mythological. It's really important that you keep pace with technological changes.

8:50

Here's another example of how it's counterproductive. Last year the University of Calgary experienced some water pipe bursting. They knew it could happen in up to eight locations, and sure enough it did in three locations. But you know what? Even though they'd reported it to all the administrative people and everybody knew it was likely to happen, the university had no money to do the repairs to prevent it. So instead of preventing it, what they had to do then was mop up all the mess afterwards and throw out destroyed equipment. [interjection] Oh, that's right. It happened even with the steam heating in the library. Now, that's a false economy. If you say that postsecondary education is a top priority for you, you got to invest in it, and that means in investing in the plant and capital around it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the minister wanted to talk about changes to the remissions program, and I also would like to bring up a few comments about that. I mean, is he convinced that a reduction . . . I'll just find the page. I think it's 16 percent. In remissions of loans they've got a 12.8 percent reduction earmarked this year. Now, you add that on to the big tuition increases and the almost uncontrolled administrative fee increases that the students are going to be facing starting in September, and what do you think that's going to mean for low-income students? I'll tell you what I know it's going to mean. It's going to mean that the rich will go to university and the poor won't. That's what this is going to mean. There's a cumulative effect.

MRS. BLACK: Nonsense.

MS BARRETT: Well, Pat Black says "nonsense," but . . .

MR. MARTIN: She should ask the University of Calgary what they think about it.

MS BARRETT: That's right.

I don't know how many demographic studies you need to prove this. You know, economic deterrents to access are real, and I think they're going to be further compounded by the reduction by 16.6 percent in fellowships and scholarships. You know what? That wasn't even that big a portion. That's a 16.6 percent nominal decrease. The real decrease, of course, will be more because the rate of inflation chews up the value of a dollar over the year, in this case at a rate of about 6 percent a year.

I think the minister has done some nice spin doctoring but hasn't addressed the really critical issues that are going with the budget he's presenting to us. I cannot believe the minister is thinking that it's appropriate now that before you leave the university you can accumulate up to \$45,000 of debt on a student-by-student basis, basically assuming a mortgage. That's appalling. It's jumped by 50 percent. I'd like to know what other fees or concepts of burden have jumped by 50 percent. Well, maybe it's true with the seniors' fees that they're now facing. They're going to have pay 50 percent of some things. But it's a massive jump, and it's the assumption that I worry about. You know, how many times do you have to pay for this system? See, we're all paying for it right now as taxpayers, all the working people are, including the parents of kids. Right? The people who graduate from the system, they're paying for it. If you're borrowing from the Students Finance Board, you're basically borrowing from the public purse in any event. You've got to ask yourself: what's the real purpose behind this? Although I wouldn't say the real purpose behind it is to constitute a deterrent, I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that it will have that effect, and that's not a good sign.

I was interested to read not too long ago that a recent Canadian poll showed the majority of Canadians consider university education to be important to this country's economic competitiveness and social development and that seven out of every 10 of the Canadians surveyed think it's "very important." An additional 26 percent thought that it was somewhat important, but most of them, 59 percent, said that increasing federal payments to university education is warranted. Now, where was this government when it came to the last election, knowing that the feds were going to start dropping funding in our established program financing system? They were out there knocking on doors for Conservatives. But what the Conservatives in Ottawa have made very clear is this: funding will continue to be eroded until it no longer exists. The Treasurer's response is to ask for tax credit powers for himself. God, I don't trust this guy with a lemonade stand, let alone a Principal Group or a NovAtel, let alone a greater tax base for him to play with. Lord love a . . . We'd all be in big trouble.

Anyway, I had a look back at some of the recommendations the government has obviously ignored. For example, the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Association's recommendations that allow a tuition fee range between 8 and 12 percent of net operating costs. Well, the formula that this minister has come up with today is nowhere like that. The students are willing to take tuition increases based upon increases that are going with the general funding to the universities and colleges and technical institutions. Well, this is across the board. What the minister has announced today bears no relation to the funding that's coming from the government itself. Now, I think he's completely ignored the recommendations that he says he went to seek.

I remind the minister – and here's just one example. There are lots. At the U of C alone 800 eligible students were refused admission last fall. The universities are in serious trouble partly because no planning has gone into the concept of the university transfer program that is operated through qualifying colleges who can offer you your first two years programming at the local level. What's happened, of course, now is that students are getting into third year and they're being told, "Sorry, no room; change programs." You know what that means? That means they get to stay in the system for a bit longer and it costs the taxpayers more money. This does not make sense.

The minister says, "Well, long gone are the days when students could pick and choose. They wanted all the programs available

at every institution." Let me put that myth to rest right now, Mr. Chairman. That was never an assumption of any Albertan, not an Albertan that I've met, and I'd be willing to bet that I've met at least half as many or a third as many as the minister. Even when I was in school or university, no one ever said, "Aw, gee, you know, I'd like to be able to get exactly the same program at Lakeland College, U of A, U of L, or Mount Royal." Nonsense. Never was that assumed. So don't try to blame the students or the attitude of the public for the disrepair in which postsecondary education now finds itself.

If you realize that you have a crisis – which, by the way, we do because we've got more people wanting into the system than can be accommodated – you don't just, you know, sort of close your eyes, hear no evil, see no evil, think you can apply a band-aid solution by giving transfer rights to colleges, and hope the problem will go away. The backlog was bound to happen. It has happened, and it's going to continue to happen. I know people who have been in the Department of Education for three years. They write to me and phone me and say, "You know what? There are 200 of us, and only 40 of us can do our practicum this year, so the others can't proceed in our program. We're being told either drop out for a year or switch programs for a year." This is efficiency? Oh, go figure.

Then we look at Grant MacEwan and how they've had to handle the \$600,000 shortfall they were faced with. Grant MacEwan is a vitally important college – all the public colleges are – but they've got massive demands on them, and it's very difficult for them to accommodate both the university transfer requests and the people who need the continuing education. If there's any doubt about the need for continuing education, just look at enrollment figures around the industrialized world and you will see that it will continue to grow because the workplace demands upgraded education on a more frequent basis than it ever has before. It is a trend that shall continue, I predict, I'm sure, with safety.

Then I read about the minister. You know, these guys, they've always got the money to advertise a bad budget but never have got the money to fix the budget. You ever notice? Now they've got the money, or so the minister thinks, to write a little letter to every university student to tell them how much the taxpayers are spending. You've got to be nuts. You're going to write a letter to every student? This is the best way you've got to spend tax dollars? That's not a cheap endeavour, for heaven's sake. Just rolling off the labels ain't going to be easy. And by the way, it sounds like it would also constitute undue and unnecessary interference in the administration of the universities and colleges and technical institutions because they'd have to give the mailing lists in the first place, right? The only list that the government should have access to directly is the Students Finance Board, and even then I'm not so sure.

9:00

Now, the consequence of this year's budget so far has been to dismantle at the U of A, for example, the entire department of mineral, metallurgical, and petroleum engineering. They've also had to downsize the agricultural engineering program. That's a result of just the initial impact, right? All sorts of students are now going to be displaced. Some of them, at least till they finish their program, can continue on a temporary basis in the program in which they're registered. Programs are now being cut. Hang around for another few minutes and it's going to be whole faculties that are going to be cut. That's because this government has not funded to the level to allow universities to conduct

well-rounded education. I'm going to get to that point in a minute.

Oh, yes. Another thing that happened recently is a student services fee contemplated at the U of A, for full-time students \$17 and part-time students \$8.50 per term, just so that they can access programs like career and placement services, health education, effective writing resources, and student counseling. You know, this is an example of a whole bunch of fees that are now going to be able to increase. Now, I know that the so-called universal fees can only increase according to a formula, but I don't think that's an ironclad rule. There are a lot of ways of getting around the so-called universal concept. In other words, you can make one exemption, and thereafter it's no longer universal.

Something else I wanted to talk about is the concept that is being promoted and will continue to be promoted, subtly or otherwise, by the Alberta government: that enrollments should be looked at from the perspective of the market. In other words, well-rounded education is not a priority. Well, I have a letter here from Rick Chamney, the president of the university athletic board. It's dated January 25, '91. It's sent to the Premier, and a copy was sent to the Leader of the Official Opposition. He talks about this so-called increase in funding of 3.5 percent, knowing that we're facing at least 6 percent inflation this year and knowing that institutional inflation tends to be higher. He's saying that what the U of A has had to do in the face of this is axe certain programs: first the Golden Bears football team and then track and field, gymnastics, and volleyball. Well, some of them have since been revived, although they're on a massive fund-raising program. Remember, fund-raising is going on throughout society. There's a million people on your phone every night looking for your spare nickel if you have it. They are a growing number of people as well, and now to provide good education for students who also excel in athletics is going to be impossible or near impossible.

I'd like to point out that it's usually the government that can hardly wait to get a champion up there in the Speaker's gallery if they've just won a national or international award. They want to get them up there. The minister or the Premier wants to introduce them, be real proud. They're usually a product of the Alberta education system and usually a product of athletic programs at their postsecondary education institutions. Well, folks, you can't have it both ways. You can't have them sitting up there while you're introducing them and taking all the credit and not provide the funding or provide so little funding that the institution is forced to delete or downsize or eviscerate its individual athletic programming. It's extremely unfair. Remember something: these are not people who are just "jocks"; these are also people who are taxpayers in the waiting or are currently taxpayers and have a right to the rounded education that they demand, just like the students who happen not to enroll in the flavour-of-the-day science program. Remember: flavour of the day changes every year because market conditions do, and you have to have a crystal ball sometimes to know which way those are going to blow. The assumption of this government is that the flavour of the day is predictable, and they want people to move into flavour of the day at the expense of well-rounded education.

Now we see that the government is going to cut STEP. This is great. This is brilliant. Cutting STEP at the same time that you're cutting funding to universities and colleges and not giving them an opportunity to earn the money that they need to go back to school: this is brilliant. You know what it does? It forces them back to borrow more money. Oh, wonderful. They

can increase the mortgage that they have when they leave college or university.

I think, Mr. Chairman, it's pretty clear that the state of postsecondary education is in serious disrepair. The latest now, from March, is that the University of Lethbridge students may have to pay a \$25 administration fee when they register. Now, the reason is this. It was passed by the board of governors so that if the student didn't get into the program – if they were unable to pay the \$152 registration deposit – they'd at least have the 25 bucks to cover costs. I mean, this is how bad it's gotten. It's nickel and diming.

The minister says: "Look, don't you folks worry. We've got a good system here. The best, the best, the best." Well, I notice that the minister or the Provincial Treasurer, whoever is responsible for this little graph that appears on page 17 of the Budget Address, was very selective: "Provincial Support of Post-Secondary Education, 1990-91 (dollars per capita)." They want to do a comparison that shows Alberta out on top, leading, right? Funny thing; they only compared Ontario, B.C., Saskatchewan, and Alberta. What happened to the others? Well, I don't think they wanted to print the others. They were sort of selective about this because Quebec and Nova Scotia funding for universities on a full-time equivalent, per capita basis is significantly higher than Alberta. Both of them are. So that's what they were doing. Yeah, I remember this old game; it's called fun with figures. Lou Hyndman used to be a pro at it too. It doesn't work. People aren't fooled by that kind of selective memory.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to have to move on quite quickly to another couple of points I wanted to make before my time on the floor expires, and that relates to something that's quite important to the Edmonton community, Grant MacEwan Community College. I'm a little worried. The grant that shows for this year for construction comes in at \$23 million. My recollection was that for them to be on track so that they could be open by September of '93 – now, we're not talking October, November. You've got to be open on time or not, right? – was in the \$30 million range for this year. I wonder if the government is trying to put the squeeze on this project as well or if the money is going to be made up next year. In other words, is the plan to make sure that they can complete the project as planned, or is it another attempt to squeeze the funding from the project altogether?

In general, you know, Mr. Chairman, I've got so many examples of complaints from students, faculty, and staff about layoffs, program cutting, overcrowding, equipment that is virtually decaying, higher student/teacher ratios, the whole gamut. One has to realize the importance of what I started to talk about here earlier this evening, and that is the consistent, gradual, and irrevocable reductions in funding that have occurred to our postsecondary education institutions. The full-time equivalent dollars per student in constant dollars keep going down. How can the minister assume or assert that he or anybody else can maintain a system that needs to live, needs to grow, needs to have research and equipment when the real funding for it declines year after year after year, 13 years in a row? It can't be done. No fooling with arithmetic is going to do that. Either we have a system that we want to protect and enhance for the purposes of generating a greater tax base in the long run or you don't. If you don't, just say so. I'm sure every taxpayer in Alberta would just love the opportunity to turf the government that would have the honesty to admit it doesn't want this as a priority.

I close by saying, Mr. Chairman, that I look forward to the minister's response. The Alberta taxpayers and students know full well that postsecondary education is a priority with the Official Opposition New Democrats, and when we're government, we're going to prove it.

Thank you.

9:10

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to correct the record before the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight comments, because the hon. member may accept as fact some of the statements made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

I would ask the hon. member to visualize the rest of Canada for a moment, the institutions across Canada: to just visualize, for example, the University of Alberta, which although not her alma mater is certainly a very close institution to her, and recognize that some \$355 million have been spent across the river in the past 10 years. I know that's not adequate. Nothing is ever adequate for some reason.

I'm not here to pick fights; I'm here to help. The hon. member condemns on the one hand Bill 27 – how dare you, Mr. Minister, interfere? – turns right around and then claims because they're going to cancel agricultural engineering . . . It's only because of Bill 27 that they must come to me as minister and ask permission. Without Bill 27 they'd have canceled it arbitrarily. Now, the member can't have it both ways, in fairness.

All I know is that I look at the population of this great province; I look at the number of dollars, the fairest way. You can do what you want with FTEs; I don't care what you do. When you talk about the per capita of the province, that means you divide the dollars by the number of people, and we still rate the highest per capita in Canada. Not only in commitment and promises – I mean, not only the fact that Mr. Rae in Ontario has said that education will be at 50 percent in five years. We're already at 60 percent.

Mr. Chairman, I'm not here to pick quarrels. The hon. member talks about formula funding, capital funding, which is now capital renewal funding. There are only four provinces in the country that have it, and we're the top of the four. Now, how much higher should we be?

MS BARRETT: Oh, the rest put it in operating, and you know it. Don't be deceitful, John.

MR. GOGO: Please don't use that term in committee, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: I just asked you not to be. You know they put it into operating.

MR. GOGO: Please don't use that term.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order. Members of the House, we want . . .

MR. GOGO: My final comment, to set the record straight, Mr. Chairman, is: we've done a tuition fee review. We've concluded that recognizing quality and access are absolutely essential to our future and our young people's future. The hon. member objects. I understand, but take a moment and look at the country. The University of Calgary, \$1,168 tuition fee. Calgary and Edmonton universities are in the top 10 in Canada in research, attracting \$130 million between them. Now, that tells you that you've got quality there or they wouldn't attract the money. Tuition fee:

UBC, \$1,850; Simon Fraser, \$1,650; Regina, the home of the socialists, \$1,650; the University of Toronto requested a 40 percent increase in tuition fees, \$1,650; McGill, a thousand – they're less than us unless you're a foreign student and it's \$6,000; the University of New Brunswick, \$2,000. [interjections] Mr. Chairman, the hon. member stood up and said that Alberta should be ashamed of what they're doing in postsecondary. I think it's appropriate to compare us to the rest of the nation. I think it's important to get the facts on the table. As long as I'm minister, I'll do my utmost to see that no student is turned away from our institutions because of lack of money.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is astoundingly easy to slowly destroy a postsecondary system, and I believe that is what is happening. While I truly believe that this minister wants to do his best for our postsecondary institutions, while I truly believe that he has traveled, has talked to a lot of people, has solicited input, I'm not sure that he was listening.

I also in my two years – it's his two years as minister; it's mine as critic – have traveled. I have listened. I have been to many corners in this province and spoken to faculty and especially to students and their parents. What I hear are cries of anguish. I want you to visualize young Maria, a constituent of mine, 17 years old, very bright student, works very hard. She's the daughter of immigrant Italian parents. They want her to be able to go to university. She is their pride and joy. She is exceedingly worried that she won't be able to get in. She's working very hard for a 75 percent average. She studies all of the time although she has to work part-time. She's very worried because the U of C has now put this entrance mark at 75 percent, not because they were worried about quality but because they had to find a way of turning away students. So remember Maria whenever you're talking about the postsecondary system in Alberta.

The members of our caucus and I believe that advanced education is the future of this province, and what we see instead is this government denying opportunity, turning students away from a chance for advancement, rejecting the fact that economic diversification depends on well-educated and well-trained Albertans. We reject what this government is doing, which is sacrificing the idea of our future prosperity for a few dollars today.

With pride the Provincial Treasurer referred to Alberta's strength in such areas as medical research. Perhaps the Minister of Advanced Education hasn't told the Treasurer that he is talking about cutting one of our two excellent medical faculties that have been so successful and that also are spinning off economic opportunities. Do these two ministers ever talk to each other?

The establishment of a new PhD program in nursing at the University of Alberta is an excellent move on the part of this government and is a very worthwhile and needed program. It is striking, though, that this new program is beginning at a time when many programs through the postsecondary system are being cannibalized to preserve core programs. While applauding the nursing PhD, I have to mourn for the many other special and unique programs throughout Alberta that will be forfeited this year.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps the most preposterous remark in the Provincial Treasurer's entire budget speech was the comment, "Alberta has the most accessible post-secondary education system in Canada." Should we laugh or should we weep? Where has

the government been? Where have the members been? I do not call a system where 75 percent entrance standards exist, because of accessibility not because of quality, an accessible system. When there are as many applicants on the first day of admission as there will be positions, the system is not accessible. When Mount Royal College has today 8,500 applications for 3,000 spaces, that is not accessibility. When every university and transfer program is full and turning away students, I think there is a crisis, and it is worsening.

Instead of making such a ridiculous statement in the Budget Address, this government should be apologizing to the people of Alberta for turning away students. I was at a rally with the minister at the University of Calgary where he said that he was proud of the fact that they had to turn people away; it meant that the institution was a very popular, successful institution. My remark was that you shouldn't be proud; you should be ashamed. What are we talking about here? We are talking about lives. We are talking about the development of human beings, about opportunities to make a system democratic, to make sure that all have accessibility to our institutions.

While we have all known about the 3.5 percent increase in operating grants to the postsecondary institutions, I would like to point out once again that this is woefully inadequate. When inflation is at least 6 percent, maybe more, a 3.5 percent increase is actually a major cut. Already institutions in this province have cut library hours and resources. They've cut support staff. They've frozen academic positions. They've decreased the number of written exams and assignments and generally cut quality. Yet this government continues to fantasize about cutting fat. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, there is no more fat. We are now cutting programs, we are cutting people, and we are cutting opportunities for the future. While the institutions are starving at 3.5 percent, the minister's office, though, received a 6.2 percent increase at both the Students Finance Board and the departmental support services. Salaries, wages, and employee benefits have risen by over 7 percent. This is obviously not leading by example.

9:20

The minister should be congratulated, however, on finally securing the money from his colleagues for the building of Grant MacEwan Community College and the U of C Professional Faculties Building. However, I have to wonder about the government's ability to come up with money for new buildings when others are falling apart. A pattern of breakdown and safety hazards at Alberta universities is developing due to the government's failure to address the formula for capital needs. The formula simply is not working. I would ask the minister to review this formula. There is a question at the U of C alone during the last year about \$600,000 in damages done in the engineering building because of lack of maintenance and renovation. Still at the U of C, 15 buildings do not meet current fire and safety standards, including two residences and the science complex. Any automobile owner will tell this government that preventative maintenance is absolutely necessary and saves money in the long run. I hope the minister will consider this when he looks at reviewing the formula for capital funding and renovation and maintenance.

During this last year the minister has often commented on increasing the contributions of the private sector in advanced education funding. However, this budget is very regressive in this regard as it shows a 41 percent drop in the endowment incentive fund. The minister is very proud of this fund; we all are. It's a wonderful way to raise money, but why cap it when

the moneys are there, when the public is willing to donate its share, to increase funding? It seems to me that this drop of 41 percent is definitely a regressive step.

Today the minister announced a tuition policy, and long before he made the announcement, we knew that the minister intended to raise tuition fees by \$200 a year. So going through the exercise of asking for input was really nothing but pretence because the minister had already made up his mind, and actually some institutions had already announced prior to today that their tuition was going up by \$200. We believe that these fees are not reasonable; they are too much too fast. We as Liberals do believe that tuition fees have to go up, but we think that they should go up more gradually than is indicated by the announcement today.

I'm concerned also about the 20 percent ceiling which was set, because we know that as soon as the ceiling has been reached, this government and this minister are liable to allow institutions to exceed the ceiling. The reason for this lack of trust is that three times during the last eight years this government has exceeded its own tuition policy, so we are very suspicious about the ceiling of 20 percent, and we do seriously predict that it will go up.

The most tragic part of all in regard to the Advanced Education budget is the hatchet job on financial assistance to students. This area has been slashed by 8.2 percent in total, but specifically fellowships and scholarships are reduced by 16.6 percent and remissions by 12.8 percent. These cuts combined with massive leaps in the tuition fees are putting students in a double bind. As I have previously pointed out to the minister, the guidelines for student aid under the Students Finance Board have declined by over 20 percent over the last seven years. The amounts quoted in the minister's tuition policy information package suggests that increases this year will once again be well below inflation. The announcements today of a \$300 a year increase hardly make up for eight years of being behind inflation. Unlike the Conservative government the Liberal caucus does not believe in the illusion of balancing a budget by turning the provincial debt directly into student debt. Mr. Chairman, I see no future, no vision in Advanced Education, yet this government desperately needs vision. This budget is a typical example of the government's belief in balancing the budget by sacrificing our future.

I have two questions to ask the minister, and I look forward to hearing the answers to these questions. What is the government's plan for future capital expenditures in Advanced Education, especially in the areas of equipment and preventative maintenance? Secondly, why is the government increasing the grants to private colleges by an average of 15 percent? The minister spoke about it a little, but I would like to hear more in regard to the justification or the rationale for this increase. Has the government altered its policy regarding private colleges without any public debate in the matter?

Now, Mr. Chairman, having concluded with my critique of the minister's budget expenditure estimates in Advanced Education, I would like to present a motion to this Assembly. I do have copies for members available.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, if you would just wait a moment before you speak to the motion, we'll check it out first.

Copies have now been distributed. The motion is in order.

Summoning Witnesses

Moved by Mrs. Gagnon:

Be it resolved that upon the request of any three members, the Committee of Supply order a warrant summoning the

deputy minister or any employee of the department it considers necessary to consider the estimates of that department and that deputy minister or employee attending the committee provide such documents and information as requested by any member.

MRS. GAGNON: My reasons for presenting this motion are that in the last two years as a member of this Assembly I have found that I've often been asked to vote in committee before having had all of my questions answered. I hardly believe, Mr. Chairman, that this is fair to my constituents. I get up during debate on budgets, I ask questions, and sometimes the answers are not forthcoming until long after the budget has been voted on. The reason for this, of course, is that sometimes the ministers do not have the information at their fingertips. They tell us, "Well, we'll get back to you later on that, hon. member," but when they finally do get back to us, many weeks have elapsed or else, in some cases, they never get back to us at all. Now, I believe if we were able to ask for the deputies and the staff to be present at Committee of Supply, we would make much better decisions. They would be based on information which we've received during budget debate.

We need to have access to information regarding program audits, efficiency measures, and so on. Otherwise, all we are doing is following the government blindly, and it takes a lot of trust to follow this government blindly. Again, we're not doing our job when we do that. We must not just have blind faith that what we are being told is accurate. We really do need to see what the program audits are and what the plans are for more efficiencies and so on. I also believe members should have a right to a free exchange of ideas, not this sort of structured and limited debate which exists now. We truly do not have debate in this Assembly when we are considering a budget. What we have is people getting up and giving dissertations and speaking without the opportunity to truly debate, to ask questions, and to give convincing arguments back and forth. It seems to me that this whole exercise is quite meaningless, and it's something we should all be prepared to change. If the ministers were more prepared and if they had their deputies with them, it seems to me that they would have backup information readily available, and we could truly have effective and meaningful debate in this Assembly.

9:30

What we see happening in actual fact is decision-making being done behind closed doors by government caucus and by cabinet. The decisions have all been made long before this kind of exercise takes place. If we want to talk about open government, about being aboveboard with the public, we do have to change this process which we go through every session. I do believe that we must be better informed as to the detail of the budget, not just the big overall considerations that are there. We need to look at each vote and be able to have answers to each vote and to the rationale behind this vote. I also believe that if we had more information, the opposition members could make more constructive criticism and better suggestions, which then the ministers might take into consideration when they are finalizing their budgets. It seems to me that we should not be forced to have to search for answers on our own, that if the deputies were present with the ministers we would be given answers immediately. This process, I believe, is a sham. We simply do not have enough information before we are asked to vote, and I don't believe that is fair to ourselves or to our constituents.

I would ask hon. members to support me in this motion. Thank you.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak to the hon. member's motion. I suppose one of the advantages, although some would think it's a disadvantage, is to have been in this Assembly for some years and observed the system as it's been over a period of time. I want to point out that we have a budget of \$12 billion presented to this Assembly. Ottawa has one 10 times that size, and yet the Committee of Supply in Ottawa, the nation's capital, is 25 days.

We have in this Assembly under Standing Order 58 twenty-five days. Whether the hon. members want to take advantage of that time and appear within the committee and make speeches is their prerogative. I want to assure the hon. member that I've spent 16 years here. I recall vividly when the Leader of the Opposition asked 15 pointed questions in less than 15 minutes and demanded answers. Mr. Chairman, tonight it's now 90 minutes into the estimates. I have three questions in front of me, and only two opposition members have spoken: 95 minutes.

I think that when one looks at the facts, Standing Orders make provision, and that's what we're talking about. If the hon. member wants to change the rules, change the Standing Orders, but I was a member of this House when we met in subcommittees down in the bowels of this building and we had the civil servants around us. Is that accountability? Surely accountability is the people who are elected to carry out responsibility, and by lining these benches with civil servants or bureaucrats or advisers . . . I don't understand, Mr. Chairman. First of all, they're not allowed in here, but we could change those rules. But if we went into subcommittee – the Member for Calgary-Buffalo last evening put a proposition forward; we've been through that – subcommittees must report to the Committee of Supply anyway. If the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight wants to take the 24 days guaranteed in here and use them another way, then I guess the hon. member simply has to convince members of the House.

I think what has to be done, Mr. Chairman, is to work within the Standing Orders to demand that elected representatives defend their estimates in the House, and I don't know another way of doing it without putting to them point-blank questions. In my view, frankly, that's not happened tonight. If 25 days of estimates are not sufficient in this province – they're sufficient in Ottawa – then I would suggest that the hon. member should be putting forward a motion to change the Standing Orders of this Assembly and not attempting to prevent other members of this House from putting questions to the members of the government, demanding explanations for the estimates, particularly of Advanced Education.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just in answer to the minister, there's no wish on the part of the Liberal caucus to be obstructionist in presenting this motion, none whatsoever. It just so happens that this is, according to legal counsel, the only way that this can be changed; that is, the committee is in possession of its own rules, and if the rules are to be changed, if there is going to be a difference, this is how it's to be done. So we are caught in that one.

Mr. Chairman, this is a response to what we are all hearing. I cannot believe that members of the government are not hearing this as well as members of the opposition, and that is the cynicism and outrage that we are hearing expressed in the electorate about the secrecy of government. The secrecy of government demands, begs for, pleads for a change in the procedures. What we're suggesting here is an opportunity for

the bureaucrats, the senior civil servants, to be involved in this process of developing a budget.

I can remember, Mr. Chairman, my dismay the first year that I sat in this House when we discussed estimates. It was a different Deputy Premier at the time who, when I expressed concern about the way the budget was dealt with, stood up and said: "Well, the hon. member should know that it doesn't matter what you say. Not one cipher, not one number, will ever be changed." I think that really, for me, is the essence of it. It says: this is our document, and nothing you say is going to change any of our thinking about it or any of our rigid positions.

Well, then, you ask yourself, why do we endure this sort of charade? Why do we go through this for 25 days? To give the minister of the department a platform? Yes. Yes, that's a good reason. To give the opposition members a platform to speak to it? Yes, and that's legitimate as far as I'm concerned. To give the opposition members an opportunity to ask questions? Yes, of course, we do it for that. But is it to find out if we're getting value or to find out if this budget in fact is meeting the needs that are expressed by our citizens? No way. No, it isn't designed to do that. Is this discussion, so-called debate, designed to change or interpret or make any difference? No, and that is made very, very clear.

That's what we're asking for, Mr. Chairman: a change, because times are different. Now, members opposite got up last night and tonight and said, "We did this once; we did it a different way," but times are different, and our electorate is different. They want and need different information.

Mr. Chairman, today I asked the Minister of Health about dental fees for seniors and what the basis for the new arrangement is. There was an answer. It was a predictable answer, but that is based on a very complex and complicated formula that I would like to find out. The only way that I can find out to help the seniors who are calling my office in numbers is to be able to sit down and get from the deputy or from the person in charge of that particular section the details. Now, of course I can put a question on the Order Paper, as the Premier would tell me, and I can then wait for a month or two to be told that no, I can't get an answer or that maybe I will get an answer, but by that time the program has long ago been put in place, and there's not a thing, not a single thing, that I can do about it. There certainly isn't a thing that the seniors in my constituency can do about it.

I'd like to ask some questions of the bureaucrats about the increase in costs of ministers' offices. I think they're responsible for running those offices. I'd like to know what they base those on. How can they tell me that? I don't believe that we can get those answers unless those people are here.

9:40

Mr. Chairman, with regret, our commitment in the budget is always measured in terms of how many dollars we spend and often how many dollars we spend relative to other provinces. That is not the way I need to measure. It is a measurement, but it is not the only measure that I need to have in front of me. The Treasurer's marketing system or marketing game for this budget I think is most unfortunate. He's going out and trying to sell to the public with their own dollars something that they put forward that I can't find out the answers to.

I don't want to think that the only reason that this government is resisting change is because they've got something to hide, but that reinforces everything that citizens have come to believe. We need to know if taxpayers' dollars are being spent wisely, in a thrifty and balanced fashion. Are we getting value? These

seem to me to be simple questions. Is the budget based on needs? Is it based on last year's experience? Where do the numbers come from?

Mr. Chairman, I'm supposed to vote for this. I'm expected by my constituents and by everyone else in the province, many of whom I represent in a different way, to vote for this. But how can I? How can I possibly vote for it? How can I vote any way but against it, because I don't know how the budget was developed or what the consequences are intended to be. I can ask the questions, but the answers may not come, they may not be relevant, and they'll be way too late.

One would like to think that a confident government – a confident government – would want all members to understand the justification for public expenditures, that a confident government would have nothing to hide. I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that this a shabby process. It's a sad reflection on the level of trust between the government and the electorate, and I would hope that we have the courage to change it.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to just make a few brief comments in opposition to the motion being put forward by the Member for Calgary-McKnight. I'd like to start out by saying that this evening, because I hoped to speak later in the estimates, I've listened very carefully to the remarks of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands and the Member for Calgary-McKnight. I thought they were, you know, with some exceptions, rather good speeches. They zeroed in on a number of very important expenditure and policy issues which really, if you're going to affect the direction of postsecondary education in this province, are the things that have to be dealt with.

However, Mr. Chairman, I can't help but reflect that the Member for Calgary-McKnight found that there was enough purpose in the estimates debate this evening to talk, and as I said before, quite constructively for some 20 or 25 minutes on matters of substance, and then turned around and put in this particular motion and derided the whole process.

Likewise, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands raised a number of very important issues. It's been my experience in the Assembly that the Minister of Advanced Education, whoever that might be, has responded quite directly and quite specifically to the major issues that have been raised by the various speakers that have brought them forward. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands raised a number of important policy issues which have implications in terms of the expenditure of that department. Listening to her remarks, however, Mr. Chairman, I could only find one area that might be, in my opinion, better served by having the deputy minister in front of us, and that is a very legitimate concern, I think, with respect to what the Auditor General has identified as certain irregularities, to put it mildly, in the operation of the board of NAIT and some irregularities with respect to one specific aspect of the operation of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. I would also point out that the Auditor General has identified that particular concern, and given what in a general way I understand to be the problem, this is a matter that will certainly have to be dealt with in Public Accounts. Given the institutional autonomy, which is very important to opposition members, I doubt if even the deputy minister could identify all of the specifics in terms of that particular set of problems. I also just have to note, Mr. Chairman, that the motion does require that the deputy ministers be before the Committee of Supply.

Another example of an issue that's been raised this evening is that of the proposed cut of the program in agricultural engineering, and there's also the one with respect to metallurgical engineering. Given this issue of autonomy and how far it should go on the part of postsecondary institutions, and given the way the opposition has defended that autonomy very strongly, I really wonder if . . . It's a very important policy issue to debate this evening, I think, in terms of its implication for these estimates, but really, given that particular very high priority of the opposition, I find it very curious that they think that the Deputy Minister of the Department of Advanced Education would be able to give the kind of information we need as to whether or not there are three students or two students or 10 students in agricultural engineering and whether or not that particular program should be eliminated. I, in fact, would like to raise that overall issue of autonomy relative to these decisions later in the estimates debate in the usual format, which I think is the best way to proceed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, what a remarkable thing. The chairman has finally spotted me. What did I do to gain this favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order. Order.

MS BARRETT: Order nothing. This chairman saw me rise three times, long before the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey did, and I expect to be recognized in the order in which I rose. I have every right to expect fairness from the Chair, but perhaps not under all circumstances. I'll talk about relevancy.

I'd like to speak against this motion. I know that the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona would keenly like to get involved in the estimates debate. Now, I noticed that when the minister responded he said that he has only had three questions. Well, the fact of the matter is: everybody knows that no matter how many questions you put, unless they're very technical and don't involve a judgment call, you're not likely to get an answer in any event. We stopped playing that illusion, I think, some time ago. The purpose of this debate is to have a debate about priorities as reflected in the estimates, and there's nothing the matter with that.

Let me tell you why this motion is a problem. It's because (a) we don't have the committee system, and (b) it is impossible to assume that either the deputy minister or any other person in the department, which this calls for, can have access on the spot to every last technical bit of information that the department may hold. If you want to go to this system, there is a very different way of doing it: either you have a committee system or you have a system like this, which is similar to the British parliamentary system. Do you know what they have to do there? For Oral Question Period they write out their question in advance. The minister gets it, and then the supplementary is the surprise. Okay? It's a different system. What are you going to do? Phone these guys up at 10 to 10 at night and say: "Come on down now. Open up the vaults. I want access to all information, but I don't know what"? I'm sorry; technically this is a real problem. You've got one system or another, and this is neither/nor.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion lost]

Advanced Education *(continued)*

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now we'll go back to the speaking order on the estimates, and we have Ponoka-Rimbey. Is Ponoka-Rimbey not in the House?

MS BARRETT: Amazing.

MR. PASHAK: Calgary-Forest Lawn will be glad to.

MS BARRETT: Good. Calgary-Forest Lawn will take his place. Right on.

Mr. Chairman, there is a member standing. I believe you have the responsibility of recognizing him, whether you want to or not.

MR. GOGO: I wouldn't purport to tell you, sir, what to do, but if the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight feels she's entitled to an answer, I'd be prepared to answer the two questions put forward . . .

MS BARRETT: Oh, that's outrageous, John.

MR. GOGO: . . . if the Chair would recognize me, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chair recognizes the minister for the moment.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, that's outrageous. The Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn was standing.

9:50

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the rules of the House is that for a member to be recognized, they must be in their seat.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight raised an excellent question about salaries, wages, and employee benefits being up 16.2 percent. I think that's an excellent question.

MRS. GAGNON: I asked others too.

MR. GOGO: Well, perhaps, hon. member, I could answer them one at a time, because that's how you asked them.

Mr. Chairman, we have in Alberta the Alberta vocational centres, of which hon. members are aware, in Calgary, Edmonton, Lac La Biche, and Lesser Slave Lake. The aggregate of their budget is \$20 million-odd. They provide excellent programs in the north, in Edmonton, and in Calgary. The emergency medical responder and practical nursing are programs you find at Lac La Biche, the native education opportunities at Lesser Slave Lake. Because they are AVCs and they come under the department, they're departmentalized like civil servants. The instructors who work for me in our AVCs are part of the settlement group that got wage increases and so on, so a significant part of the 16.2 percent was wages for instructors, support staff, and so on. I think that would answer that question.

The hon. member asked about the private colleges: Concordia College, King's College, Camrose Lutheran University College, and Canadian Union at Lacombe. Mr. Chairman, we believe students should have freedom to choose. We have committed, as a policy, funding equivalent to 75 percent of the public institutions to these private colleges. As members know,

Mount Royal was a Baptist college. The history of Alberta institutions really grew out of not the ecumenical movement but in terms of . . .

MR. PASHAK: United.

MR. GOGO: United? I appreciate the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn correcting me. But the religious institutions have a lot to do with our educational system.

Mr. Chairman, a policy decision was reached back in 1989 that we would fund over six years up to 75 percent of the funding of the public system to the private colleges in recognition that they don't do research there. We're in our third year, Mr. Chairman.

Two other points. The Member for Calgary-McKnight objects strenuously to the tuition fee policy of a maximum \$200 increase in our universities and \$100 in our college system. I would point out, Mr. Chairman, that in an eight-month year in a university that's \$25 a month. Surely the hon member is not serious about objecting to a tuition fee increase of \$25 a month for a school year.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, reference was made to scholarships. I would remind the hon. member we have the Heritage Scholarship Fund of \$100 million. It pays out about \$9.5 million to \$10 million a year. Seventy-five hundred Alberta students received those scholarships. We're committed to maintaining the fund at a hundred million 1980 dollars; it's worth about \$160 million. It helped 7,500 students, a very significant contribution as a result of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, that allocation of money, and I think we should be grateful the taxpayers of Alberta endorsed that program back in 1980.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Sorry; I had a visitor here, so I was a little bit slow getting going.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to just make a few remarks in terms of the estimates of the Department of Advanced Education. I think we have to put a few things in context. First of all, in terms of operating expenditure on a per capita basis, the province of Alberta ranks first in the nation in terms of spending. I know that we can get various statistics by dividing university education from college and technical school education and the various other 28 institutions and services that the minister has. Nevertheless, in terms of an overall effort there's quite a high-ranking and quite a significant expenditure of money there if what we're talking about this evening is only money.

Secondly, it's my understanding that there are only four provinces in the nation of Canada which have a capital formula funding program, and on a per capita basis in that particular context the province ranks at the top.

The minister referred in his opening remarks to the fact that during the past year or year and a half 3,000 additional spaces have been established in postsecondary education, and I think that's something to keep in mind.

There was reference, Mr. Chairman, to the endowment fund and the fact that there's a cap being placed upon it. That may be, and I suppose ideally it would be good that there would be no cap, but we should not forget two things. One is that the endowment fund that we've had over the past number of years has been rather unique in this nation and, secondly, extremely generous. In fact, as it was established or operating about two or three years ago, I felt it was overly generous. We can say, well, there are people in the private sector that are out there

willing to contribute, but we've got to keep in mind that under the endowment fund and the matching formula and so forth, there's an obligation for the public purse when that endowment money comes in. Now, I would suggest that perhaps there are some ways, and I hope they might be addressed later in this session of the Legislature, in which that willingness on the part of the private sector can be tapped in a better way in terms of making contributions to the postsecondary education system.

Mr. Chairman, I think that everybody in the Assembly, when you really sit back and look at this overall department and the demand that's out there and the needs it is trying to meet, recognizes that in Alberta we have a modern economy, a very vibrant economy; we have all the demands and pulls and pushes of modern life. Very, very much part of that and integral to it and something that has to be there the way things are going is increased training opportunities, increased opportunities for education, be it technical school education, trades education, or university education. That quite frankly puts a very serious, very important challenge to government. It's not a problem that is unique to the Alberta government. It's one that's being faced by other provinces; it's being faced by institutions in the United States and in Europe. Perhaps because our economy, our province are developing in the rapid way they are, the strains and stresses and demands are much more serious here in the province of Alberta. I think we all have to recognize that.

I am quite familiar, Mr. Chairman, with the University of Alberta and other postsecondary institutions in this province, but particularly the University of Alberta and the college at Red Deer. I know and I appreciate that students are working very hard, and they're under a lot of pressure, and the finances aren't always there in an ideal sense. In making some points and raising some questions with respect to these estimates but also supporting them, I'm not at all unaware of the stresses and strains that are out there on individuals. I think we have to be aware of them and express an understanding attitude towards our students, the parents that are supporting them, and so on.

In the remarks of the hon. members of the opposition this evening, Mr. Chairman, there have been, as I said before, some very good points made by way of criticism. I have recognized that, as I've said, but I did not hear any solutions, any alternatives except more money. But as I've said, there's quite a bit of money being spent at the present time.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to go on to a very important policy issue and make some preliminary remarks and then pose what I consider a fundamental question to the Minister of Advanced Education. This is the whole area of university autonomy. Last spring, when Bill 27 was brought in, the opposition opposed that particular Bill very vehemently. Actually, it was a rather modest move, as the minister has pointed out, in terms of giving some restrictions, some limits and rationality to the whole postsecondary system.

10:00

I fully appreciate that in terms of western civilization the business of university autonomy particularly is a very important matter. We look to them for neutral and free thought. We look to them for research from an unbiased point of view. There are a whole host of things that could be said about the virtues of university autonomy. But I think, Mr. Chairman, there are some problems out there with the postsecondary system which revolve around the whole issue of autonomy.

As I see it, there are two alternatives that we should be looking at. Number one, and this might surprise some people, I think we should consider strengthening the boards of our

postsecondary institutions: give them some additional status. I'm afraid that in some cases they do not have a lot of time, they do not have a lot of recognition in the administration of the colleges, as good as they are, or the technical schools and so on, to run the whole show. So maybe we should be giving them some specific responsibilities and giving them some more power and a greater role in terms of the postsecondary system so they can bring certain things under control and into the proper perspective. That's one way to go. Or we should be looking at exercising some additional controls beyond those that were proposed in Bill 27. I can't help but note that one of the members of the opposition took great issue with the plight of the faculty of pharmacy at the University of Alberta. I, too, am somewhat familiar with the difficulties the people working in that faculty are experiencing. But in fact, Mr. Chairman, they believe in university autonomy and that is a very serious problem and there is a need for additional funding and staffing and so forth, why isn't the faculty of pharmacy receiving it from the autonomous board of governors of the University of Alberta? I have to pose that question.

Secondly, there was reference also made, Mr. Chairman, to what by the tone of the remarks seemed to indicate was a terrible thing. They said that we have two excellent faculties of medicine in the province. I agree. But what is there about two faculties that is that much greater, that much better for the students of this province and for the ultimate delivery of medical care than one excellent faculty? Maybe we should have four excellent faculties. Red Deer College would like to take one on; maybe Lethbridge University. I don't follow that particular argument, and I think there is some need for rationalization in the system.

Great dismay was expressed, Mr. Chairman, about the demise, possibly, of the departments of mineral and metallurgical engineering and Agricultural Engineering, but I have to assume that the autonomous board of governors of the University of Alberta has for some good reasons, I hope, decided that those particular programs are not viable in the current situation. I would like to know, for instance, how many students are in those faculties. What's the professor-student ratio? These are things that I would pose as questions to the Minister of Advanced Education. I think that's the kind of information we should have before the Assembly this evening. Then we would see whether or not those concerns are valid.

I also appreciate the concern for the athletic programs at the University of Alberta. However, in listening to the remarks, I can't help reflecting upon a personal experience some years ago. When I was attending the University of Illinois, I had a look at their football program. It was a university, incidentally, about the same size as the University of Alberta and quite a well-regarded university. Their football stadium had some 28,000 seats. They filled them every weekend even though they had a losing team at that particular point in history. The football team in that particular case was a net contributor in terms of funds to the athletic program of that particular university. I just have to raise the question, Mr. Chairman: when money is tight, when the finances are not readily available, where must the priorities lie in terms of the decisions that universities and colleges have to make? Is it an obligation of the government of Alberta through the Department of Advanced Education to fund teams and competitive athletic programs with money that might be better directed towards the actual educational programs of those institutions?

Mr. Chairman, another matter that I'd like to raise is that I hope we don't forget in our debate on the estimates this evening

that across this province we do have two very excellent technical schools, we do have an excellent system of community colleges, and I think they are quite well funded. Yet no one recognizes that. It seems like, according to the debate this evening, the only part of the postsecondary education system that exists right now in this province is the universities. I think we should pay some attention to that particular accomplishment and that particular area of the postsecondary system. I do have one question, though, with respect to the estimates, a very specific one to the minister. That is that I expect the merging of Westerra administratively with NAIT had some purpose in terms of saving money, and I would like to know what the projected savings in terms of funding will be through that particular merger.

I have a number of specific questions that I'd like to raise very quickly, Mr. Chairman, getting down to the actual estimates. First of all, Red Deer College has been lobbying very strenuously for degree-granting status. I know that you are considering that. I also think there is another alternative that might be considered, and that is the universities of Calgary or Lethbridge or Alberta setting up a satellite campus at Red Deer and perhaps some of the other college centres in the province to offer undergraduate degree programs. My question to the minister, Mr. Chairman: since I understand some decision in that regard will be made in 1992 or early 1993, do you have any cost estimates as to which type of approach – the satellite approach, the autonomy approach for Red Deer College, let us say – is going to deliver education, let's say a bachelor of education program, most efficiently? Do we have that kind of information? Because it's certainly a very important thing when this particular policy decision has to be made.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to ask a question with respect to page 24 of the estimates book. I can't help but note that when we get to looking at the summary on page 24 and page 27, 2.2, the expenditure projected for operating provincially administered institutions rises by 14.6 percent. That is compared to, say, the increase that is projected there for the public colleges, which is an increase of 4.2 percent. There seems to be kind of a questionable balance there, Mr. Chairman.

Another area that I'd like to ask about is with respect to the operation of the advanced education consortium system. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to know whether or not the opportunity to operate as a consortium is available to the Indian reservations of this province. Could the Indian people on reservations utilize that particular way of delivering postsecondary education? Certainly we know that at least to get a start in postsecondary education, our prospective native students do better, become more comfortable with the postsecondary education system by being able to take that education closer to home.

10:10

I also have a question, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the University of Lethbridge and the expansion of their bachelor of education program to five years. I recognize that the University of Lethbridge has had a very enviable record in terms of its quality of postsecondary education offerings, particularly in terms of how it applies to training teachers. But I wonder if this is now going to be the standard for the province. Are those opportunities to expand to five years available to the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta? What is the direction that is going to be pursued there?

Mr. Chairman, I have a number of other items that I might raise, but I think I've dealt with the primary concerns I had. I'd like to just conclude my remarks by mentioning that despite all

the very real challenges and difficulties that are out there, the postsecondary education system of the province is still performing very well. It's been drawn to my attention that five international business awards have been recently awarded to students at the University of Calgary. These are very prestigious accomplishments in terms of that particular institution. There are a number of other illustrations or examples that could be given of similar quality work being recognized as far as our postsecondary institutions are concerned. We've got some very good work going on out there. I think we do need to look at better co-ordination in the postsecondary education system, and as I said, I asked the Advanced Education minister earlier what progress is being made in that regard. But I do not think that the whole picture as far as postsecondary education is concerned is doom and gloom. I think there are difficult times. We have to be sensitive to the problems that students face, but it is a system which is still performing rather well.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Minister of Advanced Education usually begins his comments or responses to questions by stating that he's very proud to be responsible for – what is it? – 28 postsecondary institutions. Well, I would like to give him 29 institutions to be responsible for, and I'll get to that point in a moment, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to begin by saying, though, that in terms of the remarks that I intend to make tonight, I'd like to deal with the postsecondary educational situation as I see it in the city of Calgary. Other people can speak for other areas of the province, but I would like to say a few words that are particularly relevant to what I understand is happening in the city of Calgary. I'd like to begin by looking at a major issue that centres around the University of Calgary, which has to do with the fact that they've increased their entrance requirements for most of their programs. As I experience it in my own constituency, this puts pressure all the way down the educational ladder because where formerly students would, say, spend three years at the Forest Lawn high school, now many students are coming back to take a fourth year just to raise their grade point average, and I guess that in turn puts an extra burden on taxpayers at another level of the system. So I think in a certain sense it's unfortunate that the university has had to respond to a funding situation by limiting enrollments and that the way they've chosen to limit enrollments is to increase the averages students must present in order to gain admission to their programs.

Now, in some respects I'm not alarmed if universities move in that direction provided that there are other opportunities within the system for students who have the capability to do university level work but for some reason have not performed well at an earlier level in their education to get back into the system. I know from my own experience as a teacher at Mount Royal College that over the years we took in many, many students that couldn't get their averages to attend the University of Calgary. But because we had come-up programs and other adult educational opportunities, many students had another door of opportunity open to them. When they came into the college, we provided all kinds of opportunities to help these students make up for any deficiencies they might have by way of either study habits or failed courses. Many of them did very well and often went on to even get master's degrees and PhDs and senior degrees at other institutions. The general point I'm making is that it's not necessarily a bad thing that the University of Calgary

raised its entrance requirements, provided that these other needs are met somewhere in the system, and I'll make some comments about that in a moment. I may have a general question to the minister with respect to that: how does he intend to handle that particular issue or problem?

I'd like to set my remarks in a bit of a perhaps philosophy of education context by asking a very basic question: what is the purpose of obtaining a university degree? Well, obviously the answer to that question depends on the nature of the degree. Some degrees are very career related, and students are very committed to perhaps a career in engineering, a career in nursing, a career in commerce, and they can go to universities, and they can take degrees in those subject areas. Usually those students are fairly highly committed and motivated and do well.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Some of these programs have the added advantage, by the way – I would suggest to the minister that they're self-regulating. If there are too many engineers out there, then students perhaps, or at least theoretically, stay away from taking courses in those programs because there's a glut of engineers on the market. I noticed in the paper the other day, for example, that there's a number of students with degrees in geology who can't find work in the city of Calgary. That's obviously related to the fact that the city of Calgary has witnessed a decline in the number of oil industry related jobs over the last few years. It's declined from approximately 130,000 to 80,000. That's obviously going to affect the kinds of career choices that students make and then the kinds of programs they'd want to take at a university level.

So to a certain extent maybe in some of these areas, supply matches demand. This situation, I'd suggest, is also true for people who want to go into medicine and law and our professional faculties. I want to make the point that it's important that we don't oversupply some of these career areas because that's a very expensive way of producing people who can't find jobs and training people for jobs that don't exist.

I think there's also a much more general problem in our postsecondary institutions. It's associated with general degrees in the arts and sciences, and there are at least two or maybe three major reasons why students choose to go into these programs. Some of them aren't particularly meritorious. Some students just have nothing else to do, and they go there. It's a warm place to go. Some students go there because they have come to believe that the only way they can get a meaningful, well-paying job in society is to obtain at least a bachelor's degree in some subject area. There are still students who attend university because they want to learn and they're committed to learning. Grades aren't that particularly important to them. They're there because they want to acquire more knowledge. As a teacher in a community college I've encountered all three of those categories of students.

It's very expensive to provide educational opportunities, as we all know. Student fees make up approximately, I guess, 15, 17 percent of the total cost of educating a student during the course of a year. Taxpayers make up the rest of it. It's quite clear that a lot of taxpayers are exploited in this situation to a certain extent, to the extent that their children don't go to university. It's usually the children of wealthy parents who benefit from a university education that's financed by all taxpayers generally.

I'm just suggesting that there is a problem in that regard. I think that somehow society has to address this larger question of matching the employment needs that are really out there in the general society, the kind of work that's available to people

with the kinds of qualifications we provide people with. What I'm trying to suggest to the minister is that in some cases it may constitute a significant waste of taxpayers' dollars to provide people with degrees to go into occupations that don't really require those degrees.

I can give him all kinds of examples. Police departments now: you might have a program in a community college, for example, that offers two years in criminal justice. If a student from that program is competing for a job in a police department with a student that has a degree in agriculture, the degree in agriculture might not help that student to be a better policeman, but because that student has a degree, he's probably more likely to become the police recruit than the student from the criminal justice program. We have to rethink the matching of what exists out there in terms of the job structure with the kinds of postsecondary educational training that we're providing our students.

10:20

Now, I think job training is something that should be left at our technical institutes primarily and our community colleges and that we have to be much more careful in the future to match our career training in those institutions with the work world. There's a very difficult situation developing in Ontario, where Ontario built some 30 colleges of applied arts and technology. Not too long ago the colleges were filled with students, but now that Ontario is deindustrializing because of this great trade deal that we entered into, enrollments are dropping in all of these institutes. These institutes were set up largely to provide technical and career training for students, and there hasn't been a corresponding adjustment. What are those institutions to do in terms of training people for what kinds of jobs might exist out there in society?

I don't think that education for students in these categories, by the way, should be just career training. I think that students who come into community colleges or career-training institutions should also have the opportunity to take general arts and science courses. Perhaps that prepares them to do lifelong learning, et cetera, et cetera.

Back more specifically to the kinds of problems that exist in the city of Calgary. I have an immediate concern with the University of Calgary. I've mentioned one: they've had to decrease their enrollment levels. A number of MLAs from the city of Calgary, members of both the government party and both opposition parties, were invited to their campus by the faculty association, but the faculty association introduced us to members of the administration, deans. They put us on a full day; they took us around their campus. The point they were trying to make was that the University of Calgary is now becoming somewhat of a mature institution. A lot of their facilities that were built 20 and now 30 years ago are really out of date. They need serious upgrading in the sewage systems, some of the engineering labs. In total they suggested that it would take in excess of \$20 million just to bring the University of Calgary's existing physical plant up to snuff, to make it work properly and function in an educationally sound way.

Now, they have some problems with trying to raise that kind of money, because it doesn't fit nicely into a capital budget. Capital budgets usually are there for new building purposes, and ministers love to come and cut ribbons to open new buildings. It doesn't fit nicely into existing operational budgets because they are excessive expenditures; they go beyond the usual amounts of money that are provided for regular upkeep. I'd just like to ask the minister to what extent he's taking into account

in his estimates what I think is a very, very strong and legitimate need on the part of the University of Calgary to have its physical plant upgraded.

Having said that, I'd like to now switch my attention to Mount Royal College. I indicated that the University of Calgary has to turn large numbers of students away at the first-year entrance level. In addition to that, their third- and fourth-year classes are becoming somewhat crowded, and there's some suggestion that they may have to increase the grade point average of students that they will accept at those levels. It clearly points out the need, to me at least, for another degree-granting institution in the city of Calgary. We know there are other institutions in the province, other colleges. I believe the one at Fort McMurray, Keyano, was mentioned as an institution that does offer a degree in at least one area. I think Mount Royal College should be looked at from that perspective. There are a number of areas – interior design, for example – where they're at a point right now where they have the library resources, they have the skilled teachers, they have the accreditation to offer a degree in that area, and I think they have enough PhDs on staff, on faculty, that would allow them to offer degrees in general arts and science areas, thus relieving a lot of the pressure on the University of Calgary and allowing the University of Calgary to fulfill its promise. The promise of the University of Calgary is to become a world-class university, and in some of its faculties it's achieved that. As long as funding is maintained, it will clearly establish that reputation for itself.

Now, if Mount Royal becomes a degree-granting institution, as I think it should, that doesn't mean that it would get rid of its two-year diploma programs. There's no reason why two-year diploma programs and degrees can't be offered within the same institution. But it does mean that they'll have to change the focus of what it is they do educationally. Where previously they were an institution that put a lot of energy and effort into helping adult students come back into the college, develop the skills and the background necessary to do advanced work, now they may have to take for granted that the students that come into that institution have that ability or they're able to demonstrate that ability. Then that falls on other institutions to pull up the slack.

I think very, very clearly, for example, Mr. Chairman, that there's an absolute need in the city of Calgary for another postsecondary institution, another community college, because the numbers are there; the need is there. If you look at the city of Calgary, there is an area of that city, a huge area that has over 200,000 people in it, that doesn't have a single postsecondary institution in its geographical area, and that's the northeast and the east side of the city. I think it's just begging, crying out, for that need to be addressed.

Let me just say a little more about that, Mr. Chairman. It's no accident, of course, that Calgary-Forest Lawn happens to be part of that area, but it also includes Calgary-Millican, Calgary-Montrose, and Calgary-McCall. I'd like to say that I recognize the financial circumstance of the province of Alberta. Nobody's expecting the province to come rushing in right now and spend \$100 million or \$200 million to build an actual physical plant in that part of the city, although when you see that \$100 million could be provided to build another community college in Edmonton, Grant MacEwan, or at least centralize their operation here, perhaps \$100 million could be found for Calgary as well. The Premier is talking about putting money into building a children's hospital in northern Alberta. Well, I don't know a health practitioner in the field who argues that that's necessary. If he can find money for that, then he certainly could find money

for a community college in Calgary. Before I leave that point, I'd just like to say that my colleague for Edmonton-Centre, who was here earlier, wanted me to thank the minister for all the support he's given for this downtown campus of the community college. So on his behalf I'd like to express that appreciation to the minister.

Back to what's happening in Calgary on the east side, I'd like to look at the whole question of whether or not a consortium could be off the ground to deliver more courses into that part of the city, a consortium that would consist of our existing postsecondary institutions in the city of Calgary. I know that the University of Calgary, Mount Royal College, SAIT, the adult vocational college, and the two school boards are actually meeting to discuss this issue. They are looking at ways in which they can extend delivery of courses and services into that part of the city. The high schools and board members are looking at ways that they could make their schools available for the senior institutions to put courses into that part of the city. I think the minister has to provide some direction and leadership, and I'd ask him if he's willing to do that, prepared to do that, to take a good look at this issue and problem and support in whatever way he can through his department something that the educators now call the east Calgary initiative. Out of that we may get a building down the road that could be a branch of the adult vocational college or Mount Royal College and maybe could eventually evolve into an institution standing on its own terms. That's what I'd like to see.

By way of conclusion, hon. minister, I'd like to tell you why I think it's important that we have that kind of institution on the east side of the city. First of all, it's a lower income area. There is a lot of social housing. There are a lot of single parents. There are a lot of new Canadians who have chosen to live in that part of the city, and it's a part of the city that most Calgarians don't know anything about. They very rarely drive to that part of the city. The only reason that exists for people to go out there is to visit the local Ikea store. There's no major athletic facility in that part of the city like the Saddledome or the football stadium. They sometimes go out to visit my colleague from Calgary-Millican because he's such a famous character in this city, and they love to visit with him. Aside from that . . .

10:30

MR. SHRAKE: Indoor soccer arena . . .

MR. PASHAK: Oh, the indoor soccer arena. I forgot about that. It's built by lottery funds in the southeast part of the city. Somehow the Member for Calgary-Millican was able to obtain something like that. I haven't been quite so fortunate in Calgary-Forest Lawn. Maybe after we have another election – who knows? – that could change.

In any event, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to indicate to the minister why I think it's really important. It's important that we have something in that part of the city that causes other Calgarians to come out. That could involve taking courses and coming out to visit this fine educational facility. More importantly, what's essential for young people in determining their attitudes and their ambitions with respect to education, if they don't have those values implanted in them by their family, is the cultural milieu in which they exist. Even a physical building allows students to think, "Well, that's for me; that's something I can investigate and explore." That tends to enhance their ambitions, aspirations, and leads to greater productivity, which is what society would really like to see.

In addition to all of that and because a majority of the new Canadians are continuing to settle in that part of the city – the minister's probably aware that the federal government has embraced an immigration policy that would encourage some 250,000 new Canadians to come to this country on an annual basis. Some 20,000 of those will come to the city of Calgary, and most of them will settle in the northeast. There's really a need to specialize in English as a Second Language; those programs have to be offered there. Because there's such a powerful need for jobs among young people, this kind of institution that I'm talking about should really emphasize job training; it should emphasize co-operative education. Then there also have to be places and courses available for adults to pursue general interest.

Well, there are a dozen other reasons, but I think the minister has a sense of what I'm talking about. So my final question to the minister is: would he support this initiative on the east and northeast side of the city of Calgary? With that, Mr. Chairman, I welcome some comment from the minister.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, there have been some very excellent points raised and some excellent questions asked by both the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, sir, and the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn. I look forward to being called back to this committee. In recognition of the fact that we perhaps can't answer all those questions tonight, I would commit myself to seeing that all the questions asked will, in fact, be answered in writing.

I'm well aware there are early-morning meetings tomorrow, and in recognition of that, Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

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

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report of the hon. Member for Lacombe, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's the intent of the government tomorrow to call Committee of Supply with the Department of Career Development and Employment.

[At 10:35 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]